



St Monica's Catholic Primary School
...a small school where big things happen...



Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Reviewed:	April 2024
Policy approved by Governing Body:	May 2024
Review Cycle:	4-yearly
Date of Next Review:	May 2028

This policy was checked for accuracy in April 2024. This is a non-statutory policy which outlines the school's position and processes on whistleblowing.

No material changes were made to this policy since the last review in 2022.

Signed: *Elizabeth Bart-Williams*

1. Introduction

The School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the School's policies and procedures.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This Policy provides a safe route to raise concerns within the School at an early stage without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage. It is in everyone's interest that potential failings and malpractice are identified early so that the Head teacher/Governors can take appropriate action.

This Policy is not a substitute for normal line management processes but an addition to them. Staff should always first consider using normal line management for raising concerns. This Policy is only for the purpose of raising concerns about wrongdoing and is not a substitute or alternative for existing procedures such as the Grievance, Disciplinary Procedures for staff or the Complaints Procedure. This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through the normal line management. As an example, therefore, if a member of staff has a personal grievance then it must be raised through the Grievance procedure; it would not be appropriate for it to be raised through this procedure. The existence of this procedure does not prevent staff from raising concerns through their trade union if they so wish. The procedure is therefore **not** a route through which employees can raise concerns about mismanagement which may arise from weak management rather than malpractice.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- Manipulation of accounting records and finances;
- criminal activity;
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns; * See note at the end of this policy
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- negligence;
- breach of the school's internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct;
- conduct likely to damage the School's reputation;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the School's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of School Staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a service provider. The law allows Staff to raise a concern in good faith with a third party, where the member of staff reasonably believes it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, Staff are encouraged to report such concerns

internally first. Staff should contact one of the other individuals set out above for guidance.

St Monica's has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the *whistleblower* is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

Name & Position

Head teacher

Amanda Ruthven

07957 394 738

Address available on request

Chair of Governors

Address available on request

2. Aims and Scope

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
- To provide staff with guidance on how to raise those concerns;
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be a mistaken.

This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the British Standards Institute and Public Concern at Work.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff at the School and the School reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all employees and those contractors working for the School, for example agency staff. It also covers those providing services under contract with the School, for example, cleaning contractors. This Policy reflects the School's current practices and applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including the Governors, Headteacher, members of the Senior Leadership Team, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as "Staff" in this policy) who are advised to familiarise themselves with its content.

3. Key Principles

- 3.1 The School makes clear that no employee will be subject to victimisation or other detriment by reporting concerns which they believe to be true.
- 3.2 Any issue reported will be taken seriously and investigated. This may involve interviews or an investigation to establish the facts.
- 3.3 The School prefers matters to be raised where suspicion first arises rather than waiting for or searching for proof.
- 3.4 Concerns raised will be treated in a confidential manner and feedback will be given on any action taken.
- 3.5 Employees should put their names to any allegation wherever possible.
- 3.6 A complainant will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for the concern, and

- will be expected to co-operate with any investigation that takes place. If any meeting or interview is arranged, there is a right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or workplace colleague.
- 3.7 This procedure will be supported by management culture.

4. Matters outside the scope of this procedure

- 4.1 This procedure is not intended to cover concerns that can be progressed under Human Resource policies and procedures. The School has a Grievance Procedure for dealing with employment related complaints. This policy should not be used for complaints relating to Staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should follow the Grievance Policy and Procedure
- 4.2 Issues relating to protection of children, using this procedure will ensure your concerns are addressed.

5. Employee responsibilities

- 5.1 All employees have a duty of confidentiality to the School and therefore it is important that this procedure is used and not ignored. Any disclosure externally to the press or media will result in disciplinary action. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 does provide protection to individuals who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest but anyone wishing to make an external disclosure is strongly advised to seek legal advice before doing so as they may put their employment at risk.
- 5.2 Business ethics are increasingly seen as an issue that can build or damage a School's reputation and public trust. Employees therefore have a general responsibility to report all suspected concerns using this procedure for the positive benefit of all.

6. Safeguards

- 6.1 Where malpractice is shown to have occurred this may reflect badly on management, systems, or on individual managers. Whistleblowers may fear that management will be tempted to 'shoot the messenger'. It is important for employees to understand that there will be no adverse repercussions for raising concerns. The following safeguards exist when following this procedure:
- 6.2 Harassment and Victimisation
The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, especially if the issue involves a senior manager or someone in authority. If concerns are raised in good faith, there will be nothing to fear because whistleblowers raising matters of concern are protected from harassment, victimisation, and disciplinary action.
- 6.3 Confidentiality
It is recognised that raising a concern will require this to be done in confidence under this procedure. The School will try and protect the identity of employees who raise a serious concern and do not want their identity to be disclosed. However, it should be recognised that in some instances, it may not be able to resolve the concern without revealing identity (for instance because a statement from an employee may be required as supporting evidence). In these circumstances the employee will be advised on how the investigation will proceed.
- 6.4 If a whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the School will arrange for them to receive advice and support.

7. How to Raise a Concern

- 7.1 The matter has to be kept strictly confidential and therefore only told to someone in authority. Failure to do so could result in allegations of spreading unsubstantiated rumours or gossip invoking the disciplinary procedure. As a first step, concerns should be raised with the line manager or supervisor because the issue causing concern could be immediately clarified. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the alleged wrongdoing or malpractice.

If the employee believes that the manager or supervisor is involved employees should raise their concerns with their Headteacher or Chair of Governors. Where employees believe that the matter may not be dealt with properly, then they can raise their concerns with the Director of Children's Services, the Chief Executive or straight to Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud who have responsibility for investigating issues. The Officer responsible for schools is Frank O'Donoghue
Tel. 020-8820-7555; Email frank.odonoghue@learningtrust.co.uk

If an individual misuses the policy and procedure e.g. by making malicious or repeated unsubstantiated complaints against colleagues this could give rise to action under the School's Disciplinary Procedure. If the Headteacher knows or has a suspicion that an employee comes into this category then s/he will take advice from the Designated Governor who will help to determine what action should be taken.

If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are:

Public Concern at Work (Independent whistle blowing charity)

Helpline: 020 7404 6609 E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

The **whistleblowing hotline (24hours)** is Expolink **Tel. 0800 374199**

- 8.2 Concerns are better raised in writing and clearly marked confidential as below:

Confidential
Head of Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud
London Borough of Hackney
Town Hall

- 8.3 Employees should set out the background of the concern, giving names, dates, times and places where possible, and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation so this can be registered. If an employee feels that they are not able to raise the concern in writing, they may raise the matter with the Head of Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud or a member of the Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud team (tel:0208 921 5239). Employees may also arrange to meet with Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud as it recognised that discussing concerns in person is often a great relief and removes some of the pressure of not being able to talk about the issue to anyone else.
- 8.4 When emailing concerns, this should be sent to one person only, such as the Head of Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud, and not copied to anyone else (otherwise the motive for raising the issue may be open to question).
- 8.6 Employees are not expected to provide proof of an allegation but they will need to demonstrate when providing information that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.
- 8.7 Anonymous correspondence

The London Borough of Hackney will treat all anonymous allegations seriously but a concern expressed anonymously is much less powerful and can prove difficult to investigate where all the facts are not known or further information is required and the person cannot be contacted to provide further details. For this reason, it may not be possible for the Royal Borough to conduct a full investigation.

8. How the School will Respond

- 8.1 The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concerns raised. The matters raised will normally be investigated internally by the School. However, in appropriate cases the concerns may be referred to a regulatory body or the Police in criminal matters.
- 8.2 In order to protect the employee, the School and also those accused of possible wrong doing or malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form the investigation should take. The overriding principle is that of the public interest. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 8.3 Some concerns may be resolved by immediate agreed action without the need for a full investigation e.g. repairs that may present a Health and Safety risk.
- 8.4 If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 8.4 Within ten working days of a concern being received, where the identity of the employee is known the School will write to the employee:
- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
 - indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter;
 - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
 - telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made, and
 - telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.
- 8.5 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties that employees may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if it becomes necessary to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the School will provide the necessary advice about the procedure and give whatever practical support that is possible.
- 8.6 The School accepts that employees need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to any legal constraints, employees will normally receive feedback about the outcome of any investigation.
- 8.7 The Director of Finance has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this procedure and will ensure that a register of concerns is maintained by Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud together with the results of any investigations carried out.
- 8.8 Information will be kept in the strictest confidence, in a secure location and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The Director of Finance will report as necessary on the operation of the procedure, but not on individual cases, to the Royal Borough's Audit and Risk Management Panel.
- 8.9 False Allegations

If an employee makes an allegation in good faith that cannot be confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If, however, an employee makes an allegation for an ulterior motive, e.g. for a malicious reason, disciplinary action will be taken against that employee which could result in dismissal.

9. Check-list

9.1 If you are thinking of raising a concern, here are a few things to remember:

YES : PLEASE DO...	NO : PLEASE DO NOT
Raise the matter as soon as possible if you feel your concerns are warranted.	Do nothing. The School would prefer you to raise your concerns so that we can carry out a full and fair investigation.
Tell your suspicions or concerns to someone who has the appropriate authority to deal with them.	Be afraid of raising your concerns. The School has safeguards in place to protect staff who raise a concern.
Be assured that the School will take seriously concerns raised based on honest and reasonable suspicions.	Try to investigate the matter yourself. This may complicate any later enquiries, particularly if a criminal investigation becomes necessary.
Familiarise yourself with the whistle blowing procedure.	Approach or accuse any individuals directly.
Consider writing down the key points and details as to why you are concerned.	Tell your suspicions or concerns to anyone other than those with the proper authority.

9.2 If you receive a concern as a line manager or supervisor:

YES : PLEASE DO...	NO : PLEASE DO NOT
Be fully responsive to staff concerns	Ridicule or ignore the concerns raised.
Respect the fact that staff can raise a concern confidentially.	Approach or accuse any individuals directly.
Take detailed notes of the information provided; including details such as who, what, where, when, why and how in relation to the matter of concern.	Tell your suspicions or concerns to anyone other than those with the proper authority.
Evaluate the allegation objectively	Try to investigate the matter yourself. This may complicate any later enquiries, particularly if a criminal investigation becomes necessary.
Advise the appropriate person, whether that is your line manager or an individual with the Royal Borough, such as the Head of the Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud Team.	Do nothing. The School is committed to a culture of openness in which staff feel able to communicate their concerns freely and in confidence
Deal with the matter promptly and as a matter of priority.	Delay. The speed of response may be important.

10. Further information

10.1 For further information on the operation of this procedure please contact the Head of Internal Audit and Anti-Fraud.