



# LIFE Education Trust

## Learning Is For Everyone

Our Aim is that every School will be:

- An efficient School
- An effective School
- An enriching School
- An enabling School

## Whistleblowing Policy

Policy	Whistleblowing Policy
Policy adopted by Trust Board	19/6/17
Reported to LGBs for implementation	19/6/17
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Review Date	June 2020
Policy Source	Own Sourced Policy

**KEY DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY:**

The Trust	LIFE Education Trust
The Board/Directors/Trust Board	The Board of Directors of LIFE Education Trust
School /Trust School	An Academy or School within LIFE Education Trust
Staff	All staff employed by LIFE Education Trust and working with academies, Schools or units within LIFE Education Trust

**All Schools** within the LIFE Education Trust are legally defined as academies, regardless of whether the term “School” is used to describe them in the following policy.

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## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1.1.** LIFE Education Trust is committed to conducting the Trust with honesty and integrity and the Trust expects all staff to maintain high standards.

However, 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 in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

- 1.2.** The aims of this policy are:

- 1.2.1 to 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;
- 1.2.2 to provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
- 1.2.3 to reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

- 1.3.** This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

## **2. WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?**

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Trust, including officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

## **3. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?**

- 3.1** Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- 3.1.1 criminal activity;
- 3.1.2 miscarriages of justice;
- 3.1.3 danger to health and safety;
- 3.1.4 damage to the environment;
- 3.1.5 failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- 3.1.6 bribery;
- 3.1.7 financial fraud or mismanagement;
- 3.1.8 negligence;
- 3.1.9 breach of our internal policies and procedures;
- 3.1.10 conduct likely to damage the reputation of the Trust;
- 3.1.11 unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- 3.1.12 concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children;
- 3.1.13 the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

- 3.2** 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 (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

- 3.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to a member of staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases they should use the Grievance Procedure or Code of Conduct or Complaints Procedures as appropriate.

#### **4 RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN**

- 4.1 The Trust hopes that in many cases the member of staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager or Headteacher. They may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if they prefer. The Line Manager or Headteacher may be able to agree a way of resolving the area of concern quickly and effectively.
- 4.2 However, where the matter is more serious, or the member of staff feels that their line manager or the Headteacher has not addressed their concern, or they prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, they should contact the Chief Executive Officer. If the matter relates to the Chief Executive Officer the member of staff should contact the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust.
- 4.3 The Trust will arrange a meeting with the member of staff as soon as possible to discuss their concern. They may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Their companion must respect the confidentiality of any disclosure and any subsequent investigation.
- 4.4 The Trust will take down a written summary of the concern and provide the member of staff with a copy after the meeting. The Trust will also aim to give you an indication of how it is proposed to deal with the matter.

#### **5 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 5.1 The Trust hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if they want to raise their concern confidentially, the Trust will make every effort to ensure the identity of the whistleblower is not disclosed. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the identity, the Trust will discuss this with the member of staff in the first instance.
- 5.2 The Trust does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the Trust is unable to obtain further information from the whistleblower. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should discuss this with their Line Manager or Headteacher or CEO if the allegation is about the Line Manager or Headteacher or with the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust if the allegation is about the CEO so that appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If the whistleblower is in any doubt they can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

#### **6 EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES**

- 6.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
- 6.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever

be appropriate to alert the media. The Trust strongly encourages staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

- 6.3 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect staff if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the Trust encourages staff to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact their line manager or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 4 for guidance.

## **7 INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME**

- 7.1 Once the member of staff has raised a concern, the Trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The Trust will inform the whistleblower of the outcome of their assessment. The whistleblower may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 7.2 In some cases the Trust may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the Trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 7.3 The Trust will aim to keep the whistleblower informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the Trust providing specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Staff should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.
- 7.4 If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **8 IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED**

- 8.1 While the Trust cannot always guarantee the outcome the whistleblower seeks, the Trust will try to deal with their concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy staff can help the Trust to achieve this.
- 8.2 If the whistleblower is not happy with the way in which their concern has been handled, they can raise it with the Chair of the Board of Directors.

## **9 PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS**

- 9.1 It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 9.2 Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If staff believe that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform their Line Manager or Headteacher or CEO if the allegation is about the Line Manager or Headteacher or

with the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trust if the allegation is about the CEO immediately. If the matter is not remedied the whistleblower should raise it formally using the Trust's Grievance Procedure.

9.3 Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

## 10 **RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS POLICY**

10.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

10.2 The Headteacher has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

10.3 All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

Public Concern at Work <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>  
T: 0207 404 6609