

## Whistleblowing policy

- 1 **Honesty and integrity:** The Federation is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with the Code of Conduct. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 2 **Aims:** The aims of this policy are to:
  - a. encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
  - b. provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
  - c. reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 3 **Wrong doing at work:** This procedure is designed to deal with disclosure of information by an officer or a visitor of the Federation which relates to some danger, bribery, corruption, fraud or other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace. This may include a criminal offence, breach of a legal obligation, miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety or the environment or any action to conceal such activities. For the purposes of this policy, an officer of the Federation includes; employees, trainees, agency workers, councillors, governors, trustees, directors, board members, contractors and volunteers. Employment legislation governs the making of disclosures concerning workplace activities and is intended to protect employees who blow the whistle on bad practice from being subjected to any detriment or from being unfairly dismissed as a result. This procedure is available to all officers and visitors of the Federation who discover something they feel that they should pass on in the interests of the public. All types of wrongdoing are included whether they are acts committed by fellow employees, faults in Academy or Federation procedures or oversights which should be rectified. The procedure should be used even in the event that the act or omission causing you concern has finished or has not yet started.
- 4 **Grievances:** This procedure should not however be used where you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace. The Grievance Procedure contained in the Employment Manual should be used in such cases.
- 5 **Detriment:** Provided that this procedure is used correctly and you make the disclosure in good faith you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting the wrongdoing. A failure to follow this procedure may however make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure and/or the legislation may be lost.
- 6 **Trade Union Representation:** You may consult with and/or be represented by your TU representative at any stage.

## Safeguarding

- 7 Safeguarding:** Nothing within this policy is intended to prevent staff from complying with their statutory obligations in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2020). In particular:
- a. Safeguarding / child protection policy:** If you have any concern about a pupil's welfare, action should be taken immediately. You should report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. See the Federation's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures for full information about what to do if you have a concern about a pupil, including what to do if the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available;
  - b. Safeguarding - member of staff:** You should raise any concerns about another staff member with the Academy Principal, or if the concern is about the Academy Principal, with the Chair of Academy Council (without first notifying the Academy Principal) in accordance with the procedures in the Federation's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.
  - c. Whistleblowing policy:** You should follow this procedure to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices at the Academy or potential failures by the Academy or staff to properly fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities.
- 8 The Modern Slavery helpline:** The Federation is committed to the prevention of modern slavery. If you have any queries relating to modern slavery please contact the academy Principal and / or refer to the Federation's [Modern Slavery Statement](#). Identified instances of modern slavery should be immediately notified to the police. If you think you have identified an instance of modern slavery, or if you consider that you may be a victim of modern slavery you may contact the Modern Slavery helpline on 0800 0121 700.

## Confidentiality

- 9 Confidentiality:** We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 10 Anonymous disclosures:** We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

## Stage one

- 11 Procedure:** You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your Head of Department or equivalent senior leader. In the event that your Head of Department or equivalent senior leader is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you shall be entitled to proceed directly to Stage Two of this procedure.
- 12 Response:** You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven calendar days of your Head of Department or equivalent senior leader becoming aware of the disclosure.

### **Stage two**

- 13 **Procedure:** If no response is forthcoming after seven calendar days, or if your Head of Department/ equivalent senior leader is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage one, you shall be entitled to notify the Academy Principal / member of the Executive team as appropriate.
- 14 **Response:** You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven calendar days of the Academy Principal / member of the Executive team becoming aware of the disclosure.

### **Stage three**

- 15 **Procedure:** If no such response is forthcoming after seven calendar days, or if your Academy Principal/ relevant member of the Executive team is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome under Stage two, you should inform the Chair of Academy Council and Chief Executive Officer.
- 16 **Response:** You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven calendar days of the Chair of Academy Council and Chief Executive Officer becoming aware of the disclosure.

### **Stage four**

- 17 **Outside body:** If you do not receive a response under Stage three within seven calendar days you shall be entitled to notify a relevant and appropriate body outside the Federation which may include:
- a. the local authority's Designated Officer;
  - b. Children's Social Care;
  - c. The NSPCC;
  - d. the Health and Safety Executive (HSE);
  - e. the Environment Agency;
  - f. 11.3 the Information Commissioner;
  - g. 11.4 the Department for Education (DfE);
  - h. 11.5 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS);
  - i. 11.6 the Police;
  - j. 11.7 the Charity Commission; or
  - k. 11.8 Ofsted
- 12 **Bypassing the procedure:** in extreme circumstances you will have the right to either enter the Whistleblowing Policy at Stage Three, rather than following each of the stages or raise concerns directly with a relevant and appropriate outside body at Stage Four of the process without having followed any of the previous stages within this policy. Bypassing the procedure in such a manner may be a wholly appropriate course of action; however such an action could cause damage and reputational damage to the Federation and/or the Academy, as well as potentially constituting a breach of your own duty of confidentiality. Bypassing the procedure and referring directly to an outside body should therefore only be taken where extreme

circumstances exist and following careful consideration, it would be advisable to take advice from your Trade Union if you are considering such an action.

- 13 **Extreme circumstances:** The Federation will consider extreme circumstances exist where you have a reasonable belief that your individual Academy or the Federation as a whole will subject you to a detriment as a result for making a protected disclosure under this policy. Examples include:-
- 13.1 A cover-up is being mounted by your individual Academy or the Federation as a whole directly as a result of the protected disclosure you have made or intend to make.
  - 13.2 Due to a previous complaint not having been promptly dealt with by your individual Academy or the Federation as a whole, that the same approach would be applied to a fresh protected disclosure.
  - 13.3 Staff or children in your individual Academy or the Federation as a whole are at immediate risk of danger or abuse.
- 14 Due to the nature of whistleblowing the above list is not exhaustive and it is also recognised that in certain Extreme Circumstances that employees will have an obligation to raise issues simultaneously with the Federation and the Police. In respect of the above Extreme Circumstances, where the reasonable belief exists at individual Academy level, the process would normally be bypassed to Stage Three and where the reasonable belief exists at Federation level it may be appropriate to bypass the process to Stage Four and raise an external concern.
- 18 **Advice:** Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before you do, as well as considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:
- a. **Protect:** If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 7404 6609 for advice.
  - b. **NSPCC:** The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).
  - c. **The Modern Slavery helpline:** The Modern Slavery helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns about modern slavery internally. Staff can call on 0800 0121 700.
- 19 **The media:** You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and / or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain, the protection given to you by this procedure and/or the legislation may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and a disciplinary investigation may take place.
- 15 **Queries:** If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the HR Director.