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Whistleblowing Policy

Status	Statutory
Version	8
Responsible Directors' Board	Finance and Operations Committee
Responsible Persons	Deputy CEO and Head of Governance
Date Policy Reviewed	August 2024
Next Review Date	September 2025
Academy to implement without Amendment, using appendix when required	



Exceed Learning Partnership
• EVERY CHILD • EVERY CHANCE • EVERY DAY •



Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Updates
V3	July 2018	B Nixon	None
V3	Sept 2019	B Nixon	None
V4	Sept 2020	D Ashmore	Updated contact details for PCAW- now Protect.
V5	Sept 2021	L Birley	PCAW changed to Protect throughout. Link to ESFA online link updated (pg 7)
V6	Sept 2022	L Birley	No changes
V7	01/08/2023	Dawn Slater	Updated onto new format.
V8	August 2024	Head of Governance	Transferred to new version and formatted Added Executive Principal/Principal Updated support link to new DfE customer help portal



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1. Introduction

Exceed Learning Partnership is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the Academies' policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This procedure is not a substitute for normal line management processes but an addition to them. Staff should always first consider using normal line management for raising concerns. This procedure is only for the purpose of raising concerns about wrongdoing and is not a substitute or alternative for existing procedures such as the Grievance, Disciplinary Procedures for staff or the complaints procedure.

This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through the normal line management.

2. Aims of Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns.
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Protect (formally Public Concern at Work).

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff within Exceed Learning Partnership Trust and the Trust reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

This Policy reflects the Trust's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including the Members, Directors, Governors, CEO, Executive Principal/Principal and members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers.

3. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns;
- miscarriages of justice;



- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- negligence;
- breach of the Academy's internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct;
- conduct likely to damage the Trust's reputation;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Trust's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to employee's own personal circumstances, such as the way in which an employee has been treated at work. In those cases, an employee should follow the Grievance Policy and Procedure.

If employees are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, they should seek advice from the CEO or Executive Principal/Principal and if the matter is in relation to an alleged wrongdoing by the CEO - seek the advice of the Chair of Directors or if the Executive Principal/Principal seek advice from the CEO.

4. Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

The Trust hopes that in many cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with their Line Manager, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively. In some cases, they may refer the matter to the CEO or the Local Governing Body.

However, where the matter is more serious, or felt that the Line Manager has not addressed the concern, or the employee prefers not to raise it with the Line Manager for any reason, the employee should contact one of the following:

- CEO
- Executive Principal/Principal of the Academy
- The Chair of Governors who is responsible for Whistleblowing matters.

The Executive Principal/Principal will arrange a meeting with the 'whistleblower' as soon as practicable to discuss their concern. They will record sufficient details to enable the matter to be thoroughly investigated. As a minimum the Executive Principal/Principal will record the name of the employee but also indicate whether the individual wishes their identity to remain confidential, if possible and the nature of the concern. In some cases, it will not be possible to maintain confidentiality and the Executive Principal/Principal should explain this to the employee. In such instances the employee will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to their identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.



Employees may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this policy who must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

The Trust will take notes and produce a written summary of the concern raised and provide the 'whistleblower' with a copy as soon as practicable after the meeting. The Trust will also aim to give the "whistleblower" an indication of how it proposes to deal with the matter. As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or Executive Principal/Principal. However, depending upon the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice, it may not be appropriate to contact the Executive Principal/Principal. Where this is the case, you should report your concern directly to the CEO or the Chair of Governors of Chair of Directors.

5. Confidentiality

The Trust hopes that employees will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise their concern confidentially, the Trust will endeavour to keep their identity private in so far as it is possible to do so when following this policy and procedure. If it is necessary for anyone investigating that member of staff's concern to know the 'whistleblower's identity, the Trust will discuss this with the member of staff first.

The Trust does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the Trust cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. 'Whistleblowers' who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the contacts listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

If an individual misuses the policy and procedure e.g., by making malicious or repeated unsubstantiated complaints against colleagues this could give rise to action under the Trusts Disciplinary Procedure. If the Executive Principal/Principal knows or has a suspicion that an employee comes into this category, then they will take advice from the CEO or the Chair of Governors who will help to determine what action should be taken.

If in any doubt employees can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Protect (formally Public Concern at Work, Independent whistle blowing charity) Helpline: 020 3117 2520

E-mail: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-us/>

6. Concerns Against Governors/Directors

If a concern against a Governor is received, then this will be treated in the same way as any other concern. It will receive the same serious consideration. The concern will be raised by the Executive Principal/Principal with the CEO or Chair of Governors who will decide how it should be dealt with.

If the concern is against the Chair of Governors, then clearly this process cannot be followed. In such circumstances, the concern will be taken directly to the Executive Principal/Principal who will decide in consultation with the Safeguarding Governor and the CEO with responsibility for Whistleblowing



matters how it should be dealt with. In normal circumstances such a concern would be referred to the Board of Directors.

If a concern against a director is received, then this will be treated in the same way as any other concern. It will receive the same serious consideration. The concern will be raised by the CEO with the Chair of Directors who will decide how it should be dealt with. If the concern is against the Chair of Directors, then clearly this process cannot be followed. In such circumstances, the concern will be taken directly to the CEO who will decide in consultation with the Safeguarding Director with responsibility for Whistleblowing matters how it should be dealt with. In normal circumstances such a concern would be referred to the Department for Education.

7. External Disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating, and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for employees to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media.

We strongly encourage employees to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external.

Other avenues which may be of use:

By Post:

The Education and Skills Funding Agency
Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Online: via this link

<https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/>

Telephone:

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01302 737748.
HR Department RMBC 01709 336060

8. Investigation and Outcome

Once a member of staff has raised a concern, the Trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The Trust will inform the 'whistleblower' of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information.

In most cases a panel of three Governors will investigate any issue. In rare cases the Trust may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of



investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the Trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The Trust will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the Trust from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the Trust concludes that a ‘whistleblower’ has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the ‘whistleblower’ will be subject to disciplinary action under the Trust’s Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Whilst the Trust cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking, the Trust will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled, they can raise it with one of the other key contacts outlined above.

There are no rights of appeal against any decisions taken under this procedure. However, an employee or the Executive Principal/Principal will have the right to refer any case to the Chair of Governors for review.

Any member of staff raising a concern under the procedure will be kept informed of progress by the Executive Principal/Principal, including, where appropriate, the outcome. However, in certain circumstances, e.g., where disciplinary action under the Trust’s Disciplinary Procedure has resulted from the concern, it may not be appropriate to provide specific details due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of such matters.

9. Protection and Support for ‘Whistleblowers’

It is understandable that ‘whistleblowers’ are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment because of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Executive Principal/Principal immediately. If the matter is not remedied the member of staff should raise it formally using the Trust’s Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against ‘whistleblowers’ in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.



10. Safeguarding

If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Executive Principal/Principal is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Executive Principal/Principal, they should in the first instance contact the CEO or Chair of Governors.

If they still believe the issue hasn't been resolved, they can then contact:
The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01302 737748

Policy Agreed: September 2023 and reviewed August 2024

Signed CEO: *B.A. Nixon*

Signed: Chair of Directors: *J.P. Blum*

Policy to be reviewed in September 2025