



St Wilfrid's
Church of England Academy

Whistle Blowing Policy

Statutory Policy

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| Created by: | Mrs K Coomber and Mrs J Herbertson |
| Date approved by the Governing Body: | |
| Review Date: | Summer Term 2024 |

Link to other policies:

- Anti-fraud Policy
- Debt Management Policy
- Internal Financial Regulations and scheme of delegation
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Staff Discipline Policy
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedures
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

Whistle Blowing Policy

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1. Rationale

The Academy is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability.

In line with this commitment, the Academy encourages employees and others connected with the Academy (including temporary and agency staff and authorised volunteers working in the Academy), who have serious concerns about any action or behaviour which appears to contradict these standards to come forward and voice these concerns.

The Academy expects that minor concerns will be raised in regular meetings and discussions between staff. However, where it is felt that such action is not appropriate given the nature of the concerns, this policy sets out the steps to be taken in reporting and considering more serious matters.

2. Policy aims

This policy is intended to cover major concerns which fall outside the scope of other procedures, for example the Academy Complaints Procedure, the Staff Grievance Procedure and the Anti-Bullying Policy.

The following list provides some examples of such concerns, but is not exhaustive:

- sexual or physical abuse of students where referral under the Child Protection procedures is not appropriate;
- radicalisation, terrorism or extremism of students or staff;
- conduct or operation which is an offence or a breach of the law;
- health and safety risks, including risks to students, other staff and visitors to the Academy;
- financial misconduct including inappropriate or unauthorised use of Academy funds or other resources;
- suspected fraud or corruption;
- other unethical conduct;
- notification of suspicions of price fixing cartels providing goods or services to the Academy;
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- damage to the environment;
- damage to the Academy premises or assets.

Any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of Academy activities or the conduct of staff of the Trust, Governors or Trustees or others acting on behalf of the Trustees can be reported under the Whistle Blowing policy. This may be about something that:

- Makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the Trust subscribes to
- Is against the ESFA Academy Trust Handbook, Academy Finance Policy or other Academy financial policies
- Falls below established standards of practice in academies
- Amounts to improper conduct
- Appears to be an attempt to mislead

An employee who is not sure whether the conduct he/she is concerned about does not constitute illegal or improper conduct or is unsure about how to proceed can contact the following for advice:

Principal and Accounting Officer
Mrs V Michael
vmichael@saintwilfrids.com

Chair of Trustees
Mr David Rintoul
governors@saintwilfrids.com

Internal Auditor
Stephen Lester
skl@skleducation.co.uk

3. Confidentiality

The Academy acknowledges that employees may be worried about the consequences to them if they 'blow the whistle'. Therefore, concerns will be treated in confidence and the identity of the 'whistle blower' will not be revealed. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed completely as there may be situations in which it is necessary for evidence to be given and for the 'whistle blower' to submit a signed statement or to be present at the relevant hearing.

In any event, the Board of Trustees will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of an individual as a result of them reporting concerns under this policy. Any such action will be treated as a disciplinary offence and appropriate action taken under the Disciplinary Policy.

It should also be noted that if false or malicious allegations are made, consideration will be given to acting against the person who made the complaint.

4. Reporting Procedures

Informal procedure

There are some situations which are of a minor concern and it is expected that these will be dealt with either by directly challenging the person concerned or through discussion with the line manager.

In such cases, the person making the disclosure should be satisfied that this approach is relevant and that the issue has been properly addressed. If a line manager has been involved, a note of the concern should be made and the action taken to address the situation.

If the person making the disclosure is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, the matter may be raised under the formal procedure.

Formal procedure

This procedure is intended to cover those matters not satisfactorily dealt with under the informal process and any matters which are considered sufficiently serious to merit making a formal complaint.

Financial regulations require any employee who suspects fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity to ensure this is reported to the Governing Body for possible investigation.

Normally, you should first report any suspicion of such irregularity to the Chair of Governors, as detailed below.

Exceptionally, if you believe that the matter cannot be resolved in this way, or if the matter relates to the Chair of Governors you should report it to the Internal Auditor.

The formal procedure is initiated by the completion of a written report, which may include the following:

- the background and history of the concern (relevant dates, times and places should be included);
- the reason for the particular concern about the situation;
- details of any witnesses or other people who may share the concern;
- if relevant, the action that the person making the disclosure would wish to be taken.

'Whistle blowers' are encouraged to put their name to the report. Anonymous concerns will be considered in the context of the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of obtaining confirmation of the allegation from attributable sources.

The report should be noted 'Strictly Confidential' and given to the Chair of Governors. A written acknowledgement will be sent within ten working days, with an indication of how the matter will be handled and an estimate of the time the investigation will take. The identified Governor for handling any whistle blowing issues is Mr Michael White (Foundation Governor).

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will be identified to carry out an investigation (the 'investigating officer') and every effort will be made to conclude this in a reasonable time. However, the 'whistle blower' will be advised of any significant delay in the investigation.

It is likely that the 'whistle blower' will need to be interviewed by the investigating officer. The 'whistle blower' may be accompanied at any interview by a Union representative, a colleague or friend.

The investigating officer will provide a written report to the Principal on the findings of the investigation. A decision will then be made on the action to be taken.

The person making the disclosure will be informed of the outcome of the investigation, subject to any legal constraints. This information will not include details of any disciplinary action that may have been taken against any individual. Any information provided must remain confidential.

5. Other Action

It is hoped that allegations made under this policy will be handled internally. However, the Academy Trust recognises the lawful rights of employees to make disclosures to other

bodies (e.g. the police, the Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency, Education and Skills Funding Agency). In such cases, the 'whistle blower' should ensure that they meet the criteria laid down in the [Public Interest Disclosure Act](#).

Exceptionally, if you feel unable to pursue any of these routes, you should consider approaching an appropriate body outside St Wilfrid's Academy. Such bodies include:

- The District Audit service (for financial irregularities)
- The independent charity "Public Concern at Work" offers confidential advice 020 7404 6609 e-mail: whistle@pcaw.org.uk to employees and others with serious concerns about public dangers and malpractice. <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/contact.html>
- Trade Union/Professional Association representatives

6. Further Information

Further information is available from the following sources:

Whistleblowing for employees, including a definition of whistleblowing
<https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

School complaints and whistleblowing, including how ESFA handles complaints about academies
<https://www.gov.uk/education/school-complaints-and-whistleblowing>

The whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work, which provides confidential independent advice about wrongdoing in the workplace.
<https://protect-advice.org.uk/>