WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

TRINITY CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL	**Reviewed by:**	Governors' Finance and Resources Committee
	Approved by:	Full Governing Body
	Date approved:	15th May, 2025
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	Next review due by:	End of 2027/28 academic year

AIM/PURPOSE

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 was established to protect workers who 'blow the whistle' about malpractice or wrongdoings within an organisation. For schools this is relevant especially in relation to safeguarding children and financial management. If staff have serious concerns they should be able to raise them within or outside the school, without fear of recrimination, such as denial of promotion or training opportunities or, in extreme cases, dismissal. Concerns relating to an individual's own employment should be addressed through the grievance procedure.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Disclosures qualifying for protection are those when the employee believes, in good faith, that one or more of the following matters took place in the past, is happening now, 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 or safety of an individual.
- Damage to the environment.
- Deliberate covering up of information tending to show any of the above.

The employee must have reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show one or more of the offences or breaches listed above, known as 'a relevant failure'. The belief need not be correct – it might be discovered subsequently that the employee was, in fact, wrong – but the employee must show that he or she held the belief, and that it was a reasonable belief in the circumstances at the time of disclosure. The employee, therefore, acted in good faith and not for personal gain.

In the context of the school, concerns may include specifically:

- Misuse of public money.
- Abuse of students.
- Corruption or unethical conduct.
- Damaging the environment.
- A health and safety risk.
- Breaking the law.
- Bringing the name/reputation of the school into disrepute.
- Concealment of any of the above.

WHISTLE BLOWING AT TRINITY CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

The Head should be the initial point of contact. If the concern is about the Head, then the matter should be taken up with the Chair of Governors.

- The concern should be expressed verbally or in writing at the earliest opportunity.
- The member of staff 'blowing the whistle' may wish to take advice from a professional association.
- A response can be expected within 5 working days.
- If the 'whistle blower' is concerned that the matter has not been addressed adequately then, depending on the concern, representation should be made to either the Chair of Governors or the Manchester Diocese.

Procedure for staff to raise a whistle blowing concern

1 - When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in the 'general principles' section of the policy 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.

2 - Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors.

3 - How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

Trust procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

1 - Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher - 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. If there is:
    - The recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the Chair of Governors, 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

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.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This will take place through the Governors' Finance and Resources Committee and ratified by the Full Governing Body.