

# Mercia Primary Academy Trust



## Whistleblowing Policy

### Policy Status and Review

<b>Date:</b>	<b>March 2026</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>September 2027</b>
<b>Signed by Director:</b>	<b>Garry Hirons</b>
<b>Date Signed:</b>	<b>25/03/2026</b>

## Whistleblowing Policy

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### 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, ensuring that staff know that concerns raised by whistle-blowers will be responded to properly and fairly
- 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)
- Ensure staff know that they are protected by law and that a non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality clause or 'gagging clause' in a settlement agreement or employment contract cannot stop them from making a protected disclosure in the public interest

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

This policy applies to all employees, officers and trustees. Other workers, including consultants, contractors, agency staff and those on work placements, are also encouraged to use it.

### Legislative Framework

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 have also taken into account the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### 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
- Sexual harassment (in effect from 6 April 2026)
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above. These concerns should be reported under this policy.

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Not all concerns about the trust, or individual schools in 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.

If a complaint involves personal circumstances alongside wider concerns (e.g. pupil health and safety), the staff member may consult with CEO, Headteacher or other senior leader to decide the most appropriate reporting procedure.

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](#)

### Policy Statement

Mercia Primary Academy Trust expects employees, and others that we deal with, (such as contractors, agency staff and partners), who have serious concerns about any aspect of the trust's work to come forward and voice those concerns. If and when they do, provided they act in good faith and follow the laid down procedures, the Trust will do everything it can to ensure that they are not victimised in any way.

The trust will, at its discretion, consider disclosures that are made anonymously, although such disclosures are inevitably much less powerful. The Trust will also treat every disclosure in confidence, and only reveal the identity of the person making it if absolutely necessary (e.g. if required in connection with legal action).

The trust will keep people who make disclosures informed about the progress and (subject to legal constraints) outcome of any investigation carried out.

However frivolous, malicious, or allegations made for personal gain, may result in disciplinary action against the person making them.

### When to raise a concern

Staff should consider reading the information within the above links, 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.

### Who to report to?

School-based staff should report their concern to the Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body). If the concern is about the CEO or 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 the Directing Board.

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Central team staff should report their concern to the Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) if the concern is about the CEO, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the central team staff should report the concern to Chair of the Directing Board.

### How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing and should be sent in a sealed address envelope addressed to the Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) and marked: Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) – Strictly Private and Confidential. E-mail is not a secure medium and must not be used.

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

Staff are encouraged to give their name when reporting an allegation, to help the trust take the investigation further. However, a complainant's right to anonymity will be respected. A proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if further information cannot be obtained from the staff member raising the concern. This will also make it more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

Staff who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should consult with the CEO or one of the contact points listed in section in appendix A, and appropriate measures can be taken to protect confidentiality where possible.

### Investigating a concern

When a concern is received by the Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) they will:

- Get as much detail as possible about the concern and record the information. If it becomes apparent that the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate 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
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:
  - The Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) should then arrange further investigations into the matter, involving the Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) if appropriate. In some cases, this may be the Chair of the Directing Board or an external, independent body to investigate. In others instances, 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 Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body)

The Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) will write to the person who raised the concern within 20 working days, excluding periods of trust closure. The Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) will include the following:

- Acknowledgement that the concern has been received within 20 working days

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- Seek further information, if need be, including by personal interview, at which the individual can be accompanied by an official of their trade union or professional association, or by a fellow employee
- Indicate how the matter is to be dealt with
- When the precise nature of the alleged malpractice is established, refer the disclosure to the Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher)
- Give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response, informing the complainant as to whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Tell the staff member whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not
- In liaison with the Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher), keep the individual informed regarding the progress and (subject to legal constraints) outcome of any investigation

### **Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher)**

On receipt of a disclosure from a Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) the Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) will determine what further action, if any, is needed, which may comprise of:

- Internal investigation
- Report to the DfE/Police
- Report to external audit, DfE, ESFA
- Independent enquiry
- Any combination of the above

The Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) will also ensure that the Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) is advised of progress and outcome and will produce a report detailing the findings.

### **The Chair of the Directing Board**

The Chair of the Directing Board must stand in as the Contact Officer in the event that the allegation involves the CEO or Headteacher. In this situation the Monitoring Officer becomes the Chair of the Governing Body.

### **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 Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) 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 (LA) 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 CEO, Directing Board and relevant staff, will if necessary, review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

While the trust cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, the trust will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way. If a staff member is not satisfied with the way in

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which their concern has been handled, they can raise their concerns with the Chair of the Directing Board.

Throughout any investigation, the trust will provide wellbeing check-ins for both the complainant and the subject(s) of a concern. Where appropriate, support and signposting to manage expectations, protect emotional wellbeing and maintain professional confidence will be offered.

### Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made with the reasonable belief that the disclosure is in the public interest and meets the definition of whistle-blowing, 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.

### Levels of Authority

Throughout this policy document, there are many references to:

- Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body)
- Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher)
- The Chair of the Directing Board

For the purposes of this policy 'Contact Officer' is the person delegated by the Directors to perform the task. All details can be found in Appendix A.

### Other considerations

The Trust will monitor the application of this policy and, in conjunction with the recognised trade unions, review and revise it as necessary.

### Accountabilities

Contact Officer (Chair of the Governing Body) should receive the initial disclosure, obtain further information, and refer disclosures to the Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher).

Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) has overall responsibility for the proper application of the policy and is responsible for deciding, in respect of ALL disclosures, whether there will be a formal investigation, what form it will take and who will carry it out.

The Monitoring Officer (CEO or Headteacher) will carry out any investigation as required, and keep the whistle-blower informed regarding the progress (subject to legal constraints) and outcome of any investigation.

### Further Advice and Information

This policy document is for general guidance only. *If you need any further advice on how to apply this policy, please contact your Headteacher/Business Manager.*

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Independent advice on 'whistle-blowing' can also be obtained from the Charity Protect (previously known as Public Concern at Work) and the Audit Commission. Contact details for these organisations are:

### **Charity Protect:**

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

Advice Line: 020 3117 2520

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

### **Further information and Advice**

Further background information on this topic is available on the following

#### **Websites:**

[Citizens Advice:](#)

[Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\)](#)

Your professional body or union

### **Other Contacts**

Please note that the trust takes no responsibility or liability for any material produced by or contained in external sites or for any advice or services given by external organisations. It is the responsibility solely of each person to decide whether or not they use any such material, advice or service.

### **Public Interest Disclosures**

The trust acknowledges that anyone who is not satisfied with its response to a disclosure they have made under this policy is entitled in law to disclose elsewhere. Appendix B lists the names and bodies to whom disclosures can be made, including bodies prescribed by the Government.

### Appendix A

#### Mercia Primary Academy Trust Monitoring Officers

##### Whistle Blowing Procedure

##### Directing Board Members

Garry Hirons	Director (Chair)
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##### Mercia Primary Academy Trust Contact Officers

##### Local Governing Body Chairs

Christine Fisher	Governor (Chair)
Neil Rose	Governor (Chair)

##### Headteachers

Richard Lane	Headteacher (CEO)
Neil Probert	Headteacher

### Appendix B

#### External/Prescribed Bodies

Health & Safety Exec.  
19 Ridgeway  
9 Quinton Business Park  
Quinton  
Birmingham  
B32 1AL  
Tel: 0345 300 9923  
Website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm>

Environment Agency  
General enquiries:  
National Customer Contact Centre  
PO Box 544  
Rotherham  
S60 1BY  
Tel: 03708 506 506 (enquiries)  
Tel: 0800 807 060 (Environment incident hotline – 24 hours)  
Tel: 0345 988 1188 (Floodline)  
Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Staffordshire Police HQ  
Weston Road  
Stafford  
ST18 OYY  
Tel: 101  
Website: <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us-beta/contact-us/>

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HM Revenue & Customs

BX9 1AB

Tel: 0300 200 3700

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs>

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/find-hmrc-contacts>

Citizens' Advice Bureau

Tel: 0808 223 1133

Website: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Information Commissioner's Office

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

This information can be made available in a range of formats and languages, including Braille and large print. If this would be useful to you or someone you know, please contact your Directorate HR Unit.

*A signed copy of this document is available from the school office.*

### Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Changes	Reasons for alterations & signature
2	02.12.2015	HR Advisers are Insight HR Limited Neil Probert added	Accessibility
3	27.06.2018	Changes to staff in schools	Accessibility
4	11.12.2019	Updated list of Directors	Accessibility
5	25.09.2020	Amended list of Directors	Accessibility
6	12.11.2020	Updated address for Public concern at home Removed Audit commission Removed 3 websites Removed one named governor – W Pell Wallpole Removed M Booth in head teacher section	Updated contact details closed 2015 achieved or not found No longer a governor Head of Schools Updated contact details

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		Updated address and phone number for H and S Exec Updated address and phone number for Staffordshire Police HQ Added postcode and new phone number for Inland revenue Updated Customs and Excise phone number Replaced CAB address with Tamworth one Removed Audit Commission address	Updated contact details Updated contact details Updated contact details Updated contact details Closed 2015 M. Booth
7	24.03.2021	Added range of formats	Accessibility F Biddle
8	June 2025	Updated list of directors and contact details for external companies	Current information
9	February 2026	COG details updated	Governance structure updated - COG
10	March 2026	Legal updates to include sexual harassment and to make the policy clearer on roles and responsibilities	Accessibility