



EXCELLENCE
GIRLS ACADEMY
LEARNERS TODAY - LEADERS TOMORROW

Whistle-blowing Policy

Approved by:	Mohammed Ummar Azam -Chair of Governors
Reviewed by:	Laura Webb - Governor
Last reviewed:	August 2023
Next review:	August 2024

1. 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
- 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)

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

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Independent School Standards.

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

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 aren't limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' 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

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. 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.

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.

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

4.1 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.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the 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 Governors.

If the concern is about or involves the Chair of Governors, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should escalate their concern as outlined in section 7.

4.3 How to raise the concern

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.

It is strongly recommended that the Whistleblowing Form (Appendix 1) is completed.

4.4 Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the person(s) if they request this. If we are unable to resolve the concern without revealing their identity (e.g. statement needed for the purposes of undertaking a statutory investigation), we will discuss this with them.

4.5 Anonymous allegations

Where possible, we encourage any person to provide their details because concerns raised anonymously are less powerful but will still be considered and action taken will be dependent on the following:

- The seriousness of the issue raised;
- The credibility of the concern;
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from an attributable source.

4.6 External concerns

If the concern is raised outside of the school, this policy does not apply. Where a concern is raised outside of the school it is the responsibility of the person raising the concern to ensure they comply with the requirements of the Public Disclosure Act 1998. Personal and sensitive information should not be disclosed.

5. School procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern

5.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Acknowledge the concern within 10 working days.
- 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.
- Reiterate, at this meeting, 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 (see section 6 of this policy)
- 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 other members of the Governing Body if appropriate, or with the support of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). In some cases, they may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate. In others cases, they may need to report the matter to the police or Ofsted - Ofsted should be contacted with details of the allegation and the actions that were taken within 14 days by writing to Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD or by contacting them via phone on 0300 123 1231.
 - 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 amount of contact between the person leading the investigation and the member of staff who raised the concern will depend on the nature of the concern raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of

the information provided. If necessary, the school will seek further information from staff, as part of the investigation process.

The school will take steps to minimize any difficulties experienced by the person as a result of raising any concerns. For instance, if they are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the school will arrange for them to receive support.

5.2 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 Headteacher, trustees and other staff if necessary will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

The school maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcome, but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality.

6. Malicious or vexatious 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.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

Any staff who unreasonably and without justification raises such issues on a wider basis, such as with the press, without following the steps and advice in this procedure may also be subject to the school's disciplinary procedure.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the Governing Body

Excellence Girls Academy 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.

If a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their senior leadership or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed or are not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, they can access the Government's guidance via www.gov.uk/whistleblowing which includes a list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with (linked [here](#)).

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available via 0800 028 0285 (8am-8pm Mon-Fri) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) also has a free and confidential [advice line](#) which can help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

8. Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed every year but may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary.

It will be reviewed by the Governing Body and approved by the Chair of Governors at every review.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our:

- > Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- > Complaints Policy
- > Staff Code of Conduct
- > Staff Discipline Procedure
- > Staff Grievance Procedure

Appendix 1: Whistleblowing Form

Please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body.

Name:	
Address or contact details:	
Best time to contact you:	
Person Assisting You (e.g. relative, friend, union official)	
Their address or contact details:	
Details of your concern: (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)	
Signature:	
Date:	

Thank you for completing this form.

Within 10 working days of receipt of your concern the person appointed to investigate your concern will write to you as set out in the Whistleblowing Policy. Your concern will be treated in confidence.