

Whistle Blowing Policy

1. Introduction

St Francis Catholic Primary School is committed to the highest possible standards for all. While this is the case, on occasion wrong doings may occur. Staff and governors are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the school. They may not express their concerns for fear of harassment or victimisation or because by speaking up they may be considered disloyal to their colleagues or the school.

In line with the commitment to high standards and its duties under the terms of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, St Francis School will:

- encourage staff and governors and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to voice those concerns;
- recognise that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis;
- encourage staff and governors to participate in a no blame environment;
- enable staff and governors to raise serious concerns **within** the school in a constructive and positive way rather than overlook a problem.

2. Aims and Scope of the Policy

2.1 The Policy:

- provides avenues for an employee and governors to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- allows employees and governors to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the school's decision;

2.2 The Policy does not replace:

- the school's complaints procedure;
- its grievance procedure;
- the Employees' Code of Conduct;
- managerial responsibilities

2.3 Employees' and governors concerns may be about actions that include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
- disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice;
- health & safety risks to public, pupils or staff;
- damage to the environment;
- unauthorised use of public funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- breaches of the School and LEA's Financial Regulations, Standing Orders or policies;
- falling below established professional standards or practices;

- improper or unethical conduct; or
- the abuse or neglect of service users.

3. Safeguards

3.1 Harassment or Victimisation

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for malpractice. It will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect an employee when a concern is raised in good faith.

If an employee is the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures when they raise their concerns, then those procedures will not automatically be affected. The information provided would be assessed in the light of the new circumstances and a decision taken as to how, if at all, those proceedings should be affected.

3.2 Confidentiality

The school will endeavour to protect the identity of an employee or governor who raises a concern. However, as a result of the investigation process a statement may be required, as part of the evidence and this will be seen by all parties.

3.3 Anonymous Allegations

Employees and governors are encouraged to put their name to an allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the school. The key factors to be taken into account in these circumstances will be the:

- seriousness of the issues raised;
- credibility of the concern and likelihood of confirming the allegation.

3.4 Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

When an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee or governor voicing the concern. If, however, an employee makes a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against that employee or the conduct of the governor may be the subject of consideration by the full governing body.

4. Procedure

Employees should initially raise concerns with:

- a) Their Line Manager. However, this does depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the matter that concerns them.

If the matter is more serious then any of the following should be contacted :-

- b) The Headteacher
- c) The Chair of Governors c/o School Office marked "Confidential"

There are also officers at North Somerset Council who can to be contacted:

- Director of Finance and Resources:
- Assistant Director of Finance and Resources:
- Chief Executive Officer:
- Internal Audit and Risk Manager:
- Department for Schools and Colleges, Clifton Diocese: 0117 902 9953

Concerns are better raised in writing and should incorporate relevant information about specific incidents. The background and history of the concern including names, dates and places where possible and the reason why employees or governors are particularly concerned about certain situations should also be provided. If an employee or governor is unable to express their concerns in writing then they can contact the appropriate person by telephone or arrange to meet them.

The earlier a concern is expressed the easier it will be to take appropriate action.

Although employees or governors are not expected to prove the validity of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for raising the concern.

5. How the school will respond

The action taken by the school will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be:

- Resolved without the need for investigation
- Investigated internally;
- Referred to the police;
- Referred to the Internal Auditor; or
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

St. Francis' Catholic Primary School



Ensuring an excellent child-centred education within a Christ centred philosophy

In order to protect individuals and the school, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

As soon as possible after a concern has been raised the school will write to the employee or governor concerned to acknowledge the issue that has been raised and to indicate the future course of action.

The amount of contact between the employee or governor raising the concern and the people considering the issue will depend on the nature of the matters raised. An employee or governor may be approached to provide further information.

If a meeting is arranged then an employee or governor has a right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or some other person of their choice.

An employee or governor raising a concern will need to be assured that the issue has been appropriately addressed. Therefore the school, subject to legal constraints, will inform the employee or governor about the outcomes of any investigations.

6. How to take a concern further

This Policy is intended to provide employees and governors with an avenue to raise concerns **within** the school, hopefully to a satisfactory conclusion. Where all internal avenues have been exhausted, however, it may be necessary for an employee or governor to take the concerns outside the school and the LA Education Department should then be contacted.

Reviewed by Finance Committee: 05/02/2014

Approved by the Governing Body: