



CHISONA
ACADEMY
Embrace the Achiever in You

Whistle Blowing Policy

Updated	September 2024
Review Date	31 st August 2025
Authorised by	Emmanuel C AJOKU



Achievers Within Educational Ltd is committed to the highest possible standard of operation, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, staff and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the Organisation's or school's work are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns.

1. This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Inform all staff in the Organisation on how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the Organisation
- Set clear procedures for how the Organisation will respond to such concerns
- Inform staff of the protection available to them if they raise a whistleblowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (however vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue).

The Organisation 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 any wrongdoing. The Organisation will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect employees when they raise a concern in good faith. To this end, the Organisation has appointed a Whistleblowing Officer who may be approached where a concern arises or for advice on whistleblowing procedures.

Whistleblowing Officer: Mrs. Huma Ahmed

Director: Mr. Emmanuel Ajoku (for any concerns)

- This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, and it can be amended at any time following consultation with relevant staff, governors and or unions.
- All investigations will be carried out by a competent and suitably trained or experienced individual and are undertaken to establish the facts.

2. What is whistle blowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of concerns which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work that is "in the public interest". This may include:

- Criminal activity, such as fraud, bribery, corruption
- Miscarriages of justice which are occurring or are likely to occur
- Danger to health and safety for students or staff
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to comply with any legal/professional obligation or regulatory requirements
- Negligence, such as unsafe safeguarding procedures or examination malpractice
- Breach of our internal policies and procedures including the Organisation's Code of Professional Conduct and conduct likely to damage our reputation
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above

It is acknowledged that it may often be the case that the employee may often not be directly or personally affected by the danger or illegality.

- A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If an employee has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Organisation's activities (a whistleblowing concern) they should report it under this policy. A disclosure must be for the right reason, but equally should not go beyond being to the right person, for the right reason or motivation
- It is acknowledged that the reason for the disclosure may be in the past, present or future. Therefore, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to any concern that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen.
- This policy should not be used for complaints relating to an employee's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases they should use the Grievance Procedure as appropriate.
- If an employee is uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy they should seek advice from the Organisation's Whistleblowing Officer.
- Further advice can be sought from Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work). Their guidance outlines the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure. Protect also operates a free and confidential advice line: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/advice-line/>.

3. Who does this policy apply to?

The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the Organisation in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

Who is responsible for carrying out this policy?

- The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Leadership Team of the Organisation and will remain under constant review by the board of governors and in partnership with recognised Trade Unions guidelines.
- This policy will be subject to monitoring and review regarding the effectiveness of the policy with recognised trade unions, in line with those groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.
- The Whistleblowing Officer has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.
- The Whistleblowing Officer, in conjunction with the CEO and staff consultation groups, should review this policy from a legal and operational perspective at least once a year. This will be done in consultation with recognised Trade Unions guidance.
- 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 Whistleblowing Officer.

4. Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

Before initiating the procedure employees should consider the following:

- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all employees
- Employees should use line manager or team meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues which are of day-to-day concern where a resolution may be found quickly and effectively
- Whether the concern would qualify as being something in the public interest, as set out in 2 and therefore requires blowing the whistle
- Whilst it can be difficult to raise concerns about the wrongdoing, practice or behaviour of a colleague, employees must act to prevent an escalation of the problem and to prevent themselves being potentially implicated.

5. Stage One

As a first step, if an employee is unsure about whether their concern is one which requires following the whistleblowing procedure, they should raise their concerns either with their line manager or their superior, or directly with the Whistleblowing Officer.

This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues and who is involved. For example:

- if an employee believes that their immediate manager or their manager's superior is involved, they should approach the General manager.
- If the General manager is the subject of the concern, the employee should contact the Director
- If the Director is the subject of the concern, the employee should contact the Chair Board of Governor.
- If the Whistleblowing Officer is the subject of the concern, the employee should contact the Director.

It is important that the employee makes it clear that they are raising the issue via the whistleblowing procedure.

Once an employee has made a disclosure, the senior manager or the Whistleblowing Officer (or other appropriate person) will respond within 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of the disclosure and to set out the next steps. The Organisation will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation and will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss the concern(s) as soon as possible.

At the initial meeting the senior manager (or other appropriate person) should establish that:

- The concern has been appropriately raised via the whistleblowing policy. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle blowing nature, the recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure.
- There is genuine cause and sufficient grounds for concern. An employee has the right to be accompanied by a Union representative or workplace colleague at this meeting.

The senior manager (or other appropriate person) should ask the employee, to put their concern(s) in writing, if they have not already done so. If the employee is unable to do this the senior manager

will take down a written summary of their concern/s and provide the employee with a copy after the meeting. The senior manager should make notes of the discussions with the employee. The employee's letter and/or senior manager's notes should make it clear that the employee is raising the issue via the whistle-blowing procedure and provide:

- the background and history of the concerns; and
- names, dates, and places (where possible); and
- the reasons why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation.

The employee should be asked to date and sign their letter and/or the notes of any discussion. The senior manager should positively encourage the employee to do this, as a concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and much more difficult to address, although an employee should not be put under undue pressure. If the employee has requested anonymity, then a redacted copy of the above will be provided to any other relevant parties.

The senior manager should follow the policy as set out above and explain to the employee:

- who they will need to speak to, to determine the next steps (e.g., Principal)
- what steps they intend to take to address the concern.
- how they will communicate with the employee during and at the end of the process. It should be noted that the need for confidentiality may prevent the school giving the employee specific details of any necessary investigation or any necessary disciplinary action taken as a result;
- that the employee will receive a written response within ten working days;
- that their identity will be protected as far as possible, but should the investigation into the concern require the employee to be named as the source of the information, that this will be discussed with the employee before their name is disclosed;
- that the Organisation will do all that it can to protect the employee from discrimination and/or victimisation;
- that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated immediately;
- that if the employee's concern, though raised as a genuine concern, is not confirmed by the investigation, no punitive action will be taken against them;
- if clear evidence is uncovered during the investigation that they have made a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against them; and
- the investigation may confirm their allegations to be unfounded in which case the Academy will deem the matter to be concluded unless new evidence becomes available.

6. Stage Two

Following the initial meeting with the employee, the senior manager should consult with the principal (or other designated person) to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. A record should be made of the decisions and/or agreed actions.

It may be necessary, with anonymous allegations, to consider whether it is possible to take any further action. When making this decision, senior managers should take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised;
- the credibility of the disclosure(s); and
- the likelihood of confirming the disclosure(s) from attributable sources.

In some cases, it may be possible to resolve the disclosure(s) simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern(s), without the need for further investigation. However, depending on the nature of the concern(s) it may be necessary for them to:

- be investigated internally;
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to the external auditor;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

The designated person will feed back in writing any outcome of the Stage 2 investigation advising of any further action being taken by the Organisation.

Senior Managers should have a working knowledge and understanding of other school policies and procedures, e.g., grievance, Online Use, child protection procedures, GDPR to ensure that concerns raised by employees are addressed via the appropriate procedure/process.

7. Stage Three

Within ten working days of a concern being received, the manager receiving the concern (at paragraph 5 above) must write to the employee:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how they propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and/or
- telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not why not; and/or
- letting the employee know when they will receive further details if the situation is not yet resolved.

In some cases, we 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 us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

We will aim to keep the employee informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The employee should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If we conclude that a whistle blower has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the whistle blower may be subject to disciplinary action.

The recipient will confirm during this meeting that the employee is protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal because of raising the concern.

The recipient of the concern will determine whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:

- The recipient will arrange a further investigation into the matter by escalating to the Organisation's Whistleblowing Officer. In some cases, a referral may be required to an external, independent body to investigate.
- The person who raised the concern will be informed of how the matter is being investigated and an estimated timeframe for when they will be informed of the next steps.

8. Outcome of Investigation

Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the recipient of the concern will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified, and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the local authority or police.

They will inform the person who has raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the Principal, Leadership Team or other staff, as necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.

9. Confidentiality

We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Achievers Within Educational Ltd will make every effort to protect an employee's identity if confidentiality is requested. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the identity of the person, the Organisation will discuss this with them.

Employees are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information and it is also more difficult to establish whether allegations are credible. Anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the Principal. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Whistle blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer or the Director and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If they are in any doubt they can seek advice from Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), the independent whistleblowing charity.

10. Unfounded Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation where they have a genuine concern, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that employee. The outcome will be notified to the employee who raised the concern, who will be informed that the Organisation deems the matter to be concluded and that it should not be raised again unless new evidence becomes available.

11. Malicious or vexatious allegations

If the Organisation concludes that an employee has made an allegation in 'bad faith' such as a malicious or vexatious allegation, or with a view to personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against that employee.

12. Support to Employees

It is recognised that raising concerns can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available, as appropriate to both the employee(s) raising the concerns and any employee(s) subject to investigation.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be monitored as part of the Organisation's annual internal review and reviewed on a three-year cycle, in consultation with recognised Unions.

Approved

*E. Ajoku
Director*