

# Whistleblowing Policy (Safeguarding – Children)

## 1. Policy Statement

Wessex Academia is committed to the highest standards of safeguarding, integrity, and accountability. We recognise that safeguarding children requires a culture where concerns can be raised openly and safely.

This whistleblowing policy is designed to enable staff, volunteers, and others working on behalf of the organisation to raise concerns about **unsafe, unethical, or improper conduct related to safeguarding children**, without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

This policy relates **only to safeguarding children** (anyone under the age of 18) and does not cover whistleblowing concerns relating solely to vulnerable adults.

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## 2. Legal Framework (UK)

This policy is informed by:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable)

The organisation recognises its responsibilities to protect whistleblowers who make disclosures in the public interest.

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## 3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Tutors, trainers, and facilitators
- Contractors and associates
- Trustees and governors

It applies to concerns arising from any activity delivered by Wessex Academia, including **in-person and online courses**.

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## 4. What Is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of raising a concern about wrongdoing that is in the public interest. In the context of safeguarding children, this may include concerns about:

- Abuse or neglect of a child
- Poor or unsafe safeguarding practice
- Failure to follow safeguarding policies or procedures
- Inappropriate behaviour by staff or volunteers towards children
- Attempts to conceal safeguarding concerns
- A culture that discourages reporting or ignores safeguarding risks

Whistleblowing is distinct from a personal grievance.

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## 5. Principles

Wessex Academia is committed to ensuring that:

- All safeguarding concerns are taken seriously
- Individuals feel safe and supported when raising concerns
- No one suffers detriment for raising a genuine concern in good faith
- Concerns are handled confidentially and sensitively
- Appropriate action is taken to protect children

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## 6. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible.

### 6.1 Internal Reporting

Safeguarding-related whistleblowing concerns should normally be reported to:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

If the concern involves the DSL, or if the whistleblower feels unable to raise the concern internally, it may be reported to:

- A senior manager or director

### 6.2 External Reporting

If internal reporting is not appropriate or has not resulted in action, concerns may be raised with external bodies, including:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Children's Social Care
- The Police (where a child is at immediate risk)
- A recognised whistleblowing advice organisation

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## 7. Confidentiality and Anonymity

All whistleblowing concerns will be handled confidentially, so far as is reasonably possible.

Whistleblowers are encouraged to provide their name to allow concerns to be properly addressed; however, anonymous disclosures will be considered where sufficient information is provided.

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## 8. Protection for Whistleblowers

No member of staff or volunteer will suffer harassment, victimisation, disciplinary action, or other detriment for raising a safeguarding concern in good faith.

Any attempt to discourage whistleblowing or retaliate against a whistleblower may result in disciplinary action.

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## 9. False or Malicious Allegations

Concerns raised in good faith will not result in action against the whistleblower, even if they are not upheld.

However, deliberately false or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

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## 10. Record Keeping

All whistleblowing concerns related to safeguarding children will be:

- Recorded accurately and securely
- Managed in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements
- Retained in accordance with organisational policy

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## 11. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed regularly and at least annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation or safeguarding guidance.

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## 12. Approval

Approved by: Gavin Fraser-Gosling

Role: Chief Executive Officer

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026