

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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REVIEW

Last reviewed: June 2017
To be reviewed: June 2020

Policies may be subject to review and revision at any time, notwithstanding that the next review date has not been reached. Review dates are for guidance only; all policies will remain in force until a review has taken place and been formally approved by the Trust.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Girls' Learning Trust (GLT) ("the Trust") is committed to maintaining the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability in the Trust and its schools.
- 1.2 In support of this commitment, employees who have concerns about the conduct of affairs at the Trust are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns. This extends to concerns about the activities of staff, trustees, governors, volunteers and external organisations in their dealings with the Trust.
- 1.3 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within a school or Trust, however they may choose not to express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, there is a risk that those individuals may consider that it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be a suspicion of a serious issue.
- 1.4 The main aims of this policy are to:
 - 1.4.1 encourage employees 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;
 - 1.4.2 provide employees with guidance as to how to raise those concerns;
 - 1.4.3 reassure employees that they can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and may be amended from time-to-time.

2 Who does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees of the Trust regardless of length of service or employment status (including workers) (collectively referred to as "employees").

3 Scope of the policy

- 3.1 Examples of areas of concern covered by this policy are:
 - 3.1.1 a crime that has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
 - 3.1.2 a person who has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject;
 - 3.1.3 manipulation of accounting records and finances;
 - 3.1.4 inappropriate use of Trust or school assets or funds;
 - 3.1.5 decision-making for personal gain;

- 3.1.6 fraud and deceit;
- 3.1.7 serious breaches of Trust or school procedures;
- 3.1.8 where someone's health and safety is in danger;
- 3.1.9 any failure to comply with appropriate professional standards;
- 3.1.10 actions likely to cause physical danger to any person or give rise to significant damage of property;
- 3.1.11 abuse of power or the use of the Trust's authority for any unauthorised or ulterior purpose; and
- 3.1.12 any deliberate concealment of any of the above.

3.2 The above is not an exhaustive list. Other concerns may be raised as follows:

- 3.2.1 If the whistleblower's concern relates to their own employment, contractual position or personal position as a member of the Trust, the matter should be raised under the GLT Grievance Policy (or any Anti-Harassment or Bullying Policy in place at the time.)
- 3.2.2 This policy does not cover members of the public and any reports received from members of the public will be dealt with under the GLT Complaints Policy.
- 3.2.3 Concerns that are raised around child protection and safeguarding will also be addressed through the GLT Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.2.4 If it is unclear whether a matter is within the scope of this policy or another policy, the whistleblower should contact a person from the Contact List in Appendix 1 of this policy, choosing the person they feel is most appropriate, and they will be advised of the appropriate course of action.

4 Safeguards, protection and support for whistleblowers

- 4.1 The Trust recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the wrongdoing.
- 4.2 The Trust aims to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 4.3 Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If an employee believes that they have suffered any such treatment they should inform a person from the Contact List in Appendix 1 of this policy, choosing the person they feel is most appropriate.
- 4.4 The Trust will not tolerate any threats or retaliation against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct may be subject to disciplinary action.

- 4.5 If the Trust concludes that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 4.6 The Trust will make every effort to protect the identity of employees who raise concerns and do not want their name to be disclosed. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation may reveal the source of the information, and statements made by the whistleblower who raised the issue may be required as part of the evidence.
- 4.7 The Trust does not encourage anonymous disclosures under this policy. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the Trust cannot obtain further information from the whistleblower. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. A whistleblower who is concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward using the Contact List in Appendix 1, and, where possible, appropriate measures can be taken to preserve confidentiality.
- 4.8 Further support is available from Public Concern at Work, that operates a confidential helpline for employees. Their contact details are found in Appendix 2 of this policy.

5 How to raise a concern

- 5.1 The earlier employees express their concerns the easier it is for the Trust to take action. The Trust encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally, under this policy, in the first instance, to allow appropriate staff, trustees or governors (refer to the Contact List in Appendix 1) the opportunity to investigate the allegations made by the whistleblower and to take appropriate action.
- 5.2 The Trust has designated a number of individuals to deal with these matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter. A Contact List is given in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 Concerns should be raised in writing, stating clearly that a concern is being raised under the GLT Whistleblowing Policy. This should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the employee is concerned about the situation. A whistleblower who does not feel able to put their concerns in writing can contact an appropriate person from the Contact List in Appendix 1 to discuss alternative arrangements.

6 How the Trust will respond

- 6.1 The action taken by the Trust will depend on the nature of the concern. In order to protect individuals and the Trust, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. It may be possible to resolve some concerns by agreed action without the need for investigation.
- 6.2 The Trust will write to the whistleblower who raised the issue:
 - 6.2.1 acknowledging that the concern has been raised;

- 6.2.2 indicating how the matter will be dealt with and, where possible, giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and
- 6.2.3 telling the whistleblower whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
- 6.3 When any meeting is arranged with the whistleblower, they will be given the right to be accompanied by their trade union or professional association representative.
- 6.4 It may be necessary for third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involving other Trust staff, legal advisors, HR advisors, the police, the Department for Education, the Education Funding Authority, and the Local Authority.
- 6.5 The Trust accepts that the whistleblower will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal or contractual constraints, the whistleblower will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

7 External disclosures

- 7.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, it should not be necessary for an employee to alert anyone externally. The law recognises, however, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for the Trust to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. Anyone considering alerting someone externally is strongly encouraged to seek advice first.
- 7.2 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. In some circumstances the law will protect those who raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the Trust encourages employees to report such concerns internally first to one (or more) of the people in the Contact List in Appendix 1.

8 Management of policy

- 8.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.
- 8.2 The Trust will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes, and will report as necessary to the Trust HR Committee and Trust Board.

APPENDIX 1 : CONTACT LIST

To raise a whistleblowing concern, please contact one or more of the people below, choosing the person that is most appropriate given the issue being raised, and stating clearly that you are raising a concern under the GLT Whistleblowing Policy.

| Position | Contact Details | |
|---|-------------------|--|
| GLT CEO and Accounting Officer | Jane Burton | jburton@girlslearningtrust.org 0208 394 1308 ext 208 |
| GLT Director of Finance and Operations | Helen Latham | hlatham@girlslearningtrust.org 0208 394 3412 0208 254 9303 |
| Nonsuch High School for Girls Headteacher | Amy Cavilla | cavilla-a@nonsuchschool.org 0208 394 3400 ext 245 |
| Wallington High School for Girls Headteacher | Richard Booth | rbooth@wallingtongirls.org.uk 0208 254 9302 |
| Chair of the Trust (GLT) | Tony Hyams-Parish | thyamsparish@girlslearningtrust.org |
| Vice Chair of the Trust (GLT) | Sandy Gillett | sgillett@girlslearningtrust.org |
| Chair of Local Governing Body (Nonsuch) | Chris Goostrey | goostrey-c@nonsuchschool.org |
| Chair of Local Governing Body (Wallington) | Hamza Aumeer | haumeer@wallingtongirls.org.uk |

APPENDIX 2 : PUBLIC CONCERN AT WORK

If anyone is in any doubt, they can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline:

Public Concern at Work Helpline: 020 7404 6609

Email: whistle@pcaw.co.uk

Website: www.pcaw.co.uk