Amadeus Primary Academies Trust
Whistleblowing Policy

Date: September 2024	Review: January 2027
Date of approval: Autumn 2024	By whom: Trust Board
Status: Statutory	Leadership Lead: S Bridges

Board Summary

The Amadeus Primary Academy Trust (Trust) is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) made up of six schools in the Bexley and Bromley area:

- Castilion Primary School
- Holy Trinity Lamorbey CE Primary School
- St Paulinus CE Primary School
- Old Bexley CE Primary School
- Hillsgrove Primary School
- St Paul's Cray CE Primary School

All of the schools are working together to provide an exciting opportunity to improve the education and life chances for all our children.

Introduction

The Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in all of its activities. It also expects a high standard of conduct and integrity from employees. Any employee who has a serious concern about any aspect of the Trust's work, any of the individual academies work, or the actions of any of its employees, should voice their concerns through established internal channels, without fear of harassment or victimisation. It is vitally important that every member of staff understands their responsibilities in relation to voicing their concerns and this policy seeks to offer guidance.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing inside the workplace is the term used to describe reporting by employees or ex-employees, of wrongdoing on the part of leadership, central Trust employees, academy leadership teams, the Local Governing Body, or by any other employee. Examples of possible concerns are outlined in the purpose section of this policy.

Protecting the whistleblower

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 a 'whistleblower' is protected from detriment and unfair dismissal. The Trust and therefore its academies will support and not discriminate against concerned employees who apply the whistleblowing procedure, provided any claim is in good faith.

The Trust and its academies recognise that the decision to report a concern can be difficult to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the subject that gives rise to the concern. If concerns are raised in good faith, there will be nothing to fear because employees will be doing their duty to the employer and to those for whom they are providing a service.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon their concerns
- Provide avenues for employees to raise these concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the Trust / Academy's response
- Reassure them that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith, in accordance with the procedure
- This policy applies to all employees including those working on a temporary or casual basis
- There are existing procedures in place to allow staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment within the Academy's Grievance Policy
- This Policy is intended to cover reasonably serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. That concern may be about any of the following:
    - A criminal conviction that has been, is being, or is likely to be committed
    - Fraud and corruption
    - Unauthorised use of public funds
    - Any concerns of a safeguarding nature
    - A failure to comply with a legal obligation
    - A health and safety risk relating to any individual
    - A miscarriage of justice
    - A damage to the environment
    - Actions that are contrary to any of the Trust / Academy policies
    - Actions or behaviour that fall below established standards of practice
    - Abuse and welfare of students or staff
    - Harassment or victimisation of students or staff
    - Any actions or concerns regarding practice that could result in a financial loss to the Trust / Academy
    - The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above matters
    - Other unethical conduct

This list is not exhaustive.

Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with issues between an employee and the Academy which relate to the employees own employment, or rights of employment conditions generally.

Whistleblowing is not appropriate for dealing with student complaints, which will be dealt with under separately published procedures.

Whistleblowing is not appropriate to specific cases of child safety or safeguarding which will be dealt with under the procedures specified in that connection.

Procedure

Making a disclosure – initial action

As soon as an employee becomes reasonably concerned about a matter, they should first raise the issue with their line manager [the "receiving manager"], unless the disclosure concerns them, in which case the employee should arrange to discuss with the Principal or a member of the Trust Leadership Team. If the matter is of a safeguarding concern, the employee should raise it immediately with a member of the Trust Leadership Team.

Disclosures involving the Principal should be raised with a member of the Trust Leadership Team. In this case, the Trust Leadership may appoint an independent investigator to consider the case, and consider if there are grounds for proceeding. Disclosures concerning a member of the Senior Leadership Team [SLT] should be raised with the Principal of that Academy.

All 'receiving managers' have a responsibility to act on the concerns raised, in accordance with this procedure. Failure to do so in accordance with the policy and procedure may lead to disciplinary action.

Preferably concerns must be raised in writing without undue delay setting out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates, places where possible, and the reason for the employee's particular concern.

Once a concern is raised about an employee as outlined in the table below, the receiving manager should alert the appropriate decision maker. The decision maker will determine whether the matter constitutes a disclosure or whether it should be dealt with under another procedure [the employee will be informed of this]. If the matter is dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy then the employee will be informed of the name of the Investigating Officer.

Concern raised	Decision maker	Appeal / Escalation
Concern in relation to an Academy employee	Principal Email appropriate Principal	Trust Leadership Team Trust Board
Concern in relation to a Principal	Trust Leadership Team Email:sbridges@apat.org.uk	Trust Board
Concern in relation to Trust Leadership Team member	Trust Board Email: clerk@apat.org.uk	Trust Board
Concern in relation to a member of a Local Governing Body	Trust Leadership Team Email:sbridges@apat.org.uk	Trust Board
Concern in relation to a member of the Trust Board	Trust Board (where appropriate) Email: clerk@apat.org.uk	Members

Any concern raised in an individual Academy should be immediately notified to the Chief Finance and Operations Officer. They can provide support, guidance and advice.

Within ten working days of a concern being received, the Investigating Officer will write to the employee:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how they propose to deal with the matter
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not

The Investigating Officer will also inform any employee against whom allegations are made against, of the detail of the allegations. This will normally be done in writing within ten working days. However this may be delayed if it is likely to jeopardise the investigation.

Handling a disclosure

The Investigating Officer will be responsible for deciding whether there are grounds for proceeding further with the case, they should discuss possible outcomes with the Trust Leadership Team, or otherwise indicated by the table on page 3. Potential action that the Investigating Officer could take includes:

- formal investigation by the Investigating Officer or internal auditors
- referral to the police
- referral to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry by an outside body

Appendix 1 provides details of the timescale and the role of the Investigating Officer.

Any internal investigation should take no longer than necessary to complete from the date of receipt of the original disclosure.

Ordinarily, there should be no delay due to school holidays, however, there are sometimes exceptional circumstances, but in these instances, the employee/s will be kept updated. As part of the investigation, the Investigation Officer will decide:

- whether disciplinary action be recommended against any employee
- whether changes should be recommended to any Trust or Academy procedure
- whether any other action should be recommended

These will be detailed in a final report.

The Investigating Officer will send a copy of the final report, including recommendations, to the decision maker outlined in the table on page 3 who will consider the recommendations and determine what action, if any, to take. The decision maker will also give a response in writing to the employee who made the disclosure as soon as possible after the completion of the investigation. This response will include the outcome of the investigation and what action, if any, is to be taken, although precise details may not be given where there are legal constraints, or it would infringe a duty of confidence owed by the Academy to someone else, or where there are business reasons for not doing so.

The individual who is subject to the disclosure will also be informed of the outcome in writing and what action, if any, is to be taken as soon as possible, or within reasonable time after the completion of the investigation.

Appeal

An employee who raises a concern and is not satisfied with the outcome or action proposed may appeal against the decision by following the table on page 3. An appeal should be made (in writing) to the appropriate person within five working days of receipt of the outcome letter. For any guidance please contact the Chief Finance and Operations Officer.

The appeal should be completed within one month.

After the appeal process is exhausted, there is no further right of internal appeal. However, if the employee remains dissatisfied they may raise the matter further by contacting an outside agency.

An employee who is subject to action arising from a whistleblowing disclosure will be able to make representations, within five working days, to the appropriate person (outlined in the table on page 3) about the outcome of the report. The appropriate person will consider these representations and may direct further investigation or review as appropriate.

Further Points

In order to protect individuals and those accused of possible wrongdoing or malpractice, initial enquiries will be made by the appropriate person to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Some concerns may be resolved by an agreed action without the need for formal investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues, and the complainant employee will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided.

The Trust will take steps to minimise any difficulties which employees may experience as a result of raising a concern.

The Trust accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and will ensure this happens.

Subject to legal constraints, employees will normally receive feedback about the outcomes of any investigations.

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns within the Trust and Local Governing Bodies. The Trust hopes that employees will be satisfied with any action taken under this policy.

If the employee raising the concern is unhappy with the outcome the next steps are to contact the person named in the table on page 3, under escalation. An employee should, prior to raising the concern outside of the Academy, first go through the internal procedure.

Whistleblowing

There is a whistleblowing advice line which is available should a member of staff feel they need external advice. The number is 0800 028 0285 and is open Monday to Friday, 8am - 8pm.

Policy Review

This policy will be monitored as part of the Trust's annual internal review or as required by legislature changes.

Appendix 1

Timescales Action	Timescale	By Who
Written acknowledgement of disclosure made in writing, including an outline of process to be followed	Within 10 working days	Investigating Officer
Confirm in writing to the person complaining that a disclosure has been received and that it is being considered. Outline the process to be followed	Within 10 working days	Investigating Officer
Written confirmation of the outcome of investigation and action to be taken. Report sent to the appropriate person with recommendations and determination of suggested action to take. Letters sent to employee and person complained of	Within three months of receipt of disclosure but as soon as practically possible to do so	Decision Maker
Appeal against outcome of investigation	Within five working days from receipt of outcome	Employee who makes the disclosure
Appeal carried out	Within one month of appeal being received	Escalation member
Appeal to the decision maker	Within five working days from receipt of outcome	Employee subject to the disclosure

These timescales only apply if the original disclosure is not acted upon under one of the Trust's other policies. If the decision of the Chief Finance and Operations Officer is that it falls under a separate procedure, then the timescales for that procedure will apply.