



ST ETHELBERT'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Whistle Blowing Policy 2016

Date of Review: October 2016

Date of Next Review:

1. Introduction

All employees at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, health and safety risks to the public or to other employees, damage to the environment, possible fraud or corruption, sexual or physical abuse of clients or any other unethical conduct, it can be difficult to know what to do.

Staff may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to themselves, perhaps feeling it's none of their business or that it's only a suspicion. They may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the school. They may decide to say something but find that they have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next. Staff may also fear that you could be harassed or victimised.

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. It expects that its employees who have serious concerns about anything that is happening in the school to come forward and raise those concerns. The school, however, recognises that employees need to be supported and have confidence that any concerns will be treated appropriately. The purpose of this policy, which is based on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, is to enable staff to raise any concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. The school would rather that staff raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof.

The policy is intended to apply not only to employees but also to contractors working for the school on school premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school.

This policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the school itself are at risk. If staff have a concern about their employment with the school this should be raised through the school's Grievance Procedure. The school also has policies to cover the situation where staff are the victim of bullying or harassment.

If in doubt - raise it!

2. Purpose of the policy

2.1 The policy aims to encourage staff and others to feel confident in raising serious concerns by providing clear avenues through which those concerns can be raised and reassuring staff who raise concerns that they will not be victimised if they have a reasonable belief and the disclosure was made in good faith.

2.2 The policy will ensure that staff and others who raise concerns receive a response and are informed about how their concerns are being dealt with.

3. Safeguards

3.1 The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If a member of staff raises a genuine concern under this policy they should have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to the school.

3.2 The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect its staff when concerns are raised in good faith.

3.3 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence, or be influenced by, any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that may already affect any member of staff.

3.4 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the staff member raising the concern. At the appropriate time, however the member of staff may need to come forward as a witness.

3.5 Staff should, whenever possible put your name to the allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. The school will exercise discretion in considering anonymous allegations if the issue raised is sufficiently serious - e.g. involving child protection issues, individual or public safety, corruption, waste or other impropriety - and credible and there is a likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

3.6 If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

4. How to raise a concern

4.1 It is normally expected that concerns will be raised in the first instance with the immediate line manager. However, if the matter is of an extremely sensitive or serious nature, or it is believed that management are involved, the staff member should approach the headteacher or Chair of Governors, who will be able to provide advice/guidance on how to pursue matters of concern.

4.2 Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. If a written report is produced, it is suggested that the background and history of the concern with relevant dates are included, along with the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

4.3 Staff raising the concern will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

4.4 A trade union representative, a colleague or a friend may accompany the member of staff raising the concern at any meetings or interviews in connection with this concern.

5. How the school will respond

5.1 Once a concern has been raised, the school will determine what action should be taken initially.

5.2 As appropriate, matters raised may:

- be investigated by the school through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the local authority
- form the subject of an independent investigation

5.3 In deciding how to deal with the concern raised, the overriding principle which the school will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures e.g. child protection will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. 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.

5.4 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person with whom the concern has been raised will write to the staff member raising the concern acknowledging that the concern has been received and indicating how the school proposes to deal with the matter. If there is an ongoing investigation the person responsible for that investigation will provide the member of staff raising the concern with updates on how the matter is progressing and inform them of the outcome of the investigation, subject to any legal constraints.

5.5 The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties, which the member of staff raising the concern may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if they are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the school will arrange for them to receive advice about the procedure and any support and counselling that may be required.

6. The responsible officer

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The headteacher will maintain a record of concerns raised, and the outcomes, in a form that does not endanger confidentiality, and will report as necessary to the board of governors and/or local authority.

7. External contacts

While the school hopes this policy gives its staff the reassurance the need to raise such matters internally, it recognises that there may be circumstances where any member of staff can properly report matters to outside bodies, such as the local authority or the police. Unions or Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise on such an option and on the circumstances in which outside body may be safely contacted.

APPENDIX 1: WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT FORM

PROFORMA FOR RAISING CONCERNS

Date	
Member of staff/contractor raising concern <i>Please refer to point 3.4 and 3.4 regarding anonymity and raising a concern</i>	
Concern raised with: <i>Please refer to section 4 above: How to raise a concern</i>	Line manager (name): Headteacher: Chair of the Governing Body
Details of the concern Background/history/context <i>(Please give as much detail as possible including times and dates where applicable)</i>	
Summary of action taken <i>(Further notes/evidence may be attached)</i>	

Signed:

Date:

Headteacher:

Date:

Chair of the Governing Body:

Date

