



Academies Trust

Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by Trust Board September 2018

Be yourself,
always

Do what
matters most

Show you
care

Succeed
together

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability.
- 1.2 As part of that commitment, we encourage those who work with us or others with concerns about any aspect of our work, to come forward and express those concerns. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with through normal procedures, such as mechanisms for resolving grievances, disciplinary matters, or concerns relating to equal opportunities.
- 1.3 However, in some cases, we recognise that individuals will need to come forward on a confidential basis. Our Code of Conduct and procedures make it clear that they can do so without fear of reprisal or victimisation.
- 1.4 This statement is intended to underline our commitment to the process and our support for those who come forward to express their concerns.

2. Consultation and Information

- 2.1 Through our induction procedures, we will make sure that you know how to recognise the problems, and that you understand the effects they may have on the organisation and the service we provide in relation to:

- fraud, corruption and malpractice;
- abuse or neglect of vulnerable people (including child protection/safeguarding children);
- failure to deliver proper standards of service;
- damaging personal conflicts; and
- bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation in the work place.

(The list is for guidance only and is not intended to be comprehensive)

- 2.2 When we find a problem, we will always deal with it seriously. We will pursue fraud and serious abuse as vigorously as possible through our disciplinary procedures, or if necessary through courts; frauds are also always reported to the police. We hope that you will feel confident in coming forward, that we will share your sense of right and wrong, and act on what you tell us.

3. Confidential Reporting

- 3.1 We know that it is never easy to report a concern, particularly one that may relate to fraud or corruption. We urge you to come forward with any concerns at an early stage, and before problems have a chance to become serious.

- 3.2 If you prefer, we are happy for you to come forward with another colleague, a friend or other representative to report a concern.
- 3.3 We support concerned staff and that includes all Members, trustees, committee members and governors. We will protect everyone from reprisals or victimisation. If anyone comes forward with a concern they can be confident that this will not affect their position. This applies equally to anyone who comes forward in good faith with a concern which turns out later not to have been justified.
- 3.4 We will do everything we can to respect your confidentiality if you have requested this.
- 3.5 If anyone tries to discourage you from coming forward to express a concern, we will treat this as a disciplinary offence. In the same way, we will deal with anyone who criticises or victimises you after a concern has been expressed.
- 3.6 We must also have concern for the welfare and reputation of the individual against whom the allegation has been made. Allegations must be made in good faith and without malicious intent. Allegations will be investigated thoroughly.
- 3.7 If you make an allegation which is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you unless it is considered that you have made malicious or vexatious allegations. In these circumstances, disciplinary action may be taken against you.
- 3.8 At all times confidentiality must be respected by all parties. If the allegation is not proven then the individual against whom the allegation has been made is considered innocent and the matter must be dropped.

4. Who To Contact

- 4.1 In most cases, you should be able to raise any concerns with your line manager, Headteacher or Principal. If for some reason this is not possible, you should speak to the regional Chief Education Officer, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive or the Trust Board Chair, and ask for a confidential meeting. All such contacts will be treated in confidence.

Each Academy is responsible for ensuring all their staff are aware of the Whistleblowing Policy, and who to contact (See Appendix 1)

- 4.2 If our policy and procedures are working properly, you should not need to contact an external agency to express concerns. But there may be exceptional or urgent circumstances where it might be best to do this. It is not possible to give precise examples but, for instance, relevant situations might be:

- if the problem involved senior staff, the Chair or another trustee;
- in the case of a criminal offence, the police;
- in the cases of abuse of vulnerable people in a residential home, the local authority social services registration officer;

- in the case of abuse of public funds, the ESFA which is responsible for regulating all academy trusts; and
- in the case of any fraud, the Trust's external auditors.

We hope that none of these will ever prove necessary.

4.3 You can also approach [Protect](#) for confidential and independent advice: Tel: 020 3117 2520, Email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

4.4 Regulation staff at the ESFA may also be able to advise on a confidential basis if you are not sure who to contact about a particular problem. As regulators, they may need to follow up on any potential problems identified.

5. Dealing with Concerns

5.1 If the matter has been raised with your line management, Headteacher or Principal, he or she should, as soon as possible, refer the matter to your Chief Education Officer. If you come to us with a concern, we will look into it confidentially, thoroughly and as quickly as possible. We must be aware of the well-being of all parties involved. Initially we will seek to gather evidence together to support or dispose any allegation. However, we will also need to advise the person against whom the allegation has been made and find out their side of the story.

5.2 We will try to let you know the timescale for our investigations, the results and about any action that is proposed. However, in doing this, we have to respect the confidentiality of other members of the Trust as well. If the investigation proves that there is a case to answer then the Trust's disciplinary procedures will be invoked, or, if necessary referral will be made to the police.

5.3 The investigation will be led by the Headteacher, Principal, SLT Member or someone senior and appropriate whom they ask to conduct the investigation. Details of the allegations and the investigation should not be shown or discussed beyond those who need to know. (i.e. the person making the allegation, plus potentially a supporter – see 3.2 above, the person accused, the Director of the Trust and anyone else conducting the investigation). The only other person who will be informed is the Chair of the Trust Board. In certain circumstances the Chair may be obliged to initiate the investigation.

5.4 If you confidentially raise a concern, then you too should treat the matter as confidential, both during and after any investigation. If anyone abuses the confidentiality of the reporting process, for instance by maliciously raising unfounded allegations, we will treat this as ground for disciplinary action. However, anyone who comes forward in good faith has nothing to fear and the Trust will fully support the individual. Any actions taken against the individual which might be viewed as reprisals will also be treated as ground for disciplinary action.

5.5 If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, the Trust recognises your lawful right to make disclosures to a prescribed persons as per the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013.

6. Child Protection / Safeguarding

6.1 All staff and volunteers in schools and academies must comply with 'Keeping children safe in education' 2020, which includes taking action to protect a child who may be at risk of harm or in need of services, and to make appropriate referrals to children's social care. Any member of staff should press for re-consideration if they believe a child is not being safeguarded.

6.2 This section should be read in conjunction with:

- The academy's child protection policy and procedures;
- The Trust's 'managing allegations against staff' policy;
- The relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures;
- Keeping children safe in education (DfE 2020); and
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners (DfE 2015).

Concerns About a Child

6.3 In the first instance, the person with the concern should discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in their academy. Action may already have been taken and/or the designated staff may have sought advice from partner agencies such as children's social care or the police. If the individual is not satisfied with the outcome of this discussion, they should report their concerns to the Headteacher/Principal or the designated child protection governor.

6.4 If the individual still has concerns about the safety or welfare of the child, they should contact at least one of the following:

- A senior member of the Trust's central management team – for example, a Chief Education Officer or the Chief Executive Officer;
- A member of the Trust's Board; or
- The Trust's Safeguarding Lead (claire.dodd@coopacademies.co.uk).

6.5 If the child is in danger or at immediate risk of harm, anyone can make a referral to children's social care at their local authority:

[Bradford](#); [Kirklees](#); [Leeds](#); [Manchester](#); [Oldham](#); [Salford](#); [Staffordshire](#); [Stoke](#); [Wirral](#)

6.6 The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

Concerns About a Colleague / Adult in School

6.7 This relates to concerns that a member of staff, volunteer or other adult in school may have harmed a child/ren or behaved in a way that suggests they may be unsuitable to work with children. In line with the Trust's 'managing allegations against staff' policy, anyone who has concerns about the behaviour of another adult in school should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher/Principal in the first instance, unless the concern relates to one of those individuals.

- 6.8 Concerns about the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be reported to the Headteacher/Principal. If the allegation or concern relates to the Headteacher/Principal - or there is reason to believe that the Headteacher/Principal is not taking the appropriate action, or the individual does not believe their concerns are being taken seriously - they should contact at least one of the following:
- Chief People Officer, Juliet Caunt - juliet.caunt@coopacademies.co.uk
 - Chief Education Officers:
 - West Yorkshire, Lynda Johnson - lynda.johnson@coopacademies.co.uk
 - Greater Manchester, Ian Burchett - ian.burchett@coopacademies.co.uk
 - Stoke, Staffordshire and Merseyside, Nick Lowry - nick.lowry@coopacademies.co.uk
 - Chief Executive Officer, Chris Tomlinson - chris.tomlinson@coopacademies.co.uk
 - A member of the Trust Board;
 - The relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO); or
 - If the incident or concern is so serious as to warrant a police investigation, or a child has been placed at immediate risk of harm, then the police should be contacted.
- 6.9 Any professional with concerns about child protection or safeguarding can also contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on 0800 028 0285.