



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Version: 5.0
Approved by: Trustee Board
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REVIEW HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE OF CHANGE	CHANGE SUMMARY	PAGE NO.
1.2	04.03.2021	Revised and approved by HR Committee	
1.3	12.03.2021	Updated with revised branding	
2.0	24.2.2022	Updated to include a named member of staff and a named trustee and their contact details as point of contact for whistleblowing concerns	6
3.0	10.01.2023	Updated in new brand	
4.0	18.01.2024	Change named trustee	6
5.0	27.02.25	Changed named trustee in section 4.3	6

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy applies to all OAK Multi Academy Trust (the Trust) employees regardless of whether they are permanent, fixed term, casual, agency or volunteers.
- 1.2 The Trust are committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. It is very important that all employees feel they can talk about any concerns they may have and where they have reasonable cause to believe there has been a detrimental effect on education provided to pupils and the working environment for staff.
- 1.3 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This policy encourages and enables employees to raise promptly any serious concerns they may have about the activities of employees, Trustees, Governors, or external organisations in relation to their dealings with the Trust. This policy:
 - 1.3.1 Enables employees to raise any concerns they may have and to receive feedback about the outcome of any resulting investigation. It is important to note that the employee will not receive information regarding the detail of the investigation, nor any actions taken.
 - 1.3.2 Allows employees to understand how and where to escalate their concerns, if following the completion of any internal processes, their concerns remain.
 - 1.3.3 Protects employees from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' made in good faith.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 Where an employee has a concern it may be about something that is either already happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future. This may include:
 - 2.1.1 A criminal offence or is potentially unlawful
 - 2.1.2 A miscarriage of justice
 - 2.1.3 Regarding the application of the Trust's policies or operating procedures.
 - 2.1.4 An act of fraud or corruption
 - 2.1.5 Seems likely to cause damage or harm to a member of the public, the Trust, employees, or the pupils
 - 2.1.6 An act creating a risk to health and safety
 - 2.1.7 An act causing damage to the environment
 - 2.1.8 Is a breach of any other legal obligation
 - 2.1.9 Is a deliberate attempt by an individual or group of people to conceal any of the above
- 2.2 A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. Any genuine concern related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting

any of the Trust's activities (a whistleblowing concern) should be reported under this policy.

- 2.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to an employee's personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, employees should use the Grievance Policy.
- 2.4 Employees should seek advice from a member of the school or Trust's Central Team if uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy.
- 2.5 If an employee's concern is in relation to safeguarding and the welfare of pupils at a school, they should consider whether the matter is better raised under the Child Protection Policy and in accordance with the arrangements for reporting such concerns, i.e. via the designated safeguarding lead, although the principles set out in the is policy may still apply.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 3.1 The identity of employees who raise concerns will be protected as far as practicable. However, the investigation may, out of necessity in some instances, reveal the source of the information and statements made by the employee(s) who raised the issue may comprise part of the formal process, for example if a formal process/hearing is required.
- 3.2 Employees are encouraged to put their name to any allegations made. Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the Trust taking into account:
 - 3.2.1 The seriousness of the issues raised
 - 3.2.2 The credibility of the concern
 - 3.2.3 The likelihood of the allegation being substantiated and
 - 3.2.4 whether it is considered that the allegations are untrue/false
- 3.3 Employees who raise an issue in good faith under this policy are protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 from any repercussions on their present position or future career. The Act does not protect anyone who is acting maliciously, making false allegations or who is seeking personal gain. The Trust does not tolerate any form of harassment or victimisation against an individual raising a concern.
- 3.4 If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not upheld by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee who raised the concern. However, employees who make malicious or vexatious allegations may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.5 Central HR will keep a record of disclosures made under the Whistleblowing policy.

3.6 Data will be processed to be in line with the requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation and in accordance with the Trust Retention and Records Management Policy.

4. RAISING A CONCERN

Who can raise a concern?

4.1 Any individual who currently works for the Trust may raise a concern under this policy. In addition, a complaint may also be raised by an individual who works for an organisation that provides a service to the Trust such as agency workers, volunteers, trustees and governors, or former employees.

How to raise a concern?

4.2 Employees should normally raise concerns with their Headteacher in the first instance. The line manager may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively. This will depend on the nature of the concern, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue and who is allegedly involved.

4.3 Where the concern is more serious or where employees feel unable to approach their Headteacher, they should invoke the Whistleblowing policy and may raise their concern with the central Trust:

- Sean Morris, Trustee & Vice-Chair: smorris@oaktrust.org
- Nicola Wall, Trust HR Manager: nwall@oaktrust.org

4.4 Concerns can be raised orally or in writing. It is important that the employee provides as much detail as possible (including specific names, dates and places where known).

4.5 In addition, where concerns are of a serious nature and criminal activity is suspected, employees have the right to raise issues directly with the police or other relevant agencies as they see fit. However, the aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases employees should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

4.6 When taking the matter outside of the Trust, the employee must ensure that they do not disclose confidential information about the Trust or its employees and pupils which is not relevant to the issue.

5. RESPONSE

5.1 The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. For example, the matter may:

- 5.1.1 be investigated internally
- 5.1.2 be investigated by a third party
- 5.1.3 be referred to the police, or relevant professional body

5.2 In order to protect individuals and the Trust, initial enquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

5.3 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

5.4 Within two weeks of a concern being received, the Central Team will write to the employee:

- 5.4.1 Acknowledging that the concern has been raised;
- 5.4.2 Indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- 5.4.3 Advising whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not; and
- 5.4.4 Confirm, where possible, an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.

5.5 If necessary, further information will be sought from the employee regarding the concern. The employee will have the right to be accompanied at any meetings by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

6. OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION

6.1 If an investigation is warranted, the employee will be informed about the outcome of any investigation but not the detail of the investigation or any action taken against another employee (e.g. disciplinary action).

6.2 The employee who raised the concern has no right of appeal against the outcome of the investigation, however, if the employee is not satisfied with the outcome of the Trust investigation, they may raise their concern with:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chair of Trustees

7. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

The Chair of Trustees has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and delegates the responsibility for this to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer must maintain a record of concerns raised and their outcomes and will report to the board of trustees.