

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Whistleblowing Policy

*Here at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we learn and grow through the love of Jesus.
Our community is a safe, caring and happy place where everyone is supported and valued.
We encourage and challenge everyone to achieve their full potential,
spiritually, academically, morally and socially.
We inspire others with a love of learning and aim for excellence in everything we do.
Through our own faith, we treat one another the way we would like to be treated.
We help every child to be gentle and fair: to always do their best.*

'Learning through the Love of Jesus Christ'

Introduction

Here at St Joseph's we are committed to giving all of our children every opportunity to achieve the highest of standards. We offer a broad and balanced curriculum and have high expectations of all the children. The achievement, attitude and well-being of all our children matter. This policy helps to ensure that this school puts the child first and ensures that at all times the school acts in the best interests of its pupils and staff.

St Joseph's is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its pupils and staff. The governors and staff are committed to promoting British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles.

Staff are often the first to realize that there may be something wrong within the School. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when the concern feels serious because it is about a possible fraud, corruption or misuse of position that might affect others or the School itself, it can be difficult to know what to do.

You may be worried about raising such a concern and may think it best to keep it to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, school leaders or to the School itself. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

If in doubt – raise it!

The School and the Governing Body are committed to running the School in the best way possible and to do so we need your help. We have introduced this policy to reassure you that it is safe and acceptable to speak up and to enable you to raise any concern you may have about malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. Rather than wait for proof, we would prefer you to raise the matter when it is still a concern.

This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns however if your concern related to Child Protection of the safeguarding of children, please refer to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and follow the steps laid out there. This policy applies to all those who work for us; whether full-time or part-time, employed through an agency, contractors or as a volunteer. If you have a concern, please let us know.

These procedures are in addition to the School's complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. If, however, you wish to make a complaint about your employment or how you have been treated, please use the grievance procedure.

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This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of the pupils or of the School itself are at risk.

These include:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other staff or pupils
- The unauthorized use of public funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Sexual, physical, verbal or financial abuse of others

The Governing Body and the School Leadership are committed to this policy. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. Provided you are acting in good faith, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue.

With this assurance, we hope you will raise your concern openly. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances when you would prefer to speak to someone in confidence first. If this is the case, please say so at the outset. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. You should understand that there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we will discuss with you whether and how the matter can best proceed.

Please remember that if you do not tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. We will not be able to protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly you should not assume we can provide the assurances we offer in the same way if you report a concern anonymously.

If you are unsure about raising a concern you can get independent advice from Public Concern at Work which is an independent charity on 020 7404 6609 or by email at helpline@pcaw.org.uk their lawyers can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work.

How to Raise a Concern

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with Mrs Hannon (Office Manager), Mrs Burns (Deputy Head) or Miss Strachan (Head teacher). This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.

If you are unable to raise the matter with one of them, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with Mrs Janet Nelms (Chair of Governors).

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact the Education Commission at St Edwards House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, BR5 2SR.

The concern could be raised verbally or in writing. If you want to raise the matter in confidence, please say so at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

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How the School will Respond

Once you have told us of your concern, we will assess it and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them and what further assistance we may need from you.

If you ask, we will write to you summarizing your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it and provide a timetable for feedback. If we have misunderstood the concern and there is any information missing please let us know.

When you raise the concern it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, conduct or equality policies or other relevant procedure, we will let you know.

Whenever possible, we will give you feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you about the precise actions we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence we owe to another person.

Monitoring

The Strategic Steering Committee of the School's Governing Body will have responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes and will report as necessary to the Full Governing Body.

Taking Matters Further

We recognise that there may be circumstances where you can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as regulators or the police. Public Concern at Work www.pcaw.org.uk or your union will be able to advise you on such an option and on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.

Guidance to Staff

This guidance is written for staff, paid or voluntary, working with children in St Joseph's school and is in line with Bromley Council's 'Raising Concerns – Something Wrong? – How To Report It!'

All staff should be aware of the school's child protection/safeguarding procedures, including procedures for dealing with allegations against staff, which are informed by the NEOST/Joint Union Guidance and explained in the School's Statement of Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff. Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

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

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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 stops people from whistle blowing:

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

How to raise a concern:

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. 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.
- Depending on your role in the school, you should approach the class teacher or Head Teacher who is the Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer.
- If your concern is about the Head Teacher, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school, contact the Lead Officer for Education Safeguarding on 020 8461 7669.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.
- You should then 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 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.
- Allegations made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain will be seen in a different light and disciplinary action may be taken.

Self reporting:

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, or perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most situations, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice and support:

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager, HR department and/or your professional trade union.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Date: September 2017

Date of next review: September 2018