



*"Praying together,
Learning for life,
Caring for all"*

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy

Date: March 2019

To be reviewed: March 2020





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INTRODUCTION

This policy document makes it clear that if you have a concern about an issue of legality or practice within school, you can speak out without fear of victimisation, or any discrimination, or disadvantage. This confidential reporting policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns **within** school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. It is important that employees raise issues of concern so that they can be investigated.

This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover any major concerns you may have that fall outside the scope of existing internal procedures. These concerns include:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- Suspected fraud or corruption
- Disregard for legislation, particularly in relation to health and safety at work
- The environment has been, or is likely to be, damaged
- Serious breach of the Finance Procedure Rules or Contract
- That information on any of the above has been, is being or is likely to be, concealed

If something is troubling you which you think we should know about or that we should look into, please use this policy. If, however you are aggrieved about your personal position, please use the Grievance Policy. This Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the school itself are at risk. Governors recognise employees may wish to seek advice and be represented by their Trade Union officers when using the provisions of this policy

This policy aims to: -

- Encourage you to feel confident about raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- Provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to follow them up if you are not satisfied
- Reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

CONFIDENTIALITY

St Joseph's governors are committed to good practice and high standards and want to be supportive of their employees. Governors recognise that deciding whether or not to report a concern can be very difficult. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffer any form of retribution as a result.



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If you want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy and ask for your identity to be protected, it will not be disclosed without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for instance because your evidence is needed at a disciplinary hearing or if the police need to be called in), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed. If you do not tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the governors. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Step 1

If you have a concern about malpractice, please raise it with one of the Deputy Headteachers or the Headteacher. This may be done either verbally or in writing. Please say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that they can make appropriate arrangements.

Step 2

If you feel unable to raise the matter with any of the above, please raise the matter with your Headteacher.

Step 3

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, you should contact: -

The independent charity Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 or at helpline@pcaw.co.uk. Their lawyers can give you free confidential advice on how to raise a concern about serious malpractice at work. 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.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a work 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 invite a Trade Union representative or work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised. The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action. Where concerns are raised, whether in writing or otherwise, an initial interview, which will be confidential, will be arranged to ascertain the area of concern.

At this stage you will be asked if you wish your identity to be disclosed. You will be reassured about protection from possible reprisals or victimisation. You will also be asked whether or not you wish to make a formal statement. In either case, a brief summary of the interview will be written, which will be agreed by both parties. All concerns will be reported to the Headteacher who will be responsible for the commission of any further investigation.

If exceptionally the concern involves the Headteacher, this report will be made to the Chair of Governors, who will decide how the investigation will proceed. This may include an external investigation.



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HOW THE GOVERNORS WILL RESPOND

A designated person will be appointed to formally respond to your concerns in all cases. Lee Fishwick is the designated governor for Whistleblowing.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues), should be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person dealing with your allegation will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how the matter will be dealt with
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to give you a final response
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made, and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the person considering the issues and yourself will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and how clear the information provided is. If necessary, the person leading the enquiry will ask for further information from you.

Where any meeting is arranged (this can be off-site if you wish) you can be accompanied by a union representative or a colleague. We will take steps to help you as much as possible to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern.

For example, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings they will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

Governors accept that you need to know that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed about the investigation and its outcome.



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HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. Governors hope you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside school, the following are possible contact points where you will be able to obtain advice about the protection given under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998:

- Internal Auditor –Trafford Council – John Miller – 912 1326
- The External Auditor – Grant Thornton – obtain numbers from Trafford Council
- Your trade union
- Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations i.e. Health and Safety Executive, Audit Commission and utility regulators
- Relevant voluntary organization
- The police.

You can also get independent, confidential advice from the charity Public Concern at Work on: www.pcaw.co.uk or by telephoning 020 7404 6609.