

ST JAMES' RC PRIMARY SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This policy has the School's Motto at its heart.

**Faith in action,
Growing together,
Walking in the footsteps of Christ**

THIS WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY RELATES TO THE WITNESSING OF IMPROPER PRACTICES THAT IMPACT UPON THE SAFEGUARDING OF PUPILS, FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES AND OTHER IMPROPRIETIES.

Introduction

The staff and governors of St James' RC Primary School seek to run all aspects of pupil safeguarding, business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, St James' has established the following whistleblowing policy, or code of practice, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term *whistleblower* denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by *The Bromley Safeguarding Board and the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies* published in May 1996.

St James' is committed to tackling safeguarding allegations against children, fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. St James' recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

St James' is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion about another member of staff or governor, can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved. The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected Child Protection, fraud and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance which would be dealt with under the St James' grievance procedures.

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

Reasons for whistle blowing:

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To protect the pupils in the school
- 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
- Fear of spoiling relationships
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed.

When might the whistleblowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour which St James' considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- Safeguarding concerns in line with the school's safeguarding and child protection policy;
- Manipulation of accounting records and finances;
- Inappropriate use of school assets or funds;
- decision-making for personal gain;
- any criminal activity;
- abuse of position;
- fraud and deceit;

- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

How to raise a concern if it is a safeguarding matter:

- 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.
- Approach the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher who are the Designated Safe Guarding Leads.
- If your concern is about the Head Teacher, report it to the Chair of governors Mary Hutchinson or if 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.

What action should the *whistleblower* take if it is a financial or other matter?

St James' RC Primary School encourages the *whistleblower* to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

St James' Primary School 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. It may be appropriate to speak with the line manager in the first instance.

Name and Position and Contact details:

- Headteacher: Lisa Weeks 020 84678167
- Chair of Governors: Mary Hutchinson (Ask the school office for the contact details of Mary Hutchinson).
- Director of the Catholic Commission: Simon Hughes 01689829331

The *whistleblower* may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively if the *whistleblower* considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the Director of the Catholic Commission as above and/or the Department for Education and Employment as appropriate. In addition information and advice can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work
 Suite 306
 16 Baldwins Gardens
 London
 EC1N 7RJ
 Telephone number 020 7404 6609

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 or if it would not be in the public interest.

Further advice and support:

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

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation [the investigating officer(s)] will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of school staff, legal or personnel advisors, the Lead Officer for Education Safeguarding, the police, the Department for Education and Employment, the Commission. Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the governing body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral such as the police.

The *whistleblower* will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the governing body and other bodies involved.

If the *whistleblower* is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the governing body and/or directed to the external body concerned.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible St James' RC Primary School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the *whistleblower* and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals.

St James' RC Primary School will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the *whistleblower* or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within St James' RC Primary School in terms of its systems of internal control of safeguarding, financial matters and other non-financial matters and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that cases of suspected impropriety or fraud are unlikely to occur. This whistleblowing policy is

provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be updated in line with any new developments in the school and/or any new government guidance.

This policy will be renewed annually.

It was last reviewed in: September 2018

It will next be reviewed in: September 2019

This statement of policy was approved by the Governing Body at their meeting on:-

Date: _____

Signed:

_____ (Chairperson)

_____ (Head teacher)

