

Whistleblowing Policy

OCTOBER 2024

Reviewed OCTOBER 2026

Related policy Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Code of Conduct

Review Frequency Biennially

INTRODUCTION

Thinkfast Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and we encourage employees and others working with us to raise any concerns about any aspects of our work to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

If employees raise serious concerns, this procedure enables them to raise it without fear of reprisal or victimisation. It is raised internally within the Academy, rather than over-looking a problem or raising the matter outside.

This procedure applies to all employees, and those working within the Thinkfast Academy. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect an individual.

AIMS AND SCOPE

This procedure aims to ensure individuals are:

- Encouraged to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- Provided with avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Given a response to their concerns and are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied
- Reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if any disclosure has been made in good faith

There are procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance in relation to their own employment including issues relating to harassment and bullying. This procedure is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

These include;

- Conduct which is, has been, or is likely to be an offence or breach of the law.
- Conduct that has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur, which associates Thinkfast with a failure to comply with a legal obligation. For example possible fraud, corruption, discrimination of any kind, sexual or physical abuse of individuals and/or any other conduct deemed to be unethical.
- Disclosures related to past, current or likely miscarriages of justice.

- Past, current or likely health and safety risks, including risks to students, staff and/or members of the public
- Past, current or likely actions that are likely to damage the environment unwontedly.

Concerns about any aspects of service provision can be reported under the section below

CONFIDENTIALITY

All concerns raised under this policy will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identities of those who invoke this policy if this is their wish. However, in some cases confidentiality may not be possible, particularly if other agencies become involved.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Wherever possible, persons invoking this policy should do so openly, as concerns expressed anonymously are less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual.

UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

Where an allegation is made in good faith but is not subsequently confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken. Disciplinary action will only be taken under the terms of this policy against individuals who knowingly make false, malicious or vexatious allegations.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

GENERAL

A concern may be raised verbally or in writing. A trade union or professional association may raise a matter on behalf of an employee. Those raising a concern should:

- Describe the context and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible
- Outline the reason/s why the person/s raising the concern is/are motivated to do so.
- Demonstrate as far as is possible that there are sufficient grounds for raising the concern.

RAISING A CONCERN

Wherever possible, you should in the first instance raise your concern with your Manager.

RESPONSE

The action taken in response to raising the concern will depend on the nature of the concern. Matters raised under this policy may:

- Be investigated internally
- Be referred to the police
- Be referred to the Academy's external auditor
- Be the subject of an independent inquiry

In order to protect individuals and the Academy, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures,

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is needed this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

Within ten school working days, the responsible person will write to you:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received
- How the situation is going to be dealt with (by the Academy)
- A given estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Informing you of any initial enquiries that have been made
- Informing you whether further investigations will take place and,if not,why not

CONTACT

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and yourself will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought.

ATTENDING MEETINGS

When you are invited to attend a meeting, you have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

SUPPORT

The Academy will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect individuals who raise a concern in good faith

The Academy accepts that you need to be assured that concerns will be properly addressed and, subject to legal constraints, will provide you with information about the outcomes of any investigations.

HOW THE MATTER MAY BE TAKEN FURTHER

The procedure outlined above is intended to provide individuals with a means to raise concerns with Thinkfast Academy and to resolve them satisfactorily. However, if you are not satisfied, and feel it is right that you take the matter further, the following contacts may offer advice:

PROTECT - formally public concern at work

Telephone - 02031172520

THE POLICE

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 gives employees two safeguards in respect of disclosures of information:

- A worker has the right not to be subjected to any detriment by any act, or any deliberate failure to act, by his employer done on the ground that the worker has made a disclosure (ref 47b).
- An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this part (Of the act) as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or if more than one, the principal reasons) for the dismissal is that the employee made a protected disclosure (ref 103A).

