

# The Auriga Academy Trust

## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

### (How to express concerns about conduct at work)

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Please note that all Trust policies are reviewed annually. Should you have any queries regards this policy, note an omission or wish to propose an amendment, please email [sconnor@strathmore.richmond.sch.uk](mailto:sconnor@strathmore.richmond.sch.uk).

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## 1. Scope and purpose

- 1.1. The Auriga Academy Trust is committed to conducting itself with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations from occurring or to address them when they do.
- 1.2. The aims of this policy are:
  - 1.2.1. To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
  - 1.2.2. To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
  - 1.2.3. To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken
- 1.3. This policy does not form any part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.



## 2. Who is covered by this policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the Auriga Academy Trust, including officers, members, trustees, governors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

## 3. Who is responsible for this policy

- 3.1. The Auriga Academy Trust has overall responsibility for this policy, and for

reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy

- 3.2. The Whistleblowing Officer (see Contacts: section 11) has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training
- 3.3. All staff are responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing
- 3.4. All staff will be notified of any amendments and directed to read this policy online on the Auriga Academy Trust website.

#### 4. What is whistleblowing?

- 4.1. **Whistleblowing** is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or danger at work. This may include:
  - 4.1.1. Criminal activity;
  - 4.1.2. Miscarriages of justice;
  - 4.1.3. Danger relating to health and safety;
  - 4.1.4. Damage to the environment;
  - 4.1.5. Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
  - 4.1.6. Bribery;
  - 4.1.7. Financial fraud or mismanagement;
  - 4.1.8. Negligence;
  - 4.1.9. Breach of Trust internal policies and procedures;
  - 4.1.10. Conduct likely to damage the reputation of the School/Trust;
  - 4.1.11. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
  - 4.1.12. Concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children;
  - 4.1.13. The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.
- 4.2. A **whistleblower** is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If a member of staff has any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the Trust's activities (a **whistleblowing concern**) they should report it under this policy.

- 4.3. This policy should not be used for complaints relating to a member of staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases the staff member should use the Trust Grievance Policy and Procedure, available on the Auriga Academy Trust website.
- 4.4. If a member of staff is uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy they should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

## **5. Raising a whistleblowing concern**

- 5.1. The Auriga Academy Trust hopes that in most cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with their line manager, school leadership team, Head of Centre or Headteacher. A member of staff may tell them of their concern in person or in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving the concern quickly and effectively. We would hope that most whistleblowing concerns will be dealt with at school level.
- 5.2. However, where the matter is more serious, or if the member of staff feels that their line manager, school leadership team, Head of Centre or Headteacher has not addressed the concern, or if they prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, they should contact the Trust Whistleblowing Officer.

## **6. Confidentiality**

6.1. The Auriga Academy Trust hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise a concern confidentially, the school/Trust will make every effort to keep their identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the member of staff's identity this will be discussed with them.

6.2. The Trust does not encourage staff to make disclosures or voice concerns anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if further information cannot be obtained from the member of staff raising the concern. It is

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also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If a member of staff is in any doubt they can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

## **7. Investigation and Outcome**

7.1. Once a member of staff has raised a concern, the school/Trust will arrange a meeting with them as soon as possible to discuss their concern. A member may

bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. The companion must agree to respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

7.2. The school/Trust will make a written summary of the member of staff's concern and provide them with a copy after the meeting. The school/Trust will also aim to provide an indication of how it proposes to deal with the matter.

7.3. The school/Trust will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The Local Governing Body/Trust Board will inform the member of staff of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

7.4. In some cases, the Local Governing Body/Trust Board 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 the school/Trust to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

7.5. The school/Trust will keep the member of staff who raised the concern informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the Local Governing Body/Trust Board giving the member of staff specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Any information about the investigation should be treated as confidential.

7.6. If the Local Governing Body/Trust Board concludes that the whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **8. If a member of staff is not satisfied with the outcome**

8.1. While the school/Trust cannot always guarantee the outcome that the member of staff raising the complaint may be seeking, it will deal with the concern fairly and in

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an appropriate way. By using this policy staff can help the school/Trust to achieve this.

8.2. If, having followed the procedures laid out in this policy, a member of staff remains unhappy with the way in which their concern has been handled, they should raise their concern with the Trustee with responsibility for whistleblowing (see section 11).

## **9. External Disclosures**

9.1. The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and resolving wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases staff

should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

9.2. The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. The school/Trust strongly encourage staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this document.

9.3. Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of the school/Trust's staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect staff if they raise the matter with the third party directly. However, the school/Trust encourages staff to report such concerns internally first. Staff should contact their line manager, school leadership team, Head of Centre, Headteacher or the Whistleblowing Officer for guidance.

## **10. Protection and support for whistleblowers**

10.1. It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The Auriga Academy Trust aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

10.2. Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied, they should raise it formally using the Trust's Grievance Policy and Procedure.

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10.3. Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **11. Contacts**

<p><b>Whistleblowing Officer</b></p>	<p><b>John Kipps - Chief Executive Officer</b> Auriga Academy Trust  020 3146 1441  <a href="mailto:jkipps@clarendon.richmond.sch.uk">jkipps@clarendon.richmond.sch.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Trustee with responsibility for whistleblowing</b></p>	<p><b>Harry James - Chair of Trustees</b> Auriga Academy Trust  07341 902465  <a href="mailto:hcjames@tiscali.co.uk">hcjames@tiscali.co.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Public Concern at Work</b>  (Independent whistleblowing charity)</p>	<p><b>Helpline: 020 7404 6609</b>  e-mail: <a href="mailto:whistle@pcaw.co.uk">whistle@pcaw.co.uk</a>  Website: <a href="http://www.pcaw.co.uk">www.pcaw.co.uk</a></p>
<p><b>NSPCC whistleblowing helpline</b>  (Available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way in which a safeguarding concern is being handled by their school)</p>	<p><b>Helpline: 0800 028 028</b>  (Monday-Friday, 0800-2000)  E-mail: <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a></p>