

Whistleblowing policy

Edition – December 2023

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Policy statement

1 Vision, mission and values

Diverse Academies is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability.

Staff members are encouraged to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If they are not sure whether to raise a concern, they should discuss the issue with their line manager or the HR department.

When raising any legitimate concern, it is important that staff members feel cared for and supported.

2 Benefit and impact

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1998, gives legal protection to members of staff against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. We have endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no member of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff members, trustees, academy committee members, and members of the community to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs.

Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by member of staff or anyone working on behalf of the organisation is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore encourage all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others or the way in which the Trust is run.

This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns, regarding the points in section 3, that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

3 Purpose and introduction

Staff members, casual workers, agency workers and contractors are protected from disciplinary or other action by the employer, specifically in relation to the act of whistleblowing, if they reasonably believe the disclosure is in the public interest. Whistle-blowers will be supported and protected on the basis that the below procedure is followed.

This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the initiation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary.

These concerns could include:

- A breach, or potential breach, of health and safety legislation
- Financial irregularities
- Harassment of a colleague, customer or other individual
- Damage to the environment
- The committing of a criminal offence
- An act of bribery
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under complaint, disciplinary, grievance or other procedures.

Where staff members raise concerns externally without following the Whistleblowing procedure could be in breach of their contract of employment and may be subject to formal investigation under the disciplinary policy.

4 Roles and responsibilities

We welcome and encourage members of staff to raise concerns in relation to all issues; ordinarily issues should be raised directly with line managers or appropriate senior leadership. If staff members are unsure about raising concerns initially with line management, then these can be raised with either the internal or external contacts listed on the last page of this policy.

5 Review and monitoring

The chief executive officer, trustees and chief operating officer will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

Internal contacts

Whistleblowing Officer	Gary Corban Chief Operating Officer gcorban@diverse-ac.org.uk
Chief Executive Officer	Dave Cotton Diverse Academies Head Office Retford Education Centre Old Hall Drive Ordsall Retford DN22 7EA
Trustee	Ian Storey Retford Academies Head Office Diverse Education Centre Old Hall Drive Ordsall Retford DN22 7EA

External contacts

Education Standards Funding Agency	0370 2670001
Department for Education	0370 000 2288

NSPCC Whistleblowing advice line 0800 028 0285

Protect – Whistleblowing Charity Helpline 020 3117 2520

Policy lead	Sarah Green – Head of HR
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