



WALTON HIGH SCHOOL



WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Reviewed by Governors:	September 2024
To be reviewed:	September 2025
Leadership link person:	Mr B Fletcher

*Walton Multi Academy Trust refers to all schools within the Trust.
When referring to Trust Boards, this includes Local Governor Boards, and the term
'Governor' includes all Trustees or Local Board Governors.*

Walton Multi-Academy Trust - Whistleblowing Policy

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1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 We are committed to conducting our Walton Multi Academy Trust with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff 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:
- 1.2.1 to 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;
 - 1.2.2 to provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
 - 1.2.3 to reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Walton Multi Academy Trust, including officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

3 WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

- 3.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:
- 3.1.1 criminal activity;
 - 3.1.2 miscarriages of justice;
 - 3.1.3 danger to health and safety;
 - 3.1.4 damage to the environment;
 - 3.1.5 failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
 - 3.1.6 bribery;
 - 3.1.7 financial fraud or mismanagement;
 - 3.1.8 negligence;
 - 3.1.9 breach of our internal policies and procedures;
 - 3.1.10 conduct likely to damage our reputation;
 - 3.1.11 unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
 - 3.1.12 concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children;
 - 3.1.13 the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

- 3.2 A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. 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.
- 3.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure or Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy as appropriate.
- 3.4 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

4 RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN:

- 4.1 We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager or Andy Leese (Headteacher). You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer.
- 4.2 If the matter relates to the Headteacher you should contact the Director of The Walton Multi Academy Trust, Ben Rowell. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.
- 4.3 We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
- 4.4 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.

5 CONFIDENTIALITY:

- 5.1 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 keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 5.2 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. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Headteacher 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, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

6 EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES:

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.
- 6.3 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. 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 your line manager or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 4 for guidance.

7 INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME:

- 7.1 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 our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 7.2 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. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 If we conclude that a whistle-blower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistle-blower will be subject to disciplinary action.

8 IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED:

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the Chair of Trustees.

9 PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS:

- 9.1 It is understandable that whistle-blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 9.2 Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. 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 the Headteacher immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.
- 9.3 Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

SECTION 2

10: Organisational Whistle Blowing Policy to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children:

10.1 Introduction:

Improving the way in which people and organisations safeguard and promote the welfare of children is crucial to improving outcomes for children and young people and key local organisations named under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, have a duty to demonstrate that they have effective arrangements in place within their organisation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Governing Bodies of Maintained schools have a similar duty under section 175 of the 2002 Education Act, and Independent Schools, Academies and the Further Education Sector under Section 157 of the same Act. These key bodies have to demonstrate that they have an effective whistle blowing process in place and that their workforce is aware of this process. This document therefore aims to offer a standard policy template for adoption by organisations that:

- Have a whistle blowing policy in place but it makes little or no specific reference to the safeguarding of children and young people;
- Do not have an existing whistle-blowing policy in place within their organisation and are required under section 11 processes to have one; and
- Organisations where there is not a section 11 requirement, but who wish to promote good practice within their organisations.

11 Section 2 Policy Statement:

Walton Multi Academy Trust Trustees expect **all staff and employees including adults working with children and young people, temporary staff, volunteers, students, contractors or external partner agencies**, to express any concerns that they may have with regards to the conduct of any individual(s). The term 'staff' will hereafter include all of the wider workforce, as stated above.

In line with these expectations, Walton High School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. All persons working for, or with this organisation, must feel safe and supported in order to express their concerns.

This policy document is intended to encourage and enable our staff to raise their concerns and to do so without fear of victimisation or discrimination. It does not replace the Complaints Procedure or the Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy or the organisation's standard procedures for reporting allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers. It is supplementary to the organisation's Whistle Blowing Policy in regards to other forms of malpractice covered under the 'Public Interest Disclosure Act'

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) protects the public interest by providing a remedy for individuals who suffer workplace reprisal for raising a genuine concern, whether it is a concern about child safeguarding and welfare systems, financial malpractice, danger,

illegality, or other wrongdoing. The concern may relate to something that is happening or has happened in the past. The PIDA covers all workers, including temporary agency staff. It does not cover the self-employed or volunteers. The Act also provides protection should individuals have difficulty gaining a reference from an employer because they have raised a concern. It makes it clear that any clause in a contract that purports to gag an individual from raising a concern that would be protected under the Act is void.

12 Aims:

This policy aims to:

- Encourage adults working for or within the organisation to feel confident in raising concerns;
- Provide a process by which concerns can be raised and dealt with;
- Receive feedback on the process (where appropriate); and
- Provide a means by which staff can receive support where concerns have been raised.

13 What does the safeguarding whistle blowing policy cover?:

This policy is designed to cover concerns that staff have about the conduct of individuals in a position of trust within the organisation which could be detrimental to the safety or wellbeing of young people and where staff, for whatever reason, **feel unable** to raise them under the organisation's standard child protection procedures around dealing with such allegations. It would include issues about:

- Unprofessional behaviour
- Bullying by staff
- Any form of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect)
- Name calling
- Personal contact with children and young people which is contrary to the organisations policies and codes of conduct
- Any form of racial abuse
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Knowledge about an individual's personal circumstances which may indicate they could be a risk to children or unsuitable to work with children

Please be mindful that these are examples of concerns, and are not exhaustive.

14 Safeguarding against harassment or victimisation:

Walton High School is committed to professional standards and to supporting staff. It is recognised that the decision to report a concern is a difficult one to make. Harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated and Walton High School will take appropriate action in order to protect the person raising the concern when they are acting in good faith.

15 How to raise a concern:

Staff should normally raise their concerns with a designated manager under the organisations standard procedures for dealing with allegations about a person in a position of trust. If the Designated Person is the subject of concern the matter should be referred to a more senior member of management or, if this is not possible, the Whistle Blowing Policy can be implemented. Under standard procedures, if there are concerns that an adult working with children may have abused a child, or be unsuitable to work with children and young people, concerns will be passed to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) by the manager.

For information about the Stoke-on-Trent LADO process, please use the appropriate link [stoke.gov.uk/Managing Allegations LADO.pdf](http://stoke.gov.uk/Managing_Allegations_LADO.pdf)

In certain circumstances, staff may feel they are unable to follow the organisation's standard procedures e.g. because they feel their position in the organisation would be in jeopardy, they would be subject to intimidation, or that the person of concern is the designated manager to whom they should report such matters and there is no one senior to refer to. They should then follow the Whistle Blowing Policy by contacting a nominated person (the 'responsible person') within the organisation or an umbrella organisation to which the organisation is affiliated. The Policy may also be used in circumstances when the matter has been raised under appropriate organisation procedures for referring child protection concerns, but the referrer considers that the manager has not taken the concerns seriously or acted appropriately with relation to them. In such circumstances, referrers are encouraged to contact the named responsible person for 'whistle blowing' for the organisation or a LADO directly for discussion and advice. The LADO contact details are listed at the end of the policy.

When following the Whistle-blowing Policy, concerns may be shared verbally, but should also be recorded in writing (Safeguarding Whistle Blowing report form – Appendix A).

Staff may wish to invite their trade union representative to be present during any subsequent interviews.

How Walton High School will respond:

Any concern regarding child protection will be referred to external agencies for investigation (children's services, police, LADO).

If the concern is not of this nature there will be:

- Investigation by management
- Disciplinary process if appropriate
- Consideration of policies, processes and procedures if such issues arise from the investigation.

Within 10 working days of a concern being raised the referrer will receive a written response from the responsible person which will:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received;
- Supply information on relevant support mechanisms

- Advise whether further investigations will take place; or
- Advise that no further action has taken place and why.

16 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS POLICY:

- 16.1 The Walton Multi Academy Trust has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.
- 16.2 The Headteacher has 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.
- 16.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

17 CONTACTS:

Mr A Leese – Headteacher
Walton High School, The Rise, Walton on the Hill, STAFFORD, ST17 0LJ
Telephone: 01785 356300:
Email: headteacher@walton.staffs.sch.uk

Alison Cashmore – Assistant Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Officer.
Walton High School, The Rise, Walton on the Hill, STAFFORD, ST17 0LJ
Telephone: 01785 356300
Email: office@walton.staffs.sch.uk

Mr Ben Rowell – Chair of Trustees: Ben.Rowell@waltonmat.co.uk

If it is felt that it would be unsafe for any reason to share concerns with the named person from your organisation the following are appropriate contacts with whom to discuss your concerns:

Staffordshire County Council:

-Individual designated agency leads for Child Protection

-First Response in the MASH* – 0800 1313126 (ask to speak to duty LADO if your concerns are that a member of staff could be harming children)

Other support

Recognised trade unions or professional associations can provide support and assistance or independent, external advice this can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work 020 7404 6609, or by email at whistle@pcaw.org.uk. For further information please see their website.

Regulatory bodies such as Ofsted will also give advice. Ofsted's whistle blowing hotline is: 0300 123 3155.

External/Prescribed Bodies

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service Wedgwood Building Tipping Street Stafford ST16 2DH Tel: 01785 355777 Fax: 01785 355842	Department for Education Regional Schools Commissioner for West Midlands rsc.wm@education.gov.uk .
Stoke-On-Trent Tax Office – HMRC Stoke-On-Trent - Inland Revenue Blackburn House Old Hall Street Stoke-On-Trent Staffordshire ST1 3BS Tel: 0844 474 0101	Staffordshire Police Non-Emergency Telephone No = 101 Or 0300 123 4455
Data Protection Registrar Local Govt. Ombudsman Pensions Ombudsman 11 Belgrave Road London SW1V 1RB Tel. 0171 834 9144	Environment Agency (no local address) Tel: 0845 933 3111 (enquiries) 0800 807060 (to report accidents)

Appendix A

Whistle Blowing Report Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Location/department: _____

Please give a brief outline of your concern? (Please give relevant names, dates, locations etc)

Were there any other witnesses? If so, please give their full contact details.

Did you take any action at the time? – if so, please outline what action you took

if you did not take action at the time, please give details as to why you took no action

Signed:

Date.....

Designation.....