



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING (WHISTLE- BLOWING) POLICY JUNE 2020

**Approved: 23/JUNE/20
Version 3**

Version History

Version	Date Approved by Trust Board/Chair of Trust Board	Changes Made
1	12 December 2018 Draft	
2	30 th January 2019	
	4 th March 2020	Draft changes agreed byTB
<u>3</u>	<u>23rd June 2020</u>	Periodicity of review changed to 2 years and inclusion of reference to GDPR

Confidential Reporting Policy

Date Policy Reviewed / Developed:	12 December 2018 30 January 2019 04 March 2020 23 June 2020	Initial Review by Trust Board Sign off by Chair of Trustees Revisions approved by Trust Board V3 approved by KD
Title:	Confidential Reporting Policy	
Summary of Policy:	<p>This policy reflects the commitment of the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust in providing a confidential reporting mechanism for all employees. The policy is based upon the model policy provided by the Local Authority to schools. Confidential reporting policies can often be referred to as 'whistleblowing' policies.</p> <p>The Academies Financial Handbook says in paragraph 2.3.7 that academy trusts must have appropriate procedures in place for whistle-blowing, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure all staff are aware who they can report concerns to • The way in which such concerns will be managed 	
Policy Author:	Rebecca Bage – Governance Officer	
Policy First Agreed By: Trust Board/CEO/Committee	Agreed By: Trust Board	Date: 30 January 2019
Author: Contact details:	Rebecca Bage rbage@esteemmat.co.uk	
Additional documents/references related to this policy:	EMAT Anti-Fraud Policy Academies Financial Handbook Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2018 and other Statutory Guidance Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998	
Academy Specific / MAT wide	MAT wide policy	
Review Period:	Every 2 years	
Date Review Due:	JUNE 2020	

Confidential Reporting Code for the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Confidential reporting is the disclosure or communication of information about possible malpractice by individuals or organisations. Disclosure can be either internal within the organisation or external to an outside authority.
- 1.2 This confidential reporting code is intended to enable employees of the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust (referred to in this policy as the 'trust') to disclose information about malpractice internally and to provide employees with protection from subsequent victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage. This will assist in detecting and deterring malpractice and, by demonstrating the trust's accountability, maintain public confidence and the trust's good reputation.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be evidence of malpractice within the trust. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the academy or team they work within. They may also fear harassment or victimisation.
- 2.2 In line with the trust's commitment to high standards of openness, integrity and accountability, the trust expects employees who have a reasonable belief that malpractice is taking place within the organisation to come forward and voice those concerns internally. This may be an awareness of suspected irregularity, wrongdoing or a failure of standards. This code provides the means for employees to make such disclosures.
- 2.3 An employee's concerns about malpractice may include a reasonable belief that one or more of the following has occurred or is likely to occur:
 - Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law,
 - Miscarriages of justice,
 - Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees,
 - Damage to the environment,
 - The unauthorised use of public funds,
 - Fraud and corruption,
 - Sexual or Physical abuse of pupils,

- Other unethical conduct.

2.4.1 Under this code employees should make disclosures about possible malpractice to one or more of the following people:

- The Headteacher/Senior Lead if the reporting employee works within an academy. Where an employee of an academy feels that reporting their concerns to the Headteacher or Senior Lead would be inappropriate they should report to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.
- The CEO if the reporting employee is a member of the Executive Team or is employed within the central support team of the trust. Where reporting to the CEO is inappropriate, the reporting employee should contact the Chair to the Trust Board.
- The Finance Director, if concerns raised are related to financial management. If this would be inappropriate contact should be made with the Chair to the Trust Board.

It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

2.5 It is in the interests of all parties that disclosures are dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly. The overriding consideration for the trust and the employee is that it would be in the public interest for any malpractice found to be corrected and, where appropriate, sanctions applied

2.6 The code provides employees with a procedure to make disclosures of irregularity or wrongdoing without fear of adverse treatment as a result. The trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of employees making disclosures (including informal pressures) and will act to protect employees when they make a disclosure in good faith.

2.7 The code addresses major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures and where the interests of others or if the academies are at risk. It has been developed within the following legislative and policy framework:

It considers the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

It is complementary to the trust's Code of Conduct which makes clear the standards of propriety and good practice expected of employees.

It is complementary to the trust's Discipline, Grievance and Harassment Procedures. Together they form a framework which allows employees to be disciplined, to seek personal redress, to raise personal complaint and to disclose malpractice where appropriate.

The code is in addition to the trust's Complaints Policy and other reporting procedures, for example child protection procedures.

3 Scope

3.1 This code applies to all employees within the Esteem Multi-Academy Trust. It is also applicable to:

- contractors working for the trust on trust premises, for example, agency staff, builders, drivers.
- suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the trust in their own premises.

4 Procedure for Making A Disclosure

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This code provides you with a procedure for making disclosures internally about suspected wrongdoing, irregularity or a failure of standards within the trust. Its aims are:

- To encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about possible malpractice within the trust.
- To provide a means for you to disclose those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- To ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them further if you are not satisfied.
- To reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation and from subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

4.1.2 Any serious concerns that you have about an aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees, Directors, Trustees, Governors of Local Governing Bodies or others acting on behalf of the trust can be reported under this code. This may be about something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the trust subscribes to.
- is against the trust's or academies' policies.
- falls below established standards of practice.
- amounts to improper conduct.

Examples of these are given in paragraph 2.3.

4.2 Confidentiality

4.2.1 All disclosures will be treated in confidence and wherever possible, every effort will be made not to reveal your identity. However, you may need to come forward as a witness and you will be given every support from management at that time.

4.3 Anonymous Disclosures

4.3.1 You should put your name to your disclosure whenever possible. Disclosures made anonymously will still be considered at the discretion of the trust. However, it is helpful to have your name in case further information is required.

4.3.2 In exercising its discretion, the trust will consider:

- the seriousness of the issues raised.
- the credibility of the disclosure.
- the likelihood of confirming what is alleged from attributable sources.

4.4 Untrue Disclosures

If you make a disclosure in good faith that you reasonably believe is in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, your allegation is frivolous, malicious or for personal gain, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

4.5 Employee Action

4.5.1 As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with the most senior member of the leadership team at your place of work. For employees within an academy this would normally be the Headteacher. If you work as part the trust's central team this would be the CEO. If the matter is related to a financial management concern, then you are advised to raise this with the Finance Director. If you believe any of these people are involved, you should approach the Chair of Governors or Chair of Trust Board as appropriate. Any reporting of this nature depends on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.

4.5.2 You may raise your concern either verbally or in writing. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to act. You should provide:

- details of your concerns, including the nature, dates and location of any relevant incidents.
- reasons why you feel concerned about the situation.

4.5.3 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable

grounds for your concern.

- 4.5.4** You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns. You may also discuss your concerns with your trade union representative.
- 4.5.5** You may invite your trade union or other representative to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.
- 4.5.6** The amount of contact between you and the person considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the person who you have reported your concerns to will seek further information from you.

4.6 Action Taken by the Trust

- 4.6.1** The trust will respond to your disclosure. Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:
 - a) investigated by management or through the disciplinary process;
 - b) reported to the Trust Board for further investigation
 - c) referred to the Police;
 - d) the subject of an independent inquiry.
- 4.6.2** To protect individuals and those accused of possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The over-riding principle the trust will have in mind is the public interest. Disclosures for which there are other specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 4.6.3** Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any action investigation is conducted.
- 4.6.4** Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, you will receive a response:
 - a) acknowledging that the concern has been received;
 - b) telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
 - c) indicating how the matter is going to be dealt with;

- d) giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- e) supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms;
- f) telling you why if there is to be no further investigation.

4.6.5 The trust will take steps to minimise any difficulties you may experience because of making a disclosure. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the trust will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

4.6.5 You will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcomes of any investigation.

4.7 How the Matter Can Be Taken Further

4.7.1 This code is intended to provide you with a route within the trust to make disclosures of malpractice. The trust hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and you believe the information you have disclosed is substantially true, possible contact points include:

- Public Concern at Work
- Your trade union
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police

If you do take the matter outside the trust, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Please ensure that you check with the person dealing with your disclosure within the trust before divulging any information.

4.8 GDPR

4.8.1 Data will be processed in line with the requirements and protections set out in the General Data Protection Regulation.