



Yardleys
School
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Adopted by Trustees:

Signed:

Date:

This policy is reviewed annually by the Finance, Premises and Staffing Committee

Review date:

POLICY INFORMATION

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Date of last review | March 2025 | Review period | Annually |
| Date ratified by trustees | April 2025 | Trustees' committee responsible | FPS |
| Policy owner | Gemma Webb | SLT member responsible | Gemma Webb |
| Date of next review | March 2026 | | |

Reviews/revisions

| Review date | Changes made | By whom |
|-------------|--|-------------|
| March 2020 | No changes | Jill Wilson |
| March 2021 | No changes | Gemma Webb |
| March 2022 | Clarified purpose of the policy in paragraph 1.1 | Gemma Webb |
| March 2023 | No changes | Gemma Webb |
| March 2024 | No changes | Gemma Webb |

Dates of linked staff training (if applicable)

| Date | Course title | Led by |
|------|--------------|--------|
| | | |

EQUALITY AND GDPR

All Yardleys' policies should be read in conjunction with our Equal Opportunities and GDPR policies.

Statement of principle – Equality

We will take all possible steps to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly against any individual or group of individuals. When compiling, monitoring and reviewing the policy we will consider the likely impact on the promotion of all aspects of equality as described in the Equality Act 2010.

Statement of principle – GDPR

Yardleys School recognises the serious issues that can occur as a consequence in failing to protect an individual adult's or child's personal and sensitive data. These include emotional distress, physical safety, child protection, loss of assets, fraud and other criminal acts.

Yardleys School is therefore committed to the protection of all personal and sensitive data for which it holds responsibility as the Data Controller and the handling of such data in line with the data protection principles and the Data Protection Act (DPA)/GDPR.

Statement of principle – Yardleys Way

Yardleys School treats everyone equally and we value everyone the same irrespective of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy or maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

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Schedule I Nolan Principles

I. Introduction

- I.1.1 Yardleys School is committed to ensuring that it, and the people working for it, complies with the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. We recognise that employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the school. However, they may be concerned about expressing their concerns because they feel that speaking up could be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, they may feel it is easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice. However, it is vital that employees feel confident in raising concerns in the public interest and they may be confident in doing so without fear of reprisals, as outlined in more detail in this policy. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides statutory protection to employees making disclosures (see paragraph 2).
- I.2 The term whistleblowing has a specific legal definition, i.e. a disclosure or allegation of serious wrongdoing made by an employee, and a wider public definition, i.e. any disclosure or allegation of serious wrongdoing made by anyone.
- I.3 This policy document seeks to cover both disclosures and allegations of serious wrongdoing made by employees, and to this end, where this policy makes reference to a whistleblower; it refers to any individual who is making a disclosure or allegation of serious wrongdoing.
- I.4 Where an individual is aware of any serious wrongdoing committed by or related to the actions of Yardleys School employees, such as:
- breach of a legal obligation;
 - any criminal activity, including incitement to commit a criminal act;
 - corruption or fraud;
 - a miscarriage of justice;
 - a danger to the health or safety of any individual or damage to the environment;
 - abuse of power or authority;
 - failure to comply with professional standards, the Academy's policies or codes of practice/conduct;
- and reports it, the Academy will investigate any such allegations and, where appropriate, take action. The Academy is also committed to preventing any harassment, victimisation or unfair treatment of any person arising from their whistleblowing, and where appropriate, take disciplinary action against any member of staff responsible for such harassment, victimisation or unfair treatment against a whistleblower.
- I.5 This policy seeks to set out how the Academy will handle and respond to any such allegations.
- I.6 Whilst the whistleblowing legislation offers protection to employees, the Academy considers that any such allegations of serious wrongdoing should be investigated.
- I.7 This policy seeks to:
- a) encourage employees to feel confident in raising concerns or allegations in the public interest about suspected serious wrongdoing in the Academy without fear of reprisals or victimisation even where the concern or allegations are not subsequently confirmed by the investigation;
 - b) give a clear message that allegations of serious wrongdoing or impropriety are taken seriously;

- c) ensure that where the disclosure proves to be well founded, the individuals responsible for such serious wrongdoing will be held accountable for their actions;
- d) set out what employees can expect by way of confidentiality and protection when making a whistleblowing disclosure; and
- e) identify independent support for employees who wish to make a whistleblowing disclosure (see section 6).

1.8 This policy is not designed to be used:

- a) for raising or reconsidering matters that come under existing Academy procedures e.g. Grievance, Disciplinary, Capability, Complaints procedure; or
- b) for allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example child or vulnerable adult protection) which will normally be referred for consideration under the relevant procedure, unless the employee has good reason to believe that the procedure is not being followed or will not be followed effectively; or
- c) as an appeal process from any complaint or grievance handled under any of the above procedures.

1.9 Where a complaint made under this policy falls outside the scope of the policy, e.g. where the complaint falls outside the scope of “serious wrongdoing”, the Academy will advise the whistleblower of this and consult with the whistleblower in respect of taking the complaint further. Wherever possible, the Academy will comply with the views of the whistleblower, but there are situations where the Academy is legally required to pass on details of allegations, without the consent of the whistleblower, such as in safeguarding matters, or where the allegations relate to serious criminal activity undertaken by individuals outside the Academy.

1.10 Likewise, if an allegation made under either of the other above complaints processes falls under the remit of a “serious wrongdoing”, the Academy will notify the whistleblower of this and investigate the allegation under this process.

2. Disclosures made by Yardleys School employees, Agency Staff, and any other individuals working for the Academy

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (“PIDA”)

- 2.1 PIDA is designed to encourage and enable employees (which includes Agency Staff and any other individual working for the Academy) to raise any concerns about any suspected serious wrongdoing, an illegal act or a dangerous situation within the organisation.
- 2.2 This is called making a “Protected Disclosure” under the Act, and when it is made in the public interest and in accordance with this policy, an employee is legally protected from harassment or victimisation as a result of the disclosure.
- 2.3 The person making the disclosure does not have to be directly or personally affected by the serious wrongdoing, but the disclosure must be made in the public interest.
- 2.4 To be protected, the disclosure must be in the public interest and raise a concern concerning any of the following:

- a) a criminal offence (e.g. fraud, corruption or theft) has been/is likely to be committed;
- b) a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he is subject;
- c) a miscarriage of justice has been/is likely to occur;
- d) the health or safety of any individual has been/is likely to be endangered;
- e) the environment has been/is likely to be damaged;
- f) public funds are being used in an unauthorised manner;
- g) the Academy's Financial Regulations have not been observed or is being breached by an employee;
- h) sexual or physical abuse by any member of staff on service user is taking place;
- i) unlawful discrimination is occurring to any member of staff or service recipient in relation to the legally protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation (see guidance on Equality Act at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/introduction>);
- j) any other form of improper action or conduct is taking place. This could include breaches of the regulation requiring school trustees to "act with integrity, objectivity and honesty and in the best interests of the school" (The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statutory-guidance-schools> and breaches of the 'Nolan Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life' (See Schedule 1);
- k) information relating to any of the above is being deliberately concealed or attempts are being made to conceal the same.

2.5 PIDA will protect any employee or worker making a Protected Disclosure, irrespective of whether or not the disclosure relates to information gained in the course of their employment (e.g. a protected disclosure made by an employee acting as a service user would still fall under the PIDA protection).

2.6 If an employee does not feel comfortable making a disclosure to the Academy, he/she may be entitled to make a disclosure to other prescribed persons. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>

3. Advice to employees wishing to raise a concern or make a disclosure

Employees who have major concerns arising from their employment may wish to seek advice from their union or the charity Protect (Whistleblowing Advice Line: 020 3117 2520 –<https://www.pcaw.org.uk>) , to see whether the information which they wish to report would meet the definition of a 'qualifying disclosure' and whether they should be using this procedure, or some other procedure.

4. Reporting an actual or suspected serious wrongdoing

4.1 A person who wishes to report any suspected serious wrongdoing ("a disclosure") to the Academy should contact the Academy by one of the methods below:

E-mail: enquiry@yardleys.bham.sch.uk

Post: Yardleys School
FAO Head Teacher – Whistleblowing
Reddings Lane
Tyseley
Birmingham
B11 3EY

Telephone: 0121 464 6821

Specifying the following information:

Name (unless they wish to be anonymous)
Contact details (unless they wish to be anonymous)
Who has committed the alleged serious wrongdoing?
What is the nature of the alleged serious wrongdoing?

- 4.2 Employees are also entitled to make a Protected Disclosure through their manager, if they feel confident in approaching their manager to report a concern or allegation of serious wrongdoing that falls under this policy. The manager must follow the obligation of confidentiality, but must, as soon as possible, and no later than 2 working days after receiving the Protected Disclosure, log the disclosure in accordance with 8.1, and then confirm to the employee concerned, in writing or email, that this matter has been recorded.

In the event that an employee does not feel comfortable in making a disclosure to the Academy, they are entitled to also make a Protected Disclosure to a number of other organisations. For further information as to whom, other than the Academy, a protected disclosure can be made, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2>

5. How the Academy will respond to a disclosure

- 5.1 The Academy will acknowledge receipt of a disclosure within 2 working days.
- 5.2 The Academy will then consider and decide whether the disclosure falls under the whistleblowing criteria and, if not, will, wherever possible, seek the whistleblower's consent as to how the disclosure will be investigated using the appropriate Academy procedure(s). The Academy's decision will be given to the person making the disclosure, wherever possible, as soon as possible after receipt of disclosure, and no later than 5 working days after acknowledging receipt of the disclosure.
- 5.3 The decision letter should state who will be handling the disclosure, how that person can be contacted, what action is likely to be taken and when the employee or worker might expect to hear the outcome of the disclosure. A further letter, summarising progress to date, should be sent within another 10 working days, and if the matter has not been resolved at that time the letter should include an estimate of how long it is likely to be before a full response can be provided.
- 5.4 However, there are situations where the Academy is legally required to investigate, under separate procedures, without the consent of the whistleblower, such as investigating allegations of ill-treatment or abuse of children or vulnerable adults (safeguarding). In these circumstances, the Academy will, wherever possible, advise the whistleblower that the disclosure will be investigated under another process, but there may be situations where it is not appropriate to disclose the existence of these investigations.
- 5.5 When the disclosure is considered to come under the whistleblowing policy, and the Academy has assigned an investigator, he/she will contact the whistleblower, within a further 10 working days, to advise them of the following:
- a) the arrangements for confidentiality;
 - b) how the person making the disclosure will be expected to contribute to the investigation;
 - c) the outcome of any discussions which may have taken place over anonymity;
 - d) an estimate of how long the investigation is likely to take;
 - e) the name of the investigator appointed to undertake the investigation; and
 - f) the right of an employee to representation by a recognised trade union or work colleague at any meeting.

- 5.6 Yardleys School will, wherever possible, seek to advise the whistleblower of the outcome of the investigation. However, the Academy is bound by the GDPR and the Human Rights Act in respect of allegations relating to individuals, and may not be able to disclose information where legal proceedings are pending.

The use of this whistleblowing process does not automatically amount to acceptance by the Academy that the information provided is necessarily a qualifying disclosure.

- 5.8 For monitoring purposes the Academy keeps a list of communications received from people using this whistleblowing process. This information is used for monitoring purposes and to detect if there are areas where there is a high incidence of alleged serious wrongdoing.

6. Confidentiality and anonymity

- 6.1 Although the PIDA does not refer to the confidentiality of concerns raised in a qualifying disclosure, there is a widespread assumption that such a disclosure will be treated in confidence as a means of preventing victimisation. The Academy will seek to avoid disclosing information identifying any whistleblower, even if the Academy considers that the disclosure by the whistleblower falls outside the scope of a qualifying disclosure. However, there are situations where, due to the circumstances of the alleged serious wrongdoing, it is impossible to avoid disclosing information identifying any whistleblower. In these circumstances, the Academy will consult with the whistleblower prior to the disclosure taking place and offer support.
- 6.2 There may also be situations where the Academy may be obliged to disclose information, such as where there are legal proceedings following on from the investigation of the whistleblowing investigation. This may require the disclosure of witness statements or correspondence, and there is even the possibility that the whistleblower may be expected to give evidence at any hearing. In these circumstances, the Academy should discuss the implications for the whistleblower if he/she proceeds with the disclosure, and where appropriate, discuss appropriate support arrangements.
- 6.3 The Academy may also be required to disclose the identity of the whistleblower to third parties, where necessary for the purposes of undertaking investigations e.g. where the allegations relate to serious criminal offences where the Academy considers that the Police should investigate.
- 6.4 Anonymous complaints will be considered but, depending on the information given and the credibility of the evidence, there may not be enough information for a proper investigation without the investigator being able to contact the whistleblower for further information and, in these circumstances, there may not be sufficient evidence to pursue an investigation.
- 6.5 The Academy is subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. This means that there is a presumption that the Academy discloses any information it holds, unless that information falls under one or more exemptions and, in most cases, that the application of that exemption is in the public interest.
- 6.6 The FOI Act contains exemptions that may be applicable to permit the withholding of information identifying the whistleblower, including:
- s.40 Personal Data.
 - s.41 Information which, if disclosed, would give rise to an actionable breach of confidence.
- 6.7 If the Academy receives a request for information identifying a whistleblower, it will contact the whistleblower to seek their views in respect of the disclosure or withholding of the information requested and, wherever possible, it will seek to comply with those views.

6.8 The Academy is mindful, in reconciling the legal obligation to disclose information it holds under the FOI Act 2000, of its legal obligations under:

- d) The Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 to avoid the discrimination or victimisation of employees; and
- e) The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, to protect the health and safety (including mental health) of employees.

7. Protecting an employee whistleblower

7.1 Employees are protected if:

- they honestly think what they report is true;
- they think they are telling the right person; and
- they believe that their disclosure is in the public interest.

7.2 Any employee who makes a 'qualifying disclosure' which meets the definition in the Public Interest Disclosure Act is legally protected against victimisation for whistleblowing. The Academy has adopted this procedure in order to encourage early internal whistleblowing and demonstrate its commitment to preventing victimisation. If an employee claims that, despite that commitment, he/she has been victimised because of blowing the whistle, he/she should make a further complaint under this whistleblowing procedure directly to the Chair of Trustees.

7.3 An employee has the right to complain of victimisation as a result of any whistleblowing to an employment tribunal.

7.4 Any employee who victimises a whistleblower could:

- be subject to an internal investigation and potential disciplinary action, including potential dismissal;
- face a civil claim personally, as the affected whistleblower could be entitled to directly issue a legal claim against the culprit.

8. Recording and monitoring complaints

8.1 The Academy is legally required to maintain a list of concerns raised by employees made under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Inclusion in this list does not amount to acceptance that the communication amounts to a Protected Disclosure and any subsequent decision that the matter falls outside the Act will be added to the record on the list.

8.3 For the purposes of investigating whether or not there are any systemic issues that need to be addressed, and to monitor the performance of any investigation, an anonymised summary of all disclosures of serious wrongdoing made by employees will be sent on a monthly basis to the Chair of Trustees.

8.4 The Academy will record details of all complaints made under this policy, anonymising the identity of the whistleblower and use this information for the purposes of identifying areas of concern, which may indicate further action is required.

8.5 Both lists are maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR.

8.6 A report on the number of concerns will be published annually. This report will not include any information identifying any whistleblower.

Schedule I

The Nolan Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life

1. **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **Integrity** – Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. **Objectivity** – Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. **Openness** – Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. **Honesty** – Holders of public office should be truthful.
7. **Leadership** – Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Holders of public office are defined in law. They include school trustees and staff of academies whose funding is derived from the government.