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• Bravery
• Individuality
• Caring



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MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST
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Whistle Blowing Policy



Document and Version Control

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V3	Spring 2021	K. Groom	Equality Statement added
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V7	Summer 2025	CEO	No changes
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Section	Changes Made
Spring 2026: Section 3: Section 4: Section 5: Section 6:	Section 3: Addition to clarify that this policy reflects the latest guidance and legal framework. Section 4: Updated to reflect Employment Rights Act 2025 whistleblowing protections (sexual harassment as a protected disclosure). Section 5: Addition of sexual harassment in the workplace, where the disclosure is made in the public interest and relates to conduct that has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur. Section 6: Update from changes in guidance which now include disclosures relating to sexual harassment, provided the disclosure is made in the public

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1. Statement from the Trust Board

We want our workforce to be ambitious, courageous, and empowered to do a great job and make a positive difference to the lives of the people we serve.

To support this, we want a positive working environment and a culture of confidence, respect, and equality. When things do not go to plan, it is important we resolve issues in the right way for all involved.

Our People Policies provide managers and colleagues with clear yet flexible guidance to deal with those issues quickly and fairly.

2. Guiding Principals

We are committed to developing policies and processes that reflect our values and contribute to promoting a positive working environment.

Our principals therefore comprise:

- Encouraging adult-to-adult conversations where everyone acts to address workplace concerns early through 1-2-1's, supervision, and other day-to-day conversations.
- Being supportive, proactive and solution focused, addressing concerns quickly and fairly, tailored to individual needs.
- Recognising that everyone has a responsibility and role to play in creating the right conditions to do their job well.
- Focusing on wellbeing and building trust within the workplace.
- Developing policies that support diversity and inclusion and promote an inclusive work environment free from any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation.
- Holding ourselves and each other to account to always behave and act in the best interests of the school, council, and the communities that we serve.

3. Purpose

The aim of this policy is to encourage and enable you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns. It provides you with a clear avenue to raise concerns and sets out how we will deal with them and communicate with you.

It aims to ensure everyone feels able to raise any genuine concern in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously, and that they will be protected from repercussions. Those working for or on behalf of the Trust must not treat individuals detrimentally because they have made a qualifying disclosure (i.e., blow the whistle) under the Employee Rights Act 1996, including Public Disclosure Act 1998.

This policy reflects current whistleblowing legislation, including recent enhancements to legal protections introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and workers employed by us including contractors, subcontractors, and agency workers. Other individuals, including our volunteers, suppliers, and those genuinely self-employed are also encouraged to follow the procedure set out in this policy.

This policy has been adopted from the Staffordshire County Council model (April 2026) following consultation with the recognised Trade Unions and updated to reflect Employment Rights Act 2025 whistleblowing protections (sexual harassment as a protected disclosure).

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time in consultation with recognised trade unions.

Where a colleague has a concern with their own treatment at work or in relation to their contract of employment, it is usually appropriate that they raise it under either the Resolving Grievance Policy or Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy. We will however consider if there are any exceptional circumstances in which we feel it appropriate to deal with it under the terms of this policy. If you are unsure about whether your concerns are best dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy or another policy, please contact the Trust HR Provider for further advice.

Decisions will be made in line with the school's local scheme of delegation or equivalent mechanism for making decisions at the appropriate level.

5. What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when you report certain types of wrongdoing which relate to risk or malpractice. This could well be something you've seen at work – though not always. The wrongdoing you disclose is often seen as something which is in the 'public interest.'

The following are the types of complaints that count as whistleblowing:

- A criminal offence, and/or
- A miscarriage of justice; and/or
- Risk or actual damage to the environment; and/or
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation; and/or
- A risk to the health and safety of an individual; and/or
- Public funds are being used in an unauthorized manner; and/or
- A serious safeguarding concern; and/or
- You believe someone is covering up any of the above
- Sexual harassment in the workplace, where the disclosure is made in the public interest and relates to conduct that has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.

6. Rights and Protection of the Whistle-blower

The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support you if you raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

In turn, to be protected by whistleblowing laws against detrimental treatment or dismissal, you must reasonably believe that the wrongdoing (as outlined above) is being, has been, or is likely to be committed and that your 'disclosure' is in the public interest. Examples of detrimental treatment include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavorable treatment connected with raising a concern.

From April 2026, whistleblowing protections under the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Employment Rights Act 2025) explicitly include disclosures relating to sexual harassment, provided the disclosure is made in the public interest. Individuals making such disclosures will be protected from detriment and (where applicable) unfair dismissal.

If you believe that you have been subjected to a detriment for raising such a complaint you should raise the matter with the CEO. If you believe that the CEO has subjected you to a detriment, you should raise the matter to the Chair of the Trust Board (Mrs. Zoe Insley).

Victimisation of a whistle-blower by any other colleague, for raising a concern under this policy will constitute a disciplinary offence.

False allegations raised maliciously may lead to disciplinary action or a referral made to any relevant regulatory body if you are not an employee.

We will take all reasonable steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are asked to give evidence in a criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will arrange for you to receive appropriate advice and support.

7. The process

Step 1 Raising a Whistleblowing concern

As soon as you become reasonably concerned, we hope you feel able to raise it. The earlier you raise your concern, the easier it is to take action.

You should raise your concern in the first instance, at any time, with the nominated member of staff in your school, the Headteacher. If the whistleblowing concerns involve the Headteacher, you should raise your concern directly to the CEO.

If your whistleblowing concerns relate to the CEO, your concerns should be directed to the Chair of the Trust Board. If your whistleblowing complaint relates to a local authority service provided to the school, you should direct it to the Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement for Staffordshire County Council (see key contacts section) who will ensure it is raised through the appropriate internal process.

It could be something that has happened, is happening now or you believe will happen in the near future.

You can raise your concern verbally, or in writing. If you are emailing, particularly using an external email (i.e., your personal email) we strongly recommend that you secure the email by password protection with encryption and share the password by alternate method.

We recommend that you use our form to raise a whistleblowing concern. This will help you provide us with the information that we need to properly look at the concerns. Take care to ensure the accuracy of the information.

It is important that you set out clearly:

- What the concern is and to whom it relates
- The background and history of the concern – giving relevant dates and any evidence you may have.
- The reason you are particularly concerned about the situation and why you believe the information to be true.

You are encouraged to put your name on any concern you raise as it makes it easier for the Trust to investigate it.

If you have difficulty at any stage of this procedure either

- Because of a disability or
- Because English is not your first language

You should discuss the situation with the nominated member of staff as soon as possible, so that suitable support can be explored.

Step 2 Responding to your whistleblowing concern

On receipt of your 'disclosure' or concern, the nominated member of staff will acknowledge its receipt, in writing to you, ideally within 5 working days. They will also seek advice and support via their HR or Legal Provider.

In some cases, they may need to ask you to attend a meeting to clarify the nature of your concern. This will be arranged as soon as possible. You may, if you wish, bring a colleague or a trade union representative with you to the meeting.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting, we may conduct the process remotely, for example using Microsoft Teams. We will ensure that you have access to the necessary technology for participating.

The nominated member of staff will decide if an investigation is required or any other appropriate actions. For example, refer to another policy, the Trust audit/fraud team, or the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding (see key contacts section).

The level of investigation and time this will take will vary depending on the nature of the suspected wrongdoing hence it is not possible to lay down precise timescales. However, at the outset of this process you and the nominated member of staff will agree how and when communication will take place so that you are kept updated on progress.

Following the investigation, a report will be produced outlining findings for the nominated member of staff to decide on any appropriate next steps, including whether it is appropriate to commence a disciplinary process.

They will endeavor to inform you of the outcome of our enquiries and/or investigations, however, given confidentiality and other relevant aspects and legal constraints, it may not be possible to share details of the outcome and any action taken.

Step 3 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome

The Trust hope that you will be satisfied with the way your concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out.

However, if you are not, and you feel it is right to take the matter externally, i.e., outside the Trust, please find below a list of possible contacts. If you tell a prescribed person or body, it must be one that deals with the issue you are raising.

- A list of external regulatory organisations, such as the Secretary of State for Education or relevant professional bodies can be found at the following government website. [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies)
- A disclosure about child protection and safeguarding concern can be raised directly with the local authority LADO, if not already raised.
- The charity, [Protect](#), can advise you about raising the concern externally. This will include advising who the appropriate prescribed regulator is.

We always encourage you to raise your whistleblowing concerns internally in the first instance. However, the law recognizes that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media and as such you will not have protection under whistleblowing laws if you choose to contact the media unless certain conditions are met.

We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone externally. If you would like independent advice at any stage, you can [contact the independent charity Protect](#). They should be able to give you free and confidential advice about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. If you are a trade union member, your union may also be able to provide you with appropriate advice.

8. Confidentiality and Anonymity

We hope that you to feel able to raise a whistleblowing concern openly under this policy.

Where you raise a whistleblowing concern openly, we will maintain your confidentiality as far as possible. If we need to identify your identity to anyone, we will notify you beforehand and we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

As an alternative, you may decide to raise a whistleblowing concern anonymously. We encourage anonymous reporting over remaining silent. Although we will investigate any concern that is reported anonymously, as best we can, an anonymous report is likely to be more difficult for us to investigate, and we will not be in a position to provide you with any feedback. We will consider the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

9. Wellbeing and Support

Supporting wellbeing is an integral and essential part of our People Policies. We recognise that whistleblowing processes can be stressful for everyone involved. We all respond to stressful situations in different ways. Sometimes a process may cause distress and impact on both physical and mental health.



wellme – Schools Wellbeing Service

Wellme is a platform that provides staff who work in schools in Staffordshire services to assist with improving their lifestyle and wellbeing. The services relate to physical and mental health and financial and social wellbeing. The service is free to staff who work in the Trust.

You can access the VIVUP platform www.staffordshire.vivup.co.uk. You will need to register using your personal email address, select schools in the organisation box and use the schools DFE number not your Employee Number.

More general wellbeing advice and information can be found at [MIND](#) and [Mental Health Foundation](#).

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Our aim is to deal with whistleblowing matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with such a complaint. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

If you are invited to a formal meeting, you must not make any electronic recordings. An exception to this may be where it has been agreed by all parties as a reasonable adjustment related to a disability. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal or referral to any relevant regulatory body.

We process personal data collected during whistleblowing complaints/investigations in accordance with the Trusts privacy notice and data protection policy.

11. Related Policies

This policy is part of a suite of people policies and other related policies that you may wish to read are as set out below:

- Resolving Grievances Policy
- Appeals Procedure
- Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

12. Further Advice

If you need any further information about any aspect of this policy, please initially speak to your Headteacher or your HR Provider will also be able to provide additional clarification and advice in respect of this policy.

13. Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually unless there is a requirement to do so before due to legislative or best practice changes.

14. Community Impact Analysis

We consider carefully how the decisions we make affect people who share different protected characteristics (race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, religion, belief, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity).

The Community Impact Analysis, available to support this policy, highlights the proactive and positive approach we take to supporting employees who may raise a whistleblowing complaint, whilst taking into consideration any employee protected characteristics.

The completed community impact analysis to support this policy is available on request.

15. Key Contacts

Our schools

Nominated member of staff for Whistleblowing complaints: The Headteacher

Or, if the concern is regarding the Headteacher, then please contact the CEO: Maria Hamblin, CEO@fierte.org

Or, if the concern is regarding the CEO, then please contact the Chair of the Trust Board: Zoe Insley, z.insley@fierte.org

Staffordshire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 0300 111 8007 or use the online enquiry form at the following website.

Website details: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Care-for-children-and-families/Childprotection/rc-Professional.aspx

Staffordshire County Council's Audit Team: Fraud Email: fraud@staffordshire.gov.uk

Integrity Hotline: 0800 73118

Website details: www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Report-fraud-bribery-and-theft/Online-reporting-form.aspx

Notes regarding the Whistleblowing Form (Raising a concern)

This form is intended for use by any individual working for the Trust (including contractors, workers and volunteers) who want to raise a concern about wrongdoing.

This form should be used to report wrongdoing within the Trust that you believe is in the public interest.

If your concern relates to a personal complaint that is not in the public interest (for example, an allegation of bullying or harassment, or that your contract of employment has been breached), you should raise it under our separate policies, such as Anti-Harassment and Bullying and Resolving Grievances. If you are unsure about whether your concerns are best dealt with under the Whistleblowing or Resolving Grievance Policy, please speak to:-

The Headteacher, or

If your concern is in regard to the Headteacher, then please speak to the CEO of the Trust (Maria Hamblin)

On completion, please send the form to:-

The Headteacher, or

If your concern is in regard to the Headteacher, then please send this to the CEO of the Trust (Maria Hamblin)

Please note an exception to this is where your whistleblowing complaint relates to a CEO in which case the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the Trust Board (Zoe Insley).

Complaints can be submitted either via an envelope marked "confidential" or sent as an email attachment with "confidential" in the subject line. If you are sending via a personal email, you are strongly advised to secure your email by password protection with encryption, providing a password via an alternate method.

Once you have submitted this form, we will invoke the procedure set out in our Whistleblowing Policy and may contact you to clarify the nature of your concerns.

Formal whistleblowing concern

Name:

Job Title:

School :

Date:

Summary of your concern

Please set out your concern with as much detail as possible, including the date, time, location, the identities of those involved in the wrongdoing and details of any witnesses.

Background and history of the concern – giving relevant dates and any evidence you may have (additional sheets can be attached)

Nature of your concern, i.e. the reason you are particularly concerned about the situation and why you believe that information to be true

Please specify if your concern is about a potential: criminal offence; failure to comply with a legal obligation; miscarriage of justice; risk to the health and safety of an individual; damage to the environment; or attempt to cover up any of these.

Whistleblowing Protection

As a Trust , we would always want you to raise genuine concerns with us rather than stay silent, so that we can do something about it. As long as the concerns that you raise are not false one/s raised maliciously, you will be protected under the Whistleblowing Policy and relevant laws. This is even if the genuine concerns you raise turn out to be mistaken.

Signature:

For completion by the Named Responsible Officer	
Date form received by the named responsible Officer:	
Name of Officer:	
Signature:	

Acknowledgement of the complaint should be made within 5 working days of receipt.