

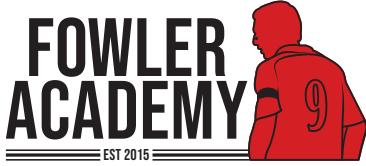
**RAINHILL
HIGH SCHOOL**



RainhillSixth

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING/ WHISTLEBLOWING





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HIGH SCHOOL**



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STATUS	NON-STATUTORY
RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE	The Board of Trustees
APPROVAL DATE	20/01/2023
RENEWAL DATE	20/01/2026



SCHOOLS IN PARTNERSHIP
STEPHENSON
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the place of work. 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 these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.2 Rainhill High School, Rainhill 6th Form & FEFA, are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's business, to come forward and voice those concerns.
- 1.3 This policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the place of work rather than overlooking a problem or "blowing the whistle" outside.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all employees and those contractors working in the school at Rainhill or in FEFA at Melwood. It also covers suppliers and those providing service under a contract with the school and FEFA in their own premises.
- 1.5 These procedures are in addition to the schools complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures applying to some departments. You are responsible for making service users aware of the existence of these procedures.
- 1.6 This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
 - encourage you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
 - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
 - ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
 - reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals of victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith

2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
- disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- damage to the environment;
- the unauthorised use of public funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- sexual or physical abuse of clients;
- other unethical conduct; or
- concealment of the above.

2.3 Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or others acting on behalf of the school, or FEFA, can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy. This may be about something that

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the school subscribes to; or
- is against the schools Standing Orders and policies; or
- falls below established standards of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct

2.4 This policy does not replace the school complaints procedures.

3. **SAFEGUARDS**

3.1 The school and FEFA are committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.

3.2 The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear, because you will be doing your duty to your employer and those for whom you are providing a service.

3.3 The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. This would include taking action against anyone who harassed or victimised you.

3.4 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced, by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

4. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. The identity of the complainant will not be revealed to the

person(s) complained about unless this is incompatible with a proper investigation. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

5. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- 5.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school.
- 5.3 In exercising this 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
- 5.4 Where the school decides to pursue an anonymous complaint it will be the subject of action as identified in Section 8.

6. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

- 6.1 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

7. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

- 7.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or their superior. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example:
- 7.2 However, the important thing is that you raise your concern and therefore you can raise concerns with any senior manager in the organisation with whom you feel comfortable.
- 7.3 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:
- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)
 - The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation

- 7.4 The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action.
- 7.5 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.
- 7.6 You may find it easier to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two or more of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

8. HOW THE SCHOOL/FEFA WILL RESPOND

- 8.1 The school will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may
- be investigated by Management, Internal Audit or through the disciplinary process
 - be referred to the school governing body
 - be referred to the Police
 - be referred to the External Auditor
 - form the subject of an independent inquiry
- 8.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial inquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the Trust will have in mind is the public interest.
- 8.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 8.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person with whom you raised your concern will write to you
- 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;

- telling you whether any initial inquiries have been made;
- supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms; and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

8.6 The amount of contact between the person considering the issues and you, will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Council will seek further information from you.

8.7 Where any meeting is arranged, off site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

8.8 The Trust will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Trust will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

8.9 The Trust accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to any legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

9. **THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

9.1 The Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. That Officer maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Trust. The effectiveness of the policy will be continually monitored based on the experience of its use.

10. **HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER**

10.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The school hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken, if you believe that appropriate action has not been taken, you may then report the matter externally to an appropriate external authority such as a regulator. The Public Interest Disclosure legislation sets out a number of prescribed external bodies or persons to whom qualifying disclosures may be made (contacts at the end of this policy).

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to make an external disclosure.

The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for a whistleblower to report concerns to an external body, such as a regulator. It will very rarely be appropriate to report concerns to the media. We strongly encourage anyone thinking of making an external disclosure to seek advice before doing so.

The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline through which potential whistleblowers can take advice about their situation. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. (Their contact details are below) -

Protect

(Independent whistleblowing charity)

Helpline: 0203 117 2520

E-mail: info@protect-advice.org.uk

Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/contact-protect-advice-line/>

Prescribed Bodies for Education Whistleblowing:

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills ('the Chief Inspector')

The Chief Inspector

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 3155

Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

Whistleblowing and malpractice

Complaints investigation manager

Ofqual

Earlsdon Park

53-55 Butts Road

Coventry

CV1 3BH

Tel: 0300 303 3344

Email: whistleblowing@ofqual.gov.uk

Online form: complaints.ofqual.gov.uk/new-concern

Secretary of State for Education

Contact them about matters relating to RH6 & FEFA:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Tel: 0370 000 2288

Website: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe