Staffordshire University Academies Trust

Whistleblowing Policy

Last reviewed	**December 2025**
Reviewed by	**CFO**
Approved by	**CEO**
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Policy owner	**CFO**
Location	**Trust Website**

1. Introduction

This Policy is intended to help employees who are working in or with Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) who have major concerns over any wrongdoing within SUAT academies relating to unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or dangers to the public or the environment. Specific examples could include:

- A criminal offence (e.g. fraud, corruption or theft) has been/is likely to be committed.
- A miscarriage of justice has been/is likely to occur
- The health or safety of any individual has been/is likely to be endangered
- The environment has been/is likely to be damaged
- Public funds are being used in an unauthorised manner
- The Governance arrangements have or are not being observed or are being breached by students, staff employed in or those working with or assisting SUAT academies
- Sexual or physical abuse of any employee or service recipient is taking place (subject to the Child Protection Procedure in the case of children)
- Discrimination is occurring to any member of staff or service recipient on grounds of sex, race or disability
- Any other form of improper action or conduct is taking place
- Information relating to any of the above is being deliberately concealed or attempts are being made to conceal the same

This Policy will also cover Safeguarding concerns, but it is important to note that where any pupil may be at risk there should be no delay in reporting such concerns within normal child protection/safeguarding processes as you have a duty of care to ensure you exercise your reporting responsibilities as outlined within the school's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education in an expedient manner.

The Trust would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for concrete proof.

If something is troubling you, which you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. If, however, you are aggrieved about your personal position, please use any appropriate Grievance Policy – which you can get from your Principal. This Whistle Blowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk.

If in doubt – raise it!

2. Aims

The Policy aims to:

- Encourage employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon their concerns
- Provide ways for employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies to raise those concerns and get feedback on any action taken as a result
- Ensure that employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies get a response to their concerns
- Ensure that employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies are aware how to pursue their concerns and the appropriate steps to take if they are not satisfied with any action
- Reassure employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies that if they raise any concerns in good faith and reasonably believe them to be true, they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation. It is not intended to be used where other more appropriate procedures are available, for example:

- Grievances – (see Grievance Procedure)
- Child protection (see Safeguarding procedures)

3. Who is covered by this Policy?

All employees, Local Academy Council members, Trust members, in or working with or assisting SUAT academies, may use this, Policy. This includes permanent and temporary employees, and employees seconded to a third party. Any concerns relating to the third party, if relevant to the employee's secondment, can also be raised under this Policy.

4. What is the legal background?

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (hereinafter referred to as 'the Whistleblowers Act') protects employees against detrimental treatment or dismissal as a result of any disclosure of normally confidential information in the interests of the public. The Act only covers protected disclosures under six categories, namely, crime, illegality, miscarriage of justice, damage to health and safety, damage to the environment, and 'cover-ups' about these issues. To obtain protection, employees must first disclose the information to the employer.

Therefore, this Policy has been adopted to provide an avenue within the SUAT academies to raise concerns. If an employee takes the matter outside the SUAT academies, s/he should ensure that no disclosure of confidential information takes place and should take advice, if unsure, as the Public Interest Disclosure Act does not provide blanket protection and could leave employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies vulnerable to disciplinary or other action, if they disclose confidential information in circumstances not covered by the Act.

If you are unsure whether to use the SUAT Whistle Blowing Policy or you want independent advice at any stage, you are advised to contact

- If applicable, your relevant trade union; or
- The independent charity Public concern at Work on 020 7404 6609. Their lawyers can give you real confidential advice at any stage about how to raise a concern about serous malpractice at work.

5. How should a concern be raised?

As soon as you become reasonably concerned you should firstly raise the issue with your Principal (unless s/he is the potential transgressor, in which case write to the CEO. Appendix A can be used as a template to document and submit your concerns under this Policy.

Concerns however may be raised orally or in writing. Employees who wish to make a written report should use the following format.

- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates).
- The reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.
- Whether there are any witnesses to the concern being raised
- What if any action has been taken previous to raising the concern?

In relation to Safeguarding concerns staff should normally raise their concerns with a designated manager under the academy's standard procedures for dealing with allegations about a person in a position of trust. If the Designated Person is the subject of concern the matter should be referred to a more senior member of management or, if this is not possible, the Whistle Blowing Policy can be implemented. Under standard procedures, if there are concerns that an adult working with children may have abused a child or be unsuitable to work with children and young people, concerns will be passed to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) by the manager.

The Policy may also be used in circumstances when the matter has been raised under appropriate organisation procedures for referring child protection concerns, but the referrer considers that the manager has not taken the concerns seriously or acted appropriately with relation to them. In such circumstances, referrers are encouraged to contact the Chief Executive Officer of SUAT on 01782 987120 or by email at (JCapper@suatrust.co.uk) or a LADO directly for discussion and advice. The LADO contact details are listed at the end of the Policy.

In certain circumstances, staff may feel they are unable to follow the organisation's standard procedures e.g., because they feel their position in the organisation would be in jeopardy, they would be subject to intimidation, or that the person of concern is the designated manager to whom they should report such matters and there is no one senior to refer to. They should then follow the Whistle Blowing Policy by contacting a nominated person (the 'responsible person') within the organisation or an umbrella organisation to which the organisation is affiliated. (Appendix B)

Further advice on Safeguarding matters can also be obtained from other sources outlined in Appendix C.

6. What assurance do you get?

The Trust is committed to professional standards and to supporting staff. It is recognised that the decision to report a concern is a difficult one to make. If you do raise a genuine concern under this Policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. Provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course, this assurance is not extended to someone who maliciously raises a matter that s/he knows to be untrue. In order to safeguard the individual raising a concern:

- The Trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect employees who raise a concern in good faith.
- Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures already taking place concerning the employee.
- No action will be taken against anyone who makes an allegation in good faith, reasonably believing it to be true, even if the allegation is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation.
- Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality as far as this is reasonably practical.
- Help will be provided to you in order to minimise any difficulties, which you may experience. This may include advice on giving evidence if needed. Meetings may, if necessary be arranged off-site with you and for you being represented, if you so wish.

7. Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence, however, there may be a need for the whistle blower to give evidence e.g., if they have witnessed a crime or in regard to disciplinary procedures if this is the outcome. If you ask us to protect your identify by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

8. Anonymous Allegations

Employees are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information and it is also more difficult to establish whether allegations are credible. Anonymous allegations will be considered at the

discretion of the Trust Board. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:
• the seriousness of the issues raised;
• the credibility of the concern; and
• the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

9. How long will it take the Trust to respond?

Once you have raised your concern, the Trust will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. You will be told who may be handling the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request it, the Principal or CEO will write to you summarising your concern(s) and setting out how it will be handled.

When you raise the concern, you may be asked how you think the concern(s) might best be resolved. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. Should your concern fall within another policy of the Trust for example, the Grievance Policy, we will tell you.

While the purpose of this Policy is to enable us to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give you as much feedback as we properly can. If requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owned by us to someone else.

Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example child protection) will normally be referred for consideration under that relevant procedure. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Any concern regarding child protection will be referred to external agencies for investigation (children's services, police, LADO).

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
- Be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the external auditor
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry

Usually, within two weeks of a concern being raised, the person looking into the concern will write to the person raising the concern:
- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- Indicating how the Trust propose to deal with the matter
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a full response
- Saying whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Supplying information on support available to you
- Saying whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not (subject to any legal constraints)
- The relevant employee will normally be informed of the final outcome of any investigation (subject to confidentiality constraints)

When any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you so wish, to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague of your choice.

10. How can a concern be taken further?

Employees in or working with or assisting SUAT academies who are not satisfied with the action taken by the Trust and feels it right to question the matter further, may consider the following possible contact points:

- The employee's Trade Union
- The Citizens Advice Bureau and/or law centre/firm
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- The Local Government Ombudsman
- The Information Commissioner
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police and/or Health and Safety Executive
- Department for Education
- Ofsted

11. Corporate recording and monitoring

The Trust will ensure it has sufficient internal arrangements to address the requirements of the Policy, including appropriate support for the CEO / CFO and Principals in implementing the Policy.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Trust Board is responsible for setting this policy and the procedures contained within the Policy. The policy / procedure will be reviewed every 2 years unless circumstances warrant review prior to this date.

The Principal of each school within the Trust will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy / procedure and reporting this back to the CEO of the Trust.

Appendix A

Whistle Blowing Report Form

Name: _____

Academy: _____

Date: _____

Location/department: _____

Please give a brief outline of your concern? (Please give relevant names, dates, locations etc)

Were there any other witnesses? If so, please give their full contact details.

Did you take any action at the time? – if so, please outline what action you took

if you did not take action at the time, please give details as to why you took no action

Signed: ……

Date……

Designation……

Appendix B

If it is felt that it would be unsafe for any reason to share concerns with the named person from your organisation the following are appropriate contacts with whom to discuss your concerns:

The Designated Safeguarding Leads in our Academies are listed in each academy's individual Safeguarding Policy.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads in our Academies are listed in each academy's individual Safeguarding Policy.

The Nominated member of the Local Academy Council for Safeguarding is listed in each academy's individual Safeguarding Policy.

The Chief Executive is:
Dr James Capper
JCapper@Suatrust.co.uk

The Nominated member of the Trust Board for Safeguarding is:
Mary Walker
Chair@suatrust.co.uk

The Chair of the Trust Board is:
Mary Walker
Chair@suatrust.co.uk

The Chairs of the Local Academy Councils are:

All Saints Bednall	Kate Jackson	Chairofgovernors@allsaints-bednall.staffs.sch.uk
All Saints CE Academy, Denstone	Karen Mann	chair@thesaintsacademies.co.uk
Boney Hay Primary	Linda Hood	chair@boneyhay.staffs.sch.uk
Church Eaton Primary School	Jo Kenny	jkenny@churcheaton.staffs.sch.uk
Charnwood Primary Academy	Jim Raban	j.raban@charnwood.staffs.sch.uk
Dove CE Academy	Jamie Gill	j.gill@dove.staffs.sch.uk
Horton St Michael's First School and Nursery	Karen Mann	chair@thesaintsacademies.co.uk
John Wheeldon Primary Academy	Jenny Rowley	chair@johnwheeldon.staffs.sch.uk
Little Aston Primary Academy	Myles Pearson	mylespearson@littleastonprimary.co.uk
Littleton Green Community School	Ryan Pritchard	Chairofgovernors@littletongreen.staffs.sch.uk
St Leonards CofE First School	Katrina Gibson	Chairofgovernors@littletongreen.staffs.sch.uk
Moorgate Primary Academy	Claire Keast	c.smith@moorgateacademy.co.uk
St Paul's CE (VC) First School	Jo Sawyer	j.sawyer@st-pauls-coven.staffs.sch.uk
Perton Primary Academy	Marcus Francis	m.francis@pertonacademy.co.uk
St Augustine's Academy	Karen Mann	chair@thesaintsacademies.co.uk
St Luke's CE Academy	Sue Gibbons	sgibbons@st-lukes-endon.staffs.sch.uk
St Peter's CE Academy	Sue Gibbons	sgibbons@st-lukes-endon.staffs.sch.uk
St Peter's CE Academy	Karen Mann	chair@thesaintsacademies.co.uk

St Edward's CE Academy	Jodie Calcutt	chair@thesaintsacademies.co.uk
Tynsel Parkes CE Primary Academy	Liam Cairns	l.Cairns@tynselparkesacademy.co.uk
Staffordshire University Academy	Sean Corbett	scorbett@suacademy.co.uk
Westlands Primary School	Vicky Recine	chairofgovernors@westlands.staffs.sch.uk

Appendix C

Further advice on Safeguarding matters can also be obtained from:

Local Contacts

- Staffordshire Children's Social Care Services: First Response Service in Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (M.A.S.H.) 0800 1313 126. Email firstr@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Emergency Duty Services (out of hours safeguarding concerns) 0845 604 2886 or email eds.team.manager@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Staffordshire Police M.A.S.H. can be contacted on 101. In the event of an emergency please dial 999
- Stoke-on-Trent Children's Services: Advice and Referral Team (ART) 01782 235100
  Emergency Duty Team: 01782 234234 (outside office hours, weekends and bank holidays)
  Minicom: 01782 236037
- School Guidance around Asylum Seekers – Sam Hubzer (Central Throughcare Team) Tel: 01785 854906 Solihullsafeguardingteam@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
- Staffordshire Police Force coordinator : Mark Hardern
  Tel: 07539 3636299 Email: mark.hardern@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
- Staffordshire Police Prevent Team 01785 232054, 01785 233109 or email prevent@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
- Staffordshire County Council's Education Safeguarding Advice Service
  01785 895836 e-mail : esas@staffordshire.gov.uk
- LADO Staffordshire (01785) 278958 or mobile: 07580805368
- DoLS Team – Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards is the name for the process by which someone who does not have the mental capacity to agree to arrangements for their accommodation, treatment and care
  Tel: 01785 895665 Email: deprivationofliberty@staffordshire.gov.uk

Local Advice

- Entrust Learning Technologies ICT/Computing/E-safety Teacher Consultants 0300 111 8030
- Families First Local Support team (Staffordshire) email families.first@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Fostering Service (Staffordshire) 0800 169 2061 email fostering&adoptionbus@staffordshire.gov.uk Out of Hours: Emergency Duty Service 01785 354030
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board 01785 277151 sscb.admin@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Entrust HR Services (subscription basis) 01785 278961
- Fostering Service (Stoke-on-Trent) 01782 234555 Email: fostering@stoke.gov.uk

- Stoke-on-Trent Family Information Service Hub (F.I.S.H) 01782 232200 email fish@stoke.gov.uk

Other support

Recognised trade unions or professional associations can provide support and assistance or independent, external advice this can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work.

Regulatory bodies such as Ofsted also have 'whistle blowing' hotlines. Ofsted's whistle blowing hotline is: 0300 123 3155. The email address is whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.

Public Concern at Work
Helpline: 020 7404 6609
E-mail: helpline@pcaw.co.uk