

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Malmesbury

Whistle Blowing Policy



'Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, loving and serving together'

Policy Statement

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. Our whistleblowing policy supports this commitment. It gives employees and others with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the school, a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimisation.

Objectives

Sometimes people are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they think that they are being disloyal, or because they are afraid that they might be victimised if they speak up.

The purpose of this policy is to provide all members of the school community with help and support to speak up and be confident that individuals can do so safely. The school takes all concerns seriously and will ensure they are dealt with promptly and fairly.

What is whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is a way for employees of an organisation, members of the public, contractors and stakeholders to raise reasonably and honestly held concerns they may have about serious matters that could put the school and/or members of the school community at risk.

Whistleblowing usually involves bringing forward concerns that are in the public interest to investigate and resolve. Examples are:

- Practices or behaviours that pose a risk of harm or cause a detriment to others
- Financial malpractice, including the giving or taking of bribes
- Individuals exceeding the scope of their authority or acting in a way that could bring the school into disrepute

Whistle blowers are protecting the community that the school exists to serve, and we wish to support and protect employees and others who raise their concerns through this procedure.

Anonymous allegations

Individuals are encouraged to raise their concern(s) in person, because concerns that are expressed anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, anonymous allegations may be investigated depending on:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the allegation, and
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

When to blow the whistle

If you see something being done wrong, can you tackle it yourself, there and then? A firm, polite challenge is sometimes all that is needed.

It will often be appropriate to raise a concern with your line manager in the first instance. Sometimes this will not be possible (for example, if you think your line manager may be involved in the issue). If, for whatever reason, you do not feel able to raise your concern through your line management, or if you have done so and no appropriate action has been taken, we encourage you to blow the whistle.

Please don't hesitate to bring the matter forward at an early stage. You are not expected to conduct your own investigation or prove your concern. It is enough that you have a reasonable suspicion.

To whom should I blow the whistle

The whistleblowing governor in this school is Deacon Steve Boughton and all concerns should be directed to him in the first instance.

Steve is in school from time to time and he can be contacted by email on SteveB@st-josephs-malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk. Unless you speak to him in person, upon receipt of your email Deacon Steve will arrange to contact you by telephone as soon as practicable to discuss your concern.

You may also raise a concern with either the headteacher or the chairman of the Governing Body if you don't feel able to raise your concern with Deacon Steve Boughton.

What will happen when I've raised a concern

- Concerns will receive a response as soon as practicable but at least within 5 working days during term time
- A meeting will be arranged to discuss the matter.
- Before the meeting, it would be helpful if the following information is provided:
 - the nature of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible
 - If there are any documents or other evidence that might be helpful, please bring them to the meeting.

- Deacon Steve Boughton (or the headteacher or chairman of the Governing Body, as the case may be) will write formally responding to the concern within 10 days of the initial meeting to:
 - Acknowledge that the concern has been received
 - Outline their understanding of the concern that has been raised
 - Indicate how the school proposes to deal with the matter

If the Whistleblowing Governor (or headteacher or chairman of the Governing Body) decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, advice from the Local Authority &/or the Clifton Diocese will be sought and followed. Where it is necessary to safeguard children or vulnerable adults, the appropriate procedures will be followed. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves issues of bullying or unlawful discrimination, it will be necessary to seek appropriate professional advice. Investigations will never be conducted by anyone in the direct line management structure of the person raising the concern.

If an investigation is carried out, the person raising the concern will always be informed of the final outcome. It might not be possible to provide full details of the outcome if it contains personal details of a third party, because the school has a duty to protect personal information under the Data Protection Act.

Confidentiality and the protection of whistle blowers

People who raise concerns through the whistleblowing procedure are understandably sometimes concerned about their position and wish to maintain confidentiality. We encourage people to let us know their names and contact details when they raise their concern, because it is often difficult to conduct an effective investigation without being able to discuss it fully with the person who first brought the issue forward. In practice, it is often desirable for the identity of the whistle blower to be known as the investigation progresses.

We understand that some individuals may not be comfortable with what is known as 'open whistleblowing', so we will offer the option of keeping your identity confidential unless we are required to disclose it by law, or unless we have your permission. If you wish us to maintain confidentiality, we will always seek to do so.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 provides legal protection, in certain circumstances, to workers making disclosures in good faith about malpractice. The Act makes it unlawful for the school to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.

Essentially, under PIDA, employees who act honestly and reasonably are given automatic protection for raising a matter internally. Protection is also available to people who report a disclosure to a 'prescribed person/body'. Examples of such prescribed bodies are Ofsted, Foods Standards Agency (FSA) and HM Revenue & Customs, with the full list being available on the gov.uk website.

PIDA covers all employees including temporary agency staff, people on training courses and self-employed staff who are working for and supervised by the school.

We always seek to protect whistle blowers from reprisals taken as a result of raising their concerns, provided that those concerns were raised in good faith and without malicious intent. If an allegation is made in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the individual making the allegation. However, if a person knowingly makes malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

Taking reprisals against an employee who has raised a concern in good faith is unacceptable. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another employee from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of recrimination or victimisation against an employee, or other individual, who raises a concern.

Any person raising a concern will be given the opportunity to feedback any issues or problems that might have been experienced as a result. For employees this will take place outside their line management structure. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own, or another, organisation. It does not replace the need for immediate concerns to be addressed with your own employer or safeguarding lead, in the first instance.

The helpline telephone number is 0800 028 0285 or you can email help@nspcc.org.uk

Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review

Responsible committee for monitoring & evaluation:	Mission, Vision and Ethos Committee
Policy reviewed by:	Mission, Vision and Ethos Committee
Policy review & approval date:	December 2021
Next review date:	September 2022