

# **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

**St Joseph's school is a Christian community in which individuals are valued and respected, and encouraged to reach their full potential and be**

**'The Best They Can Be'**

**Faith, Hope, Love.**



## **Policy for Whistle Blowing**

### **SAFEGUARDING POLICY CROSS REFERENCE**

**Please read this policy in conjunction with the School Safeguarding Policy alongside the guidance found in the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Handbook [www.gscb.org.uk/handbook](http://www.gscb.org.uk/handbook) and the guidance on safer working practices outlined in [www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/safeguardingchildren/safeguardingadvisernetwork/sanetwork](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/safeguardingchildren/safeguardingadvisernetwork/sanetwork)**

**Our ethos is one that nurtures education through recognition and celebration of all children's experiences and achievements, whatever the context. Each child is unique and made in the likeness of God. Every child should succeed at their own level and be praised for this success**

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**Approved by: Learning and Standards**

**Approved on: Spring Term 2018**

**Review Date: Spring Term 2019**

**Other relevant policies: PSHE, Safeguarding, Code of Conduct**

## **Introduction**

Whistle Blowing has been defined as:

***‘the disclosure by an employee or professional of confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the work place, be it of the employee or his/her fellow employees’ (Public Concern at Work Guidelines 1997).***

Statutory protection for employees who Whistle Blow is provided by the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (“PIDA”)**. The PIDA protects employees against victimisation if they make a protected disclosure within the meaning of the PIDA and speak out about concerns about conduct or practice within the School which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice. This policy applies to all school staff and volunteers including full and part time, casual, temporary or supply staff and to individuals undertaking work experience in the school.

### **Policy Aims**

The Governing Body at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School is committed to high standards in all aspects of the School and will treat Whistle Blowing as a serious matter. In line with the Governing Body’s commitment to openness, probity and accountability, members of staff are encouraged to report concerns which will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action taken in response.

#### **This policy aims to:**

- Give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with School standards and policies so that s/he is encouraged to report on those concerns
- Provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns
- Ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- Offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for Whistle Blowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

#### **This policy covers Whistle Blowing relating to alleged:**

- unlawful conduct
- miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes
- failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- Health and Safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to pupils and members of staff
- action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment
- abuse of authority
- unauthorised use of public or other funds
- fraud or corruption
- breaches of financial regulations or policies

- mistreatment of any person connected to the school
- action that has caused or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to school property
- sexual, physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or pupils
- unfair discrimination or favouritism
- racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment
- any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.

The PIDA sets out the full statutory rights and obligations of members of staff wishing to Whistle Blow. Where members of staff are unclear about any of the PIDA requirements they should seek further advice. Public Concern at Work is an independent charity that provides free advice for persons who wish to express concerns about fraud or other serious malpractice (telephone 0207404 6609 or [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)). Members of staff could also approach their trade union for further advice.

Allegations against the headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors [chair@st-josephs.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:chair@st-josephs.gloucs.sch.uk) who will complete a full investigation and follow procedures as outlined

### **Safeguard Against Reprisal, Harassment and Victimisation**

The Governing Body at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff when matters are raised in accordance with the PIDA provisions. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the Whistle Blowing policy will be dealt with under the staff disciplinary procedures.

### **Confidentiality**

The Governing Body recognises that members of staff may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of staff who raise a concern and do not want their name disclosed. However investigation into the concern could reveal the source of the information; and statements may be required from the member of staff as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved. If the investigation leads to prosecution the Whistle Blower is likely to be called in to give evidence in court. The Governing Body will not place members of staff under pressure to give their name and will give due consideration to proceeding with investigating the concern on the basis of an anonymous allegation

### **Anonymous Allegations**

Staff should put their name to allegations whenever possible. Anonymous allegations are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations will be considered under this Whistle Blowing procedure especially concerns raised relating to the welfare of children. In relation to determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward the Governing Body will take the following factors into account:

- the seriousness of the issue raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

### **Untrue and Malicious/Vexatious Allegations**

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the Governing Body will consider taking disciplinary action against the member of staff.

### **Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues**

This policy has been written alongside our child protection policy and procedures which should also be referred to as required

If a member of staff raises a concern related to a child protection issue, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors should urgently consult the LA officer designated to lead on child protection (or if they are not available the designated manager for child protection in the authority's social service.)

However, in relation to child protection issues, it is open to the member of staff to make a direct referral to the social services designated manager either before raising their concern with the Governing Body or where the Headteacher or Chair of Governors fails to do so after raising their concern and the member of staff remains concerned about the situation.

### **Raising a Concern**

Where the concern relates to a child protection matter, if the whistle blower does not want to raise this through the School, they must consult the LA officer designated to lead on child protection or if that person is not available, the local authority's designated social services manager for child protection. If the concern needs to have Police or other statutory authority involvement, the Whistle Blowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the Whistle Blowing process.

Whistle Blowing by staff is fully supported and encouraged by both the School and Gloucestershire County Council. If possible you should first raise your concern with the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. The person to be approached depends to an extent on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue and who is thought to be involved.

If you feel staff cannot express your concerns within the School or wish to raise a serious concern they should contact Gloucestershire County Council orally or in writing (marked 'Confidential') to the:

Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Gloucestershire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Gloucester  
GL1 2TZ  
Telephone: 01452 425201

**Alternatively you can use the Council's 24 hour 'Whistleblowing' Answerphone service 01452 427052 to report a serious concern relating to possible fraud, corruption, conduct or mal-practice/administration.**

If possible, concern should be put in writing for the avoidance of doubt. They should set out the background and history of the concern; giving names, dates and places where possible, and explaining the reason for your concerns. If the whistle blower feels unable to put the matter in writing they can still raise your concern verbally and should telephone or arrange to meet the appropriate person. They can also ask your trade union or professional association to raise the matter on their behalf or to support them in raising the concern.

### **Response to Whistle Blowing**

The matter raised may:

- need inquiry internally in the School
- need to be passed to the Police if it relates to alleged criminal activity
- need to be passed to the person in the LA who deals with complaints about financial management or financial propriety in schools
- need to be referred to the LA officer designated to lead on child protection if there is a concern relating to child protection, or if that person is not available the local authority's designated social services manager for child protection.

At this stage concerns/allegations are neither accepted nor rejected

If you have reported your concern directly to Gloucestershire County Council please refer to Appendix 1 for Gloucestershire County Council Guidelines on Whistle Blowing.

### **Timescale for Response**

The appropriate person appointed by the governing body to look into Whistle Blowing allegations will normally provide a written response to you within 5 working days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- advising whether any enquiries have been made
- advising whether further enquiries will take place
- informing you of support available whilst matters are looked into, and
- maintaining confidentiality wherever possible, but also explaining that it may not be possible that you can remain anonymous.

### **The Inquiry Process**

The appointed person will:

- Look into the allegation - seeking evidence and interviewing witnesses as necessary.
- Maintain confidentiality wherever possible but will be mindful that there is no guarantee that the whistleblower can remain anonymous.
- If appropriate, bring the matter to the attention of the LA appointed person dealing with complaints about financial management of schools.
- If appropriate, for concerns of criminal behaviour refer the matter to the Police.

The Whistle Blowing process will be halted until the statutory authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the Whistle Blowing process.

If the person appointed by the governing body needs to talk to you, you are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The target is to complete the inquiry within 10-15 working days from the date of the initial written response. If the enquiry extends beyond the timescales outlined for specific reasons all individuals concerned will be notified of this in writing with an indication when the inquiry will be completed.

### **The Inquiry Report**

Following completion of the inquiry process the person appointed will make a written report and submit to the Chair of Governors normally within 5 working days. The report will not contain the Whistle Blower's name unless you have expressly stated that you wish to be named.

Following receipt of the inquiry report, the Chair of Governors will convene a committee with at least one other governor and an independent person from outside the governing body, e.g. the LA or a governor of another school to consider the inquiry report and decide on the action to be taken. This should normally take place within 5 - 10 working days following receipt of the inquiry report.

Following notification of the committee's decision, the Chair of Governors will notify you of the outcome normally within 5 working days (except in relation to anonymous allegations), setting out the action to be taken or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons why.

### **Taking the Matter Further**

If no action is to be taken and/or you are not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with, you can make a complaint under the Governing Body's complaints procedure or raise your concerns with other organisations as listed below:

- the local authority
  - Health & Safety Executive
  - Audit Commission
  - Financial Services Authority
  - diocesan authority (for Church schools)
- Inland Revenue
- relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
  - solicitor
  - Police - for concerns of criminal behaviour
  - trade union or professional association
  - Public Concern at Work (an independent charity that provides free advice for persons who wish to express concern about fraud and other serious malpractice. **Telephone 0207 404 6609 or [www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)**).