

Whistleblowing policy

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1 Policy statement

1.1 Purpose and intent

1.1.1 Diverse Academies Trust are committed to the highest possible standards of honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain these standards in accordance with our Code of Conduct. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

1.1.2. This policy has been formally adopted by the Board of Trustees.

1.1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

1.2 Scope and purpose

1.2.1 The aims of this policy are:

1.2.2 To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.

1.2.3 To provide staff with guidance on how to raise concerns.

1.2.4 To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

1.2.5 This policy applies to all staff members, trustees, governors, consultants, contractors, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

2 Policy

2.1 What is whistleblowing?

2.1.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. The law provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters or "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by a worker who has a reasonable belief that there are wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;

- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- bribery;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- negligence;
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct;
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- unethical behaviour; and
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

2.1.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

2.1.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should use the Staff Grievance policy.

2.1.4 If a complaint relates to your own personal circumstances but you also have wider concerns regarding one of the areas set out at 2.1.1 above (for example, a breach of our internal policies), you should discuss with a member of leadership team which route is the most appropriate.

2.1.5 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy, you should seek advice from a member of the People team.

2.1.6 If your concern is in relation to safeguarding and the welfare of pupils/students, you should consider whether the matter is better raised under the trust's child protection policy and in accordance with the arrangements for reporting such concerns, i.e. via the designated safeguarding lead, although the principles set out in the is policy may still apply.

2.2 Confidentiality and data protection

2.2.1 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

2.2.2 We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible

reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the other contact points listed in section 1 of the Whistleblowing procedure and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt, you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are given at the end of this policy.

2.2.3 Where we receive anonymous complaints, we will investigate the complaints as far as is reasonable taking into account:

2.2.4 the seriousness of the issue raised;

2.2.5 the credibility of the concern; and

2.2.6 the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

2.2.7 As part of the application of this policy, we may collect, process and store personal data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation (being the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018) and any implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time in the collecting, holding and sharing of information in relation to our workforce. Records will be kept in accordance with our Staff Privacy Notice, our Records management and retention guidelines and in line with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation.

2.3 External disclosures

2.3.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

2.3.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Protect holds a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy. Alternatively, the list is available from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy.

2.3.3 Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a contractor, supplier or service provider. In some circumstances the law will protect you if you raise a concern with the third party directly where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager or one of the other individuals set out in section 1 of the Whistleblowing procedure.

2.4 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 Retford DN22 7EA
Trustee	Ian Storey Diverse Academies Head Office Retford Education centre Old Hall Drive Retford DN22 7EA
Confidential counselling hotline	Vivup Employee Assistance programme 03303 800658 Available 24/7, 365 days a year
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 3117 2520 Website: www.protect-advice.org.uk
The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline	Helpline: 0800 028 0285 E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk
Department for Education	Telephone: 0370 000 2288 Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education
Ofqual	Telephone: 0300 303 3344 Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual