Whistle-blowing Policy
Trust Policy & Procedures

Accountable Trust Committee	Audit & Risk
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Responsible Officer	Head of Governance and Compliance
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Document Control

Date	Version	Comments
01/10/21	1.0	Trustee approved – board meeting 29/09/21
01/10/21	1.0a	Cover page update
21/04/22	1.0b	Reference company name change to Learning Partners Academy Trust
16/11/23	1.0c	Job titles updated to reflect current organizational structure
1/5/24	1.0d	Links updated, email addresses and school information updated.
02/09/24	1.0e	No change in legislation, cover page updated and job titles updated. Reformatted flowchart (Appendix 1)
10/12/24	1.0e	Trustee approved – board meeting 10/12/24
18/12/25	1.1	Trustee Approval – Board Meeting 18/12/2025 Updated Key Contacts, reformatting, No changes to legislation, no changes to the content of the policy are necessary
05/05/26	1.2	Changes in line with Employment Rights Act

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Please note this list may be updated by the responsible officer when change arises in the organisation, without the need for committee meeting review/approval.

Contents

1 Introduction 5
2 Legal position 5
3 Evaluation 5
4 Aim/scope of the policy 5
5 Context 6
5.1 Safeguard - harassment or victimisation 6
5.2 Confidentiality 7
5.3 Anonymous allegations 7
5.4 Untrue allegations 7
6 How to raise a concern 7
7 How the trust will respond 8
7.1 Initial Enquiries 8
7.2 Internal Investigation 8
8 How the matter can be taken further 9
9 Appendix 1: Whistle-blowing Flowchart 10

1 Introduction

The Board of Trustees of Learning Partners Academy Trust (the 'trust') is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the trust to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy provides clear guidelines on the position of all schools within the trust in relation to whistle-blowing.

The Board of Directors and the trust Local Governing Body (LGB) are mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and this procedure will be applied fairly and consistently to all employees.

2 Legal position

The policy provides a means for a concern to be raised under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which provides the whistle-blower with a certain level of legal protection to raise legitimate concerns.

3 Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated regularly by the relevant committee of the board to ensure it is still fit for purpose (please review title page, review cycle and accountable committee). Details of associated schools and key contact details within the trust may be modified by the responsible officer from time-to-time, without the need for committee approval. Details of allegations and outcomes will be registered with the Head of Governance and Compliance and retained in a confidential file for five years, after which time they will be destroyed, unless the allegation and outcome is against the Head of Governance and Compliance, when it should be retained by the Chief Operations Officer. The purpose of this is to ensure that a central record is maintained that can be cross-referenced to other complaints to monitor any patterns of concerns raised.

4 Aim/scope of the policy

This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of other people or the organisation are at risk. It only applies to concerns raised in the public rather than personal interest. If the concern is about their own personal position, this should be raised through the Grievance Procedure.

The aim of this policy is to:

- provide avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- take the matter further if dissatisfied with the trust's response
- give reassurance that the whistle-blower will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle-blowing in good faith

The Whistle-blowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, although the trust reserves the right to determine which procedure is appropriate.
Concerns to be reported under this policy may relate to something that is:

- unlawful
- contrary to any code of ethics
- bribery
- corruption
- creating or ignoring a serious risk to health and safety

- criminal activity
- discrimination of any kind
- dishonesty
- endangering the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults
- failing to comply with a known legal obligation
- fraud
- financial irregularities/malpractice
- miscarriage of justice
- evidence of academic or professional malpractice
- failure of an individual(s) to disclose a serious conflict of interest
- contravening the trust's and or LGB's policies
- deliberate concealment of any of the above
- sexual harassment

Any concern that a young person is being harmed or at risk of being harmed must be reported through the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Any concerns about an individual's suitability to work with children should also be reported through the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy.
Concerns about any professional practice and procedure undermining the safety and welfare of young people, or concerns about how safeguarding allegations have been managed, should be expressed through the Whistle-blowing Policy.

Any concern regarding fraud or corruption should be notified to the Chief Operating Officer (or CEO if the case concerns the COO). Please also refer to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

5 Context

An employee, governor/trustee or volunteer is often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the trust. However, concerns may not be expressed, because of a fear that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or the trust. There could also be a fear of harassment or victimisation, and therefore it could be easier to ignore the concern rather than report it.

The trust is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage employees, governors/trustees and volunteers, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the trust's work, to come forward and voice those concerns.

It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that individuals can do so without fear of reprisals. This Whistle-blowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff, governors/trustees and volunteers to raise serious concerns with the trust rather than overlooking a problem or discussing it externally.

The CEO of the trust has overall responsibility for:
- maintaining and operating the policy
- reporting on the effectiveness of the policy
- approving amendments to the policy
- promoting the policy periodically
- maintaining a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form that does not endanger the confidentiality of the whistle-blower)
- reporting as necessary to the trust's Board of Trustees

5.1 Safeguard - harassment or victimisation

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 malpractice. The trust will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will act to protect the whistle-blower when a concern is raised in good faith. This does not mean that if the whistle-blower is already the subject of procedures such as disciplinary, capability or grievance procedures, those procedures will be halted as a result of the whistle-blowing.

Throughout the process, the person to whom the initial concern was raised by the whistle-blower will provide ongoing support the whistle-blower, as they may be worried about their position, about getting someone else into trouble, or about what they suspect may be happening. Support may also be called upon by a whistle-blower's union representative, as appropriate.

Where feasible, the whistle-blower will be contacted when their concern has been investigated to ascertain whether they have suffered any detriment as a result of their whistle-blowing. If at any time, either during or after the investigation, the whistle-blower feels that they have suffered any detriment as a result of the whistle-blowing they should contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees or CEO of the trust.

5.2 Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence; the trust is committed to protecting the identity of whistle-blowers as far as is possible. However, in some circumstances it may not be possible to do this, for example if it will prevent a thorough investigation taking place; if there is reason to reveal the name by law; if the whistle-blower has to give evidence at any hearings.

In cases where identities are revealed for whatever reason, the school will do its best to support all parties involved and protect them from discrimination and victimisation. Confidentiality is a priority throughout any investigation, and continues to be once the investigation is over, and we urge all individuals to closely follow all guidelines relating to confidentiality.

Any individual who has acted knowingly against this, or revealed confidential information unnecessarily or for vicious reasons, may face prosecution.

5.3 Anonymous allegations

Allegations can be made anonymously. However, this policy encourages whistle-blowers to put their name to the concern/allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. For example, we may need to contact the whistle-blower to obtain further information or verify the details already provided. Anonymous allegations will be considered wherever possible at the discretion of the trust. The factors to be considered when determining whether an investigation in such a case can proceed would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the creditability of the concern, and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other, attributable sources

5.4 Untrue allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the whistle-blower. If, however, the whistle-blower makes a malicious or vexatious allegation, appropriate action may be taken against them.

6 How to raise a concern

The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action. As a first step, the whistle-blower

should normally raise concerns with their immediate line manager or other appropriate senior member of staff. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. For example, if it is believed that a member of the senior leadership team is involved, the whistle-blower should contact the Headteacher/Principal, CEO or the Chair of the Board of Trustees in writing.

7 How the trust will respond

The action taken by the trust will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally (this is the most likely option), led by an independent Investigation Officer
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- be referred to the DfE
- form the subject of an independent inquiry

or any combination of the above.

7.1 Initial Enquiries

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. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection and safeguarding of children), will be referred for consideration under those procedures.

When any meeting is arranged, the whistle-blower has the right, if they wish, to be accompanied by a union or professional representative or a friend who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates. The trust will take steps to minimise any difficulties that the whistle-blower may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the whistle-blower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the trust will provide advice about the procedure.

The trust acknowledges the need to provide the whistle-blower with assurance that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, the whistle-blower will receive appropriate information about the extent and outcomes of any investigations.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. This may be because:

- the leadership member does not feel that there is enough evidence to warrant a continued investigation
- it is unlikely that any malpractice has occurred or will occur
- there is a belief that the whistle-blower is not acting in good faith
- the matter has already been raised and is being investigated

Within ten working days of a concern being received, where appropriate, the trust will write to the whistle-blower at their provided email address:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter
- informing whether any initial enquiries have been made, and
- outlining whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not

7.2 Internal Investigation

The amount of contact between the employees or trustees considering the issues and the whistle-blower 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 the whistle-blower by the Investigation Officer.

Further interviews may also be conducted by the Investigation Officer with other individuals to ascertain further evidence.

All individuals concerned and involved with any allegation or investigation should keep good records of meetings they attend, discussions that are held, and any outcomes or action points that have been decided.

The outcomes of any investigations will be reported to the whistle-blower in writing to their provided email address within a further ten working days. If they do not receive any information and this time has passed, they may appeal for information through the Head of Governance and Compliance.

A summary of the report will be shared at the subsequent Audit & Risk Committee.

8 How the matter can be taken further

This policy is intended to provide an avenue to raise concerns within the trust and the trust hopes that the whistle-blower would be satisfied with the outcome/actions taken from the investigation. However, if this is not the case the whistle-blower may feel that the matter should be taken further.

Staff should only approach external authorities regarding their concerns without discussing them internally as a last resort, for example if:

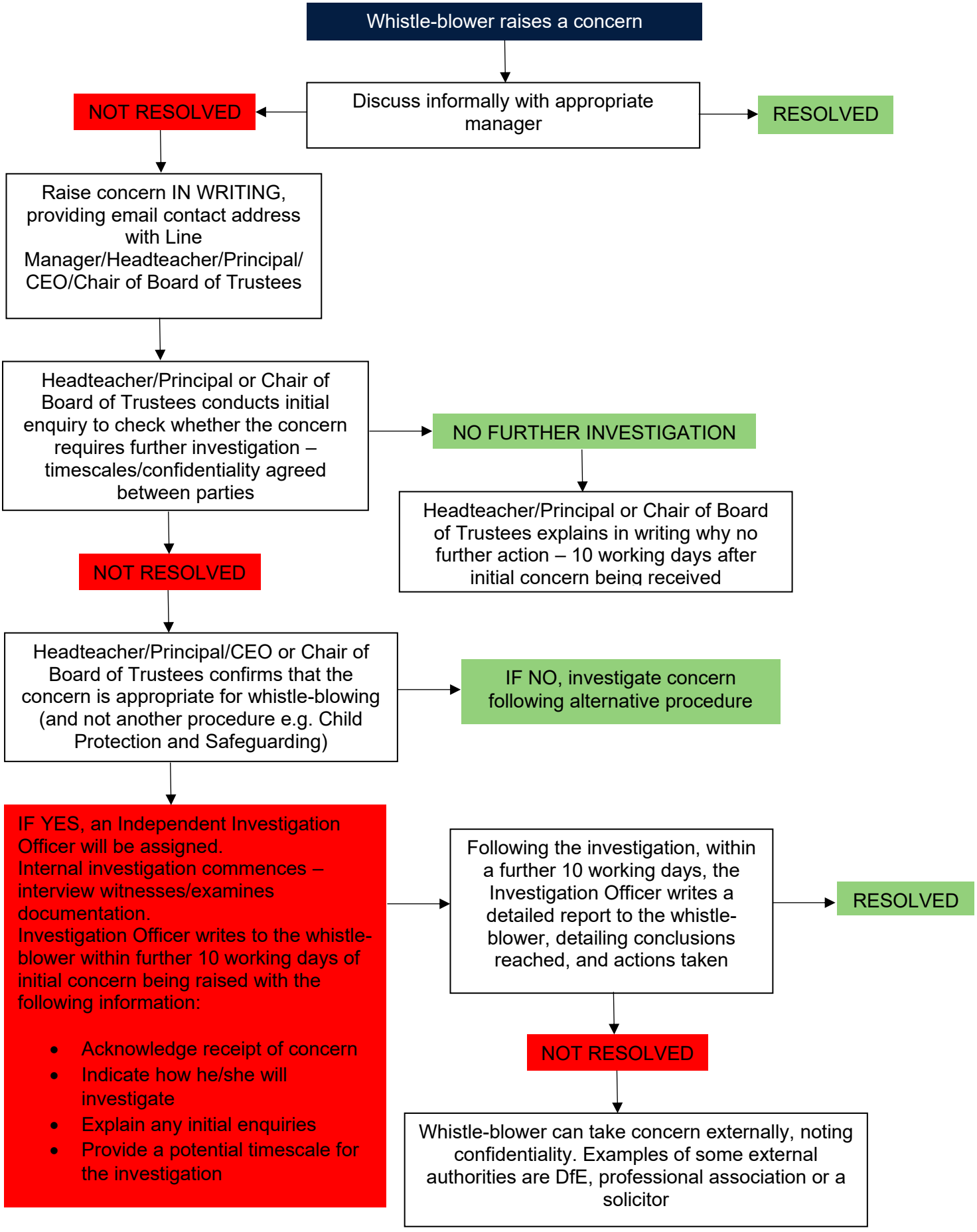
- They feel that they are being discriminated against and that there is no internal authority that can be contacted with trust
- They reasonably believe that they will be victimised if they follow internal procedures for whistleblowing
- They believe that the concern that they have raised has not been taken seriously or acted upon correctly
- There is an urgent and immediate need to protect a child in danger and this cannot be achieved via internal processes

The authorities that may be of assistance are:

- Department for Education
- Regional Schools Commissioner
- Surrey Police
- Protect (an independent charity that provides free advice for employees who wish to express concerns about fraud/serious malpractice) – Whistle-blowing Helpline: 020-3117-2520
- Children's Social Care Services
- Information Commissioners Office
- Health and Safety Executive
- Local Citizen's Advice Bureau
- The trust's legal advisers
- The trust's external auditors

If the whistle-blower refers the concern to an individual or organisation outside of the school or the trust, steps will need to be taken to ensure that there will not be a disclosure of confidential information, in line with data protection law – see our Data Protection Policy for guidance.

Key points:

- Take immediate action
- Protect confidentiality
- Refer to policy
- Keep accurate records

9 Appendix 1: Whistle-blowing flow chart