



Trust Education Group Ltd

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

Trust Education Group Ltd. is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics, integrity, and accountability in all aspects of school life. As part of this commitment, we recognise our responsibility to provide clear avenues through which concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal activity can be raised without fear of retribution. This whistleblowing policy outlines the procedures and protections in place for staff, volunteers, contractors, and any individual connected with Trust Education Group Ltd., in accordance with government guidelines and Ofsted standards.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage individuals to raise concerns in good faith and at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure that concerns are taken seriously and investigated promptly and appropriately.
- Protect whistleblowers from being subjected to any form of detriment or victimisation.
- Promote a culture of openness, transparency, and accountability within the school community.
- Comply with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), relevant government guidance, and Ofsted regulations.

Scope

This policy applies to all current and former employees, governors, volunteers, supply staff, contractors, and individuals working in, or with, Trust Education Group Ltd. It covers concerns that relate to the public interest, including but not limited to:

- Financial malpractice or impropriety.
- Breach of legal, statutory, or professional obligations.
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Danger to the health and safety of individuals or environment.
- Neglect or abuse of pupils.

- Deliberate concealment of information related to any of the above.

Personal grievances (e.g., bullying, harassment, disputes) should be resolved through Trust Education Group Ltd Grievance Procedure and are not covered under this policy unless they are specifically about safeguarding or are in the wider public interest.

Legislative Framework and Ofsted Standards

This policy aligns with:

- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA).
- Department for Education (DfE) guidance: "Whistleblowing for Employees" and "Keeping Children Safe in Education".
- Ofsted's "Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings".
- Relevant guidance from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Ofsted expects all schools to have effective whistleblowing procedures and to ensure all staff are aware of their duty to report concerns, particularly in relation to safeguarding and the welfare of children.

Principles

- Concerns will be treated seriously and investigated promptly.
- Reports will be handled confidentially, and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.
- Whistleblowers will not be victimised or subjected to any detriment for raising concerns in good faith.
- Trust Education Group Ltd. will take appropriate action in response to any proven wrongdoing.
- All staff will be made aware of this policy, and it will be accessible on the school website and in the staff handbook.

Whistleblowing Procedures

Raising a Concern

Anyone with a concern should raise it as soon as possible. Concerns may be raised orally or in writing.

Steps to follow:

- Step 1: Raise the concern internally
- The concern should normally be raised with your line manager, headteacher, or designated whistleblowing officer. If the concern relates to the headteacher or senior members of staff, it should be raised with the Chair of Governors or the proprietor of Trust Education Group Ltd.

- Step 2: Provide detailed information
- Clearly state the facts, including any relevant background, names, dates, places, and the reason for your concern. The more information provided, the easier it will be to investigate the concern effectively.
- Step 3: Confidentiality and anonymity
- If you wish, you may raise your concern anonymously. However, it may be more difficult to investigate or respond if you do not provide contact details. The school will make every effort to keep your identity confidential, only revealing it if required by law or when absolutely necessary for the investigation.

External Routes

If you do not feel comfortable raising the concern internally, or believe your concerns have not been addressed properly, you may contact an external body, such as:

- Ofsted (for concerns about safeguarding and the welfare of children)
- The Department for Education
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – particularly for matters relating to financial management or governance
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – for safeguarding concerns about adults working with children
- Public Concern at Work (independent whistleblowing charity)

How Concerns Will Be Handled

Once a concern is raised:

- The designated officer will acknowledge receipt as soon as possible and within five working days.
- An initial assessment will determine whether further investigation is needed and, if so, the most appropriate process to follow.
- The investigation may:
 - Be handled internally by a nominated individual or panel.
 - Be referred to the police or external agencies.
 - Lead to a disciplinary or other formal process.

The whistleblower will be informed of the progress and outcome as far as is possible, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements.

If the concern is not substantiated, the whistleblower will be protected from any adverse consequences, provided the concern was raised in good faith.

Timescales

- All concerns will be acknowledged within five working days.
- Investigations will be conducted as swiftly as possible, with regular updates provided to the whistleblower.

- Timescales may vary depending on the complexity and seriousness of the issue raised.

Safeguarding for Whistleblowers

- No whistleblower will be subject to harassment, victimisation or detriment as a result of raising a concern in good faith.
- Any attempt to retaliate against a whistleblower will be treated as a disciplinary offence.
- Support will be offered to anyone raising a concern, including access to pastoral support, counselling, or trade union advice as appropriate.
- Where allegations are found to be malicious or unfounded, disciplinary action may be taken against the person making the false claim.

Responsibilities

- Staff and volunteers: Must report concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal activity as soon as possible.
- Line managers and leaders: Must deal with concerns appropriately and ensure confidentiality and support for whistleblowers.
- Designated whistleblowing officer: Oversees the process, ensures concerns are investigated properly, and maintains records.
- Governing Body/Proprietor: Monitors the effectiveness of the policy and ensures compliance with regulatory requirements.

Training and Communication

- All staff and volunteers will receive training on the whistleblowing policy and procedures as part of their induction and regular safeguarding updates.
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with changes to legislation or government guidance.
- The policy will be accessible on the school website and available in alternative formats upon request.

Record Keeping and Monitoring

- Records of all whistleblowing disclosures, investigations, and outcomes will be kept confidentially and securely by the designated officer.
- The governing body will receive anonymised reports on whistleblowing cases to monitor trends and the effectiveness of the policy.
- All data will be handled in accordance with data protection law (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018).

Review and Policy Approval

- This policy is subject to annual review and approval by the governing body or proprietor of Trust Education Group Ltd.

- Staff, volunteers and relevant stakeholders will be consulted on significant changes to the policy.

Contact Details

- Designated Whistleblowing Officer: Melissa Wainman
- Chair of Governors: Matthew Embley
- Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155
- ESFA: 0370 000 2288

This whistleblowing policy is designed to ensure that everyone at Trust Education Group Ltd. feels empowered and protected in raising genuine concerns, in the knowledge that these matters will be handled with the utmost professionalism and care. Adhering to government and Ofsted guidelines, we are committed to a culture of openness, honesty, and continual improvement for the benefit of all our pupils and the wider school community.

Policy Lead	Melissa Wainman Director of Education
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