



**TRENT
ACADEMIES**
GROUP

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction and Definition

1.1 Whistleblowing can occur when an individual knows, or suspects, that there is some wrongdoing occurring within the organisation and alerts the employer or the relevant authority accordingly.

1.2 Employees, casual workers, agency workers and contractors are protected from disciplinary or other action by the employer, specifically in relation to the act of whistleblowing, if they reasonably believe the disclosure is in the public interest. 'Whistle-blowers' will be supported and protected on the basis that the below procedure is followed.

1.3 The Trent Academies Group welcomes and encourages staff to raise concerns. Usually issues should be raised directly with line managers or appropriate TAG senior leadership. If staff are unsure about raising concerns initially with line management then these can be raised with a trade union representatives and/or the HR department.

2. Possible Situations

2.1 Although this list is not exhaustive, examples of situations in which it might be appropriate for an individual to report a wrongdoing include:

- A breach, or potential breach, of health and safety legislation
- Financial irregularities
- Harassment of a colleague, customer or other individual
- Damage to the environment
- The committing of a criminal offence
- An act of bribery
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above

Formal Procedure

3. Procedure – Action to be taken by the individual

3.1 If an individual knows or suspects that some wrongdoing is occurring within the organisation, he or she should raise the matter immediately with the relevant manager, as outlined below. If the individual is unsure who to raise the concern with then they should contact the HR department.

4. Stage 1

4.1 As the first step, the matter should be raised with an appropriate level of line management which would normally be the line manager. Much depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of wrongdoing. If an employee believes that their immediate manager is involved, the Headteacher or the Executive Headteacher should be approached.

4.2 If the complaint is such that the employee does not feel able to raise it with someone in their school/academy then they would need to raise it with the Executive Headteacher, another Headteacher in the Group, the HR Director or Chair of the Board

4.3 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing, but it is preferable for an allegation to be set out in writing. An allegation may also be made by phone. It is important, however, that when the concern is raised, it is made clear that the issue is being raised under the whistle blowing policy and why it is felt that this is in the public interest.

4.4 If the allegation is written, the background and history should be set out, giving names, dates and places wherever possible, and the reasons why the situation is a cause for concern. This statement should be signed and dated.

4.5 If the allegation is made verbally, the complainant may invite a friend or representative of a trade union/professional association to be present. It is also permissible for a trade union or professional association representative to raise the matter.

4.6 If the matter is to be raised confidentially, this must be made clear to the person who is initially contacted.

4.7 Verbal reports may be requested in writing at a later stage.

4.8 the person who receives the report of concern may need to refer the matter to a member of the senior leadership team, the Executive Headteacher, HR Director or to the Chair of the Board.

4.9 Once the issue has been raised, a meeting to discuss the matter may need to be arranged. Again, a friend or trade union/professional association representative may accompany for the purposes of giving support.

4.10 Notes will be taken of the details of the concern and these will be signed by both parties.

4.12 When the matter has been fully investigated and a conclusion reached, a formal written response will be sent to the person raising the concerns.

4.13 If the concern has involved the actions of another employee then they will be notified of the outcome within five working days of the meeting. Upon receipt of the information, this individual will be able to appeal against any decisions by writing to the Executive Headteacher, HR Director or Chair of the Board of Directors.

5. Stage 2

5.1 If the person raising the concern is dissatisfied with the response, they may raise the matter within 10 working days of the date of the response by writing to the next level of authority. ie, If the HR Director has responded in stage 1 then the Executive Headteacher should be contacted if the Executive Headteacher has responded then the Chair of the Board of Directors should be contacted.

5.2 The HR Director, Executive Headteacher, or Chair of Governors will then respond within five working days of receiving the letter to arrange a meeting to discuss the continuing concerns. This meeting should take place promptly. Again, a friend or TU representative may attend to support.

5.3 Further investigation may be undertaken and the outcome delivered within five working days.

6. Procedure – Action to be taken by the Manager

6.1 Whistle blowers are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. If confidentiality is requested, all will be done to protect the identity of anyone who raises concerns. The identity of the whistle blower will not be disclosed to the person who is the subject of the disclosure or to others not involved in the investigation unless it is absolutely necessary to do so and only with the prior consent of the individual concerned.

6.2 There are, however, circumstances under which complete confidentiality may be difficult for to maintain. For example:

- If the matter leads to a legal procedure and evidence is required by the court.
- If the issue raised comes within the remit of another procedure and the whistle blower is asked to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence, thus revealing their identity.

6.3 Anonymous allegations will only be considered if the issues raised are:

- Very serious.
- The credibility of the allegation is considered to be high.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation is high.

7. Procedure – Alerting outside bodies

7.1 An individual should always, in this first instance, talk to a senior leader in the organisation about potential “wrongdoing”, as outlined above. If the individual is not satisfied with the response given following “stage 2”, he or she is entitled to contact a relevant external body to express the concerns. In doing this the individual should;

- Have a reasonable belief that the allegation is based on correct facts
- Make the disclosure to a relevant body
- Have a reasonable belief it is in the public interest to make the disclosure
- A “relevant body” is likely to be a regulatory body (e.g. Health and Safety Executive, Financial Services Authority)

8. Protection against Detriment

8.1 Any individual who takes action will be protected from suffering any detriment in relation to the allegations that are made, including victimisation and harassment by the organisation or by colleagues.

8.2 If the individual does not follow the procedure set out above, which encompasses the requirements in relation to “public interest”, the protection will not apply.

8.3 The media is not a relevant external body, individuals should not contact the media with allegations about the organisation. Disclosing information in an inappropriate way could result in disciplinary action being taken against the individual, which could include dismissal.

9. Monitoring and review

9.1 HR Director and the Trent Academies Board will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.