



SCHOLARS ACADEMY TRUST

Fulfilling every child's potential

## Whistle Blowing Policy

Reviewed and amended March 2021  
Review date June 2023

Signed .....  .....  
Chair of the Trust

Date ..... 23/3/21 .....

# Whistle Blowing Policy

## Purpose

Scholars Academy Trust is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, the school encourages employees with serious concerns about the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This also applies to concerns about the activity of staff, Trustees, Governors and external organisations in their dealings with the school.

This policy:

- Provides the basis on which employees or anyone who visits or is part of the Trust can raise any such concerns they may have, and receive feedback on action taken;
- Allows employees and others related parties to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the School's or Trust's response; and
- Gives protection from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.

## **The Policy**

There are existing procedures in place to enable employees and other related parties to raise grievances about their own employment i.e. the grievance procedures. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of individual grievances. The concern may be about something that:

- Is unlawful;
- Is against the School's or Trust policies;
- Amounts to improper conduct;
- Seems likely to harm somebody or the environment; or
- Represents a cover-up of these sorts of issues.
- This policy applies to all employees, governors and Trustees.

## **Safeguards**

### Harassment or victimisation

The Board of Trustees and governors recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. The Trust will not tolerate harassment, or victimisation and will take all possible measures to protect employees who raise concerns in good faith.

### Confidentiality

Scholars Academy Trust will protect the identity of employees, governors, trustees, or external visitors / organisations who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the employees, governors, trustees, members or other parties who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence. Scholars Academy Trust encourages employees to put their name to allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken account of will include:

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources,
- Untrue allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee, governor or trustee. However, if employees, governors or trustees make allegations that are malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action against them is likely.

### **How to raise a concern**

The earlier individuals express their concern the easier it is to take action.

As a first step an employee should normally raise concerns with their Headteacher or Chair of Governors. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice.

Employee's who feel that they cannot approach management in the school should approach either; Vice Chair of Governors or Staff Governor or go directly to the Trust Board. If a member of staff is unsure who to contact, then further information may be obtained from Human resources at County hall or their trade union.

It is advisable that concerns are better raised in writing. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation. An employee who does not feel able to put the concerns in writing can telephone or meet the appropriate officer. If the latter is chosen, then a note, dated and signed must be kept for future reference as a written statement may be required when the matter is investigated.

Employees may invite their trade union or professional association to raise the matter in conjunction with them.

### **How will the Trust respond?**

The action taken by Scholars Academy Trust will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may for example;

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the Police;

In order to protect individuals and Scholars Academy Trust, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. Within two weeks of a concern being received, the Chair of Governors or Trustee or appropriate member of school staff will write to the employee who raised the issue;

- acknowledging that the concern has been raised;
- indicating how it proposed to deal with the matter;
- where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the investigators considering the issue and the employee who has raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee.

When any meeting is arranged with the employee, they will be given the right to be accompanied by a representative or fellow worker who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

Scholars Academy Trust accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, employees will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

### **Employees who are the subject of complaints**

If you are the subject of a complaint under this procedure it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedure. This means you will have all the right contained in the procedure such as representation at the investigatory interview.

If it is a governor raising a concern, then the concern must be raised with the chair of governors or the chair of the trust.

If it is a trustee raising a concern then it must be referred to the chair of the Members' Board or the RSC/DFE. Members may refer the concerns to the RSC/DFE.

### **Taking the issue further**

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise relevant concerns within the Trust. It is hoped that employees will be satisfied with the action taken as a result. If an employee is not satisfied, and feel it is right to take the matter outside the Scholars Academy Trust, the following are possible contact points, some or all of which may be appropriate.

- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- The Local Authority e.g. safeguarding, HR, welfare
- The Police;

If an employee does take the matter outside of the Scholars Academy Trust, they must make sure that they do not disclose otherwise confidential information.

### **Management of policy.**

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.

The Governing Body will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees will keep maintain a record of concerns, outcomes and report to members / RSC / DFE as required.