



BEACON EDUCATION
 AMBITION RESPECT EXCELLENCE

Whistleblowing Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- 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
- 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)
- Provide Clear guidance on how concerns can be raised
- Promote high standards of conduct and integrity across the organisation

This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity, including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”. Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences such as fraud or corruption
- Health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with legal or statutory obligations
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up such wrongdoing
- Damage to the environment
- Bribery

- facilitating tax evasion
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- negligence;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A whistleblower should ask a few questions before taking action:

- Is it, or do you believe it to be, illegal?
- Is it, or do you believe it to be, against codes of practice issued by the school, the Trust, the DfE or a professional body?
- Does it contradict what the employee has been taught, or should have been taught?
- Is it about an individual's behaviour or is it about general working practices?
- Is it a Health and Safety issue?
- Is it a Child Protection issue?
- Has the whistleblower witnessed the incident?

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

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

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing 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 their line manager or headteacher. If the concern is about the headteacher or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to CEO. If the concern is about the CEO, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report the concern to governance professional or the chair of trustees.

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 governance professional or chair of trustees.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those 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.

4.4 Anonymous Allegations

This Code encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously or through a third party are much less powerful and may not be possible to investigate. The person to whom the concern is initially reported may discuss it with the County Council's Monitoring Officer, and it will be at their joint discretion as to whether the concern will be considered further.

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

4.5 Harassment or Victimisation

Beacon Education recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. However, you have a responsibility to the Trust and to those for whom you are providing a service to raise serious concerns using the approach outlined in this Confidential Reporting Code.

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

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the line manager/headteacher/CEO/trustee – 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
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected 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, local governing body and/or chair of trustees if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. 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

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 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.

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

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 in good faith, 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 trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

8. Approval

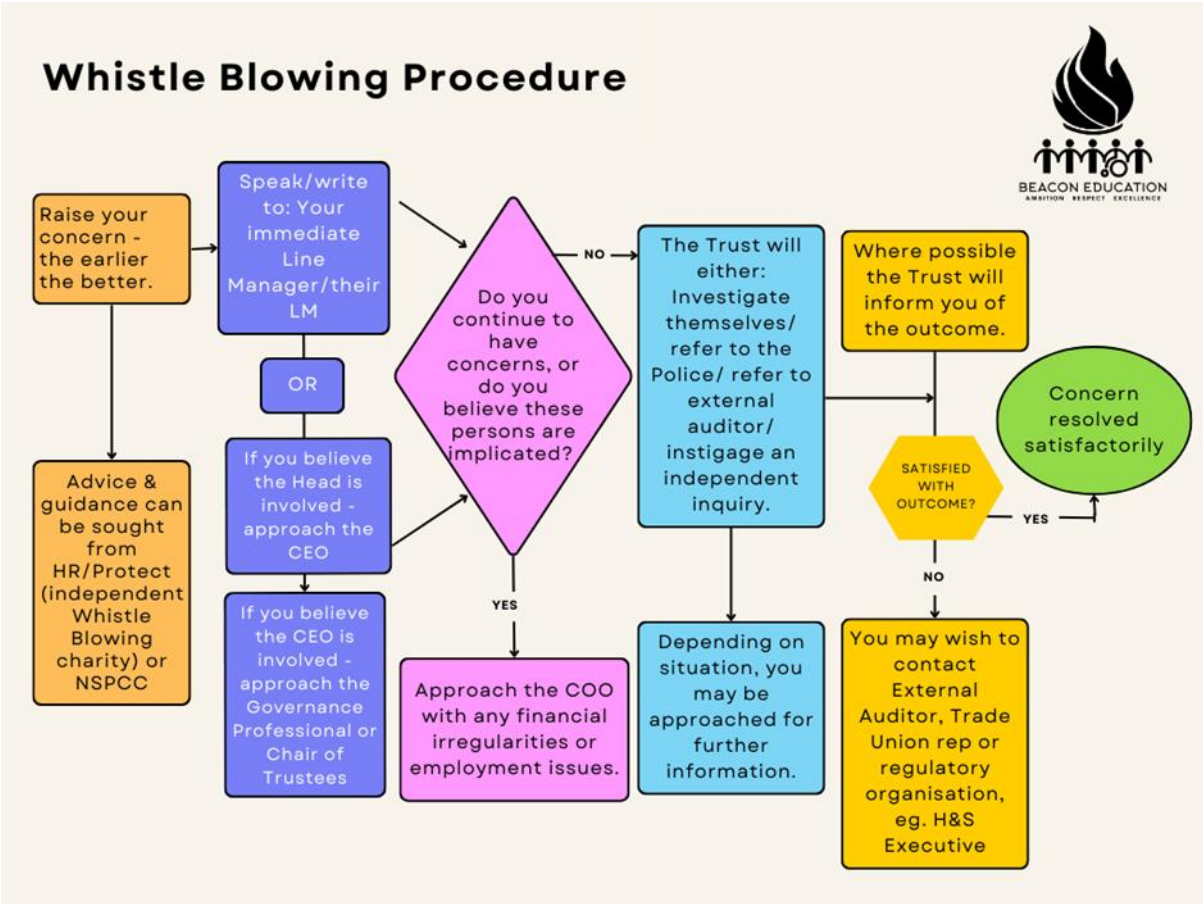
This policy will be reviewed every year.

These procedures have been agreed by the board of trustees, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection and safeguarding policy



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