



## ARK Alternative Education Provision (ARK AEP) Whistleblowing Policy-September 2026

**Policy owner:** Designated Safeguarding Lead

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Kay Walton

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL):** Allison Middlemas

**Applies to:** All staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, trustees, partners and commissioned providers working with or on behalf of ARK AEP

**Review cycle:** Annually, or sooner if statutory guidance, local arrangements or organisational procedures change

### 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy explains how individuals can raise concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice, risk, unsafe practice or failures in safeguarding at ARK AEP. It supports a culture of openness, accountability and professional curiosity, where concerns are listened to, acted upon promptly and handled sensitively. The policy should be read alongside ARK AEP's safeguarding and child protection

policy, staff code of conduct, allegations management procedures, safer recruitment procedures, complaints policy, data protection arrangements and disciplinary procedures.

## 2. What Whistleblowing Means

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information that, in the reasonable belief of the person raising it, shows wrongdoing or risk that is in the public interest.

This may include concerns about safeguarding failures, unsafe practice, neglect of duties, criminal activity, financial malpractice, fraud, corruption, health and safety risks, bullying or harassment linked to public interest concerns, deliberate concealment of information, data protection breaches, improper use of public funds, or conduct that may damage trust and confidence in ARK AEP.

## 3. Recent Statutory and Safeguarding Updates

- The Department for Education published updated guidance in June 2025 on how it handles whistleblowing disclosures and how disclosures may be made about academies and post-16 providers. The guidance was further updated in March 2026 to clarify routes for making disclosures.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 comes into force from 1 September 2026. ARK AEP will review this policy against the final statutory guidance and apply any required changes from that date.
- Safeguarding practice continues to place strong emphasis on early identification of concerns, information sharing, online safety, attendance as a safeguarding matter, multi-agency working and careful management of allegations against adults working with children.
- Where a concern relates to an adult who works or volunteers with children and may meet the allegation threshold, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be consulted without delay and normally within one working day.

## 4. Principles

- Concerns will be taken seriously and considered fairly.
- Individuals will not suffer detrimental treatment for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

- Confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, while recognising that information may need to be shared to protect children, investigate concerns or meet legal obligations.
- Safeguarding concerns must always be acted on immediately and must not be delayed by internal uncertainty.
- Anonymous concerns will be considered, although this may limit the ability to investigate fully.
- Malicious or knowingly false allegations may be addressed under disciplinary procedures.

## 5. Concerns That Should Be Raised

Examples include, but are not limited to, failure to follow safeguarding procedures, failure to report or record concerns, unsafe supervision, inappropriate relationships or boundaries, serious breaches of professional conduct, unsafe premises or practice, fraud or misuse of funds, discriminatory conduct that creates risk or harm, data protection breaches, deliberate concealment of information, or pressure to act in a way that may be unlawful, unsafe or contrary to statutory guidance.

## 6. How to Raise a Concern Internally

1. Raise the concern with the DSL, Kay Walton, as soon as possible.
2. If the concern involves the DSL, raise it with the DDSL, Allison Middlemas, or the most senior appropriate leader available.
3. If the concern involves the DDSL, raise it with the DSL or the most senior appropriate leader available.
4. If the concern involves senior leadership or the individual believes the concern cannot be raised safely internally, they may contact the relevant external body, including the local authority, LADO, Department for Education or other prescribed person.
5. Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services or children's social care immediately and then inform the DSL/DDSL as soon as it is safe to do so.

## 7. Information to Include When Raising a Concern

- The nature of the concern and why it is believed to be serious.
- Names of individuals involved, where known.

- Dates, times, locations and any witnesses.
- Relevant documents, messages, records or evidence.
- Steps already taken, if any.
- Whether there is an immediate safeguarding, health and safety or criminal risk.

## 8. Responding to Whistleblowing Concerns

ARK AEP will acknowledge concerns where contact details are provided, assess any immediate risk, decide whether safeguarding, HR, disciplinary, financial, data protection, health and safety or external referral procedures are required, and keep the whistleblower informed as far as is appropriate. The amount of information shared may be limited by confidentiality, safeguarding, employment law or the need to protect the integrity of an investigation.

## 9. Safeguarding and LADO Escalation

If a concern relates to an allegation that a person who works or volunteers with children has harmed or may have harmed a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, or behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, ARK AEP must seek advice from the relevant LADO. Employers should not investigate such allegations before consulting the LADO, unless immediate action is required to protect a child.

## 10. Local Safeguarding and LADO Contacts

| Area / Service                              | Contact details                    | When to use                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Hull LADO</b>                            | 01482 790933<br>lado@hullcc.gov.uk | Advice or referral where an allegation concerns an adult working or volunteering with children in Hull. |
| <b>Hull Early Help and Safeguarding Hub</b> | 01482 448879 option 4              | Children's safeguarding concerns in Hull.                                                               |
| <b>Hull Emergency Duty Team</b>             | 01482 300304                       | Out-of-hours urgent safeguarding concerns.                                                              |
| <b>East Riding LADO</b>                     | 01482 396999                       | Advice or referral where an allegation concerns an adult working or volunteering                        |

|                                                                       |              |                                                                          |
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|                                                                       |              | with children in the East Riding.                                        |
| <b>East Riding Children's Safeguarding and Partnership Hub (SaPH)</b> | 01482 395500 | Children's safeguarding concerns in the East Riding during office hours. |
| <b>East Riding Emergency Duty Team</b>                                | 01482 393939 | Out-of-hours urgent safeguarding concerns.                               |
| <b>Emergency services</b>                                             | 999          | Immediate danger or risk of serious harm.                                |

## 11. Protection, Confidentiality and Support

ARK AEP will protect individuals who raise genuine concerns from victimisation, harassment or disadvantage. Staff should not attempt to investigate matters themselves, confront individuals who are the subject of concerns, remove records without authority, or discuss concerns more widely than necessary. Support will be offered where appropriate, including safeguarding supervision, line management support and signposting to external advice.

## 12. External Routes for Whistleblowing

Where appropriate, individuals may raise concerns externally with a prescribed person or body. For academies, the Department for Education provides a route for whistleblowing disclosures and advises that disclosures should include the full name, address and postcode of the academy or provider, details of the wrongdoing and any relevant evidence. Individuals may also seek independent advice from Protect, the whistleblowing charity, or from their trade union or professional association.

## 13. Monitoring and Review

The DSL, Kay Walton, supported by the DDSL, Allison Middlemas, will review this policy annually and sooner where statutory guidance, local safeguarding partnership procedures, LADO arrangements or ARK AEP internal processes change. The review will consider any whistleblowing concerns raised, lessons learned, staff training needs and whether procedures remain clear, accessible and effective.

Date Created- 1.9.26

Review-1.9.27