



Update to Template Staff Handbook

The Academies Financial Handbook 2020 introduces new requirements for Academy Trusts in regard to whistle-blowing arrangements. This includes a new requirement to:

1. ensure all staff are aware of the whistleblowing process, and how concerns will be managed; and
2. let staff know what protection is available to them if they report someone, what areas of malpractice or wrongdoing are covered in the trust's whistleblowing procedure, and who they can approach to report a concern

The easiest way to fulfil these requirements is to add a new section to the Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct, since this is issued to all staff annually.

I am aware that 2020 handbooks will already have been issued, and therefore I have also created a single page Addendum document that can be issued immediately to your existing staff to ensure compliance with the new requirements. You will find this on the final page of this document.

To insert the new text into your Staff Handbook and update the table of contents to include the new section and correct page numbers, please use the following steps:

1. Open your current Staff Handbook and navigate to the Dignity and Respect section (immediately before the Appendices).
2. Copy the following (black) text and paste it to a new line immediately following the Dignity and Respect:



Whistle-Blowing

The Trust has a Whistle-Blowing policy in place for employees who need to raise concerns that fall outside the scope of the Grievance Policy. Such concerns may be about something that:

- Is potentially unlawful;
- Is against the policies of the Trust or the individual member school;
- Amounts to improper conducts, bad practice, or potential fraud or corruption;
- Seems likely to cause damage or harm to a member of the public, the school or its staff;
- “covers up” an issue.

Employees should normally raise concerns with their Head Teacher. This will, however, depend on the nature of the concern, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue, and who is allegedly involved. Employees who feel unable to approach their Head Teacher may contact the CEO, a member of the school's Local Governing Body (contact details available from the school office) or the Chair or Vice-chair of the board of Trustees (contact details available from <https://www.owlsacademytrust.co.uk/home/contact-information>). Trade Union members may wish to contact their union representative for assistance or advice on raising an issue.

Concerns may be raised orally or in writing. It is important to provide as much details as possible, including specific names, dates and places where known.

Employees who raise an issue in good faith under the Whistle Blowing Policy are protected, by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, from any repercussions on their present position or future career. The Act does not protect anyone who is acting maliciously, making false allegations or who is seeking personal gain.

Where concerns are of a serious nature employees have the right to raise issues directly with the Police or other relevant agency as they see fit.

Any action taken will depend on the nature of the concern, as set out in the full policy document. To protect individuals, the Academy Trust and the member schools, initial enquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and what form it should take. Allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. child protection or unlawful discrimination issues) will normally be dealt with under those procedures.

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

Before raising a concern please refer to the full policy, available to download from the Human Resources section on <https://www.owlsacademytrust.co.uk/finance-policies>.

If necessary, add further empty lines to keep the heading with the text. When pasted the formatting should be as used in this document.

3. Navigate back to the Contents page of your handbook then:
 - a) Right click anywhere inside the table of contents – the table will turn grey and an options box will appear
 - b) In the options box select **Update Field** and then in the new box select the radio button for **Update entire table**.
4. Scroll to the end of your contents section, and a link to the new Whistleblowing section should have been added. This process will also have updated any page numbers which have changed as a result of the addition.
5. If you keep a separate template document to use as your starting point each year, please repeat steps 1 to 4 in your template document.
6. Please also issue the addendum on the next page to all of your current staff. This can be done via e-mail or by distributing hard copies.

ADDENDUM TO STAFF HANDBOOK 2020-21

All staff are asked to note that for legal compliance reasons the following information, which does **not** represent any change to pre-existing policy and procedure, has been added to the “General” section of our Staff Handbook:



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