

Mercia Primary Academy Trust

Lark Hall Infant & Nursery Academy
Flax Hill Junior Academy

Whistleblowing Policy

Legislative Framework

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1999 - sets out a framework of protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers who blow the whistle on ("disclosure") criminal behaviour and other specified forms of malpractice.

The Act does not provide a general protection for whistleblowers that applies in all circumstances. It applies to making a 'protected' disclosure in respect of specific types of malpractice, which are:

- criminal behaviour
- failure to comply with a legal obligation
- miscarriage of justice
- endangering someone's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

The Act covers internal disclosures to the employer, disclosures to prescribed 'persons' such as regulatory bodies (e.g. for health and safety, the Health and Safety Executive), and wider disclosures, for example to the police and the media.

Policy Statement

Mercia Primary Academy Trust expects employees, and others that we deal with, (such as contractors, agency staff and partners), who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work to come forward and voice those concerns. If and when they do, provided they act in good faith and follow the laid down procedures, the Trust will do everything it can to ensure that they are not victimised in any way.

The Trust will, at its discretion, consider disclosures that are made anonymously, although such disclosures are inevitably much less powerful. The Trust will also treat every disclosure in confidence, and only reveal the identity of the person making it if absolutely necessary (e.g. if required in connection with legal action).

The Trust will keep people who make disclosures informed about the progress and (subject to legal constraints) outcome of any investigation carried out.

However frivolous, malicious, or allegations made for personal gain, may result in disciplinary action against the person making them.

Trade Union

There are many trade unions working within Staffordshire County Council who can assist with this process. It is recommended that a trade union representative be contacted at the earliest stage so that appropriate advice, guidance and support can be offered to the employee.

HR Units

Insight HR can assist with the interpretation and application of this process. It is recommended that an HR representative be contacted at the earliest stage so that appropriate advice, guidance and support can be offered to both the manager and employee.

Guidance On How To Apply The Policy

Making a Protected Disclosure

To make a 'protected' disclosure the whistleblower has to meet certain conditions.

- Disclosure to the employer will be protected if it is made in good faith and the whistleblower has a reasonable suspicion that the alleged malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- Disclosure to a regulatory body will be protected where, in addition, the whistleblower honestly and reasonably believes that the information they provide and any allegation contained in it are substantially true.
- Disclosure to other external bodies will be protected if, in addition, making it is in all respects reasonable. "In all respects reasonable" means, in effect:

the disclosure is not made for personal gain–
the whistleblower– reasonably believed that they would be victimised if they raised the matter internally
there is no relevant regulatory body–
they reasonably– believed that evidence was likely to be concealed or destroyed
the concern– has already been raised with the employer and/or relevant regulatory body
the concern is of an "exceptionally serious" nature - which in a local– government setting could include, say, the alleged abuse of children or vulnerable adults in an authority's care or corruption.

Having taken advice as appropriate, an employee of the Trust, or any other person covered by the Act, who has serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work, should in the first instance inform one of the Contact Officers whose details are given in Appendix A.

The initial contact can be by telephone or in writing, and if the latter should be in a sealed envelope addressed to the officer concerned and marked: 'PIDA - Strictly Private and Confidential'. E-mail is not a secure medium and must not be used.

The Contact Officer who has received a disclosure will: (a) acknowledge its receipt, in writing, within 5 working days; (b) seek further information if need be, including by personal interview, at which the individual can be accompanied by an official of their trade union or professional association, or by a fellow employee; (c) when the precise nature of the alleged malpractice is established, refer the disclosure to the Monitoring Officer; (d) in liaison with the Monitoring Officer, keep the individual informed regarding the progress and (subject to legal constraints) outcome of any investigation.

On receipt of a disclosure from a Contact Officer the Monitoring Officer will determine what further action, if any, is needed, which may comprise:

- internal investigation
- report to the Police
- report to external audit
- independent enquiry
- any combination of the above

The Monitoring Officer will also ensure that the Contact Officer is advised of progress and outcome.

If at the end of the process an employee of the Trust, or any other person covered by the Act, is not satisfied with how a disclosure has been dealt with, they may refer to one of the regulatory bodies/other external agencies whose details are listed in Appendix B. As with the internal disclosure, before referring to one of these bodies the individual should consider: do I honestly and reasonably believe that my concerns are well founded and that any allegations I am about to make are substantially true?

Exceptionally, the Act offers protection in respect of disclosures made to people or bodies not listed in Appendix B but only when, all things considered, it is reasonable to do this and the disclosure is not made for personal gain. In addition, one of the following must apply:

- The matter has been raised already with the employer and/or relevant regulatory body, or
- The person reasonably believed that they would be victimised if they raised the matter internally; or
- There is no relevant regulatory body, and they reasonably believed that evidence was likely to be concealed or destroyed; or
- Their concern is of an "exceptionally serious" nature, which is for them to determine.

Levels of Authority

Throughout this policy document, there are many references to Contact Officer. For the purposes of this policy 'Contact Officer' is the person delegated by the Directors to perform the task. The Contact Officer's are listed in Appendix A.

Other considerations

The Trust will monitor the application of this policy and, in conjunction with the recognised trade unions, review and revise it as necessary.

Accountabilities

Monitoring Officer - has overall responsibility for the proper application of the policy. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for deciding, in respect of ALL disclosures, whether there will be a formal investigation, what form it will take and who will carry it out.

Contact Officers – Chair of Local Governing Body Directors to receive disclosures, obtain further information if need be, refer disclosures to the Monitoring Officer, carry out investigations as required, and keep the whistleblower informed regarding the progress and (subject to legal constraints) outcome of any investigation.

Further Advice and Information

This policy document is for general guidance only. *If* you need any further advice on how to apply this policy please contact your headteacher.

Independent advice on 'whistleblowing' can also be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work and from the Audit Commission. Contact details for these organisations are:

Public Concern at Work
Suite 306
16 Baldwins Gardens
London EC1N 7RJ
Helpline: 020 7404 6609
E-mail: helpline@pcaw.co.uk

Audit Commission
1 Vincent Square
London SW1P 2PN
Telephone: 020 7828 1212
E-mail: enquiries@audit-commission.gov.uk

Further information and Advice

Further background information on this topic is available on the following

Websites:

www.dti.gov.uk

www.acas.org.uk

www.lg-employers.gov.uk

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

www.pcaw.co.uk

See also national conditions of service and local agreements before determining or issuing advice.

Other Contacts

Please note that the Trust takes no responsibility or liability for any material produced by or contained in external sites or for any advice or services given by external organisations. It is the responsibility solely of each person to decide whether or not they use any such material, advice or service.

Standard Documents

This information can be made available in a range of formats and languages, including Braille and large print. If this would be useful to you or someone you know, please contact your headteacher.

Public Interest Disclosures

The Trust acknowledges that anyone who is not satisfied with its response to a disclosure they have made under this policy is entitled in law to disclose elsewhere. Appendix B lists the names and addresses of bodies to whom disclosures can be made, including bodies prescribed by the Government.

Mercia Primary Academy Trust Monitoring Officers

Whistle Blowing Procedure

Directors

Vic Van Den Bergh	
Lisa Colclough	
Richard Lane	
Michelle Haywood	
Emma Bryan	

Mercia Primary Academy Trust Contact Officers

Local Governing Body Chairs

Wayne Pell-Walpolle (FH)	
Marion Couchman (FH)	

Deputy Headteachers

Sue Boden (FH)	
Michelle Booth (LH)	
Neil Probert (FH)	

External/Prescribed Bodies

Health & Safety Exec.
Area Office
Marches House
The Midway
Newcastle under Lyme
(Info line tel: 08701 545500)

Environment Agency
(no local address)
Tel: 0845 933 3111 (enquiries)
0800 807060 (to report
accidents)

Staffordshire Police HQ
Cannock Road
Stafford
ST17 0QG
Tel: 0185 257717

Inland Revenue
Greyfriars House
Greyfriars
Stafford
Tel: 01785 256222

Customs & Excise
Newcastle under Lyme Business
Centre
Blackburn House
Newcastle under Lyme
ST5 1UT
Tel: 01782 753600
(Enqs: 0121 697 4295)

Citizens' Advice Bureau
131 North Walls
Stafford
Tel: 01785 258673

Data Protection Registrar
Local Govt. Ombudsman
Pensions Ombudsman
11 Belgrave Road
London
SW1V 1RB
Tel. 0171 834 9144

Audit Commission
1 Vincent Square
London
SW1P 2PN

Signed
Director, Mercia Primary Academy Trust

Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Changes	Reasons for Alterations
2	02.12.2015	HR Advisers are Insight HR Limited Neil Probert added	