



Wessex
Learning Trust

We Learn Together

Whistleblowing Policy



Wessex Learning Trust

Whistleblowing Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees in May 2028, and then henceforth every three years or earlier if legislation requires it.

Signature:

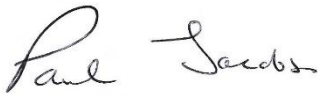


Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Date: 21/05/2025

Position: Chief Executive

Signature:



Name: Mr Paul Jacobs

Date: 21/05/2025

Position: Chair of the Board

<u>Date approved by Trust Board: May 2025</u> <u>Review Date: May 2028</u>

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees, members of the Local Partnership Boards, Trustees, volunteers, contractors and suppliers to raise serious concerns within the Wessex Learning Trust rather than overlooking a problem.

1.2 This policy applies to all employees, Local Partnership Boards, Trustees, contractors and suppliers, and provides them with a secure basis for reporting suspicions of impropriety, in the knowledge that if requested the matter will be treated confidentially.

2. Aims of this policy

2.1 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.
- Inform all colleagues in the Trust how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the Trust.
- Set clear procedures for how the Trust will respond to such concerns.
- Let all colleagues know the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing concern.
- Assure colleagues 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.

2.2 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the Trust in any capacity, including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

3. Legislation

3.1 The requirement to have clear whistleblowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

3.2 This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistleblowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

4. Definition of a whistleblow

4.1 Whistleblowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is 'in the public interest'. Examples of whistleblowing 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.
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest.
- Damage to the environment.

4.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

4.3 Not all concerns about the Trust, or individual schools in the Trust, count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

4.4 When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow the grievance or complaints procedures. Please refer to Grievance Policy in this instance

4.5 Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure.
- A free and confidential [advice line](#).

5. When to raise a concern

5.1 Staff should consider the examples in section 4 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Considerations should also be made as to whether the incident(s) was illegal, a breach of statutory or Trust procedures, people put in danger or an attempt to cover any such activity up.

6. Who to report to

6.1 As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with the setting leader, (Executive) Headteacher if within a school, or Chief Executive if within the Central Team. However, depending upon the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice, this may not be appropriate. Where this is the case, you should report your concern directly to the Chair of the Local Partnership Board or Chair of the Trust Board.

7. How to raise the concern

7.1 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.

8. Investigating the concern

8.1 When a concern has been received, the 'recipient' 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.
- Establish 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 whistleblowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy.
- Reiterate that there is protection from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. However, 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 recipient should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, involving the Chair of Local Partners, or the Chief Executive of the Wessex Learning Trust, or the Chair of Trustees, if appropriate. In some cases, an external, independent body may need to be commissioned to investigate. In others, the matter may need to be reported to the police.

The person who raised the concern will be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps.

9. Outcome of the investigation

9.1 Once the investigation is complete, the investigating person(s) will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

9.2 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.

9.3 Beyond the immediate actions, the appropriate person will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

9.4 Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, concerns will be dealt with fairly and in an appropriate way.

10. Malicious or vexatious allegations

10.1 Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there is potentially an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

10.2 If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the Trust may consider whether disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

11. Escalating concerns beyond the Trust

11.1 The Trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with this policy, but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

11.2 The Protect advice line (see section 4.5) can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.