



Diocese of Coventry Multi Academy Trust



Whistleblowing Policy

Reference: WHIS MAT/06

Multi Academy Trust Policy (MAT)

Policy Date:	January 2014
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1. Version	Date	Author	Changes
v1.0	13/03/14	Jo Baker	v1.0 approved by MAT Board

Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that employees can and should voice concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended that this policy will encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the academy and the Multi Academy Trust rather than overlooking a problem or 'whistleblowing' outside the organisation.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all employees within the Multi Academy Trust whether on a permanent, fixed term or temporary contract. It also applies to volunteers or contractors working for the academy or the Multi Academy Trust for example agency workers, supply teachers and builders
- 1.3. It is recognised that in certain cases the person raising the concern will wish to proceed on a confidential basis. This document makes it clear that wherever possible, confidentiality will be respected and the staff member raising the concern will be kept informed at all times as to progress of the issue. This policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise concerns within the academy or the Multi Academy Trust in order that they can be properly and quickly investigated.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1. The Multi Academy Trust along with the Local Governing Body and management of the academy has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Whistleblowing Policy is managed appropriately in accordance with this agreed procedure.
- 2.2. In an academy the Head teacher, along with line managers are responsible for making employees aware of the existence of this policy.
- 2.3. In the Multi Academy Trust the Head of Human Resources will be responsible for making employees aware of the existence of this policy.
- 2.4. Head teacher's and Chair of the Local Governing Body are responsible for informing the Head of the Multi Academy Trust of any concerns raised by employees which come under the Whistle Blowing Policy.
- 2.5. The Head of the Multi Academy Trust is responsible for maintaining a record of concerns raised and outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and will report to the Local Governing Body and Multi Academy Trust Board as necessary.
- 2.6. Employees are responsible for making themselves familiar with and complying with this policy.

3. Policy

3.1. Employees could be the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an individual academy or the Multi Academy Trust. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the academy. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances the employee may feel it is easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

3.2. The Multi Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the academy's or Multi Academy Trust's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

3.3. This policy aims to encourage employees to feel confident about raising serious concerns, to question and act upon concerns and to provide avenues for employees to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken. The policy also aims to reassure employees that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief and have made any disclosure in good faith.

3.4. A Grievance Procedure exists to enable an employee to lodge a grievance relating to his/her own employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. This includes:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Serious health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- Serious damage to the environment
- The unauthorised use of public funds
- Sexual or physical abuse of pupils
- Unethical conduct

3.5. Any serious concerns that an employee may have about any aspect of conduct by employees of the academy or others acting on behalf of the academy or Multi Academy Trust may be reported under this policy. This policy does not replace the Multi Academy Trust's complaints procedure.

4. Safeguards against harassment or victimisation

- 4.1. The Multi Academy Trust recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what the employee is saying is true, or they have a reasonable believe that it is true, the employee will have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to the academy and pupils of the academy.
- 4.2. The Multi Academy Trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take appropriate action to protect and provide support for employees when concerns are raised in good faith.
- 4.3. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect an employee.

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of an employee who raises allegations under this policy. At the appropriate time, however, the employee may need to come forward as a witness.
- 5.2. Employees are encouraged to put their name to allegations wherever possible. This is because concerns expressed anonymously are much more difficult to investigate. Therefore anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the Head teacher in consultation with the Chair of the Local Governing Body and the Head of the Multi Academy Trust.

6. Untrue allegations

- 6.1. If an employee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If however, the employee makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action will be taken against the employee.

7. How to raise a concern

- 7.1. In most circumstances the employee should raise concerns with their immediate line manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. Where an employee believes the senior management is involved the employee should approach the Head teacher, Chair of the Local Governing Body or the Head of the Multi Academy Trust.
- 7.2. Where members of staff, or individual governors, have concerns relating to the conduct of the local governing body and/or the senior management of the academy, and where it would be unreasonable to raise these concerns within the academy, then Head of the Multi Academy Trust should be contacted.

- 7.3. Where concerns relate to conduct of the Head of the Multi Academy Trust the Chairman of the Multi Academy Trust Board should be contacted.
- 7.4. Where concerns relate to the conduct to the MAT Board then the member of staff or the individual governors should contact The Bishop of Coventry in writing.
- 7.5. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. It is helpful for the employee to provide the background and history of the concern (giving relevant names and dates) and the reason why the employee is particularly concerned about the situation.
- 7.6. The earlier the employee expresses the concerns, the easier it will be to take action.
- 7.7. Although the employee is not expected to prove beyond reasonable doubt the truth of an allegation, the employee should demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for the concern.
- 7.8. The employee may wish to consider discussing the concern with a colleague or trade union representative first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are other colleagues who have the same experience or concerns.

8. How the Academy or Multi Academy Trust will Respond

- 8.1. The academy or Multi Academy Trust may need to test out the concerns. Where appropriate the concerns may be investigated by management, this could be through the disciplinary process where relevant; or form the subject of an independent inquiry.
- 8.2. Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 8.3. In order to protect individuals and those accused of malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate, and if so, what form it should take. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.
- 8.4. Within **10 academy days** of a concern being raised the Head teacher, Chair of the Local Governing Body or Head of the Multi Academy Trust will write to the employee:
- acknowledging that a concern has been raised;
 - indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter and who the investigating officer will be;
 - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;

- telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- telling the employee whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

8.5. The amount of contact between the individual considering the issue and the employee who raised the issue will depend on the nature of the matters raised; the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of information provided. If necessary the academy or Multi Academy Trust will seek further information from the employee.

8.6. When a meeting has been arranged, employees may be accompanied by a representative from a trade union or professional association or a workplace colleague. They may also request that the meeting is held away from the normal place of work.

8.7. The academy and Multi Academy Trust accepts that the employee will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed and therefore the academy or Multi Academy Trust will inform the employee of the steps that have been taken to resolve the matter as appropriate. Where the employee has raised concerns in writing, then the course of action should also be confirmed in writing.

9. How the Matter can be taken further

9.1. The aim of this policy is that employees should be able to raise concerns internally and it is hoped that the employee will be satisfied with any action taken. If this is not the case then they may raise their concerns to the Head of the Multi Academy Trust.

9.2. If the employee wishes to take the matter outside of the organisation then the following are possible contact points:

- Diocesan Board of Education
- Public Concern at Work. This is an independent charity that operates a confidential helpline to provide free impartial advice. (www.pcaaw.co.uk)
- Audit Commission
- A relevant Trade Union
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant Professional Bodies
- Regulatory Organisations
- Local Police

9.3. If the employee chooses to take the matter outside of the academy and Multi Academy Trust then the employee should ensure that they do not disclose confidential information. An employee should not take concerns directly to the media.