



LIGHTHOUSE
SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

WHISTLEBLOWING (SAFEGUARDING) POLICY Statutory

This Policy applies to all schools and employees within the Lighthouse Trust Partnership.

Policy Approved by the Trust Board

Signed: 

Name: Adele Haysom

Date 09 September 2019

Board of Trustees

Authorised for Issue

Signed: 

Name: Gary Lewis

Date 09 September 2019

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

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2.0	Gary Lewis	16.07.19	Changes to reflect that the Trust operates across two LA areas and update external advice contact details.

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1. Preamble

The Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Public Spending Bodies published by The Nolan Committee used the term “whistleblowing” to mean the confidential raising of problems or concerns within an organisation by a member of staff. This refers to matters of impropriety e.g. a breach of law, school procedures or ethics. Whistleblowing does not relate to the raising of a grievance within the School or Trust, these matters should be dealt with through the staff grievance procedures. The scope of this policy is to address the raising of concerns of a safeguarding nature. The Trust’s Business Ethics Policy contains provisions for whistleblowing on matters of financial impropriety or fraud.

2. Introduction

The Trustees, Governors and staff of the Lighthouse Schools Partnership seek to deliver all aspects of our activities with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. If Trustees, Governors, staff, parents, or members of the community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, they may highlight the matter through one of our whistleblowing policies. These act as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provide for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, possibly under the Trust’s disciplinary procedure.

The Lighthouse Schools Partnership is committed to tackling malpractice and treats these issues seriously. The Lighthouse Schools Partnership recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the Trust environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the Trust.

3. When might this Whistleblowing Policy apply?

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns knowing they will be taken seriously. A whistleblower should ask a few questions before taking action:

- Is it, or do you believe it to be, illegal?
- Is it, or do you believe it to be, against codes of practice issued by the Trust, the North Somerset or Bath & North East Somerset Local Authorities, North Somerset or Bath & North East Somerset Child Safeguarding Boards, the Department for Education or a professional body?
- Does it contradict what the employee has been taught, or should have been taught?
- Is it about an individual’s behaviour or is it about general working practices?
- Has the whistleblower witnessed the incident?

If any individual raises malicious unfounded concerns or attempts to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

All allegations should be capable of being dealt with through the disciplinary procedure and will be considered appropriately.

Where the alleged activity or behaviour cannot be dealt with under the scope of other procedures then consideration should be given to using this whistleblowing policy or the Business Ethics Policy, e.g.

- any criminal activity;
- dangerous practices;
- abuse of position;
- sexual or physical abuse of pupils or others;
- other unethical conduct.

Anonymous allegations will only be considered if the issues raised are:

- Very serious;
- The credibility of the allegation is considered to be high;
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation is high.

4. Procedure

- 4.1.1 The Lighthouse Schools Partnership encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance with their line manager or the Headteacher.
- 4.1.2 If the concern relates to the Headteacher the matter should be raised with the Lighthouse Schools Partnership Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.1.3 If the concern relates to the Lighthouse Schools Partnership Chief Executive Officer the matter should be raised with the Chair of the Board of Trustees via email Chairoftrustees@LSP.org.uk.

Alternatively, the whistleblower may request a private and confidential meeting with the designated person recorded in section 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 above. The whistleblower may be accompanied by a representative of their choice if they so wish (e.g. Union representative or friend).

All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible. Written, dated and signed supporting evidence and statements should always be taken to any meetings if possible.

- 4.2 Alternatively if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the Trust, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the North Somerset Designated Officer for Allegations (DOFA), on 01275 888808, or the Bath & North East Somerset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), on 01225 396810 who will decide whether they wish to investigate the issue, refer to the police or raise that matter at the appropriate level with the school or Trust.

5. How will the matter be progressed?

- 5.1 The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation will treat the allegation as a disclosure and handle it as set out in the Trust or School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Where a whistleblowing allegation relates to a member of staff and is of a safeguarding nature this will always involve referring the allegation to the DOFA/LADO for guidance.

Any investigation will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of staff, the DOFA/LADO, legal or HR advisors, the police or the Department for Education.

Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not the Headteacher, Chief Executive or Chair of Trustees considers there to be a case to answer, the disciplinary procedure may be applied. In a circumstance where an investigation and disciplinary process reveal that an employee has failed in his or her safeguarding duties or acted in a way to cause harm or risk of harm to children or young people with the advice of the LADO/DOFA a referral may be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The outcome of an investigation under the Disciplinary Policy may not be able to be revealed to a whistleblower.

- 5.2 If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns may be raised with the Chair of the Board of Trustees via email Chairoftrustees@LSP.org.uk.

- 5.3 If an employee or other potential whistleblower is concerned about malpractice, wrongdoing or a possible safeguarding risk and is unsure whether to raise this with the school or Trust, he or she may find it helpful to contact the independent whistleblowing charity Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work) for advice. Protect can advise how best to raise a concern, while minimising any risk to the whistleblower. They can be contacted on tel. 0207 404 6609, email whistle@protect-advice.org.uk , website <https://protect-advice.org.uk/> .

6. Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible the Lighthouse Schools Partnership seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. The Lighthouse Schools Partnership will not tolerate any attempt to harass or victimise the whistleblower, or attempts to prevent concerns being raised, and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

7. Conclusion

Existing good practice within the Lighthouse Schools Partnership in terms of its systems of safeguarding procedures and the external regulatory environment in which the Trust operates, ensure that cases of suspected impropriety rarely occur. This whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of Trust. The policy gives a commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned. Any actions arising from allegations/investigation must be in accord with the Trust's disciplinary procedure, which should cover all of the potential areas of concern.