



Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

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For Office Use Only:

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To make changes to this policy, please
email admin@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

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1. Statement of Intent

Lincolnshire Gateway Academies Trust is committed to honesty and openness, at all levels of the organisation.

In meeting this commitment, a policy and procedure have been established which allows employees to raise concerns about matters of public interest concerning the conduct of those within our organisation.

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
- Provide appropriate pathways and avenues to raise concerns
- Set clear procedures for how the Trust will respond to such concerns
- Offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action within the meaning of the Public Interest Disclosure Act
- 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 false or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue).

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.

2. Legislation

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Employment Rights Act 2025, from April 2026)
- DfE 'Academy trust handbook 2025'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'
- GOV.UK 'Whistleblowing for employees'
- DfE 'Whistleblowing: guidance for prescribed persons'
- DfE 'Blowing the whistle to the Department for Education'
- [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) and [Department for Business and Trade](#) 'Whistleblowing: guidance and code of practice for employers'
- Sir Robert Francis 'Freedom to speak up report'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Grievance Policy

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. 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):

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed.

- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject.
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- That the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered.
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged.
- That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.
- From April 2026, disclosures relating to sexual harassment are also legally recognised as protected whistleblowing disclosures.

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the Trust count as whistle-blowing. Personal staff grievances, including issues such as bullying or harassment that affect an individual personally, do not normally fall under whistleblowing and should be raised under the staff grievance or complaints procedures.

However, from April 2026, concerns about sexual harassment may be raised through whistle-blowing where the worker reasonably believes the disclosure is in the public interest. In these circumstances, the law provides protection from detriment and unfair dismissal for making such a disclosure. Please note that where these procedures are not suitable for reporting sexual harassment, anyone wishing to make a report should refer to the Sexual Harassment Policy.

Staff should consider the nature of their concern and whether it is best addressed under the whistle-blowing procedure or the Trust's grievance/complaints processes. If uncertain, employees may seek guidance from HR or their manager.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees will be responsible for:

- Establishing and agreeing the whistleblowing procedure.
- Ensuring the agreed whistleblowing procedure is published on the Trust's website.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and undertaking any necessary reviews, e.g. in relation to good practice recommendations or changes in legislation.
- Ensuring all members of the Trust community have access to this policy.
- Investigating, in liaison with the Principal, any concerns that are raised.
- Ensuring this policy provides an open and transparent framework where workers of the school can raise their concerns.
- Taking the necessary action against members of staff following an investigation into any alleged malpractice.
- Ensuring that all concerns raised by whistleblowers are responded to properly and fairly.

The chair of governors will be responsible for receiving any concerns raised about the Principal.

The Principal will be responsible for:

- Ensuring all members of staff have read and understood this policy.
- Receiving, investigating and responding to any concerns that have been raised by academy staff.
- Being the first point of contact regarding whistleblowing unless the concern is about the Principal or it is believed that they are involved in the wrongdoing in some way.

All members of staff will be responsible for:

- Disclosing any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Raising any concerns that meet the definitions in the 'Definitions' section of this policy.
- Raising genuine concerns relating to the specified situations covered by the PIDA.
- Not raising false allegations maliciously.

5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 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.

Before making a disclosure, the Trust recommends that any potential whistleblower discusses their concern on a confidential basis with a work colleague, trade union representative, solicitor or professional body and seeks advice on how to proceed. These discussions may help assess how justified their concern is and, if they then wish to proceed, the most appropriate and effective way to report it.

Individuals who would like to seek professional and confidential advice can contact Protect - a registered charity that advises on whistleblowing queries. The Protect website can be accessed [here](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk) (www.protect-advice.org.uk), or they can be contacted on 020 31172520.

This step is important because the report should be made so as to allow the most effective investigation, whilst affording the whistleblower protection under UK whistleblowing legislation, including changes introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025.

How to raise the concern

Any worker wishing to raise a concern will be expected to do so either verbally or in writing to an appropriate person (please see below), setting out the background and history of the concern; where possible this should include names, dates and places, and the reason why the individual is particularly concerned about the situation. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

A disclosure of information will amount to a “disclosure” whether it is made in writing or verbally, formally or informally.

To help individuals ensure they are providing appropriate information, Protect has a [letter template library](#) where example templates can be downloaded and adapted.

Appropriate person

An employee who wishes to report a concern should do so to the Principal of their academy or if this is not appropriate, then to the CEO.

In the event that the concerns involve a Principal, then this should be reported to the CEO. If the concerns involve the CEO, then the employee should report this to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

6. Trust procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by a Principal/the CEO/the Chair of the Board of Trustees - referred to from here as the ‘recipient’ - they will:

- Acknowledge receipt of a disclosure within a reasonable time, and normally within 5 working days of the concern being received
- Appoint an appropriate person to investigate the disclosure, depending on the circumstances of the case, this may be an internal or external appointment
- The investigating officer 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
- 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 Principal/CEO and/or Chair of the Board of Trustees 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.

The investigating officer will explain the following to anyone raising a concern:

- How they will communicate with the complainant throughout the process. It should be noted, the need for confidentiality may prevent the school giving the complainant specific details of any necessary investigation or any necessary disciplinary action taken as a result of the concern.
- That the complainant's identity will be kept confidential from the alleged wrongdoer.
- That the Board of Trustees will do everything in its power to protect the complainant from discrimination.
- That if the concern is genuine, even if the concern is not confirmed, no disciplinary action will be taken against the complainant.

If clear evidence is uncovered that the complainant's concern is malicious or unfounded, disciplinary action may be brought against them.

7. 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 Principal, CEO, Trustees and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

A record will be made of the nature and outcome of the concern. The purpose of this is to ensure that a central record is kept which can be cross-referenced with other complaints to monitor any patterns of concern across the Trust and to assist in monitoring the procedure.

8. False or malicious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be 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.

However, in the case of any false, malicious or vexatious allegations the Trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

9. Escalating concerns beyond the Trust

The Trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with section 4 of 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](#)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies#education).

10. Appeal process

If no action is to be taken and/or the individual is not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with, they can make a complaint under the Trust's Complaints Policy.

11. Record keeping and data protection

Details of all reports received by the Trust will be logged and reported to the CEO's Office to allow a central record of whistleblowing cases to be maintained.

Records of all written and oral communications received and conducted through the course of the disclosure and subsequent investigations will be kept in line with the school's Records Management Policy.

Where this policy necessitates personal or special category data to be processed, it will be done so in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy. This policy will not be confused with the procedure on dealing with harassment at work or the Trust's Grievance Policy and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

12. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually. The policy will be agreed by the Board of Trustees after every review.