

Whistleblowing Policy

September 2022

Date Approved:	Sept 22	Review Date:	Sept 23	Approved by:	The Trust Board
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1 AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 Fareham Academy is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in all of its activities. It also expects a high standard of conduct and integrity from employees.
- 1.2 Any employee who has a serious concern about any aspect of the Academy's work or the actions of its employees should voice their concerns through established internal channels, without fear of harassment or victimisation.
- 1.3 The Academy aims to encourage all its employees to feel confident in raising serious concerns and provide appropriate avenues for dealing with them. It aims to ensure that employees are protected from possible reprisals or disadvantage where they have raised a concern or disclosed information under this policy.
- 1.4 This policy aims to:-
 - 1.4.1 Provide clearly defined channels for staff and volunteers to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
 - 1.4.2 Inform staff and volunteers on how to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the response; and
 - 1.4.3 Reassure staff and volunteers that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing.
- 1.5 There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of this and other procedures as well as enabling volunteers with the means to raise a concern.
- 1.6 Individuals are encouraged to raise any concerns that they might have about any wrongdoing on the part of the Academy, its staff or the Trust Board. Wrongdoing may include for example, fraud, corruption, malpractice, breach of health and safety law, or any other illegal or unethical act.
- 1.7 This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the Academy and contractors working for the Academy.
- 1.8 All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the individual raising the concern if they so wish. Where a concern is raised anonymously, it will be considered at the discretion of the Academy, taking into account the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.
- 1.9 If there is evidence that an allegation has been made maliciously, it may be addressed within the framework of the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

2 WHISTLEBLOWING PROCESS

- 2.1 Individual employees are encouraged to raise any concerns they have through their line manager, who will refer the matter to the Headteacher. If the concern relates to their line manager, or if the individual does not feel at ease raising the concern through this route, the individual should raise their concern with the Headteacher. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, the individual should raise their concern with the Chair of Trustees. As an alternative, employees can also raise any concerns to the Headteacher's executive

assistant, either in person or by email.

- 2.2 Concerns are better raised in writing. The background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, should be set out and the reason why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation.

3 **HOW THE COMPLAINT WILL BE DEALT WITH**

- 3.1 The action taken by the Trust Board will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may need to be referred to the police, or external advisors. However, in the first instance, initial enquiries will be made by the Headteacher or Trust Board to decide on the appropriate course of action.
- 3.2 Usually an investigation, to be handled at least initially by a member of senior leadership (this person must be sufficiently distant from the concerns so as to remain objective) will be appropriate. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of other procedures (e.g. child protection or discrimination issues) may be referred for consideration under those specific procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for further investigation.
- 3.3 Within a reasonable period of time of a concern being received, the Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees will write to the complainant, indicating how he / she proposes to deal with the matter and giving an estimate of how long it is likely to take to provide a final response.
- 3.4 If necessary, further information will need to be sought from the complainant therefore a further meeting may need to be arranged. If such a meeting is arranged, staff have the right to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative
- 3.5 The Academy will take steps to minimise any difficulties which an individual may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if members of staff are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Academy will advise them about the procedure and offer appropriate support. In addition, staff will be supported throughout the process including dealing with the media as appropriate.
- 3.6 Following the investigation process, there will be a formal written response to the whistleblower advising them, subject to any legal constraints, of the actions taken and the outcomes of any investigations. If possible, copies of reports and other appropriate documentation will also be made available to them (if appropriate in a redacted form). The whistleblower will be offered a meeting with the Headteacher or the Chair of the Trust Board if further briefing is required.
- 3.7 In appropriate circumstances, the Academy may decide not to take any further action, particularly if there is no evidence that wrongdoing within the meaning of this policy has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- 3.8 The whistleblower is not entitled to expect to be able to determine the outcome of the investigation process or to insist that disciplinary action must be taken or a prosecution instigated. Equally however, the whistleblower is entitled to expect to be given the opportunity to express their views to the investigating team and the Headteacher as to whether or not they are satisfied with the manner in which their concerns have been addressed. If they are not satisfied then they can raise their concerns at a further meeting as outlined above and if they remain unsatisfied following this they can write to the Chair of Trustees. If they still feel that their concerns have not been investigated thoroughly, there are other means of raising those concerns more widely to the Local Authority or other

regulatory bodies.

3.9 All responses to the complainant will be made in writing and sent to their home address.

4 MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

4.1 A deliberately false or malicious complaint may be a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

5 COMPLAINING OUTSIDE THE ACADEMY

5.1 This policy is intended to provide staff and volunteers with an avenue to raise concerns with the Academy. If a staff member or volunteer does take the matter outside the Academy, they need to ensure that they do not disclose confidential information (failure to do so, is a breach of confidentiality and may result in disciplinary action). Staff are encouraged to exhaust internal procedures before referring concerns outside of the Academy.

6 SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

6.1 It is the Trust Board's objective to ensure that whistleblowers feel valued and respected within the Academy; therefore, every endeavour will be made to ensure that the whistleblower is offered appropriate guidance and support throughout the process and protection from harassment or victimisation as a result of their whistleblowing.

6.2 In cases where the whistleblower has decided not to raise their complaint anonymously, due regard and sensitivity will need to be exercised by all involved in the process to ensure that the whistleblower does not suffer detrimental treatment as a result of raising a complaint.

6.3 Should the whistleblower have any concerns about harassment or victimisation as a result of raising a complaint, contact should be made with the Academy with the need to consider how potential harassment or victimisation can be best managed. This contact should be someone with authority within the Academy to challenge the alleged perpetrator. (This might include the Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees).

7 MONITORING OF THE POLICY

7.1 The Trust Board have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Headteacher should ensure that a record of concerns raised and the outcomes be maintained (in a form which does not endanger confidentiality and in keeping with the Data Protection Act 2018) and report as necessary to the Trust Board.