



# Whistle Blowing Policy

## St Richard Reynolds Catholic High School

**Policy:** Whistle blowing

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**Date of approval by Governing Body:** As required

This guidance is written for any staff or volunteer working with pupils at the College to enable everyone to blow the whistle safely when appropriate so that any issues are raised at an early stage and in the right way.

Whistle blowing is the act of expressing concern about the conduct of work colleagues. Staff, including volunteers, must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of any member of the LT. Although this could be difficult, it is particularly important where the welfare of any pupil may be at a risk.

A matter of concern does not necessarily have to relate to children. It could relate to other areas instead such as unprofessional, dishonest or unsatisfactory acts or practices or that which may put other colleagues at risk.

### **Purpose:**

- To encourage the whistle-blower to feel confident in raising concerns
- To provide the whistle-blower with a confidential method of raising concerns
- To ensure the whistle-blower receives a response to their concerns and if not satisfied, is aware of how to take the matter further
- To reassure the whistle-blower that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith

### **Reasons for whistle blowing:**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To prevent yourself from becoming implicated

### **Factors that prevent people from whistle blowing:**

- Fear of repercussions
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of not being believed
- Starting a chain of events which could spiral
- Disrupting work
- Belief that it's none of your business
- Concern about being disloyal to colleagues

### **How to raise a concern at SRRCC:**

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness at the earliest opportunity. The earlier a concern is raised, the sooner action can be taken and the issue resolved.
- You should pass your concerns to any member of the LT or, in the case of your concern involving the Head teacher, the Chair of Governors.
- If your concern is about a member of staff and you feel you would rather take it to someone outside the school community, please contact the Chair of Governors or, in their absence, the Vice Chair of Governors.

The LT and Chair of Governors will always take your concerns seriously, and will support you if it is felt to be necessary.

### **Self-Reporting:**

- There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so that professional and personal support can be offered.

### **Appendix 2**

Whistle blowing code for issues relating to children and young people

#### **Purpose of the code**

The College adheres to the local authority whistleblowing policy and procedures that enable staff to raise concerns relating to:

- crime
- a miscarriage of justice
- illegality
- health and safety
- environmental or property damage
- unauthorised use of public funds
- concealing or attempting to cover up any of the above.

This code provides additional information to help staff to understand the role of whistle blowing in the context of poor practice and unacceptable conduct and attitudes towards children.

#### **When to use the code**

The whistle blowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the College in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee towards a child is inappropriate.

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- bullying or humiliation
- contravening health and safety guidelines
- serious breaches of the College's code of ethical practice
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards

- compromising pupils' welfare but in a way that does not meet the threshold for child protection intervention.

### **Reasons for blowing the whistle**

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, each individual must take responsibility for ensuring that children are fairly treated. If poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

Your action not only protects children, but also deters any suggestion that you have colluded with poor practice that you knew was occurring but chose to ignore.

Whistle blowing can also support the member of staff who is the subject of the concern. Their conduct may result from inexperience or lack of training that can be addressed by the College, or they may be under stress and be relieved when their conduct is questioned.

Staff who deliberately fail children and show no remorse or desire to improve are unlikely to welcome being exposed, but their conduct has to be confronted for the sake of the child and the reputation of the whole College.

### **Barriers to whistle blowing**

You may worry that you have insufficient evidence to raise a concern that you will set in train an unstoppable chain of events, that there will be adverse repercussions for your career, that you may suffer harassment or victimisation, or that your suspicion or concern might be totally misplaced.

These concerns are entirely understandable but you can be reassured that whistle blowing procedures address these issues.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from reprisals for public interest whistle blowing. Your union, a solicitor or the local authority legal services can provide you with information about your legal position.

### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, your identity will not be revealed if that is your wish. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if, as a result of an investigation, you are required to provide a witness statement or attend a court hearing.

You can, if you prefer, raise your concern anonymously. The College would need to decide whether the levity and credibility of the concern warrants investigation if the source of the concern, and the key evidence, is not readily available.

The College will fully support you and do all it can to protect you from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing. Allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated and

malicious will be dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded.

### **Reporting procedure**

It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.

- You may raise your concern verbally or in writing. You should report your concern directly to the Principal.
- If the Principal is the subject of your concern, speak to the chair of governors.
- A friend, colleague or union representative may accompany you to the meeting if you wish.
- Ensure the Principal or Chair informs you of their proposed action and sets a date for a second meeting.
- Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry but the case should not be allowed to stall and you should receive initial feedback within 10 working days. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed.
- Ask for clarification about confidentiality and ensure you have your wishes regarding the protection of your identity recorded.
- Process and outcome

The Principal or chair will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.

Members of the College community, including governors, may be asked to provide information or advice.

- External advice, for example, from legal or human resources or children's services may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.
- The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:
  - No poor practice or wrongdoing is established and the case is closed
  - The concern has some substance and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the Principal to improve practice
  - Poor practice or wrongdoing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated
  - The concern is more serious and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve the local authority's legal team, children's social care or the police.

If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, children's social care will be immediately involved.

### **Further action**

If you raise a concern and you are dissatisfied with the way it is managed, or the outcome, you may contact the governing body or local authority for advice.

Alternatively you can seek advice from your union or professional association, a solicitor, the police, children's social care or Public Concern at Work (PCaW), a registered charity that offers free and confidential legal advice on workplace malpractice.

Public Concern at Work

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