

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy



Written February 2015

Introduction

At St Joseph's we are committed to the highest possible standards of care, openness, and accountability and we encourage all staff and those working with us to raise any concerns about any aspect of our work which falls below professional standards or endangers the care of an individual or group, or damages the reputation of the school, to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership and/or relevant agencies. This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation.

It applies to all staff, agency workers and supply staff and those contractors working on the premises, for example, cleaners, builders and repair workers.

It is recognised that whistle blowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in the behaviour that is causing concern continuing.

Don't think what if I'm wrong – think what if I'm right

Other Complaints Procedures

This procedure is separate from the School Complaints Procedures policy and other statutory reporting procedures. Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in the Child Protection policy.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affects an individual.

Behaviour that should cause concern

This list is not exhaustive but highlights some of the behaviours that may cause concern

- Conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- Inappropriate use of school equipment
- Accessing illegal or inappropriate material on line
- Misuse of school funds, fraud or corruption
- Verbal, physical or sexual abuse
- Inappropriate communication with pupils and/or parents
- Ignoring or causing a likely health and safety risk
- Deliberate damage to the environment

Reasons for whistle-blowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

What generally stops people from whistle-blowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed.

It is important to know and understand the possible reasons for people not wanting to blow the whistle in order to support them when a concern is raised and to encourage a climate of openness and accountability.

How to raise a concern

You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher or your line manager. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken. Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why. If your concern is about your immediate line manager approach the headteacher. If your concern is about the headteacher, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school, contact the Chair of Governors. Contact details for all the above have been provided to all staff through the 'contacts' section of the school e mail system. Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest. Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can. A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next

You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries. Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation. No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith. Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However, anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the school's discretion. In exercising the 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 from attributable sources.

Self-reporting

Staff have a responsibility to discuss with the head teacher any difficulty, issue or problem, physical or mental, which may affect their ability to carry out their duties or professional competence. Following the discussion the head teacher will review what support can be put in place and how to proceed. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.