



Whistleblowing Policy

Last review date:		July 2024	
Next Review date:		July 2025	
Review Cycle:		1 yearly	
Statutory Policy:		Yes	
Date	Version	Reason for change	Source
04.07.24	V4.1	Reviewed	Central HR reviewed by PHRP Ltd

To be read alongside all relevant Matrix Academy Trust policies and procedures

1. Introduction

1.1. Matrix Academy Trust provides support to ensure the success of all academies in our Trust with a strong commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils and remaining focused on pupil achievement. This can only be achieved by having high expectations of our employees and fostering a culture where individuals collaborate and share effective practice.

1.2. The Trust is committed to achieving this through:

- Setting high standards of expectations consistent with the academy community expectations of our Trust and relevant professional standards;
- The application of consistent and fair procedures in accordance with good practice and equal opportunities;
- Adhering to the employment legislation and guidance in relation to dispute and conduct.

1.3 This Whistleblowing Policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially and if necessary outside the management structure of the Trust. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

1.4. This policy does not form part of the contract of employment and may be varied from time to time.

2. Scope

2.1. The Trustees and employees within Matrix Academy Trust seek to run all aspects of Trust business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, parents, Trustees or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, Matrix Academy Trust has established the following Whistleblowing Policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

2.2. Throughout this policy, the term *whistleblower* denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan as recommended in the *Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies* published in May 1996.

2.3. Whistleblowing is about systemic or procedural failures and is not only confined to issues about staff conduct. The term “whistleblowing” is sometimes confused with the need to report safeguarding or professional concerns about another member of staff or adult in the school. Concerns about staff behaviour should always be taken to the Headteacher, Chief Executive (or to the Chair of Trustees of the Trust if it is about the Chief Executive). Please refer to the school’s Safeguarding Policy with guidance on reporting a safeguarding concern.

2.4 Qualifying disclosures related to safeguarding and low-level concerns will be investigated in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Disciplinary Policy and the stages as outlined below.

2.5. Matrix Academy Trust is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of unacceptable conduct and treats these issues seriously. Matrix Academy Trust recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the Trust or school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the Trust.

2.6. Matrix Academy Trust is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

2.7. The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the Matrix grievance procedures.

2.8. The type of activity or behaviour which Matrix Academy Trust considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud, deceit or corruption
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- inadequate child welfare
- health and safety breaches
- environmental damage
- failure to disclose wrong-doing
- any other activity which may be illegal, neglectful or improper

3. Actions

3.1 Matrix Academy Trust encourages the *whistleblower* to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those employees or Trustees in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

3.2 Matrix Academy Trust has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals

would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

Headteacher of your school
Chief Executive – Lynsey Draycott
Chair of Trustees – Sir Mark Aspinall
Trustee - Stephen Smith
Matrix Academy Trust
International House
20 Hatherton Street
Walsall, WS4 2LA

Phone: 01922 211 264

3.3 The *whistleblower* may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

3.4 Alternatively, if the *whistleblower* considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the Trust, the matter should be directed to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Phone: 0370 000 2288

Website : www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

3.5 The DfE has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the *whistleblower*. The DfE will ensure relevant officers are informed as appropriate.

3.6 In addition, information and advice can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Protect
The Green House
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road
London
E2 9DA
Phone : 020 3117 2520
Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk
Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk

Whistleblowing advice line NSPCC

0800 028 0285
help@nspcc.org.uk

3.7 The NSPCC can provide assistance for Whistleblowing incidents in relation to child welfare only (e.g. abuse of trust/position).

4. Procedure

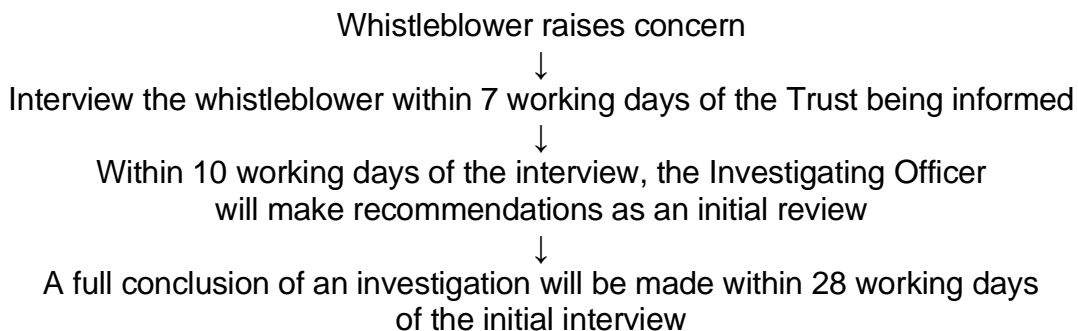
4.1 An independent investigating officer will be assigned. For example, the investigating officer will be appointed from another Trust school or similar. The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of staff, the Trust's external auditors, legal or personnel advisors, the police, LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and the Department for Education.

4.2 Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. All records taken will be treated confidentially. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral such as the police.

4.3 The *whistleblower* will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Board of Trustees.

4.4 If the *whistleblower* is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s) and the Board of Trustees. After taking this concern up with the investigating officer and the Board of Trustees, if the *whistleblower is still* concerned they could then take advice from an external agency such as the NSPCC.

Timeline



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If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct or resolution of the investigation they should raise this with the Investigating Officer and the Board of Trustees

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If there are still concerns, the whistleblower could take advice from an external agency such as the NSPCC

5. Malicious concerns

5.1 Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 Wherever possible Matrix Academy Trust seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the *whistleblower* and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. Matrix Academy Trust will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the *whistleblower* or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

7. Data Protection

7.1 The Trust will comply with the provisions of UK data protection law. Employee data will be processed in accordance with the principles of that legislation, as necessary for the performance of the contract of employment and as set out in the organisation's privacy notice. Personal information about employees, including information in personnel files, will be held securely and privately in accordance with the organisation's Data Protection Policies and Procedures.

7.2 Minutes of formal meetings will be given to the employee for information and copies of notes, letters and other relevant documentation should be retained on file.