



Whistleblowing Policy

Last Update: May 2021 (version 5.0)

Document Control

Changes History

| Version | Date | Amended by | Recipients | Purpose |
|---------|----------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1.0 | 23.11.16 | Human Resources | All Plymouth CAST staff | New Policy |
| 2.0 | 20.04.17 | Human Resources | All Plymouth CAST staff | Changes in Board |
| 3.0 | Sept2018 | Raymond Friel, CEO | All Plymouth CAST staff | Changes to Scheme of Delegation |
| 4.0 | Feb 2020 | Karen Cook, CFOO | All Plymouth CAST Staff | |
| 5.0 | May 2021 | Karen Cook, CFOO | All Plymouth CAST Staff | No substantive changes – amending dates for review |
| | | | | |

Approvals

This policy requires the following approvals:

| Board | Chair | CEO | Date Approved | Version | Date for Review |
|-------|-------|-----|----------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| * | | | Final Version 26 October 2018 | 3.0 | September 2019 |
| * | | | 28 February 2020 | 4.0 | February 2021 |
| * | | | 14 May 2021 | 5.0 | May 2024 |

National/Local Policy

This policy must be localised by Academies

This policy must not be changed, it is a CAST/National Policy (only change logo, contact details and any yellow highlights)

Position with the Unions

Does the policy require consultation with the National Unions under our recognition agreement?

Yes No If yes, the policy status is: Consulted and Approved Consulted and Not Approved Awaiting Consultation

Distribution

This draft document has been distributed to:

| Position | Date | Version |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| Joint Unions | 7 Sept 2018 | 3.0 (draft) |
| Board | 14 Sept 2018 | 3.0 (draft) |
| Board | 28 February 2020 | 4.0 |

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|-------------|------------|-----|
| All schools | March 2020 | |
| Board | May 2021 | 5.0 |
| All schools | May 2021 | 5.0 |

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1. Vision and Values

Plymouth CAST is a multi-academy trust of Catholic schools which is part of the mission of the Catholic Church dedicated to human flourishing and the building of a kingdom of peace, truth and justice. The Trust is to be conducted in all aspects in accordance with canon law and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and at all times to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our vision and values are derived from our identity as a Catholic Trust. Central to our vision is the dignity of the human person, especially the most vulnerable. Our academies are dedicated to providing an education and formation where all our pupils and young people flourish in a safe, nurturing, enriching environment. All governors in our academies are expected to be familiar with the vision, mission, values and principles of the Trust and not in any way to undermine them. They should support and promote the vision and conduct themselves at all times in school and on school business according to the vision and principles of the Trust

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust
- Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing 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)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

3. Legislation

The requirement to have clear whistleblowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academies Financial Handbook](#).

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

4. Definition of whistleblowing

Whistleblowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistleblowing include (but aren't limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest

- Damage to the environment

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.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

5. Procedure for staff to raise a whistleblowing concern

5.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistleblowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

5.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Clerk to the Trust Board of Directors. If the concern is about the Clerk to the Board or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the named Director (Ann Harris) with a responsibility for whistleblowing.

5.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

6. Trust procedure for responding to a whistleblowing concern

6.1 Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the Clerk to the Board - referred to from here as the 'recipient' – they, or where considered appropriate the HR Manager will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person 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 whistleblowing 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 named Director, 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 person 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

6.2 Outcome of the investigation

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 any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person 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 headteacher, directors 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.

7. 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.

8. Escalating concerns beyond the Trust

The trust 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. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

9. Approval

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless there is updated guidance from the DFE/ESFA. These procedures have been agreed by the Board of Directors, who will approve them whenever reviewed.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff grievance policy
- Complaints procedure
- Child protection policy