



Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by: K. Henton

Last reviewed on: 01/09/23

Next review due: 01/09/24

1. Aims of the Policy

- Encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible to a senior member of staff in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated. They will also feel that their confidentiality will be respected.
- Ensure all staff at the Academy are aware how to raise concerns.
- Set clear procedure for how the Academy will respond to such concerns.
- Ensure all staff are aware that protection will be offered to them should 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)

2. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is also set out and referenced in the Stone Soup Academy staff Handbook 2021.

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as government guidance on whistleblowing.

3. Definition of whistleblowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”.

Examples can include but are not limited to the following:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Failing to comply with a legal obligation
- Endangering the health and safety of an individual
- Environmental damage
- Theft or misuse of Academy property or assets
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Possible fraud or corruption
- Serious departure from professional standards
- Sexual or physical abuse of children, colleagues or another person linked to the Academy
- Neglect or emotional abuse of children in the Academy
- Serious breach of Academy and other relevant regulations, or
- Concealing any information relating to the above

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

Not all concerns about the trust count as whistleblowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying, or harassment do not usually count as whistleblowing. 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.

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

You should in the first instance report your concerns to the Principal who will treat the matter with complete confidentiality. If you are not satisfied with the explanation or reason given to you, you should raise the matter with the appropriate organisation or body, e.g., the Police, the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, or Social Services Department.

If you cannot report your concerns to the Principal or Vice Principal you may take them directly to the Chair of Governors (particularly if your Whistleblowing involves the Principal) or appropriate organisation or body.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 prevents you from suffering a detriment or having your contract terminated for 'whistleblowing' and we take very seriously any concerns which you may raise under this legislation.

We encourage you to use the procedure if you are concerned about any wrongdoing at work. However, if the procedure has not been invoked in good faith (e.g., for malicious reasons or in pursuit of a personal grudge), then disciplinary action may be taken against you, up to and including dismissal.

5. Stone Soup Academy procedure for responding to a whistle-blowing concern.

When a concern is received by the Principal - referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the staff member raising the concern within a reasonable time. The staff member 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 the Principal and other SLT members 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 staff member 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.

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 staff member 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 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.

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 trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

7. Escalating concerns beyond the Academy

The 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. This may include Union representatives, governors or the DFE.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Safeguarding policy
- Child protection policy
- Staff conduct.
- Complaints procedure
- Staff grievance policy