

# Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership

## Whistleblowing Policy – October 2014

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**1. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

1.1 We are committed to conducting our operations with honesty and integrity, and expect all employees, governors, directors, officers and suppliers to maintain high standards. However, 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 or to address them when they do occur.

1.2 The aims of this policy are:

- (a) to encourage employees, governors, directors, officers and suppliers 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) to provide employees, governors, directors, officers and suppliers with guidance as to how to raise those concerns;
- (c) to reassure employees, governors, directors, officers and suppliers that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

1.3 This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and **Public Concern at Work** (the independent whistleblowing charity) and the revisions to the law introduced by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 from 25 June 2013.

1.4 The EFA’s Academies Financial Handbook 2014 contains the following provision:

*2.3.4 Academy trusts should have appropriate procedures in place for whistleblowing, including making sure all staff are aware to whom they can report their concerns and the way in which such concerns will be managed.*

1.5 The following persons hold the following roles for the Academies Financial Handbook:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Accounting Officer:</b>       | <b>Mr Clive Webster, Chief Executive</b>             |
| <b>Chief Financial Officer:</b>  | <b>Mr Mark Harris, Business and Finance Director</b> |
| <b>Chair of Audit Committee:</b> | <b>Mr Peter Ventress, Foundation Director</b>        |

## 2. ATTENDEES AT FORMAL MEETINGS

- 2.1 For any process described as informal there is no right to be accompanied and we proceed without you having a companion present.
- 2.2 Where this policy allows you to be accompanied by a companion at a formal meeting, the provisions of this paragraph 2 will apply and **Permitted Companion** means a companion meeting the requirements of this paragraph 2.
- 2.3 You must let the relevant Manager know who your Permitted Companion will be at least one working day before the relevant meeting. The companion must be either a willing co-worker not involved in the substance of the issue under discussion at the meeting or a trade union representative. You do not have a right to legal representation at formal meetings.
- 2.4 If you have any particular need, for example, a disability, you may also be accompanied by a suitable helper.
- 2.5 Your Permitted Companion can address the meeting in order to:
- (a) put your case;
  - (b) sum up your case; and
  - (c) respond on your behalf to any view expressed at the meeting.
- 2.6 Your Permitted Companion can also confer with you in private during the meeting.
- 2.7 Your Permitted Companion has no right to answer questions on your behalf, or to address the meeting if you do not wish it, or to prevent you from explaining your case.
- 2.8 Where you have identified your Permitted Companion to the relevant Manager and your companion has confirmed in writing to the relevant Manager that they cannot attend the date or time set for the meeting, the relevant Manager will postpone the meeting for no more than five working days from the date set by us to a date or time agreed with your companion provided that it is reasonable.
- 2.9 You do not have a right to be accompanied by a legal representative.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, governors, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

**4. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?**

- 4.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
- (a) criminal activity;
  - (b) miscarriages of justice;
  - (c) danger to health and safety;
  - (d) damage to the environment;
  - (e) failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
  - (f) bribery;
  - (g) financial fraud or mismanagement;
  - (h) negligence;
  - (i) breach of our internal policies and procedures;
  - (j) conduct likely to damage our reputation;
  - (k) unauthorised disclosure of confidential information or other activity;
  - (l) malpractice in relation to public examinations; or
  - (m) the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- 4.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above and they reasonably believe that disclosure is in the public interest. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy as soon as possible.
- 4.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work or the way your child has been treated in school. In those cases you should use the Grievance Resolution policy, the relevant appeal process under our specific employment policies or (for parents and members of the public) the Complaints policy.
- 4.4 If you have any concerns relating to child protection or safeguarding you should raise these under the appropriate policies.
- 4.5 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you may seek advice from Public Concern at Work (whose contact details are at the end of this policy) and your trade union.

## **5. RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN**

- 5.1 We hope that in most cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager or Headteacher. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to our Responsible Officer.
- 5.2 However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager or your Headteacher has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact our CEO or Responsible Officer. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.
- 5.3 We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a Permitted Companion to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
- 5.4 We will take down a written summary of your concern and provide you with a copy after the meeting. We will also aim to give you an indication of how we propose to deal with the matter.

## **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 6.1 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 protect your identity. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 6.2 We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if it cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to our Responsible Officer and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work.
- 6.3 If you have raised a whistleblowing concern with us you should keep the fact and content of that concern confidential so that we may investigate your allegation fairly and effectively save that you may of course discuss the matter with a professional adviser or your trade union, with any investigator appointed by us and with those other contacts identified in this policy.

## **7. EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES**

- 7.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 7.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. You should seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at

Work operate a confidential helpline. Your trade union may also be able to advise you in these matters.

- 7.3 Our understanding is that the Education Funding Agency is not a prescribed person for the purposes of Section 43F of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and that the EFA would not count as the Minister of the Crown for the purposes of Section 43E of the Employment Rights Act as no members of the our Board are appointed by a Minister of the Crown under any enactment.
- 7.4 We believe that the bodies listed at Appendix 1 are the prescribed persons for the areas which may relate to us. A whistleblower will only have protection for a disclosure to a prescribed person if they reasonably believe
- (a) disclosure is in the public interest; and
  - (b) the relevant wrongdoing falls within the description of the matter in respect of which that person is prescribed; and
  - (c) the information disclosed and allegation contained in it are substantially true.
- 7.5 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or government agency. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise the matter with the third party directly. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact the Responsible Officer for guidance.

## **8. INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME**

- 8.1 Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of that assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 8.2 In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators (including staff) with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. An investigation may be internal or external. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 8.3 We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 8.4 If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with intent to damage our reputation or of any of our staff or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to our Disciplinary policy.
- 8.5 We encourage prompt disclosure of potential wrongdoing. If you have delayed in disclosing potential wrongdoing you will be asked to explain why you have delayed in making the disclosure.

**9. IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED**

- 9.1 While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.
- 9.2 If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with our Responsible Officer. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

**10. PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS & OTHER STAFF**

- 10.1 It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 10.2 Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform our Responsible Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Resolution policy.
- 10.3 Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action. In some cases the whistleblower may sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.
- 10.4 Teaching staff, whether the whistleblower or the subject of a whistleblowing allegation, may seek support from the Teacher Support Network's 24 hour Support Line, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.
- 10.5 Staff who are the subject of a whistleblowing allegation:
- (a) are entitled to be accompanied at any meetings by a Permitted Companion;
  - (b) are not entitled to know the identity of the whistleblower;
  - (c) are entitled to see and approve any final statements made by them as part of an investigation; and
  - (d) should indicate if they believe that the allegation made against them was false and if it was false whether it was made maliciously or with intent to damage the reputation of us or of any of our staff or for personal gain

**11. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCCESS OF THIS POLICY**

- 11.1 Our Board has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.
- 11.2 Our CEO and Responsible Officer have day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.
- 11.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to our Responsible Officer.
- 11.4 This policy will be made available to all employees and governors by way of each Partnership Academy’s intranet and will be drawn to the attention of new employees and governors as part of their induction.
- 11.5 This policy will be circulated to all suppliers and will be published on our website.

**12. CONTACTS**

Chair of Audit Committee (“Responsible Officer”)	Telephone: 01622 232662 Email: <a href="mailto:whistle@kcsp.org.uk">whistle@kcsp.org.uk</a>
Accounting Officer/CEO	Telephone: 01622 232663 Email: <a href="mailto:cwebster@kcsp.org.uk">cwebster@kcsp.org.uk</a>
Public Concern at Work (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 7404 6609 Email: <a href="mailto:whistle@pcaw.co.uk">whistle@pcaw.co.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.pcaw.co.uk">www.pcaw.co.uk</a>
Teacher Support Network	Support Line 08000 855 088



**Appendix 1 – Relevant Prescribed Persons**

Certification Officer.	Fraud, and other irregularities, relating to the financial affairs of trade unions and employers' associations.
Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.	The proper administration of charities and of funds given or held for charitable purposes.
Commissioners of the Inland Revenue.	Income tax, corporation tax, capital gains tax, petroleum revenue tax, inheritance tax, stamp duties, national insurance contributions, statutory maternity pay, statutory sick pay, tax credits, child benefits, collection of pupil loans and the enforcement of the national minimum wage.
Comptroller & Auditor General.	The proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in relation to the provision of centrally-funded public services.
Director of the Serious Fraud Office.	Serious or complex fraud.
Environment Agency.	Acts or omissions which have an actual or potential effect on the environment or the management or regulation of the environment, including those relating to pollution, abstraction of water, flooding, the flow in rivers, inland fisheries and migratory salmon or trout.
Food Standards Agency.	Matters which may affect the health of any member of the public in relation to the consumption of food and other matters concerning the protection of the interests of consumers in relation to food.
Children's Commissioner	Matters relating to the views and interests of children.
Health and Safety Executive.	Matters which may affect the health or safety of any individual at work; matters, which may affect the health and safety of any member of the public, arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work.
Local authorities which are responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation.	Matters which may affect the health or safety of any individual at work; matters, which may affect the health and safety of any member of the public, arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work.
Information Commissioner.	Compliance with the requirements of legislation relating to data protection and to freedom of information.
Pensions Regulator	Matters relating to occupational pension schemes and other private pension arrangements including matters relating to the Regulator's objective of maximising compliance with the duties under Chapter 1 of Part 1 (and the safeguards in sections 50 and 54) of the Pensions Act 2008 .
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.	Matters in relation to which the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation exercises functions under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
Local authorities	Compliance with the requirements of food safety legislation.
A Member of Parliament	All matters for which any other person is a prescribed person.