



Learning in Harmony Trust

SPEAK UP AND WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

September 2024

version control	Approved by
September 2024	Hr & OD Committee 9th September 2024

POLICY OVERVIEW

Why do we have this policy?

Speaking up about any concern you may have at work is a really important thing to do. Why? Because we look to everyone to help us to maintain high standards so we can safely continue to deliver exceptional opportunities for learning for all students at Learning in Harmony Schools.

All organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time and a culture of openness and honesty is essential to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do.

We want to:

- encourage you to report a concern as soon as possible,
- provide you with guidance on how to raise a concern, and
- give you assurance that you will be taken seriously,
- assure you that your confidentiality will be respected.

The Trust Board supports staff raising concerns and wants you to feel free to speak up. Please don't feel worried about raising a concern. We'd much rather hear from you than not, so we have a chance to do something about it.

Other Policies and How They Might be More Suitable for your concern

The Grievance Policy - The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with a readily accessible procedure for addressing any problems or concerns they may have at work. This procedure should not replace normal employee–manager dialogue. However, where such informal dialogue has failed to resolve an issue or concern, then an employee may utilise this procedure in an effort to have an issue resolved to their satisfaction.

The Safeguarding Policy - All staff are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct. The school works in accordance with statutory guidance in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity), and follows the process outlined in our Managing Allegations against teachers, staff and volunteers policy.

How This Relates to National Guidance and Statutory Requirements

There are specific criteria that need to be met for an individual to be covered by whistleblowing legislation when they raise a concern. These requirements are identified

within the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. To help you consider whether you might meet these criteria, please seek independent advice from the Trust's external auditor, your Trade Union, or a legal representative.

If you decide to blow the whistle to a prescribed person rather than your employer, you must make sure that you have chosen the correct person or body for your issue. Below are the prescribed persons and bodies who you can make a disclosure to regarding education.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills ('the Chief Inspector')

Contact them about matters relating to the welfare of children provided with accommodation by boarding schools, colleges and residential special schools.

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

Contact them about matters in relation to which the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation exercise functions under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Full contact details for both of the above are provided at the end of this policy.

1. Aims of the policy

1.1 The Fair Funding Regulations 2002 require a procedure to be followed by all persons working at an academy, including teachers, support workers, agency workers or governors who wish to complain about financial management or financial probity at the academy, and how such complaints should be dealt with.

1.2 The Learning in Harmony Trust (the Trust) is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and aims to comply with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, 1998 (amended 2003).

1.3 This Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable those covered by the policy to raise serious concerns at an early stage, in the right way and to do so without fear of recrimination, victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage.

2. Scope

2.1 The Act provides protection for workers who disclose information which might otherwise be regarded as confidential, if the disclosure falls into one of the categories outlined below:

- a) A criminal offence has been, is being or is about to be committed.
- b) The employer has failed, is failing, or is about to fail to comply with his legal obligations.
- c) A miscarriage of justice has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen.
- d) An individual's health and safety has been, is likely to be, or is being jeopardised.
- e) The environment is, has been, or is likely to be, damaged
- f) Information falling into any of the above categories has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

2.2 By adopting this policy the Trust is reassuring the workforce that they can safely raise concerns about malpractice internally. This will enable the individual academy or the Trust central team to investigate and deal with such concerns raised and continue to foster a responsible and accountable culture in the organisation.

2.3 Staff, governors and Trustees are expected to notify the Trust of any reasonable and genuine concerns they have about an abuse of the Trust's stated standards, malpractice, theft, fraud, financial abuse, criminal offences, breach of legal obligations, dereliction of the Trust's health and safety responsibilities, damage to the environment, other unethical conduct or the cover up of any of these.

2.4 It is recognised that some cases raised under the Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy will proceed on a confidential basis. Every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the individual who raises a concern without their prior consent.

2.5 The policy is not designed to replace the Grievance, Disciplinary or Safeguarding Policies. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

- 2.6 The policy is only about employees, trustees and governors, and it is not a replacement for the Trust's complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures that may apply. The Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy is primarily to protect the interests of others or of the organisation.
- 2.7 It is accepted that there may be occasions when a concern turns out to be unfounded but was raised in good faith. The Trust will not take action against the individual in these circumstances. If an allegation was unfounded and it was clear that it had been raised frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, then that individual may face disciplinary action.
- 2.8 The trust is committed to treating claims of impropriety seriously irrespective of who the alleged perpetrators are. In all cases the trust will seek the most appropriate sanction against individuals that it considers guilty of malpractice. This includes dismissing employees, taking civil legal action and, in conjunction with the law enforcement agencies, instituting criminal proceedings.
- 2.9 The aim of the Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy is to enable employees to raise their concerns in-house and to be assured that action will be taken quickly and effectively. It should not be necessary, in most cases, to take concerns outside the trust and especially to the media. Staff have a duty of confidentiality towards the trust. It is a serious matter to disclose confidential information.

3. **How the Trust will handle concerns raised**

Step One – how to raise a concern

- 3.1 There are a number of agreed contacts for employees to raise concerns with under the Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy. This enables the employee to choose the person to whom they wish to make the disclosure.
- 3.2 **Employees who have a concern** about any wrongdoing should normally raise their concerns with their line manager. If however you feel unable to raise the matter with your line manager, for good reason, you may raise the concern with your Executive Head Teacher, a member of the Trust Leadership Group or another senior member of staff. If you feel unable to raise your concern with any member of the school management you may raise it with a senior member of the Trust central team. You may also raise a concern with:

- Line Manager, or
- Executive Head Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team,
- Senior staff in the Trust's central team (info@lihtrust.uk or HR@lihtrust.uk or 0208 325 4578), or
- The Chair of Trustees

3.3 Concerns may be raised orally or in writing. Make it clear if you want to raise the matter in confidence. The person with whom you raised the concern may have a preliminary meeting with you to discuss the most appropriate route. You may bring a colleague /union representative to any meeting that is arranged in connection with the concern you have raised as long as the colleague/union representative is not involved in the matter and that the colleague agrees to maintain confidentiality.

3.4 If you are **raising concerns as a governor** you should speak to the chair of governors. If you feel unable to raise the matter with them for good reason, you should contact a senior member of the Trust central team with your complaint.

- Senior staff in the Trust's central team (info@lihtrust.uk or HR@lihtrust.uk or 0208 325 4578)

3.5 You are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation. However, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

3.6 The Trust hopes that this policy gives you the reassurance you would need to raise concerns internally. However, it recognises that there may be circumstances where progressing through the internal route has failed and you can only properly report your concern to external bodies who have responsibilities to monitor the Trust's compliance to its own standards and legal obligations. In most cases the most appropriate body would be the Trust's external auditors:-

Kreston Reeves, 2nd Floor, 168 Shoreditch High Street, London, E1 6RA Tel: +44 (0)20 7382 1820

Step Two – What happens once a concern has been raised?

3.7 This appointed person, while maintaining the confidentiality of the complainant, will ensure that any individual who is the subject of the allegation is given details of the allegations in order to respond.

- 3.8 Once you have raised your concern, the person receiving the whistleblowing allegation will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated properly. The nature of the investigation will depend upon the concern raised.
- 3.9 The person receiving your whistleblowing concern is responsible for ensuring you receive feedback on progress, subject to any issues of confidentiality that may be necessary to guarantee a successful conclusion. It may not be possible to inform you of the precise action undertaken where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by the Trust/Academy to another party.

4. Safeguards

- 4.1 The Trust recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. The Trust/School will take appropriate action to safeguard you from recrimination or victimisation as a result of raising a genuine concern.
- 4.2 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. However in some circumstances you may be needed to come forward as a witness.
- 4.3 You are encouraged to put your name to your concern wherever possible. Concerns expressed where the complainant wishes to remain anonymous are much less powerful but the Trust/Academy will consider anonymous concerns on a case by case basis.

5. Independent Advice and Helpline

- 5.1 If you are unsure whether to use the Trust's Speak Up and Whistleblowing Policy, or you want independent advice at any stage, you may contact the independent charity called Public Concern at Work. This organisation seeks to ensure that concerns about serious malpractice are properly raised and addressed in the workplace. The staff will give you free expert and confidential advice about how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work using a Whistleblowing Policy. The contact number is:

Public Concern at Work on 0207 404 6609

- 5.2 The Trade Unions encourage their members to contact them for advice before they take action in accordance with the policy.

5.3 The act of seeking confidential advice under 5.1 and 5.2 is solely a matter between the parties concerned and could not itself be grounds for disciplinary action.

6. Responsible Bodies and Monitoring Arrangements

6.1 The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the policy.

6.2 The Head Teacher/Head of School is responsible for the operation of the policy within each school and the overall maintenance of a record of concerns raised in accordance with this policy and the outcomes.

6.3 All staff will be advised of this policy and where to access it.

6.4 Local Governing Bodies within the trust will be consulted about any significant changes to this policy.

6.5 This policy was devised in consultation with the Trade Unions and will be reviewed similarly.

Contacts

External Auditor	Kreston Reeves, 2nd Floor, 168 Shoreditch High Street, London, E1 6RA Tel: +44 (0)20 7382 1820
Chair of Trust Board	Ben.Spinks@lihtrust.uk
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: 020 3117 2520 E-mail: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk
His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (‘the Chief Inspector’)	Address: The Chief Inspector, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0300 123 3155 Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	Address: Whistleblowing and Malpractice, Complaints Investigation Manager, Ofqual, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry CV1 3BH
The Standards and Testing Agency (STA)	Please call the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email STA.maladministration@education.gov.uk to report concerns about: • how the reception baseline assessment (RBC), phonics screening check, multiplication tables check (MTC) or key stage 2 (KS2) national curriculum tests have been administered in a school or by a member of staff • how KS2 teacher assessment judgements have been reached