Education 1st
"enhancing lives through education"
Sports 1st

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Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Review
The responsibility of reviewing and maintaining this policy is Craig Dembicki (Managing Director). This policy will be reviewed annually.

Start date of policy: **19th December 2016**
Reviewed: **16th July 2026**
Date of next review: **16th July 2027**

Signed

Craig Dembicki
Managing Director
Education 1st

Purpose of this Policy

Whistleblowing enables employees and workers to raise serious concerns within Education 1st rather than overlooking them or disclosing them externally without first giving the organisation the opportunity to respond. Education 1st is committed to creating a culture where concerns can be raised safely, openly and without fear of detriment.

This policy applies to all employees, casual staff, temporary workers, agency workers, volunteers, contractors, and work-experience or placement students.

Legal Framework

This policy complies with:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Rights Act 2025 amendments (in force April 2026)
- DfE Whistleblowing Guidance (2024–2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

Under PIDA, workers are protected when making a protected disclosure in the public interest.

Related Policies

Complaints & Feedback Policy and Procedures
Capability Procedures
Data Protection Policy
Recruitment and Selection Policy
Staff Wellbeing Policy
SEND and Inclusion Policy
Whistle-Blowers Page 32 Staff Handbook

Introduction to the Policy

Education 1st is committed to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, safeguarding and accountability. Employees and workers are often the first to identify wrongdoing, and their willingness to speak up is essential.

Education 1st recognises that employees may feel reluctant to raise concerns due to fear of disloyalty, victimisation or negative consequences. This policy provides clear procedures, reassurance and protection.

The procedures in this document aim to:

- Reinforce expectations that concerns should be raised.
- Provide clear internal routes for reporting concerns.
- Provide entitlement to feedback.
- Protect employees from detriment, harassment or victimisation.
- Enable escalation if internal responses are inadequate.

The Managing Director ensures that concerns are investigated appropriately and that employees raising concerns are supported.

Aims of the Whistleblowing Procedure

This procedure covers concerns about wrongdoing by employees, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, local authority officers, councillors or former employees.

A **protected disclosure** may relate to acts or omissions that have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur. These include:

- Criminal offences.
- Breach of any legal obligation.
- Miscarriage of justice.
- Danger to health and safety.
- Environmental harm.
- Deliberate concealment of wrongdoing.
- Financial irregularities including fraud, corruption or misuse of public funds.
- Abuse, discrimination or harassment of students or colleagues.
- Sexual harassment connected to work (protected from April 2026).
- Negligent, unprofessional or unethical behaviour.
- Breach of Education 1st policies and procedures.

A worker must reasonably believe the disclosure is **in the public interest**.

Concerns about an employee's own employment should be raised through the grievance procedure.

Safeguards for Employees

Education 1st recognises and understands that employees may be reluctant to disclose concerns. Education 1st stresses the following safeguards:

Protecting the Whistleblower

Employees are protected from detriment, dismissal and post-employment victimisation. Workers do not need evidence; only a reasonable belief that wrongdoing is occurring or likely to occur. Education 1st will arrange for the investigation of any claims of harassment/victimisation and, depending on the outcome, may take disciplinary action. Employees should make disclosures honestly and with a reasonable belief that the information is true. Allegations found to be deliberately false or malicious may result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

All disclosures will be reported in complete confidence and every effort made not to reveal the employee's identity if the employee wishes. However, the employee may need to come forward at the appropriate time as a witness. Employees raising concerns under this procedure, and any person to whom allegations are disclosed must ensure that they maintain the necessary confidentiality towards service users i.e. students, parents and the wider educational community.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages employees to put their name to the allegation whenever possible. All allegations will be investigated, although employees need to be aware that anonymous allegations are much less powerful and are more difficult to act upon. The following considerations and factors will be taken into account regarding an anonymous allegation:

- The seriousness of the matter raised.

- The credibility of the allegation.
- The likelihood of obtaining information from other sources which would be able to confirm the allegation.

Who to Contact with a Concern

- When employees are raising an issue, they should make it clear that it is part of the whistleblowing procedure. Where possible, employees should put the details of the issue in writing.
- In most circumstances, employees should raise concerns about wrongdoing to the Operations Manager or an appropriate member of the Management Team. If the concern involves the Operations Manager or a member of the Management Team, the issue should be raised with the Managing Director.
- If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the action taken by the Management Team, that the Management Team has condoned or taken no action at all regarding the issue, they should notify the Managing Director.
- In some situations, the employee may want advice/guidance from an external source appropriate to the issue.

How Education 1st will Respond to Whistleblowing

Depending upon the nature of the alleged wrongdoing Education 1st may:

- Investigate internally.
- Commission an independent investigation.
- Refer the matter to external agencies such as:
  - Police
  - Health & Safety Executive
  - Environment Agency
  - Local Authority Social Care / LADO
  - Information Commissioner's Office

Any cases raised under this procedure which have been notified to Education 1st will be registered with the Managing Director who will monitor the situation and ensure its progression. The Managing Director will ensure the following is adhered to:

- Some situations the problem may be resolved without the need for a major investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken immediately.
- The Managing Director will ensure the employee raising the concern will be written to, within 10 working days of the concern being raised, by the person they first contacted. The letter will acknowledge receipt of the concern and indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter.
- Education 1st will provide support to the employee raising the concern.
- If the employee subsequently feels victimised or harassed as a result of raising a concern in accordance with this procedure, they should advise the person they originally contacted, unless it is this person who is doing the victimising.

What employees should do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome

Education 1st considers that the Whistleblowing procedure provides effective mechanism for employees to raise concerns internally.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides some employment protection rights to individuals who “blow the whistle” outside their organisation. However, the types of information, and the situations in which concerns are disclosed externally, are tightly defined in the legislation.

The Act only protects those making disclosures which are considered to be in the public interest and therefore not all issues listed in the policy would be covered. Employees need to be careful and take advice before making an external disclosure and they should normally have used the internal procedure first.

Employees should have made the following considerations before making an external disclosure:

- Have the reasonable attempts been made to prevent the wrong through the internal whistleblowing procedures been tried and failed?
- Will it be reasonably certain that the external whistleblowing will prevent the wrong?

Education 1st reserve the right to take disciplinary action against the employee where an external disclosure is made that consequently is damaging to the organisation and is not protected under the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

If an employee is dissatisfied with the response of Education 1st through its internal procedures, they may contact an external organisation. However, employees are not expected to make a disclosure to the press.

External Disclosures

If internal procedures have been exhausted or are inappropriate, employees may make a protected disclosure to a **prescribed person**. These include:

- Ofsted – concerns about education provision
- Health & Safety Executive (HSE) – health and safety concerns
- Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – data protection concerns
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – safeguarding concerns
- Police – criminal matters
- Local Authority commissioning team
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (Relevant for ALPs operating under LA commissioning)

Employees can contact the independent whistleblowing charity; ‘Protect’ for confidential advice and information:

Protect (Formerly Public Concern at Work)
Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0203 117 2520
Website: Protect | Speak Up, Stop Harm

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Whistleblowing Policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT); including but not limited to the Managing Director, Operations Manager, Health and Safety Lead.

The Management Team will also be responsible for identifying any relevant policies/procedures in regard to the Whistleblowing Policy and draw attention to areas that require greater attention in regard to achieving the objectives and goals set out in the policy.