

# Pope Francis Multi Academy Trust

## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

<b>Presented &amp; Approved by Trust Board</b>	<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b>
<b>Signed by Chair of Trust Board</b>	
<b>Name of Chair of Trust Board</b>	<b>Fr Michael Fitzsimons</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>March 2023</b>

## **Introduction**

This policy is designed to be accessible, easy to read and to reflect the inclusive open and honest environment promoted throughout the Academy Trust.

This Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and aims to comply with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, 1998.

This whistle blowing policy is intended to encourage and enable those covered by the policy to raise concerns at an early stage, in the right way and to do so without fear of recrimination, victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage.

The Act provides protection for workers who disclose information, which might otherwise be regarded as confidential, as long as it falls into one of the following categories:

1. A criminal offence, including fraud or theft
2. The employer is in breach of their legal obligations
3. There is an issue of miscarriage of justice
4. There is a health and safety issue
5. There is an environmental issue

This policy is designed to ensure that those working in and around the schools in The Pope Francis Academy Trust be they teachers, other members of staff or governors can raise concerns safely and in the correct manner without feeling as if they are scared to do so and in the knowledge that they will not be punished if they do so.

This does not apply if the concerns raised are later proved to be malicious.

All members of the schools' community notwithstanding the information contained in this policy have a duty of confidentiality towards the school and outside bodies such as the media should not be contacted as part of any whistleblowing action.

## **Raising a concern**

Any person wishing to raise a concern should do so in the first instance with their line manager.

It is expected that the nature of the environment promoted within the Trust's schools will ensure that line managers will take any approach seriously no matter what their personal views on the matter are.

If for any reason an individual wishes not to raise a concern with their line manager, they should raise it with the Headteacher.

If the member of staff feels that their concerns have not been addressed, they should seek an appointment with the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

In the case of Governors they should speak in the first instance to the Chair of the Local Governing Body or the Chair of the Trust Board.

All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by staff should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in the school. Such concerns about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB) who will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB) must immediately inform the CEO and the Chair of the Trust Board. The LADO team will advise about action to be taken and may initiate internal referrals within children's social care to address the needs of children likely to have been affected.

After a complaint has been raised the person against whom the allegations have been made will be given an opportunity to respond. The Complainant will be kept informed of progress by the person to whom the complaint has been made and who is responsible for dealing with it.

All efforts will be made to keep concerns private unless at some point it is required as evidence.

### **Independent Advice**

If you have particular concern a trade union can be contacted for advice.

If a member of staff feels that allegations have not been dealt with, in line with policy and procedure, staff can contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

### **External Contacts**

In most cases the employee should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. However, the trustees recognise that in some circumstances the employee may not feel able to disclose a matter internally or that it may be more appropriate for them to report their concerns to an external body because, for example:

- the matter is of an extremely sensitive or serious nature, or
- the employee believes management to be involved, or
- the employee believes the school will cover it up, or
- the employee believes the school will treat them unfairly if they complain, or
- where the employee has raised the matter previously, but the concern has not been dealt with.

Employees are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Advice can be sought from their Trade Union or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Employees should be aware that if they choose to take a concern outside the school, it is their responsibility to ensure that confidential information, in whatever format, is not disclosed to a third party.

Where a disclosure to an external body is justified and/or necessary, in those circumstances the employee can properly report matters to the following:

- The Local Authority Director of Children's Services
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The school's Diocese or Trust

Further independent advice may be sought from;

- Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), an independent charity that provides confidential advice on whistleblowing issues: 020 3117 2520 or visit their website at [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)
- Ofsted (whistleblowing helpline): 0300 123 3155 or [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)
- Education & Skills Funding Agency: 0370 267 0001 or ESFA Complaints Procedure
- Children's Commissioner for England: 020 7783 8330 or [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)
- NSPCC: 020 7825 2505 or NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

As a last resort, and provided it is appropriate in all the circumstances, the employee may choose to raise their concern externally to someone other than the prescribed persons/bodies, for example:

- Union or professional association
- the Police
- a Member of Parliament (MP).

It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. This also carries a risk of disclosing confidential information to unauthorised third parties. If the employee approaches the media, they may lose their whistleblowing rights and protection.