



*Nourishing the fitrah of each unique child*

## Whistleblowing Policy

*“Speak the truth, even if it is against yourself...”*

(Mu’jam Ibn al-A’rabi 1507)

Updated: January 2024	Review date: January 2025	Whistleblowing Coordinator: Hawwa Mbombo
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## Whistleblowing Policy

***Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported that the messenger of Allah (pbuh) said; You must be truthful. Verily truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise.***

Unique Academy ethos is grounded in honesty and integrity, which promotes decency and accountability. We are committed to conducting our affairs in a manner that ensures all activities are open and effectively managed, and that integrity and principles of public interest disclosure are sustained.

In line with our commitment, we encourage all staff including volunteers, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns with the Headteacher. Where a member of staff decides to report a serious incident, whether anonymous or not, this will be treated as a 'protected, internal disclosure' and will face no adverse repercussions.

Whistleblowing has been defined as:

**'The disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the workplace, be it of the employee or his/her fellow Staff.'**

*(Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997)*

Staff have a responsibility to ensure that they, their colleagues, and others working at Unique Academy follow safe working practices so that pupils are kept safe at all times. Staff must also understand that they have a duty to report unsafe practices that could lead to a child being harmed or put at risk of harm. Failure to report such practices may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them if as a result of the failure to report, a child is harmed or put at risk of harm.

Staff are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In the circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Trustees are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect staff, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis, but it is important that all disclosures must be made in the public interest.

This policy document makes it clear that an employee can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This confidential reporting policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns **within** the school rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside.

Statutory protection for staff who whistle blow is provided by the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 ("PIDA")**. The PIDA protects staff against victimisation if they make a protected disclosure within the meaning

of the PIDA and speak out about concerns about conduct or practice within the school which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice.

This policy applies to all school staff including full and part time in the school.

## Aims

This policy aims to:

- give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that they are encouraged to act on those concerns
- provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns
- ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

There are existing procedures in place to enable members of staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This policy does not enable them to raise a concern about a breach of their own contract of employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

Reasons for whistleblowing:

- To prevent worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To safeguard children
- To preserve the integrity of the school
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

This policy covers whistleblowing relating to alleged:

- sexual harassment and/or sexual violence against a pupil or member of staff
- physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or pupils
- health and safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to pupils and members of staff
- action that has caused or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to school property
- unlawful conduct
- miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes
- failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment
- abuse of authority
- unauthorised use of public or other funds
- fraud or corruption
- breaches of financial regulations or policies
- mistreatment of any person
- unfair discrimination or favouritism
- bullying against a pupil or member of staff

- discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour (directly or indirectly)
- sexist, disability, homophobic, biphobia, transphobic bullying
- use of derogatory language
- racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment and
- any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.
- Inappropriate use of social media and other technologies

### **Safeguard Against Reprisal, Harassment and Victimisation**

The Trustees will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff when matters are raised in accordance with the PIDA provisions. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the whistleblowing policy will be dealt with under the staff disciplinary procedures.

### **Confidentiality**

The Trustees recognises that members of staff may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of staff who raise a concern and do not want their name disclosed.

However, investigation into the concern could reveal the source of the information; and statements may be required from the member of staff as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved. If the investigation leads to prosecution, the whistleblower is likely to be called in to give evidence in court.

### **Anonymous Allegations**

Staff should put their name to allegations whenever possible - anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations may be considered under this whistleblowing procedure especially concerns raised relating to the welfare of children. In relation to determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward the Trustees will take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

### **Untrue and Malicious/Vexatious Allegations**

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the Trustees will consider taking disciplinary action against the member of staff. In the most serious of cases. This may include dismissal.

### **Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues**

If an employee raises a concern relating to a child protection issue, the Head Teacher will deal with the matter in accordance with the School's Safeguarding Procedure.

If after raising concerns related to child protection issues a member of staff still has concerns, and the issue has not been referred to Social Services by the school, the member of staff can make a direct referral to the Social Services Safeguarding Board (See Safeguarding and Child Protection policy).

## **Procedure for Making a Whistleblowing Allegation**

Concerns should be expressed to the Head Teacher. If the concerns involve the Head Teacher, the matter should be referred to the Designated Trustee for Safeguarding.

If the members of staff feel they cannot express their concerns within the school, it is open to them to raise their concerns with a member of the trustees. Any concern about a Head Teacher must be reported by the Safeguarding trustee.

Where the concern relates to a child protection matter the School's Safeguarding Procedure must be followed. If the concern needs to have Police or other statutory authority involvement, the whistleblowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

The member of staff should put their concern in writing for the avoidance of doubt. They should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and explaining the reason for their concerns. If they feel unable to put the matter in writing, they can still raise their concern verbally and should telephone or arrange to meet the appropriate person. They can also ask their trade union or professional association to raise the matter on their behalf or to support them in raising the concern.

## **Response to Whistleblowing**

The matter raised may:

- need consultation with the local authority's designated social services manager for child protection/safeguarding if there is a concern relating to child protection.
- need to be passed to the Police if it relates to alleged criminal activity
- need to be passed to the S 151 Officer or Head of Internal Audit if there are concerns about financial management or financial propriety in schools.
- need inquiry internally in the school

At this stage concerns/allegations are neither accepted nor rejected.

## **Timescale for Response**

The member of staff will normally receive a written response within 5 school days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- advising whether any enquiries have been made
- advising whether further enquiries will take place
- informing them of support available whilst matters are looked into and following the outcome of the investigation
- maintaining confidentiality wherever possible, but also explaining that it may not be possible that they can remain anonymous.

## **The Inquiry Process**

The person receiving the allegation will be the Head Teacher unless the concern involves the Head Teacher in which case the Safeguarding trustee will be the first point of contact, where there is a concern about a child protection matter the School's Designated Safeguarding officer may also be the first point of contact. There will be a duty on the first point of contact to deal promptly with the matter, to become the contact point for the employee raising the concern and write to the employee within 5 school days to advise them how their concern will be addressed.

If an investigating officer needs to talk to the member of staff, they are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The first point of contact will seek to keep the employee informed of progress with their concern in a timely manner. However, the timescales to be followed will vary depending on the nature of the issue raised and the procedure that is being followed to address the matter.

## **The Report**

A report will be produced following an investigation into the concern in accordance with the appropriate process. The matter and action to be taken, if any, will be determined by the person (s) who are identified in the procedure as having the delegated authority to deal with the matter.

The school accepts that the employee needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, the member of staff will be informed when an investigation has been concluded.

Note: The Head Teacher may, at any point, seek advice on the whistleblowing process from the Head of Education Services or the Head of Safeguarding and Support.

The Head Teacher must report, in a general way, all whistleblowing cases on a termly basis to the Trustees and also in the Head teacher's Annual Report.

All information relating to the disclosure of information will be securely held. Accurate information relating to any subsequent investigation will be retained securely and where allegations have been proven to be unfounded this will be clearly recorded.

## **Taking The Matter Further**

If no action is to be taken and/or the member of staff is not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with, they can make a complaint under the school's grievance or complaint procedure.

## Appendix 1



### Letter confirming receipt of a protected disclosure (whistleblowing)-School based staff

Template letter to respond to an employee who has made a protected disclosure.

#### Letter wording

[ name]  
[ address]  
[ town]  
[ postcode]  
[Date]

[Employee's name]  
[Employee's address]  
[Employee's town]  
[Employee's postcode]

Dear [ name ]

I confirm that on [date] I received your [form/letter/email] dated [date] raising concerns about [state issues].

In accordance with the Unique Academy's whistleblowing policy, the first step is for you to provide me with more details of your concerns. Please find enclosed a form to set out your concerns. You should use this form to provide dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved in the wrongdoing, and details of any witnesses who can corroborate the allegations. Once your concerns have been sufficiently clarified, I (if the Head teacher is implicated in the wrongdoing, the Safeguarding trustee) will provide you with a written response as to how the matter will be investigated.

Please be assured that the fact that you are the source of the disclosure will be kept confidential as far as possible. However, it is possible that individuals you work with may find out. If you are subjected to any detriment, or are bullied or harassed, for making a disclosure, you should inform me immediately .and an investigation into the matter will follow to deal with perpetrators.

If you have any queries or concerns in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me on (telephone number)

Yours sincerely,



## **Whistle Blowing Disclosure Form**

### **When to use this model whistleblowing form**

For the employee to make a formal disclosure.

### **Form wording**

#### **Making a public interest disclosure (whistleblowing)**

This form is intended for use by any individual working in a school (including contractors, agency workers and volunteers) who wish to raise an issue about wrongdoing.

This form should be used to report wrongdoing within the School (for example, misconduct of a child protection nature, financial irregularities or health and safety concerns), rather than to raise a personal grievance (for example, if you would like to make an allegation of bullying or harassment, or are complaining that your contract of employment has been breached).

If you are unsure about whether your concerns are best dealt with under the School's whistle blowing policy or grievance procedure, please read the School's' whistleblowing policy, which provides an example of the issues that should be reported using this form. If, having read the whistleblowing policy, you remain unsure about which procedure to use, please consult your Head Teacher for further advice. If you are implicating your Head teacher then you should contact your Safeguarding Trustee.

Once you have submitted this form, the School's whistleblowing procedure will be invoked. This will result in an investigation, which will not involve anyone you may have implicated below.

In certain circumstances, you can request that your concerns be kept anonymous. Where possible, the School will respect a request for anonymity, but cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

This form should be completed and delivered to ( name of Head Teacher and address of school or to the Safeguarding Trustee. if you are implicating the Head teacher ) in an envelope marked "confidential" or sent as an email attachment with "confidential" in the subject line.

#### **Formal public interest disclosure (whistleblowing)**

**Employee's name:**

**Employee's job title:**

**Date:**



**Does your public interest disclosure relate to your Head Teacher?**

Yes/No

**Summary of disclosure:**

Please set out the details of the issue that you wish to raise, providing examples where possible, particularly dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved. You may attach additional sheets if required.

**Individuals involved:**

Please provide the names and contact details of any people involved in your concerns, including witnesses.

**Outcome requested:**

Please set out how you would like to see the issue dealt with, and why and how you believe that this will resolve the issue.

**Declaration:**

I confirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that, if I knowingly make false allegations, this may result in the organisation taking disciplinary action against me.

**Form completed by:**

**Name (please print)**

**Signature:**

**For completion by the Head Teacher or Safeguarding Trustee if Head Teacher is implicated)**

Date form received by the Head Teacher

Or Safeguarding trustee if Head Teacher is implicated:

Name of recipient and job role:

Signature: