



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

(Statutory)

Approved: Autumn 2022

Date of Next Review: Autumn 2025

Equality Impact Assessment - Policy Review

In reviewing this policy, we have tried to make a positive impact on equality by considering and reducing or removing inequalities and barriers which already existed. We have ensured that this policy does not impact negatively on the dimensions of equality.

Introduction

The Roseland Multi Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standard of operation, probity and accountability and recognises that its staff are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the organisation. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Trust and they may also fear harassment or victimisation.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with that Act and its commitment to the highest standards of service delivery, The Roseland Multi Academy Trust encourages its staff with serious concerns about any aspect of the Trust's work to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the Trust rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

The Roseland Multi Academy Trust will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of staff who raise concerns. "Whistleblowing" is the term used when someone who works for an organisation raises a concern about a possible fraud, crime, danger or other serious risk that could threaten students, colleagues, the public, a vulnerable adult, child, young person or the organisation's own reputation.

When someone blows the whistle it is to raise a concern about a danger or illegality that affects others. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides protection for workers who disclose information which might otherwise be regarded as confidential. All workers have a responsibility for the safety of children and vulnerable adults and to this end should report any concerns through the means identified in this policy.

Aims and Scope of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to improve our service delivery to the community by providing employees, and other workers, with a procedure for reporting genuine concerns about unlawful conduct, malpractice or wrongdoing at work, without any fear of comeback. The policy is designed to encourage and enable employees to raise concerns as soon as the issue arises, rather than staying silent and waiting until something more serious happens. The Roseland Multi Academy Trust will take your concerns seriously and ensure that any matter raised will be dealt with promptly and fairly.

This policy applies to all employees and other workers including casual staff, agency workers, contractors and consultants whilst engaged on The Roseland Multi Academy Trust business.

Concerns that should be raised via this Whistleblowing Policy may be in relation to the actions / behaviours that are perceived as being in the public interest and are:

- unlawful / illegal;
- in breach of The Roseland Multi Academy Trust's procedures or regulations;
- falling below established standard or practice; or amounting to improper conduct.

For example, (this list is not exhaustive):

- malpractice or ill treatment of a client/customer;
- abuse or neglect of children, young people, vulnerable adults or any other service user, for example, failure to take reasonable steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing or by using abusive language, shouting or deliberately withholding food, drink or medication;
- grooming a child, young person or vulnerable adult (in an effort to promote an unacceptable relationship);
- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- pecuniary or business interests that conflict with employees' roles and responsibilities;
- suspected fraud, bribery or corruption;
- a failure to comply with legislation or carry out a legal obligation;
- damage to the environment;
- endangering of an individual's health and safety;
- a breach of Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules, or any other part of The Roseland Multi Academy Trust's Memorandum or Articles of Association or other regulations, procedures or any code of conduct;
- concealment of any of the above.

A public interest disclosure is a disclosure by a worker concerning a wrongdoing on the part of his or her employer. Protected disclosures include information about: an alleged criminal offence; a failure to comply with a legal obligation; a miscarriage of justice; a breach of health and safety such that an individual has been, is, or is likely to be endangered; damage to the environment; or information that one of the above has been or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

From 25 June 2013, a disclosure is not protected unless the employee reasonably believes that the disclosure is made in the public interest.

What is the difference between a grievance and whistleblowing?

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. If an employee is concerned that his/her own contract has been, or is likely to be, broken, he/she should use The Roseland Multi Academy Trust's grievance procedure.

Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker raises a concern about a possible fraud, crime, danger or other serious risk that could threaten a vulnerable adult, child, young person, service user, colleague or the organisation's own reputation. The person blowing the whistle is usually not directly or personally affected by the danger or illegality. Consequently, the whistleblower rarely has a personal interest in the outcome of any investigation into their concern - they are simply trying to alert others. For this reason, the whistleblower is not expected to prove the malpractice. He or she is the messenger raising a concern so that others can address it.

By comparison, a grievance will usually concern an employee personally. For example, the individual may have a complaint about: his or her pay or working hours, the amount of work that he or she is expected to do or their working conditions. The person raising the grievance therefore, has a vested interest in the outcome and, for this reason, is expected to be able to evidence their case.

Confidentiality (where the employee's name is known but will not be disclosed without their consent, unless required by law)

All concerns will be treated in confidence ie The Roseland Multi Academy Trust would expect to protect the identity of the person raising a concern. At the appropriate time, however, the person raising the concern may need to come forward as a witness in order that the issue can be thoroughly investigated. The employee may be represented by a recognised trade union representative or work colleague and other forms of internal or external support will be offered, where requested.

Anonymous allegations (where the employee does not identify him or herself at any stage to anyone)

This policy encourages employees who raise concerns not to remain anonymous as, by doing so, allegations are difficult to investigate. The Roseland Multi Academy Trust will exercise its discretion in deciding whether to investigate an anonymous allegation and will take into account the seriousness of the issues raised and the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources. Remember, if you don't tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to protect your position or to give you feedback.

How to raise a Concern

If something is concerning you, please tell us straightaway. We prefer that you raise the matter promptly rather than to stay silent or wait until something more serious happens. If you are aware that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused or is at risk of abuse you must report it.

Failure to report abuse could ultimately leave The Roseland Multi Academy Trust open to noncompliance of our legal duty to refer appropriate matters to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Contact information is detailed below under "Raising a concern about children or vulnerable adults".

We will take your concerns seriously and will ensure that any matter raised will be dealt with promptly, confidentially, and will be thoroughly investigated by an appropriate senior person. Remember, you are potentially acting as a witness, not as a complainant.

If an investigation is appropriate, it will be completed by an independent member of one of the schools' Leadership Team and/or the Whistleblowing Trustee.

Due care and consideration will be given, depending on all the circumstances, to appoint the most appropriate investigator for the case. If you would feel more comfortable speaking to a particular person, please mention this when you make contact with us.

Steps to raise a concern

As a first step you should normally raise concerns with your line manager or their line manager. However, we recognise that on occasions this may not be appropriate, in which case there are the following other options to raising a concern:

- Contact any member of the Leadership Teams of The Roseland Multi Academy Trust;
- Raise a concern in writing by emailing the Chair of Trustees, Mr Nigel Hyde on nhyde@theroselandmat.co.uk. This should identify the nature of the concerns and the grounds upon which these are based. Information on the background, history, names, dates and places should be provided if possible.

You must make it clear that your declaration is being made as a 'Whistleblow' and as such will be treated in accordance with this policy. If a reported concern is in relation to suspected fraud, corruption or irregularity the recipient of the whistleblow must inform their Headteacher immediately and it is his/her role to ensure that The Roseland Multi Academy Trust acts lawfully at all times.

Raising a concern about children or vulnerable adults

If you have any safeguarding concerns about children or vulnerable adults, you should contact the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL):

Falmouth School:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is: Brenda de Sousa

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is: Carly Brooker

Gerrans School:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is: Julie Elvy

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is: Emily Haines

The Roseland Academy:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is: Vanessa Maule

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL): Nicki Mitchell, Hannah Tame, Jenny Blackwell

Treviglas Academy:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is: James Rogers

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is: Kyla McAlpin

Tregony Community Primary School:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is: Kate Douglass

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) is: Catherine Kent

The Roseland Multi Academy Safeguarding & Whistleblowing Trustee: Nigel Hyde

Whilst concerns about children or vulnerable adults can be raised via this policy, cases will be responded to and dealt with using separate safeguarding procedures. Any safeguarding concerns relating to suspicions of financial abuse/irregularity must also be referred directly to the Designated Child Protection Officer. All concerns raised will be treated confidentially by those involved in the reporting process.

Action taken by The Roseland Multi Academy Trust will be dependent on the nature of the concern raised and may:

- be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation;
- be investigated by a Leadership Team or Whistleblowing Trustee;
- be referred to the Police;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Employees will receive an initial response to any concerns raised within 14 calendar days. Due to the nature of the concerns covered by this procedure it may not be possible for The Roseland Multi Academy Trust to indicate how it proposes to deal with the matters and the timescales involved. However, The Roseland Multi Academy Trust undertakes to inform employees, who wish to know, of the progress and outcome where this will not compromise the process. The aim is to reassure employees that the matter has been properly addressed.

The amount of contact between the individual raising the concern and the person(s) investigating the matter will be dependent upon the issue raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided.

Upon completion of an investigation the Trust Board will seek assurance that management controls will be introduced such that similar cases do not occur. The Trust Board reserves the right to take whatever action is necessary to satisfy itself that those management controls have been properly implemented.

Support from “Protect” – formerly Public Concern at Work

Protect, formerly Public Concern at Work, is an independent charity which specialises in providing individuals, employers and schools, free, confidential and practical advice about raising concerns at work. They can help you identify how to raise the concern while minimising any risk to you and maximising the opportunity for any wrongdoing to be addressed.

An adviser will talk through with you how to safely and effectively raise a concern or help you if you are unsure whether to raise a concern or not. Their key advice is to remember that you are a witness not a complainant. Their number is 020 3117 2520 or website www.protect-advice.org.uk.

Trade Union support

If you are a member of a trade union, you may also wish to contact your local office for advice and support in relation to raising concerns.

How will you be protected?

The Roseland Multi Academy Trust recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. No worker will be victimised for raising a matter under this policy. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because he/she has raised a legitimate concern.

The Roseland Multi Academy Trust will treat any harassment or victimisation as a serious disciplinary offence to be dealt with under the Disciplinary or Capability Procedure.

Untrue Allegations

If you raise a concern, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If you knowingly make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

Raising your concern outside of the Trust

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within The Roseland Multi Academy Trust. The Roseland Multi Academy Trust hopes you will be able to follow the internal whistleblowing policy first of all, but if this is not possible, and you feel that it is right to take the matter outside the following are possible contact points:

- Audit Commission www.gov.uk/government/organisations/audit-commission
- Care Quality Commission www.cqc.org.uk
- Environment Agency www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency
- Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk
- The Health and Care Professions Council www.hcpc-uk.org
- DfE/EFA Tel: 0370 000 2288 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
- Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk
- Ofsted www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted
- The Police

Employees who do take a concern outside of The Roseland Multi Academy Trust should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information.