



DAYSPRING TRUST – NOW NORTHERN LIGHTS LEARNING TRUST

Whistleblowing Policy

Northern Lights Learning Trust (NLLT) have adopted all policies pertaining to Dayspring Trust – Ian Ramsey CE Academy and Venerable Bede CE Academy – from 1 February 2023 and will be reviewed in due course.

Ratified by: Board of Directors
Date of review: Autumn Term 2022
Date of next review: Autumn Term 2025

The Dayspring Trust aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian faith and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils. We believe that our Christian values spring from the two great commandments, 'Love God and love your neighbour'. We seek to live this out through the power of the Holy Spirit. St Paul reminds us in Galatians 5.22-23 that the fruit of the Spirit is "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control". These are also underpinned by the Old Testament injunction to "Do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God" Micah 6.8. These values rooted in the Christian Faith come as a package and we aim to embed them in the life of our academies in a worked out way. We recognise that at times we may highlight particular values to bring them into greater prominence within our academies and these are currently the five values of Forgiveness, Hope, Joy, Perseverance and Wisdom. We believe these values to be in accordance with British values springing from our Judeo-Christian roots. Collective worship will play a major and vital part in assisting with this process of embedding these values in the life of our academies.

The Multi Academy Trust Members and Directors are aware of their responsibilities in law and are committed to the provision of an excellent education within its academies in accordance with our Anglican foundation. This is embraced in our Dayspring Trust vision statement:

- **Forge a supportive and challenging family of academies**
- **Provide excellent education within a strong Christian community**
- **Resource our pupils for wise and generous living**

In addition, each academy also has its own distinctive mission statement, flowing out from the vision statement of the Dayspring Trust.

At Ian Ramsey CE Academy:

"Together to learn, to grow, to serve."

This is embodied in scripture:

'Each of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.' 1. Peter 4.10

At Venerable Bede CE Academy:

"Soar to the heights together"

This is embodied in scripture:

'But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.' Isaiah 40:31

This policy has been developed to take into consideration our ethos as well as local and national policy and guidance.

Introduction

The Board of Directors of the Dayspring Trust are committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the Dayspring Trust's policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. **A culture of openness, accountability and vigilance** is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This procedure is not a substitute for normal line management processes, but an addition to them. Staff should always first consider using normal line management for raising concerns. This procedure is only for the purpose of raising concerns about wrongdoing and is not a substitute or alternative for existing procedures such as the Grievance or Disciplinary Procedures for staff, or the complaints procedure.

This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through the normal line management. As an example, therefore, if a member of staff has a personal grievance, then it must be raised through the Grievance Procedure; it would not be appropriate for it to be raised through the Whistleblowing Procedure. In addition, the existence of this procedure does not prevent staff from raising concerns through their trade union if they so wish.

The procedure is therefore not a route through which employees can raise concerns about mismanagement which may arise from weak management rather than malpractice.

Aims of the Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be a mistaken

This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Public Concern at Work.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff within the Dayspring Trust and the trust reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

This policy reflects the Dayspring Trust's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including the Members, Board of Directors and Academy Council members, Executive Headteacher, Headteachers, members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff

(collectively referred to as “Staff” in this policy) who are advised to familiarise themselves with its content.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns * See note at the end of this policy
- miscarriages of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- financial fraud or mismanagement
- negligence
- breach of the academy’s internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct
- conduct likely to damage the academy’s reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

A ‘whistleblower’ is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the academy’s activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to staff’s own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should follow the Grievance Policy and Procedure.

If staff are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, they should initially seek advice from the Headteacher and, if the matter is in relation to an alleged wrongdoing by the Headteacher, or Executive Headteacher, then staff should seek the advice of the Chair of the Trust Board.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

The Trust hopes that in many cases, staff will be able to raise any concerns with their Line Manager, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively. If this is not possible, staff should raise their concern with the most appropriate person, as detailed below:

Concerns within an individual Trust academy should be raised with the Headteacher. If the concerns involve the Headteacher, then the Executive Headteacher should be the first point of contact. If the concerns involve the Executive Headteacher, then the Chair of the Trust Board should be contacted.

It should not be expected that the person receiving the allegation will become the investigating officer. It is at the discretion of this person to delegate the investigation to another person if they feel this is appropriate.

The Headteacher (or Executive Headteacher/Chair of the Board, if applicable) will arrange a meeting with the 'whistleblower' as soon as practicable to discuss their concern. They will record sufficient details to enable the matter to be thoroughly investigated.

As a minimum, they will record the name of the employee but also indicate whether the individual wishes his or her identity to remain confidential, if possible, and the nature of the concern. In some cases, it will not be possible to maintain confidentiality and the Headteacher/Executive Headteacher/Chair of the Board should explain this to the employee. In such instances, the employee will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to his/her identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.

Staff may bring a colleague or trade union representative to any meetings under this policy who must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

All concerns will be recorded and a written summary of the concerns raised will be given to the 'whistleblower' as soon as practicable after the meeting, normally within 5 working days. The academy will also aim to give the 'whistleblower' an indication of how it proposes to deal with the matter.

Confidentiality

The Trust hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise his or her concern confidentially, the academy will endeavour to keep his or her identity secret in so far as it is possible to do so when following this policy and procedure. If it is necessary for anyone investigating that member of staff's concern to know the identity of the 'whistleblower', the academy will discuss this with the member of staff first.

The academy does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the trust cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. 'Whistleblowers' who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed, should come forward to one of the contacts listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

If an individual misuses the policy and procedure e.g. by making malicious or repeated unsubstantiated complaints against colleagues, this could give rise to action under the trust's Disciplinary Procedure. If the Headteacher knows, or has a suspicion that an employee comes into this category, then he/she will take advice from the Chair of the Trust Board who will help to determine what action should be taken.

If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Protect [Formerly Public Concern at Work (Independent whistle blowing charity)]



whistle@protect-advice.org.uk

Website: <https://www.pcaw.org.uk>

Concerns against Directors/Academy Council members

If a concern against a Director or Academy Council member is received, then this will be treated in the same way as any other concern. It will receive the same serious consideration. The concern will be raised by the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher to the Chair of the Trust Board, who will decide how it should be dealt with.

If the concern is against the Chair of the Board of Directors, then clearly this process cannot be followed. In such circumstances, the concern will be taken directly to the Trust Board who will decide how it should be dealt with.

External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of academy staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a service provider. The law allows staff to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where the member of staff reasonably believes it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, staff are encouraged to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact one of the other individuals set out above for guidance.

If the matter of whistleblowing is against the 'regime' in the academy and therefore cannot be managed by senior leaders, then whistleblowers are advised to contact their Local Authority in the first instance, and thereafter OFSTED may also be contacted.

Her majesty's chief inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (the chief inspector) about matters relating to the regulation and inspection of establishments and agencies for children's social care services.

OFSTED
Picadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 3155
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Investigation and outcome

Once a member of staff has raised a concern, the trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The trust will inform the 'whistleblower' of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

If further action is required, in most cases a panel of three Directors will investigate any issue. Occasionally, depending on the level of the complaint, the academy may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable the trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

The academy will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the academy from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the academy concludes that a 'whistleblower' has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith, or with a view to personal gain, the 'whistleblower' will be subject to disciplinary action under the academy's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Whilst the academy cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking, the academy will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which his or her concern has been handled, he or she can raise it with one of the other key contacts outlined above.

There are no rights of appeal against any decisions taken under this procedure. However, an employee or the Headteacher or Executive Headteacher will have the right to refer any particular case to the Chair of the Trust Board for review.

Any member of staff raising a concern under the procedure will be kept informed of progress by the Headteacher, including, where appropriate, the final outcome. However, in certain circumstances, e.g. where disciplinary action under the trust's Disciplinary Procedure has resulted from the concern, it may not be appropriate to provide specific details due to the confidentiality and sensitivity of such matters.

Protection and Support for ‘Whistleblowers’

It is understandable that ‘whistleblowers’ are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The academy aims to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that he or she has suffered any such treatment, he or she should inform the Executive Headteacher immediately. If the matter is not remedied, the member of staff should raise it formally using the Academy’s Grievance Policy and Procedure.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against ‘whistleblowers’ in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance.

Safeguarding

If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Headteacher is not taking seriously, then they should contact the Executive Headteacher in the first instance. If the complaint is against the Executive Headteacher, they should contact the Chair of the Dayspring Trust.