



**CARLTON**  
ACADEMY TRUST

## **Whistleblowing Policy**

**Approved on behalf of Trustees:**

**Gareth Logan**

**Date:**

**September 2021**

**Next Review date:**

**September 2022**



## **Aims and Scope of Policy**

The Trust is committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct. In order to maintain these, we encourage anyone with serious concerns to come forward and disclose them. This policy sets out the framework for employees to confidentially raise serious concerns without fear of reprisal, victimisation or harassment. Its provisions apply to all staff, Trustees, volunteers and contractors.

## **Types of Concern**

Concerns raised commonly include (non-exhaustive list):

- An unlawful or a criminal offence
- Breach of a legal obligation
- Miscarriage of justice
- Mistreatment or abuse
- Health and safety at work
- Unfairness in deciding contracts, job applications, or similar
- Financial malpractice, fraud, corruption or unauthorised use of public funds
- Pollution or damage to the environment
- Unethical conduct

## **Making Disclosures**

Disclosures should be made to the Head of School. If it concerns the Head of School or concerns Central Trust staff, it should be made to the CEO. Concerns about the CEO or Trustees should be made to the Chair of Trustees. Where people are unsure whether to raise a concern, the advice is to always raise it.

After a disclosure is made, the school/Trust will decide on whether to investigate. This decision will consider the seriousness of issues raised, safeguarding of Trust assets and interests, and the likelihood that an investigation can fully establish the facts relating to the disclosure.

All investigations will be conducted fairly and objectively, and afford protection to those making disclosures in good faith. The Trust will not tolerate any resultant harassment or victimisation, which will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

## **Keeping Whistle-blowers Informed**

The school/Trust will formally acknowledge disclosures, writing to all whistle-blowers at their home address within 10 working days. This will outline their concerns and how the school/Trust plans to deal with them.

Where an investigation is required, they will be advised of the nature and estimated length of this process, and confirmation that a union representative/independent person can support them through the investigation.

The school/Trust will also appoint a named person who will inform of progress throughout the investigation. Updates will provide enough detail to assure that their concerns are addressed, without breaching confidentiality guidelines. Concerns about the conduct of the investigation may also be raised with the named person.



### **Anonymous Allegations**

By their nature, anonymous allegations are more difficult to investigate as there is no one to refer back to in order to provide further details or clarification. For this reason, we would encourage those making anonymous allegations to do this via their trade union, enabling them to register their complaint whilst maintaining anonymity.

### **False Allegations**

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees who are found to have made malicious or vexatious allegations. No action will ever be taken against employees making disclosures in good faith.

### **External Disclosures**

Where whistle-blowers feel an internal process hasn't adequately addressed their concerns, they can register their concerns with one or more external agencies. These commonly comprise:

- The Comptroller and Auditor General
- The Charity Commissioners for England and Wales
- The Office of the Children's Commissioner
- OFSTED
- The Regional Schools Commissioner
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Information Commissioner's Office
- Education and Skills Funding Agency

In making an external disclosure, whistle-blowers should take care not to disclose confidential or privileged information, which may include:

- Information that would enable a child to be identified
- Commercially sensitive information
- Third party personal financial information
- Information that is held as part of court proceedings where the information has not been made public
- Legal advice given to the service

### **Record Keeping**

Secure confidential records of all whistleblowing disclosures and investigations will be kept and reported to Trustees.

