



Whistleblowing Policy

Venn Wide Policy

1	Summary	Whistleblowing Policy		
2	Responsible person	Lynsey Cook COO		
3	Accountable SLT member	Simon Witham CEO		
4	Applies to	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All staff <input type="checkbox"/> Support staff <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching staff		
5	Who has overseen development of this policy	Lynsey Cook/Rebecca Everitt		
6	Who has been consulted and recommended policy for approval	All relevant stakeholders		
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy has been produced to ensure Venn Academy Trust complies with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- 1.2 Venn Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect you as our employees, and others with whom we deal, who have concerns about any aspect of the academy's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. Generally cases will proceed on a confidential basis, although this may not be possible if legal proceedings result from the disclosure.
- 1.3 This Whistleblowing Policy makes it clear that you can state your concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. Its aim is to encourage and enable you to raise concerns within the academy rather than to overlook a problem or take it outside.
- 1.4 Nothing in this policy must remove the obligation you have with respect to child protection issues.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2. What is whistleblowing?

- 2.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. The law provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters or "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that there are wrongdoings or dangers at work.
- 2.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.
- 2.3 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from a member of your senior leadership team or HR.
- 2.4 If your concern is in relation to safeguarding and the welfare of pupils, you should consider whether the matter is better raised under the schools child protection policy and in accordance with the arrangements for reporting such concerns, i.e. via the designated safeguarding lead, although the principles set out in the is policy may still apply. The Low Level Concern form as part of the Code of Conduct may also be an alternative avenue.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The policy applies to you as our employees as well as all contractors working for Venn Academy Trust, for example agency staff. Additionally it covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the academy in their own premises and volunteers.



4. Aims of the policy

4.1 The policy aims to:

- encourage individuals to feel confident in raising concerns and to question, and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide avenues for individuals to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that individuals receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied;
- reassure employees that they will be protected from possible dismissal/detriment or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have made any disclosure in good faith.

5. Trade union agreement

5.1 This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and has their support.

6. Whistleblowing in relation to other procedures

6.1 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Policy or Bullying and Harassment Policy.

6.2 The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover other concerns which you may have about the Trust, its employees or its practices. Such concerns could include:

- financial malpractice, financial impropriety, or fraud;
- failure to comply with the Academy's regulations and procedures;
- failure to observe safety obligations;
- endangering health and safety, including risks to the public as well as other employees and pupils;
- damaging the environment;
- criminal activity at the academy;
- deliberate miscarriage of justice;
- academic malpractice;
- abuse of authority for illegal or unethical purposes;
- wilful failure to declare a relevant interest in the Registers of Interests;
- sexual or physical abuse;
- covering up any of the above.

6.3 Concerns may include such actions as have already occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur.

7. Protection and support for whistleblowers



- 7.1 It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 7.2 Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern under this policy, or any other policy. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform one of the contact people at the end of this policy immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Policy.
- 7.3 Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 7.4 A confidential support and counselling telephone number is available to whistleblowers who raise concerns under this policy. Their contact details are set out at the end of this policy or in the Wellbeing Policy.

8. If a member of the academy knows of wrongdoing, is making a disclosure about it obligatory?

- 8.1 The Public Interest Disclosure Act and in turn the trust's procedure is intended to facilitate disclosure. It affords protection to an individual who wishes to disclose information and therefore it is intended to permit the academy to deal with malpractice as it arises. The spirit of the procedure is to protect individuals who wish to make a disclosure in the interest of the public and of the academy. It does not constitute an obligation to disclose information. This however does not apply to the child protection procedures.

9. What happens if a discloser changes their mind

- 9.1 Once the disclosure has been made it may be retracted at any time. The trust reserves the right to proceed with the investigation by any other means at its disposal and to take action in light of its findings, even if the discloser does not wish to proceed further.

10. Confidentiality and data protection

- 10.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.
- 10.2 We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is 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 one of the other contact points listed at the end of this policy and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect (previously Public Concern at Work), the independent whistleblowing charity, who offers a confidential helpline. Their contact details



are given at the end of this policy.

- 10.3 Where we receive anonymous complaints we will make a determination about whether to investigate based on:
- (a) the seriousness of the issue raised;
 - (b) the credibility of the concern; and
 - (c) the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

11. External disclosures

- 11.1 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 alert anyone externally.
- 11.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Protect (previously Public Concern at Work), holds a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.
- 11.3 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a contractor, supplier or service provider. The law allows you to raise a concern with a third party where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager or one of the other individuals set out at the end of this paragraph.

12. Untrue allegations — disciplinary offences

- 12.1 Under this procedure it will be a disciplinary offence to:
- a) make a disclosure found to be vexatious or malicious; or
 - b) obtain pecuniary benefit from a disclosure.
- 12.2 If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the discloser

13. Investigation and outcome

- 13.1 Once you have raised a concern we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.
- 13.2 In some cases we may appoint an independent investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) will collate findings on the matter and may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.
- 13.3 We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation, its likely



timescale and outcome. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

- 13.4 If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

14. How to make a disclosure under the procedure

- 14.1 Public Interest disclosures should be notified in the first instance to somebody in management in your school. This could be your Head of School or, if for some reason that is not possible, the Executive Head. This depends however on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if you believe that management is involved you should approach your Chair of Governors or Chief Executive Officer. If you do not feel you can do this with either of those roles, you may go directly to the Chair of the Trust Board. If you feel it is a safeguarding concern and feel unable to approach the designated safeguarding lead, you may contact the Local Authority Designated Officer directly, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 footnote 116. Contact details are at the end of the policy
- 14.2 Formal concerns should be raised in writing. You are invited to use the standard reporting form which is attached at Appendix 1. In any event the report should take the following format:
- the nature, background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
 - the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation;
 - names of those alleged to be involved in the malpractice.
- 14.3 The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action. Wherever possible if the issue/concern can be dealt with informally, that is preferred.
- 14.4 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.

15. How Venn will respond

- 15.1 The trust will respond to your concerns and the receipt of your report will be acknowledged in writing as soon as reasonably possible. You should be aware that further enquiries may be made, possibly leading to a formal investigation, but this does not indicate that your concern has been either accepted or rejected. A clear and objective view will be taken until clear evidence emerges.
- 15.2 Where appropriate, following initial enquiries, the matters raised may:
- be investigated by a specially constituted person/panel, Head of School, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process;
 - be referred to the Police;
 - be referred to the External Auditors;
 - be referred to an independent outside agency, specially appointed to carry out



investigations. Arrangements will be made as required, depending upon the nature and circumstances of the case;

- form the subject of an independent inquiry by an appropriate body, depending upon the nature and circumstances of the case.

16. Action by the trust

16.1 Once a concern is raised you will be written to by the investigator to:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received;
- indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- tell you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- supply you with information on available support where appropriate;
- tell you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

16.2 Following this the amount of contact between the investigator 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 investigator considering the matter will seek further information from you.

16.3 The investigator will determine whether:

- a) In the case of legal or financial concerns, the Chair of Governors should be informed immediately so that s/he can alert the Chief Executive Officer and/or the Finance Director;
- b) In all cases, the chair of governors, for monitoring purposes.

16.4 Some concerns may be resolved by agreeing action without the need for a detailed investigation.

16.5 The investigator will determine and write to you with the outcome of the investigation surrounding your concern.

17. Representation and advice at meetings

17.1 During any meetings/interviews which you attend in connection with the concerns you have raised, you have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative if you so wish.

17.2 The trust accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

18. If you are not satisfied

18.1 While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

18.2 If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled you can raise it with one of the other key contacts at the end of this policy. Alternatively you may contact the Chair of the Trust Board.



18.3 If any member of staff makes a safeguarding allegation to appropriate person under this policy and feels it has not been dealt with appropriately, they are able to contact the LADO directly. Contact details can be found at paragraph 19.

19. Useful contacts

Your Head of School – see internal email directory

Your Chair of Governor's
c/o Helen Turner (Clerk), Venn Central Office, 262 Pickering Road, Hull, HU4 7AD

Chair of the Trust Board
c/o Helen Turner (Clerk), Venn Central Office, 262 Pickering Road, Hull, HU4 7AD

Chief Operating Officer, Lynsey Cook – lcook@vennacademy.org

Hull Local Authority Designated Officer - 01482 606112.

Doncaster Local Authority Designated Officer – 01302 734100

Space 2B heard (confidential counselling)
Helpline: (01482) 705023, e-mail: hello@S2BH.org, website:
www.space2bheard.org

Protect (previously Public Concern at Work (independent whistleblowing charity)
Helpline: (020 3117 2520) website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline
Helpline: 0800 028 0285, e-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk

Education Support Line – 08000 562561

www.gov.uk/whistleblowing

Your Trade Union

