



**PENK VALLEY
ACADEMY TRUST**

*Learning
Together*

Whistleblowing Policy

Transferred to remit of Audit Finance & Risk Committee - Autumn 2024

To be ratified at PVAT Board of Trustees - Spring 2026

Frequency of Review: Annually

Mark Roberts

Amendments

2016 – NF/DS/HJ/JA/PJT – Federation SLT 17/02/2017

2017 – TP – SJFS added

2018- TP – updated for PVAT

2020 – JA No amendments

2024- DH updated as per SCC; also now reviewed annually each September by Audit, Finance & Risk Committee

2025 – no changes – all links confirmed as still working

Statement

We want our workforce to be ambitious, courageous, and empowered to do a great job and make a positive difference to the lives of the people we serve.

To support this, we want a positive working environment and a culture of confidence, respect and equality. When things do not go to plan, it is important we resolve issues in the right way for all involved.

Our People Policies provide managers and colleagues with clear yet flexible guidance to deal with those issues quickly and fairly.

Aim

Penk Valley Academy Trust is committed to operating with honesty and integrity. We expect all colleagues to operate on this basis and to adhere to the School's policies, procedures and code of conduct. Fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing will not be tolerated.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to encourage and enable you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns. It provides you with a clear avenue to raise concerns and sets out how we will deal with them and communicate with you.

It aims to ensure everyone feels able to raise any genuine concern in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously, and that they will be protected from repercussions. Those working for or on behalf of PVAT must not treat individuals detrimentally because they have made a qualifying disclosure (i.e. blow the whistle) under the Employee Rights Act 1996, including Public Disclosure Act 1998.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and workers employed by us including contractors, subcontractors, and agency workers. Other individuals, including our volunteers, suppliers and those genuinely self-employed are also encouraged to follow the procedure set out in this policy.

This policy has been adopted from Staffordshire County Council

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time in consultation with recognised trade unions.

Where a colleague has a concern with their own treatment at work or in relation to their contract of employment, it is usually appropriate that they raise it under either the Resolving Grievance Policy or Anti-Harassment & Bullying Policy. We will however consider if there are any exceptional circumstances in which we feel it appropriate to deal with it under the terms of this policy. If you are unsure about whether your concerns are best dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy or another policy, please contact HR for further advice.

Decisions will be made in line with the school's local scheme of delegation or equivalent mechanism for making decisions at the appropriate level.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when you report certain types of wrongdoing which relate to risk or malpractice. This could well be something you've seen at work – though not always. The wrongdoing you disclose is often seen as something which is in the 'public interest'.

The following are the types of complaints that count as whistleblowing:

- A criminal offence, and/or
- A miscarriage of justice: and/or
- Risk or actual damage to the environment; and/or
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation; and/or
- A risk to the health and safety of an individual; and/or
- You believe someone is covering up any of the above

Rights of the Whistleblower

PVAT aim to encourage openness and will support you if you raise genuine concerns under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

In turn, to be protected by whistleblowing laws against detrimental treatment or dismissal, you must reasonably believe that the wrongdoing (as outlined above) is being, has been, or is likely to be committed and that your 'disclosure' is in the public interest. Examples of detrimental treatment include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavorable treatment connected with raising a concern.

If you believe that you have been subjected to a detriment for raising such a complaint you should raise the matter with the CEO. If you believe that the CEO has subjected you to a detriment you should raise the matter to the Chair of Trustees.

Victimisation of a whistle-blower by any other colleague, for raising a concern under this policy will constitute a disciplinary offence.

False allegations raised maliciously may lead to disciplinary action or a referral made to any relevant regulatory body if you are not an employee.

We will take all reasonable steps to minimise any difficulties that you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are asked to give evidence in a criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will arrange for you to receive appropriate advice and support.

The process

Step 1 Raising a Whistleblowing concern

As soon as you become reasonably concerned, we hope you feel able to raise it. The earlier you raise your concern, the easier it is to take action.

You should raise your concern in the first instance, at any time, with either the nominated member of staff (e.g. Head Teacher/Deputy Head) or governor who is appointed as a contact for Whistleblowing concerns. For these roles in individual school please see key contact table below. If the whistleblowing concerns involve the nominated member of staff or governor/ trustee, you should raise your concern directly to the Chair of Trustees.

If your whistleblowing concerns relate to the Chair of the Trustees, your concerns should be directed to one of the other members who will ensure it is raised through the appropriate internal process.

It could be something that has happened, is happening now or you believe will happen in the near future.

You can raise your concern verbally, or in writing. If you are emailing, particularly using an external email (i.e. your personal email) we strongly recommend that you secure the email by password protection with encryption and share the password by alternate method.

We recommend that you use our form to raise a whistleblowing concern. This will help you provide us with the information that we need to properly look at the concerns. Take care to ensure the accuracy of the information.

It is important that you set out clearly:

- What the concern is and to whom it relates
- The background and history of the concern – giving relevant dates and any evidence you may have
- The reason you are particularly concerned about the situation and why you believe the information to be true.

You are encouraged to put your name on any concern you raise as it makes it easier for the school or trust to investigate it.

If you have difficulty at any stage of this procedure either

- Because of a disability or
- Because English is not your first language

You should discuss the situation with the nominated member of staff or governor as soon as possible, so that suitable support can be explored.

Step 2 Responding to your whistleblowing concern

On receipt of your 'disclosure' or concern, the nominated member of staff or governor will acknowledge its receipt, in writing to you, ideally within 5 working days. They will also seek advice and support via their HR or Legal Provider.

In some cases, they may need to ask you to attend a meeting to clarify the nature of your concern. This will be arranged as soon as possible. You may, if you wish, bring a colleague or a trade union representative with you to the meeting.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting, we may conduct the process remotely, for example using Microsoft Teams. We will ensure that you have access to the necessary technology for participating.

The nominated member of staff or governor will decide if an investigation is required or any other appropriate actions. For example, refer to another policy, the auditors.

The level of investigation and time this will take will vary depending on the nature of the suspected wrongdoing hence it is not possible to lay down precise timescales. However, at the outset of this process you and the nominated member of staff or governor will agree how and when communication will take place so that you are kept updated on progress.

Following the investigation, a report will be produced outlining findings, for the nominated member of staff or governor to decide any appropriate next steps, including whether it is appropriate to commence a disciplinary process.

They will endeavor to inform you of the outcome of our enquiries and/or investigations, however, given confidentiality and other relevant aspects and legal constraints, it may not be possible to share details of the outcome and any action taken.

Step 3 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome

The school/trust hope that you will be satisfied with the way your concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out.

However, if you are not, and you feel it is right to take the matter externally, i.e. outside the school, please find below a list of possible contacts. If you tell a prescribed person or body, it must be one that deals with the issue you are raising.

- A list of external regulatory organisations, such as the Secretary of State for Education or relevant professional bodies can be found at the following government website. [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- A disclosure about child protection and safeguarding concern can be raised directly with the local authority LADO, if not already raised. Similarly, if the matter relates to fraud you can raise it directly to the auditors.
- The charity, [Protect](#), can advise you about raising the concern externally. This will include advising who the appropriate prescribed regulator is.

We always encourage you to raise your whistleblowing concerns internally in the first instance. However, the law recognizes that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media and as such you will not have protection under whistleblowing laws if you choose to make contact with the media unless certain conditions are met.

We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. If you would like independent advice at any stage, you can [contact the independent charity Protect](#). They should be able to give you free and confidential advice about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. If you are a trade union member, your union may also be able to provide you with appropriate advice.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

We hope that you to feel able to raise a whistleblowing concern openly under this policy.

Where you raise a whistleblowing concern openly, we will maintain your confidentiality as far as possible. If we need to identify your identity to anyone, we will notify you beforehand and we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

As an alternative, you may decide to raise a whistleblowing concern anonymously. We encourage anonymous reporting over remaining silent. Although we will investigate any concern that is reported anonymously, as best we can, an anonymous report is likely to be more difficult for us to investigate and we will not be in a position to provide you with any feedback. We will consider

the seriousness of the issues raised, the credibility of the concern and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Wellbeing and Support

We recognise that whistleblowing processes can be stressful for everyone involved. We all respond to stressful situations in different ways. Sometimes a process may cause distress and impact on both physical and mental health.

Service provided can be accessed via the HR SharePoint. More general wellbeing advice and information can be found at [MIND](#) and [Mental Health Foundation](#).

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Our aim is to deal with whistleblowing matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with such a complaint. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

If you are invited to a formal meeting, you must not make any electronic recordings. An exception to this may be where it has been agreed by all parties as a reasonable adjustment related to a disability. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal or referral to any relevant regulatory body.

We process personal data collected during whistleblowing complaints/investigations in accordance with the schools privacy notice and GDPR policy.

Related Policies

This policy is part of a suite of people policies and other related policies that you may wish to read are as set out below:

- Resolving Grievances Policy
- Appeals Procedure
- Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Fraud Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

Further Advice

If you need any further information about any aspect of this policy, please initially speak to your nominated member of staff or governor for whistleblowing concerns. HR will also be able to provide additional clarification and advice in respect of this policy.

Key Contacts

Headteacher	Marshbrook First School	01785 712780
CFO	PVAT Central Team	01785 553085
Headteacher	Penkridge Middle School	01785 413400
Headteacher	Princefield First School	01785 714050
Headteacher	St Johns First School	01785 840318

Headteacher	St Mary & St Chads First School	01902 850373
Headteacher	The Rural Enterprise Academy	01785 338186
Headteacher	Wolgarston High School	01785 788400
Chair of Trustees	PVAT	enquiries@penkvalley.co.uk

Protect Charity: [Protect - Speak up stop harm - Protect - Speak up stop harm \(protect-advice.org.uk\)](http://protect-advice.org.uk)

Protect Advice line: 0203 117 2520

Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed every year unless there is a requirement to do so before due to legislative or best practice changes.