



KINGSTONE ACADEMY TRUST

APPROVED DOCUMENT

Whistle Blowing Policy	
Relevant School/s:	KHS and KTPS
Policy Officer:	E Vigus - CEO James Wright - Chair of Trustees
Approval:	Full Board
Date of Review:	September 2026
Next Review:	3 years or upon legislative change
Distribution:	Public, on website

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage a culture where all individuals feel able to raise concerns about alleged wrongdoing and report them at the earliest opportunity, in the knowledge that concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon and that confidentiality will be respected wherever possible; however, anonymity shall not be an automatic right
- Let all staff in the trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust
- Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns, ensuring that staff know that concerns raised by whistle-blowers will be responded to properly and fairly
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue – see section 6 below)
- Ensure staff know that they are protected by law and that a non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality clause or 'gagging clause' in a settlement agreement or employment contract cannot stop them from making a protected disclosure in the public interest
- Ensure all staff understand their duty to raise concerns about safeguarding practices within the Trust and its School/s, including concerns about the behaviour of adults working with children, in line with statutory safeguarding guidance

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trainee teachers, officers and trustees. Other workers, including consultants, contractors, casual workers, agency staff and those on work placements, are also encouraged to use it.

2. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#). [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (KCSIE) also sets out expectations for schools to have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures.

This policy has been written in line with the above documents, as well as [government guidance on whistleblowing](#). We have also taken into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definition of Whistleblowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing or dangers at work that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistleblowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger

- Poor or unsafe safeguarding practice in the trust or its schools, including potential failures in provision as well as the failure to act on concerns about a child or the behaviour of an adult
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures (such as a failure to follow internal rules or policies), including improper use of public funds
- Sexual harassment
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Risk or damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above. These genuine concerns relating to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the trust activities should be reported under this policy.

Not all concerns about the trust, or individual schools in the trust, count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances, such as bullying or general harassment, do not usually count as whistleblowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

If a complaint involves personal circumstances alongside wider concerns regarding one of the areas set out above (e.g. pupil health and safety), the staff member must consult with the Head of School or CEO as appropriate to decide the most appropriate reporting procedure.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures. Advice can be sought from the Administration Manager.

Safeguarding concerns or allegations about the behaviour of staff that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns') should be reported in line with the trust's low-level concerns policy. Where concerns indicate a pattern of behaviour or a culture of unsafe practice, they may be addressed under this whistleblowing policy.

[Protect](#), an independent whistleblowing charity, has further guidance and a free and confidential advice line on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure.

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to

School-based staff should report their concern to the Head of School. If the concern is about the Head of School, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, or where the matter is more serious or feel that the Head of School has not addressed their concern or prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, the staff member should report their concern to the CEO or the Chair of the Board of Trustees via (ceo@kingstoneacademy.co.uk)

Central team staff should report their concern to the CEO. If the concern is about the CEO, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the central team staff should report the concern to the Chair of Trustees via clerk@kingstoneacademy.co.uk.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include the names of those alleged to be committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

Staff are encouraged to give their name when reporting an allegation, to help the trust take the investigation further. The trust hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if the staff member wants to raise their concern confidentially, the trust will make every effort to keep their identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating their concern to know their identity, the trust will discuss this with the staff member.

The trust does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously, although will make every effort to investigate anonymous disclosures. The staff member should be aware that a proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if further information cannot be obtained from the staff member. This will also make it more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

Staff who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should consult with the Head of School or one of the contact points listed in section 4.2, and appropriate measures can be taken to protect confidentiality where possible. If the staff member is in any doubt, advice can be sought from DAS the Trust's confidential counselling hotline on 0117 934 2121 or [Protect](#) who offer a confidential helpline.

Where a concern relates to the immediate safety or welfare of a child, staff should follow the KAT Safeguarding and child protection policy and speak to the relevant designated safeguarding lead (DSL) without delay, in addition to using this whistleblowing procedure.

5. Trust procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Head of School or CEO – referred to from here as the 'recipient' – they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative. The companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting and record the information. The staff member will be provided with a copy of the written summary of the concern after the meeting
- If it becomes apparent that the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy and/or procedure and inform the staff member accordingly
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected, by law, from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see section 6 of this policy)
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
 - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the CEO or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate. In some cases, they

may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate who have relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator (or investigators) may make recommendations for change to enable the trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing. In others, they may need to report the matter to the police

- The person who raised the concern should be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps. The person who raised the concern may also be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information
- Within 5 working days – excluding periods of trust/school closure – of a concern being referred to the CEO or Chair of Trustees, they will write to the complainant to:
 - Acknowledge that the concern has been received
 - Indicate how the matter is to be dealt with
 - Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response, informing the complainant as to whether any initial enquiries have been made
 - Tell the staff member whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not where able. Sometimes, there may be a need for confidentiality that may prevent the trust giving the staff member specific details of the investigation, an outcome or any disciplinary action taken as a result. In any event, any information about the investigation must be treated as confidential

Throughout any investigation, the trust will provide wellbeing check-ins for both the complainant and the subject(s) of a concern. Where appropriate, support and signposting to manage expectations, protect emotional wellbeing and maintain professional confidence will be offered.

Where a concern relates to safeguarding, the relevant DSL will be informed and involved in decision-making where suitable, and appropriate referrals to external agencies (such as children's social care or the police) will be considered.

5.2 Outcome of the investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority (LA) or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the CEO, trustees and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

While we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

If a staff member is not satisfied with the way in which their concern has been handled, they can raise their concerns with one of the contact points listed in section 4.2.

6. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made with the reasonable belief that the disclosure is in the public interest and meets the definition of whistleblowing as listed in section 3, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the trust

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases the staff member should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. As such, the trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but the trust and the law recognise that in some circumstances staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. It is strongly advised that staff seek advice before reporting a concern to an external body. The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party. They operate a confidential helpline and they also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of trust staff but they may sometimes relate to the action of a third party. In some circumstances the law will protect the staff member raising the concern if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the trust encourages staff members to report such concerns internally first, in line with this policy.

Where concerns relate to safeguarding practice in the trust or any of its schools, staff may also consider contacting the local authority designated officer (LADO), children's social care directly, or the NSPCC whistle-blowing advice line on 0800 028 0285 or via email help@NSPCC.org.uk.

8. Protection and support for whistleblowers

It is understandable that whistle-blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The trust aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Whistle-blowers 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 a staff member believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform Head of School or CEO immediately. If the matter is not remedied, they should raise it formally using the trust grievance policy and procedure.

The staff member must not threaten or retaliate against whistle-blowers in any way. If the staff member is involved in such conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

9. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

These procedures have been agreed by the Board of Trustees, who will approve them each time the procedures are reviewed.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Allegations against staff (including low-level concerns) policy
- Disciplinary policy

Appendix 1 The Procedure to be Followed

1. Any issue raised will be kept confidential while the procedure is being used.
2. The Representor (the person raising the concern) should raise their concern with their line manager. This may be done orally or in writing.
3. However, if the concern relates to the Representor's line manager or any person to whom he or she reports, other than the CEO, the Representor should raise the issue with the Head of School.
4. If the concern relates to the CEO, the Representor should raise the matter with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
5. The person with whom the matter is raised is referred to as the "Recipient". The Recipient will:
 - Interview the Representor as soon as possible within seven working days, in confidence. Early interview will be essential if the concern relates to an immediate danger to loss of life or serious injury or risk to pupils;
 - Obtain as much information as possible from the Representor about the grounds for the belief of wrongdoing;
 - Consult with the Representor about further steps which could be taken;
 - Advise the Representor of the appropriate route if the matter does not fall under this Procedure.
6. At the interview with the Assessor, the Representor may be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague. The Recipient may be accompanied by a member of the Academy staff to take notes.

The Recipient may at any time disclose the matter to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of taking legal advice. The Recipient may also discuss the issue, in confidence, to other suitable professionals, such as independent HR consultants or school governance providers in order to assess the nature of the case and to inform the outcome of the investigation.
7. Promptly within ten working days of the interview, the Recipient will recommend one or more of the following:
 - The matter be further investigated internally by the Academy;
 - The matter be further investigated by external consultants appointed by the Academy;
 - The matter be reported to an external agency;
 - Disciplinary proceedings be implemented against an employee;
 - The route for the Representor to pursue the matter if it does not fall within this procedure; or
 - That no further action is taken by the Academy.
8. The grounds on which no further action is taken include:

- The Recipient is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, there is no evidence that wrongdoing within the meaning of this procedure has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
 - The Recipient is satisfied that the Representor is not acting in good faith;
 - The matter is already (or has been) the subject of proceedings under one of the Academy's other procedures or policies;
 - The matter concerned is already (or has been) the subject of legal proceedings, or has already been referred to an external agency.
9. The recommendation of the Recipient will be made to the CEO. However, should it be alleged that the CEO is involved in the alleged wrongdoing; the recommendation will be made to the Board of Trustees
 10. The CEO or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate, will ensure that the recommendation is implemented unless there is good reason for not doing so in whole or in part. Such a reason will be reported to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees.
 11. The Representor's identity will be kept confidential unless the Representor otherwise consents or unless there are grounds to believe that the Representor has acted maliciously. In the absence of such consent or grounds, the Recipient will not reveal the identity of the Representor except:
 - Where the Recipient is under a legal obligation to do so;
 - Where the information is already in the public domain; or
 - On a legally privileged basis to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of obtaining legal advice.
 12. The conclusion of any agreed investigation will be reported by the Recipient to the Representor promptly within twenty-eight working days of the initial interview.
 13. All responses to the Representor will be made in writing and sent to the Representor's home address.
 14. If the Representor has not had a response within the above time limit or such reasonable extension as the Academy requires, the Representor may go to an appropriate external agency but will inform the Recipient before doing so.
 15. The Representor may at any time disclose the matter on a legally privileged basis to a professionally qualified lawyer for the purpose of taking legal advice.