



The Athelstan Trust

Whistleblowing Policy

Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
November2022	Board	8 December 2022	December 2025	Y

- 1 **Honesty and integrity:** The Trust is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with the Code of Conduct. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 2 **Aims:** The aims of this policy are to:
 - 2.1 encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
 - 2.2 let all staff in the Trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust;
 - 2.3 set clear procedures for how the Trust will respond to such concerns;
 - 2.4 let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern; and
 - 2.5 reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue).
- 3 **Legislation:** The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the Academy Trust 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.
- 4 **Who does this policy apply to?** This policy covers all employees, officers, governors, trustees, consultants, contractors, volunteers, work placement students, casual workers and agency workers. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.
- 5 **Whistleblowing Trustee and Whistleblowing Officer:** The Trust will periodically appoint one Trustee as Whistleblowing Trustee and one member of staff as Whistleblowing Officer. **The Trust's Whistleblowing Trustee is Karen Frost. The Trust's Whistleblowing Officer is Jo Cummings**
- 6 **Definition of Whistleblowing:** Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is 'in the public interest.' Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):
 - 6.1 Criminal offences such as fraud or corruption;
 - 6.2 Students' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger;
 - 6.3 failure to comply with any legal obligation or regulatory requirements;
 - 6.4 breaches of financial management procedures;



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- 6.5 Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest; and
- 6.6 damage to the environment.

- 7 **Whistleblower:** A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities and such disclosure is in the public interest (a **whistleblowing concern**) you should report it under this policy.
- 8. Not all concerns about the Trust count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely to be a grievance. When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow the Trust's grievance procedure.
- 9. **Detriment:** Provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly, you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing.
- 10. **Advice:** If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Headteacher, Company Secretary, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Protect (formerly known as Public Concern at Work), the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline or the [Modern Slavery helpline](#).
- 11. **Confidentiality:** We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 12. **Anonymous disclosures:** We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

Stage one

- 13. **Procedure:** You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your Head of Department / Line Manager. If you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled or if your Head of Department / Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you should notify the Whistleblowing Officer as appropriate.
- 14. **Response:** You can expect a response detailing to whom the disclosure has been notified or any action taken within seven days of your Head of Department / Line Manager becoming aware of the disclosure.

Stage two

- 15. **Procedure:** If no response is forthcoming after seven days or if your Head of Department / Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing you shall be entitled to notify the Headteacher, as appropriate.
- 16. **Response:** You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven days of the Headteacher becoming aware of the disclosure.



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Stage three

17. **Procedure:** If no such response is forthcoming you should inform the Chief Executive Officer of the disclosure. Where the disclosure under Stage two was made to the Chief Executive Officer, you should inform one of the Trustees.
18. **Outcome of the investigation:** Once the investigation 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, although certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.
19. **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.
20. **Relevant external reporting:** The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. The law recognises, as does paragraph 10 above, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including:
 - 20.1 the Local Authority Designated Officer;
 - 20.2 Children's Social Care;
 - 20.3 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE);
 - 20.4 the Environment Agency;
 - 20.5 the Information Commissioner;
 - 20.6 the Department for Education (DfE);
 - 20.7 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ;
 - 20.8 the Police;
 - 20.9 the Charity Commission;
 - 20.10 the Independent Schools Inspectorate;
 - 20.11 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).
21. Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before you do, as well as



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considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:

- 21.1 **Protect** (formerly known as Public Concern at Work): If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 7404 6609 for advice.
- 21.2 **NSPCC**: The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
22. **The media**: You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and / or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain, the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the Trust may consider this to be gross misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against you.
23. **Queries**: If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the Company Secretary.