

## Whistle-blowing Policy

First Class Teachers is committed to operating with integrity, transparency, and accountability. This policy is designed to enable employees, candidates, contractors, and others working with or on behalf of First Class Teachers to raise serious concerns internally in a responsible and effective manner.

This policy applies to all staff, including supply teachers, consultants, and those involved in recruitment, compliance, or administration. It covers concerns related to malpractice, wrongdoing, or unethical conduct that is in the public interest.

This policy complies with the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** (PIDA) the **Employment Rights Act 1996** (ss.43A–43L), **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025** (KCSiE), and **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023**.

### 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy is intended to:

- o Enable individuals to raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing at work.
- o Promote a culture of openness, accountability, and integrity.
- o Reassure staff that they can raise concerns in good faith without fear of reprisal or detriment.

This policy applies to:

- o All internal First Class Teachers staff.
- o Supply teachers, teaching assistants, and other candidates working on placements.
- o Contractors, freelancers, and agency workers.
- o Schools and external partners engaging with FCT.



## 2. What is Whistle-blowing?

Whistle-blowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This may include:

- o Criminal activity
- o Failure to comply with legal obligations
- o Miscarriages of justice
- o Risk to health and safety
- o Environmental damage
- o Breach of safeguarding responsibilities
- o Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- o Deliberate concealment of any of the above

A concern may be raised even if the individual cannot prove it, provided it is raised in good faith. A concern that is raised honestly but turns out to be unfounded will not be treated as a disciplinary matter.

## 3. Safeguarding Governance and Designated Contacts

**Safeguarding:** FCT is committed to the safeguarding of children in line with KCSiE 2025. All safeguarding concerns must be escalated promptly. Where any doubt exists, concerns should always be referred externally without delay.

FCT maintains two named safeguarding contacts at all times to ensure that an independent escalation route is always available:

### Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Name: Darren Forde

Contact: [dforde@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:dforde@firstclassteachers.com)

### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL)

Name: Annabelle Forde

Contact: [deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com)

The Deputy DSL operates independently of the DSL for the purposes of receiving concerns. Concerns may be directed to either contact. Where a concern involves the DSL, it must be directed exclusively to the Deputy DSL.

Registered in England & Wales No. 15755277

[www.firstclassteachers.com](http://www.firstclassteachers.com)



[www.firstclassteachers.com](http://www.firstclassteachers.com)



[hello@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:hello@firstclassteachers.com)

#### 4. What if the Concern Involves a Senior Leader?

If your concern involves the DSL (Darren Forde), direct your concern only to the Deputy DSL at [deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com). The Deputy DSL is authorised to receive, log, and escalate the concern independently, without reference to the DSL.

If you believe internal escalation would not be appropriate regardless of who it is directed to, you may contact the following external bodies:

- Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) — [protect-advice.org.uk](http://protect-advice.org.uk)
- Ofsted — where the concern relates to an education setting
- NSPCC Whistle-blowing Helpline — 0800 028 0285 (for safeguarding concerns)
- Your trade union representative

We recommend seeking independent advice before proceeding externally.

#### 5. Your Statutory Rights

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ss.43A–43L), workers who make a qualifying disclosure in good faith are legally protected from:

- Detriment, harassment, or victimisation as a result of making a disclosure.
- Unfair dismissal where the disclosure is the reason or principal reason for dismissal.

These protections apply regardless of length of service. If you believe you have suffered detriment as a result of making a disclosure, you have the right to bring a claim to an Employment Tribunal. You may wish to seek legal advice or contact ACAS ([acas.org.uk](http://acas.org.uk)) for guidance. A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith about the categories listed in Section 2, where the concern is in the public interest.

#### 6. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns may be raised:

- By email to [dforde@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:dforde@firstclassteachers.com) (general concerns)
- By email to [deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:deputydsl@firstclassteachers.com) (concerns involving the DSL, or where the reporter prefers an independent route)
- Verbally to your designated Consultant (who must then refer it to the appropriate contact in writing within 24 hours)

You may raise a concern anonymously. Please note that anonymous disclosures may be more difficult to investigate fully. Where anonymity is requested, FCT will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity, but cannot guarantee confidentiality in circumstances where external legal proceedings require your identification.



## 7. Investigating a Concern

Once a concern is received it will be acknowledged within 5 working days. An initial assessment will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include:

- o A formal internal investigation
- o Referral to external authorities or regulatory bodies (including Ofsted or a Local Authority Designated Officer)
- o Mediation or an informal resolution
- o Where a concern involves a member of staff currently on placement, FCT will immediately notify the relevant school and suspend the placement pending investigation. No individual will be returned to a placement until the concern has been assessed and cleared.

You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, where appropriate, and subject to legal and confidentiality constraints.

## 8. Record-keeping

All concerns raised under this policy will be logged in a secure concern register maintained by the DSL or Deputy DSL. The register will record:

- The date and nature of the concern
- The name of the person who raised it (unless anonymity was requested)
- The action taken and outcome
- Any referrals made to external bodies

The concern register is a confidential document available for inspection by Ofsted or a relevant regulatory body. Records will be retained for a minimum of 7 years in accordance with FCT's data retention schedule.

## 9. Protection for Whistle-blowers

FCT is committed to ensuring no individual suffers any detriment because of raising a genuine concern in good faith. Any acts of retaliation, intimidation, or victimisation against a whistle-blower will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.



If you believe you are being treated unfairly because of raising a concern, please report this immediately to the Deputy DSL or to an external body listed in Section 4.

#### 10. False or Malicious Disclosures

This policy is intended to protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith. A concern that is raised honestly but turns out to be unfounded will not result in any disciplinary action.

However, knowingly making a false or malicious disclosure, for example, to damage another person's reputation — is a serious matter and may itself result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of the working relationship with FCT.

#### 11. Data Protection and Privacy

FCT will handle all disclosures in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. FCT is the Data Controller for personal data processed under this policy. FCT is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller.

Personal data processed in connection with a disclosure will be:

- Held securely and accessed only by those with a legitimate need to know
- Used only for the purposes of investigating and responding to the concern
- Retained for a minimum of 7 years and then securely destroyed

For further information on how FCT handles personal data, please contact [admin@firstclassteachers.com](mailto:admin@firstclassteachers.com).

#### 12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, best practice, or organisational structure.

##### Policy Sign-off

Signed (DSL): D.Forde Date: 14/05/2026

Signed (Deputy DSL): Annabelle Forde Date: 14/05/2026

**Version:** 2.1 **Effective Date:** 15/05/2026 **Next Review:** 15/05/2027

**Approved by:** Darren Forde, CEO | Date: 14/05/2026

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