



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Windsor Academy Trust (WAT) is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of its work, to come forward and voice those concerns through agreed procedures, without fear of harassment or victimisation.
- 1.2 It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. WAT aims to ensure that all staff are protected from possible reprisals or disadvantage where they have raised concerns or disclosed information where they have a genuine concern.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all employees of WAT, which throughout this policy includes staff and Directors/Trustees. It also covers contractors, agency staff, volunteers, suppliers and those providing services under a contract with WAT from their own premises.
- 1.4 There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to employment. Therefore personal grievances (e.g. bullying, harassment, discrimination) will be dealt with under the WAT Grievance policy, unless the particular case is in the public interest.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation.

## 2. Aim of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
  - “ Encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
  - “ Provide avenues for employees to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
  - “ Ensure that employees receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue the matter if they are dissatisfied with the response
  - “ Reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation for disclosures made where they have a genuine concern.
- 2.2. This policy is intended to cover major concerns that are in the public interest and that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:
  - “ Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law, including data protection “
  - Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice

- “ Significant health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- “ Damage to the environment
- “ The unauthorised use of public funds
- “ Possible fraud and corruption
- “ Sexual, emotional or physical abuse or neglect of clients, or other unethical conduct.

*NB: This list is not exhaustive*

2.3. Any genuine serious concerns that employees have about suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any aspect of service provision or the conduct of any Academy staff, Local Advisory Body (LAB) members, Directors or others acting on behalf of WAT, or suspected wrongdoing or can be reported under this policy. This may be about something that:

- “ makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe

3.1.3 WAT will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect employees when they raise a genuine concern under this policy.

3.1.4 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that may already affect the individual.

## **3.2 Confidentiality**

3.2.1 All concerns raised under this policy will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity, if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may be asked to come forward as a witness.

## **3.3 Anonymous Allegations**

3.3.1 This policy encourages staff to put their names to allegations, whenever possible. It may be difficult to progress anonymous complaints as it is more difficult to establish whether allegations are credible. Anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of WAT. WAT will exercise discretion depending on:

- “ The seriousness of the issues raised
- “ The credibility of the concern; and
- “ The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

## **3.4 Unfounded Allegations**

3.4.1 If an employee makes an allegation where they have a genuine concern, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, individuals make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

## **3.5 Support to Employees**

3.5.1 It is recognised that raising concerns can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available, as appropriate, to both the employee(s) raising the concerns and any employee(s) subject to investigation.

## **4 How to raise a Concern**

4.1 Employees should normally raise concerns with their immediate line manager, the Headteacher, the Executive team or the Chair of the LAB. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is sus.00000886gcue olf, however,

- “ the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates, names, places etc where possible), and
- “ the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation

4.3 Although staff are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for the concern.

4.4 Advice or guidance on how to pursue matters of concern may be obtained internally from:

**Dawn Haywood, 7\ JYZ9I YW hj YDj Office**

Tel: 0121 602 7594

[dhaywood@windsoracademytrust.org.uk](mailto:dhaywood@windsoracademytrust.org.uk)

**Head of HR**

Tel: 0121 602 7594

[hr@windsoracademytrust.org.uk](mailto:hr@windsoracademytrust.org.uk)

**(Insert Academy Contact Details)**

4.5 If you are unsure whether or how to use this policy, you may seek free confidential help from the independent charity, **Protect**, Tel: 020 3117 2520 or via email on [whistle@protect-advice.org.uk](mailto:whistle@protect-advice.org.uk)

Public Concern at Work will also be able to help if you feel that it would be inappropriate to speak to any of the officers referred to above.

4.6 Employees may also wish to consider discussing their concern with a colleague or trade union first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) individuals who have had the same experience or concerns.

4.7 Employees may invite their Trade Union or professional association representative or work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised under this policy. The companion must respect confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

## **5. How WAT will respond**

5.1 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, WAT will write to the individual:

- “ acknowledging that the concern has been received
- “ indicating how they propose to deal with the matter
- “ informing the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made
- “ informing the employee whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

5.2 The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- “ be investigated internally (delegated to an appropriate person)

