



**Lakelands**  
Academy

**SPEAKING UP ABOUT  
WRONGDOING POLICY  
(Whistleblowing)**

**NEXT REVIEW:  
SPRING 2022**

## **1. Advice for Lakelands Academy employees**

1. Lakelands Academy is committed to open and honest communication and the highest possible standards of integrity. Part of meeting that commitment is to encourage employees, members and others who have serious concerns to speak up. This may need to be on a confidential basis and the Academy wishes to emphasise that if someone does 'speak up' they can do so without fear of reprisals. Such policies are termed "blowing the whistle" and this phrase is used throughout this statement but should be viewed as a positive action of speaking up. It is understandable that employees may not express concerns because they may feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or they fear harassment/victimisation. The Academy would encourage all employees to not ignore concerns and to report them positively and appropriately.

## **2. Introduction**

2.1 This policy aims to:

- Provide avenues for employees to raise concerns and received feedback on any action taken;
- Allow employees to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the response;
- Reassure employees that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

2.2 Employees or members may be the first to see that something is seriously wrong within the Academy. Such wrongdoings relate to:

- Fraud and corruption
- Discrimination
- Abuse of vulnerable children/people
- Damage to the environment
- Health and Safety Breaches
- Failure to comply with legal proceedings

2.3 It is the duty of employees to speak up when they have serious concerns and it is the duty of the Academy to act on those concerns and protect and support employees when they do. A failure to report a serious concern could be construed as collusion. Difficult as it may be to speak up, employees should be aware of their special position and of their duty to make their concerns known.

2.4 This policy statement makes clear what employees should do and what will happen as a result. The policy has been discussed with all the relevant trades unions and professional organisations and has their support.

2.5 This policy statement is issued to employees to advise specifically on blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. It should not be confused with the complaints procedure (where you can complain about the Academy's services), the grievance procedure (where you can complain about your own treatment as an employee) or the Child Protection procedure (specifically relating to working around Children and Young People).

### **3. Serious Concerns**

3.1 A serious concern may be related to something that:

- is unlawful
- is against the Academy's Constitution, financial rules, contract rules or other policies
- does not meet established standards or working practices
- amounts to improper conduct.

(Theft, bribery and corruption, discrimination, the abuse of children, vulnerable adults or staff, and environmental misuse are all the types of things which would fall into these categories).

### **4. Safeguards**

#### **4.1 Harassment and Victimisation**

The Academy recognises that deciding to report a concern can be difficult, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for malpractice. The Academy will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

This does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your whistleblowing.

#### **4.2 Confidentiality**

The Academy will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed. It must, however, be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

### 4.3. Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the Academy. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would be:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the validity of the concern;
- the likelihood of confirming the allegations from other sources.

### 4.4. Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. In such circumstances employees will be supported. If, however you make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you, but the matter would be referred to the appropriate SLT Member before any action is taken.

### 4.5. Support For You

Throughout and after this difficult process you will be given full support from senior management, your concerns will be taken seriously and the Academy will do all it can to help you. If practically achievable, and if you are happy to do so, you may be transferred to another job to ensure that you are fully protected.

## **5. How to raise a concern**

5.1. As a first step you should normally raise concerns with your immediate Line Manager. This will depend, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the wrongdoing. If management is involved, you should approach the Deputy Head or Headteacher.

5.2. The earlier you express your concern the better and the easier it will be to take action. Concerns are better raised in writing. You should try to set out:

- the background and history to your concern;
- dates and places where possible;
- the reasons for your concerns.

5.3 In order to ensure the confidentiality, concerns should be sent in writing in a sealed envelope addressed to designated academy contact name and clearly marked 'Strictly Private and confidential – To be opened by the addressee only'

5.4 It is a serious disciplinary offence for any person to seek to prevent a communication of concern reaching an appropriate contact or to impede any investigation which he /she or anyone on her/his behalf may make.

5.5 Although employees are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, employees will need to demonstrate to those appointed to investigate the matter, that there are sufficient grounds to the concern.

5.6. Further advice and guidance on what to do can be found in the:

- Policy for reporting and investigation of suspected theft and fraud.
- Policies and guidance relating to the abuse of children, or vulnerable adults;
- The anti-bullying policy

## **6. How will the Academy respond?**

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

- be investigated internally with the Academy but independently of those directly involved;
- be referred to the Police;
- be referred to the external Auditor;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

6.2. In order to protect individuals and the Academy, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. These will be made confidentially and every attempt made to protect the employee. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

6.3. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

6.4. Within 10 working days of a concern being received, we will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how we propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

## **7. How the matter can be taken further**

This policy is intended to provide employees with avenues to raise serious concerns within the Academy. The Academy hopes employees will find the procedure a satisfactory way of dealing with concerns. An employee does have the right to take the matter outside the Academy, the following are possible contact points:

- Shropshire Council Whistleblowing Hotline where confidential disclosures can be made. The contact number is 01743 252627.
- an external auditor;
- relevant professional bodies who regulate organisations (including the Ombudsman);
- a solicitor;
- the police;
- Public Concern at Work (Whistleblowing Charity) [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk) 02074046609.

The disclosure of confidential information would normally constitute a serious disciplinary offence which could result in dismissal or other disciplinary action. Accordingly, if an employee did take the matter outside the Academy they would need to ensure that either no confidential information is disclosed or that there are wholly exceptional circumstances which the Academy would consider justified in the circumstances.