



# Whistleblowing Policy

## Statement of Intent

The Poppy Academy Trust and Local Governing Bodies are committed to improving the life chances of all our children. We will nurture a passion for learning to enable them to thrive in an ever-changing world.

We have shared values across the Trust which we teach explicitly and throughout the curriculum to the children. At our Church schools, these values are rooted in our Christian ethos and distinctive Christian character.

This is reflected in all our relationships between staff, children, parents, governors and the local community. It is reflected in how we teach, what and how our pupils learn within and beyond the classroom.

<b>Whistleblowing Policy</b>	
Written by:	Alice Aharon
Date:	11.09.25
Approved by:	Audit committee on behalf of Poppy Academy Trust
Date:	17.09.25
Review frequency:	Annually
Target Audience:	All stakeholders

**This policy is adapted from the Hertfordshire County Council Model Policy.**

Our Local Governing Bodies are dedicated to the promotion of high standards of educational achievement. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. These factors were considered in the formation and review of this policy and will be adhered to in its implementation and application across the whole school community.

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this policy is to encourage employees and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school to voice those concerns and feel secure in doing so.

It is important that any fraud, misconduct, or wrongdoing is reported and properly dealt with. We encourage all individuals to raise any concerns they may have about the conduct of others or the way in which we operate.

We are committed to the principles of honesty and integrity. A culture of openness and accountability is critical to ensuring these values are authentically lived by.

This policy applies to all employees, workers, agency staff, contractors, service providers, volunteers, and governors.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

## **2. Scope**

If an employee's concern relates to how they have been treated this should be raised under the grievance or bullying and harassment policies.

The whistleblowing policy will not replace any existing policies or procedures. If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this policy our disciplinary policy will be used.

We encourage individuals to disclose any concerns they may have regardless of whether they are covered by this or another policy.

## **3. What is whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing means the reporting of information which relates to actual or suspected wrongdoing. This is called a "qualifying disclosure".

Qualifying disclosures are disclosures of information where the worker reasonably believes (and it is in the public interest) that one or more of the following matters is either happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- a criminal offence
- the breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- the deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

If a worker is going to make a disclosure it should be made to the employer (The Poppy Academy Trust) first, or if they feel unable to use the organisations procedure the disclosure should be made to a prescribed person (e.g. Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Trustees), so that employment rights are protected.

It is not necessary for a whistleblower to have proof of such an act for the protections of this policy to apply.

Potential whistleblowers are encouraged to seek support from a senior manager or their trade union representative if they are unsure whether to make a disclosure or to access support in making a disclosure, regardless of whether it is qualifying or not.

#### **4. Protections for whistleblowers**

This policy has been written to take account of the Part IVA of the Employment Rights Act 1996 which protects workers making protected disclosures.

A qualifying disclosure made to the worker's employer is a protected disclosure. A qualifying disclosure made by a worker under this policy will also be a protected disclosure.

A whistleblower who makes a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed (if they are an employee) or subjected to any other detriment, because they have made a protected disclosure.

Dismissing, or subjecting a whistleblower to any other detriment for raising a protected disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.

We will not determine that anyone should cease to work at the school on the basis that they have made a qualifying disclosure in accordance with the law and this policy.

Whistleblowers may seek support and advice from organisations such as the whistle blowing charity Protect ([https://protect-advice.org.uk/020 3117 2520](https://protect-advice.org.uk/02031172520)) or ACAS ([www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)).

#### **5. Obligations for the whistleblower**

An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is in itself a disciplinary offence. A whistleblower who is told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority, should not agree to remain silent.

Whistleblowing to an external agency without first using the procedure below may be considered a breach of our Code of Conduct.

It is not appropriate to whistle blow to the media except in limited circumstances and where those circumstances do not apply such whistleblowing may be considered gross misconduct.

Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.

#### **6. Confidentiality**

We encourage individuals to voice their concerns openly. If anyone wishes to raise concerns confidentially, we will make every effort to keep their identity secret.

The person(s) to whom the disclosure is made will consult with the whistleblower before divulging their identity to any party, including an investigator.

We do not encourage anonymous disclosures as this may make it harder to establish the credibility of an allegation and may make investigation difficult or impossible. Anonymous concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as far as is possible under this policy.

#### **7. Our commitment**

Any matter raised under this policy and procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and confidentially.

Whilst the person carrying out the investigation will aim to keep the whistleblower informed of the progress of the investigation and likely timescales, sometimes the requirement for confidentiality will prevent full information about the investigation and any consequential disciplinary action from being disclosed.

#### **8. Obligations for the Trustees**

Concerns regarding financial irregularity will be reported to the trusts auditors and ESFA where concerns relate to child protection these will be handled in keeping with the relevant policy of the school and reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the threshold is met.

## **9. Whistleblowing procedure**

### **9.1. Stage 1 – Disclosure**

You should initially raise your concern with your line manager. You may do this orally or in writing. Your line manager should then inform the headteacher of the concern.

If the concern relates to your line manager or any person to whom you report (other than the headteacher) you should raise the issue with the headteacher.

If the concern relates to the headteacher, you should raise this with CEO of the Poppy Academy Trust, Alice Aharon.

If the concern relates to the CEO, you should raise this with the Chair of Governor at the schools you work in.

### **Any concerns raised should be notified to the Chair of the Poppy Academy Trust.**

### **9.2. Stage 2 – Investigation**

The headteacher will arrange an investigation into the concerns raised, unless the concern relates to the headteacher, in which case the investigation will be arranged by the CEO. This will take place as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved meeting with the investigator and giving a written statement.

At any investigatory meetings you are entitled to be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or a work colleague.

### **9.3. Stage 3 – Report to Headteacher/Governors/Trustees**

The investigator will report to the person who arranged the investigation before any further action is taken. That person will decide on potential outcomes including, but not limited to:

- invoking our disciplinary process, or other relevant policy
- referral to the police, Hertfordshire County Council department, government department or regulatory agency
- no further action.

On conclusion of any investigation, you will, as far as is practicable and where it is reasonable to do so, be told the outcome of the investigation and what the headteacher/ named governor has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

### **9.4. Stage 4 – Escalation**

If, on conclusion of stages 1, 2 and 3 you believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the proper authority. The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014 (as amended) sets out a number of bodies prescribed by the Secretary of State to which qualifying disclosures may be made. In order for the report to one of these bodies to be a protected disclosure, you must reasonably believe that the matter falls within the matters covered by that body. You must also reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegations contained in it, are substantially true.

These bodies include:

- the Financial Conduct Authority (formerly the Financial Services Authority)
- the Health and Safety Executive
- the Environment Agency

- His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education Children’s Services and Skills
- the Secretary of State for Education
- the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

A full list can be obtained from the charity, Protect or the BEIS (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) list on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. The DBEIS list contains a description of the type of matter covered by each prescribed body. Alternatively, you may contact their professional association or trade union representative for guidance.

## 10. Data Protection

When you make a disclosure, the headteacher/named governor will process any personal data collected in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

## 11. Contacts

Alice Aharon can be contacted via any of the school offices.

Schools	Chairs of Governors	Contact Details
Watford St John’s Primary School	Jo Conn	<a href="mailto:office@watfordstjohns.org">office@watfordstjohns.org</a>
Fair Field Junior School	Simon Mitchley	<a href="mailto:admin@fairfield.hertssch.uk">admin@fairfield.hertssch.uk</a>
St John’s Infant and Nursery School	Biddie O’Connor	<a href="mailto:admin@stjohnradlett.herts.sch.uk">admin@stjohnradlett.herts.sch.uk</a>
Poppy Academy Trust	Nicola Mullet	<a href="mailto:chair@poppyacademytrust.org.uk">chair@poppyacademytrust.org.uk</a>

The independent whistleblowing charity: **Protect**

**Web address :** [Protect - Speak up stop harm - Protect - Speak up stop harm \(protect-advice.org.uk\)](http://protect-advice.org.uk)

Helpline [020 3117 2520](tel:02031172520)

E-mail: [whistle@protect-advice.org.uk](mailto:whistle@protect-advice.org.uk)