



Whistleblowing Policy for Staff in Schools

Plan Administration

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Responsibility for the Plan	CEO/COFO
Approved by	Cascade MAT Board of Trustees
Date of review	July 2024

RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

When Was the Plan last Updated?		
Date	Name	Detail (changes made)
5.1.23	Sue Bridges	Policy rewritten as previous policy outdated
4.7.23	Sue Bridges	Policy checked, no amendments required

Contents

1. Aims	
2. Legislation.....	
3. Definition of whistle-blowing.....	
4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern	
5. Trust procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern.....	
6. Malicious or vexatious allegations.....	
7. Escalating concerns beyond the trust.....	
8. Approval.....	
9. Links with other policies	
10. Useful contacts	

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)

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](#).

This 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
- Pupils’ or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

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

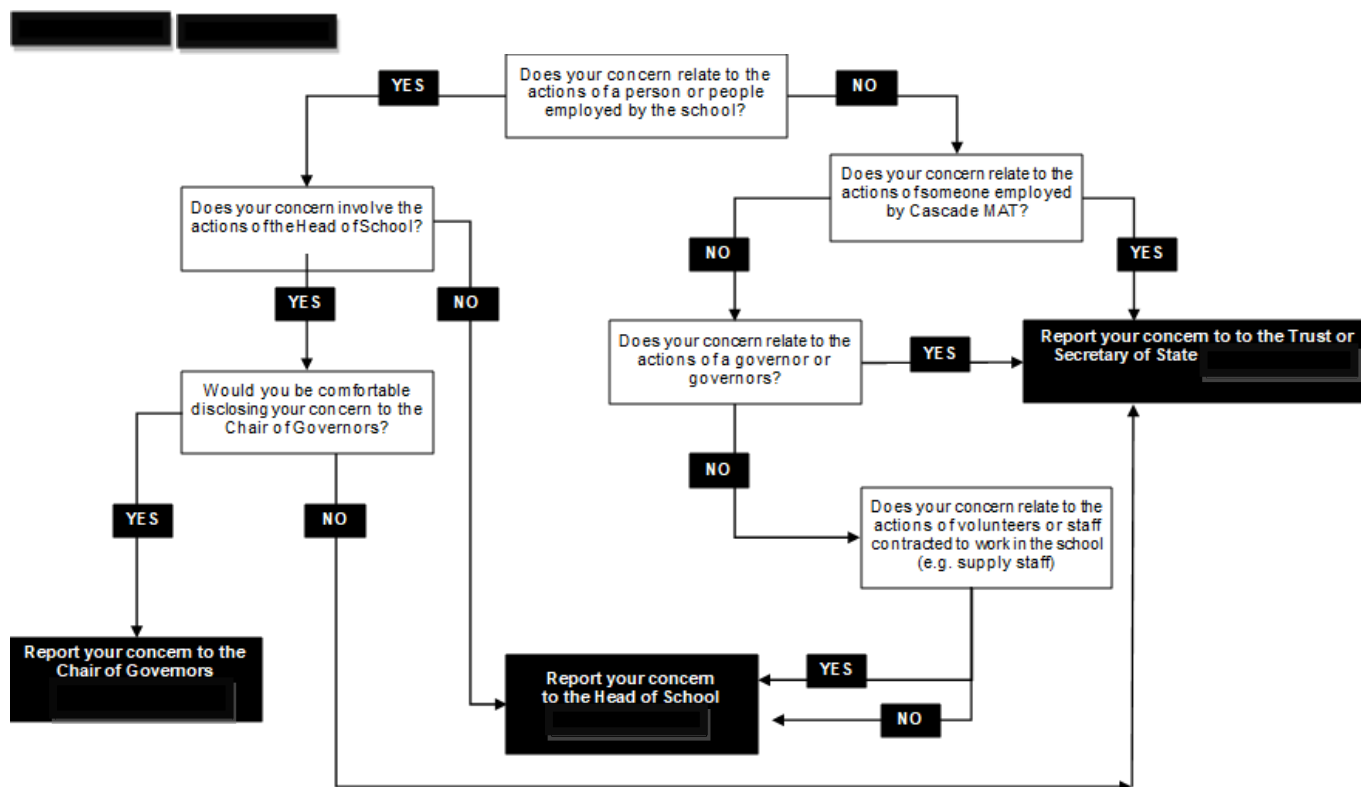
Not all concerns about the trust count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

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



If your concern relates to the Headteacher or a Governor in your school please report to the Pam Smith – the Chair of Cascade Trust Board. psmith@cascademat.co.uk

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

Staff should report their concern to the headteacher.

If it is believed the headteacher or a governor may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to Pam Smith – the Chair of Cascade Board of Trustees

4.3 How to raise the concern

There are a number of different ways to raise a whistleblowing concern – you can choose the one that suits you. It doesn't matter which you choose, you can be assured that a named manager will properly consider it.

Whichever way you decide to raise your concern, please ensure that you state that you are doing so under the Whistleblowing Policy. (If at any stage we feel that your concern is a grievance rather than a whistleblowing matter, we will tell you.)

Although you can raise your concern verbally, you may find it easier to do so in writing – this way, you can keep a record of what you reported as well as giving yourself the time to make sure you've included all the relevant information.

When reporting your concern, you should provide information about the background and history of your concern. Where possible, you should give names, dates and places and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. If you are a member of a trade union, you may find it helpful to take advice from them about putting your concerns in writing.

There is no reason why you cannot use email to raise a whistleblowing concern. However, if you do choose to use email, please take extra care to make sure that your message is sent to the correct person and consider that due to the nature of email communication it may be read by other people. To help make sure your concerns are seen and handled quickly, mark the subject box: '*Whistleblowing – confidential – recipient only*'.

If, however, you do not wish to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or arrange to meet with the appropriate person.

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

Verification

Concerns raised under this procedure may be resolved by the person to whom they were reported. This could be your Headteacher.

If they are not able to resolve the matter or you have raised your concern with the Chair of the Trust Board, they will make initial enquiries to assess whether an investigation is required and, if so, what form that investigation should take.

Although you are not expected to prove the truth of any allegation, you will need to demonstrate that there is a sufficient reason for expressing your concern. This policy provides protection to employees who raise issues in the genuine belief that there is serious cause for concern. If the complaint is found to be in bad faith, disciplinary action may be considered.

If it is confirmed that the Whistleblowing Procedure is the appropriate route and that an investigation is required:

- The concern will be recorded
- An Investigating Officer will be identified
- You will be told who will investigate and the likely timescale for the investigation within ten days

If there is insufficient information to make a decision about the most appropriate course of action, you will be asked for more information.

If it is decided not to investigate further, you will be told what enquiries have been made and the reasons for the decision.

When any meeting is arranged to discuss your concerns, you have the right to be accompanied.

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher/ Chair of the Board- 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.
- The Headteacher/Chair of the Board should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, if appropriate. In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In other cases, 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
- The Trust Board will take steps to minimise any difficulties, which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Trust Board will advise you about the procedure.

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 headteacher, 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 annually.

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
- Safeguarding Policy

10. USEFUL CONTACTS

For employee issues

Trust HR Consultants - hr@cascademat.co.uk

Linda Brown

Dyane Spencer-Barrett

For educational issues

Sue Bridges, Chief Executive Officer

sbridges@cascademat.co.uk

For governance issues

Pam Smith, Chair of Trust

via Trust Office 0114 2426736

psmith@cascademat.co.uk

For financial issues

Lyn Burgin, Chief Operations and Finance Officer

lburgin@cascademat.co.uk

For child safety issues

Lisa Whitehead, Trust Inclusion Lead

lwhitehead@cascademat.co.uk

Legal Services

Wrigleys Solicitors, Leeds

0113 2446100

Trade Union representatives

ASCL 0116 2991122

ATL 07748 351775

GMB 0345 3377777

NAHT 0300 3030333

NASUWT 0114 2757015

NUT 0870 2407714

Unison 0114 2736307
Unite 0114 3210702