



# WYMONDHAM HIGH ACADEMY

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## **POLICY STATEMENT WHISTLEBLOWING**

### **AIM**

The Governing Body of Wymondham High Academy is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the academy's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

Employees can report concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This confidential reporting policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the academy rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

### **AIMS AND SCOPE**

This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The whistleblowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

These include:

- Manipulation of accounting records and finances.
- Inappropriate use of school assets or funds.
- Decision making for personal gain.
- Any criminal activity.
- Damage to the environment of the school, to property belonging to the school or a member of the school community.
- Dangerous practices.
- Abuse of position.
- Fraud & deceit or corrupt practices.
- Serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example, tampering with tender documentation, failure to registers a personal interest).
- Other unethical conduct, including the circulation of inappropriate e-mails.
- Suppressing information about anything listed above.

There are existing reporting procedures in place to enable you to report concerns relating to child protection or safeguarding.

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or governors or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported under this confidential reporting policy.

This may be about something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the academy subscribes to;
- is against the academy's standing orders, financial regulations, contracts code, or other policies;
- falls below established standards of practice;
- amounts to improper conduct

From 25 June 2013 a new law says that a whistleblower should also believe that their disclosure is in the public interest.

### **SAFEGUARDS – HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION**

The Governing Body are committed to good practice and high standards and want to be supportive of employees; they recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service. The Governing Body will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you 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 that already affect you.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

### **ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS**

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of either the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Audit Committee, depending on the nature of the allegations.

In exercising this 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.

### **UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If however, you make an allegation which can be shown to have been made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

## HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate line manager or the Principal. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved, you should approach the Chair of Governors via the Clerk. The Chair of the Governors' Audit Committee and the Responsible Officer will be informed of each concern that is raised with regard to financial procedures or irregularities. If the Chair of the Governors' Audit Committee is suspected of the malpractice, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) should be approached.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action. Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

You may obtain advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern from [www.gov.uk/whistleblowing](http://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing).

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

You may invite your trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

## HOW YOUR CONCERNS WILL BE DEALT WITH

Your concerns will receive a response from the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Audit Committee. Do not forget that investigating your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by the SLT, the Governors' Audit Committee, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle, which the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Audit Committee will have in mind, is the public interest.

Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

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.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the Chair of Governors or the Chair of the Governors' Audit Committee will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how the matter will be dealt with
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the individuals considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from you.

Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

The Governing Body will take steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. If you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Academy will arrange for you to receive independent advice about the procedure. The Governing Body accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Chair of the Governors' Finance Committee has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The Chair maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the EFA.

## **HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER**

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the Academy to raise concerns. If you are not satisfied with any action taken and if you feel it right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points:

- Financial Matters:
  - Internal Audit Investigation Team, Department for Education, Area 1A, Castle View House, Runcorn, WA7 2DN
  - [iait.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:iait.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk)
  - The Academy's lead officer with the DFE or EFA
  - The Academy's external auditor
- Educational or Safeguarding Matters:
  - Ofsted's dedicated Whistleblowing Hotline (0300 123 3155)
  - [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)
  - WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

- Health & Safety Matters:
  - Using the HSE website's online reporting form
  - If you are not able to use this online form then you can raise your concern by email: [concerns@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:concerns@hse.gsi.gov.uk)
  - HSE Concerns Team on 0300 0031647
  - A solicitor
  - Your trade union
  - Citizen Advice Bureau
  - Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
  - The police

If you do take the matter outside the Academy you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information.

### **MONITOR**

This policy will be monitored by the Governors' Audit Committee, the Finance Director and the Assistant Principal, Staff and Student Welfare, on an annual basis.

### **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Finance Director and the Finance Committee.

Confirmed by the **Governing Body of Wymondham High Academy**

Signature of Chair: .....  ..... Date: 31/01/2021  
**Chair of Governors**

Review Date: 31/01/2022