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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Date approved:	Approved June 2025
Review Frequency:	Every 2 years
Date of next review due:	June 2027
Scope of Policy:	This policy applies to all staff and volunteers at Riverside School

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The Academy Trust's (Partnership Learning) commitment to the Whistleblowing Policy

This Whistleblowing Policy sets out our commitment to ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 as amended by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. We wish to encourage and enable employees and persons providing services on our behalf or to us to raise serious concerns within the organisation rather than overlooking the issue or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

What are the aims and requirements of this policy?

We wish to encourage and enable employees and persons providing services on our behalf or to us to raise serious concerns within the organisation rather than overlooking the issue or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

For that reason, this policy has been put in place to make sure that if you want to come forward and raise any concern within the remit of this policy, you can do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

Who is governed by this policy?

The whistleblowing policy is for the benefit of all school-based staff (including those designated as casual, temporary, agency, authorised volunteers or work experience), and those contractors working for us or on our education premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with us.

To ensure your concern is treated as whistleblowing, you must identify yourself and the policy is in place to encourage this. We will consider anonymous allegations but it is less likely that we will conduct an investigation and achieve a successful outcome.

Executive Summary

Sometimes staff and those who contract with us are the first to spot that something is wrong and is putting the school, its staff or pupils, or the wider Trust at risk, but are reluctant to act for fear of not being taken seriously, that their concerns may not be justified or that they may be victimised for speaking out.

Legislation is in place to protect those that raise legitimate concerns in the public interest and in the right way.

This policy sets out the concerns that are dealt with under the whistleblowing procedure, the way in which you may raise concerns and how those concerns are responded to.

The Principal is required by the Schools Financial Value Standard to ensure that staff are aware of whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns

It is our policy is to promote a culture of openness and a shared sense of integrity within schools by inviting staff to act responsibly in order to uphold the reputation of the Trust and maintain public confidence.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected or ongoing wrongdoing at work.

We are committed to being open, honest and accountable. For this reason, concerns about malpractice and impropriety are taken very seriously. We want you to be able to raise any concerns that are in the interests of the school and the Trust rather than overlooking the issue or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

This is because members of staff may be the first to spot anything that is seriously wrong, however, they might not say anything because they think this would be disloyal, or they might be worried that their suspicions are not justified. They may also be worried that they or someone else may be victimised.

That is why we have produced this whistleblowing policy to help staff, including agency workers and contractors to contact us with concerns. This policy has been put in place to make sure that if you want to come forward and raise any concern which you feel relate to illegal, improper or unethical conduct, you can do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

Who is covered by this policy?

The whistleblowing policy applies to all school-based staff (including those designated as casual, temporary, agency, contractors, consultants, authorised volunteers or work experience). It also covers those working for suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school.

To ensure your concern is treated as whistleblowing, you must identify yourself and the policy is in place to encourage this. Anonymous allegations will be considered but it is less likely that we will conduct an investigation and achieve a successful outcome.

What types of action are covered by the policy?

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings that are in the public interest – referred to as public interest disclosures.

When you raise a concern under the whistleblowing policy it must be in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so. We may ask you to sign a declaration to ensure you understand this principle.

Examples of concerns that may be in the public interest are suspected or ongoing actions that fall into the following categories – the list of actions under each category is not exhaustive

Criminal Offences

Misuse of school or council funds,
Other fraud or corruption,
Bribery,
An unlawful act,
A person abusing their position for any unauthorised use or for personal gain,
Improper or unauthorised use of school or council money

Failure to comply with legal obligations

A person deliberately not keeping to a school or Trust policy, official code of practice or any law or regulation
A person being discriminated against because of their race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, sexuality, class or home life

Actions which endanger the health or safety of any individual

Service users, children or students, particularly children and adults in our care being mistreated or abused
Any other danger to health and safety

Actions which cause damage to the environment

The environment being damaged (for example, by pollution)

Actions which are intended to conceal any of the above

Other wrongdoing including instances where attempts have been made to conceal or cover up wrongdoing

Your concern may be about members of staff, Governors, people who work directly for us, suppliers, or people who provide services to the public for us.

What is not covered by this policy?

You cannot use this policy to deal with serious or sensitive matters that are covered by other procedures, for example:

Staff complaints about their contract of employment. These complaints are dealt with through our Grievance procedures.

Allegations against the Local Governing Body. Such allegations should be sent in writing to: The Chief Executive Officer, Partnership Learning c/o Riverside School. Write "Private and Confidential" on your envelope.

Also, you cannot use this policy to raise issues that have already been settled through other procedures, for example, matters previously resolved under Disciplinary Rules procedures.

Protecting You

If your allegation is true, you have nothing to fear. But we understand that deciding to blow the whistle is not easy.

When you make a protected disclosure you have the right not to be dismissed, victimised or subjected to any other detriment because you have made a disclosure. Therefore, we will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of a whistle-blower and will treat such actions as a serious disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under Disciplinary Procedures.

We will do our best to protect your identity and keep your concerns confidential if this is what you want.

There may be occasions when you will need to provide statements of evidence in order for us to conclude the investigation. In this case we will not reveal your name or position without your permission or unless we have to do so by law, for example, if the evidence is required in Court then your anonymity may be subject to the decision of the Courts.

If you work for us, you should also know that any allegation you make will not influence, or be influenced by, any unrelated disciplinary action against you or any redundancy procedures that may affect you.

How to raise a concern

If you work for us, you should first raise your concern with your immediate supervisor or Line Manager (but obviously this will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who is suspected of the wrongdoing).

Alternatively you may also raise concerns with your Principal or a member of the Local Governing Body.

Safeguarding concerns should in all cases be referred to the designated person with responsibility for child protection, in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy Concerns about

members of the Local Governing Body should be raised in writing to the Chief Executive Officer of the Academy Trust (Partnership Learning).

If you prefer you can contact the Academy Trust (Partnership Learning) direct:

By writing to:

Whistleblowing The Chief Executive Officer, Partnership Learning c/o Riverside School.

Write "Private and Confidential" on your envelope.

If you are putting your concerns in writing it is best to give as much information as possible - including any relevant names, dates, places and so on. You should also provide:

- The reason why you are concerned
- Background information - What you personally witnessed or extent to which you have experienced the problem.

If possible you should provide documentary evidence.

The earlier you raise a concern, the easier it will be to take effective action.

You are strongly encouraged to raise your concerns in the way set out above, but if you feel you are unable to raise the matter internally, or feel unsatisfied with any action we take, you could contact the following prescribed persons/organisations:

NSPCC Whistleblowing advice line, 08000280285, NSPCC.org.uk

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills ("the Chief Inspector") about matters relating to the regulation and inspection of establishment and agencies for children's social care services.

Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 030 0 123 3155 Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation about matters in relation to which the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation exercise functions under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Casework Manager Ofqual Spring Place Coventry Business Park Herald Avenue Coventry CV5 6UB Tel: 0300 303 3346 Email: Public.Enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk Online reform form: www.ofqual.gov.uk/complaints-and-appeals/whistleblowing/.

You can get independent advice or support from an organisation called Public Concern at Work. Their contact details are: Public Concern at Work CAN Mezzanine 7 -14 Great Dover Street London SE1 4YR Phone: 020 3117 2520 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.org.uk

How we respond to your concerns

Within 10 working days of you raising a concern, we will:

- acknowledge that we have received your concern
- explain how we will handle the matter
- tell you what support is available to you

It is difficult to set further timescales as they depend on the nature of the allegation and the type of investigation we need to carry out.

The way we deal with the concern will depend on what it involves. If we need to take urgent action, we will do this before carrying out any investigation.

We will first make enquiries to decide whether we should carry out an investigation and, if so, how we should go about it. This may include referring the matter, after appropriate consultation to the Council, an external body or to the police. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Throughout all our enquiries and any investigation, our main concern will be to put the interests of the public first.

Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation which you believe is true, but it is not confirmed by our investigation, we will not take any action against you.

However, if the investigatory process finds you have made an allegation which you know is untrue; we will take appropriate disciplinary or legal action against you.