

St Bede's Catholic College



Whistle-Blowing Policy

Rationale

The Governors of St Bede's work on behalf of all children entrusted to our care, in providing for them, a quality education within our Diocese. We are committed to working with integrity and spending public money wisely. All decisions taken will be based on the best evidence available.

Governors and staff are accountable to the DFE, Diocese, parents, children and each other in carrying out our duties. In the event of behaviours appearing to fall short of our expected high standards, employees are entitled to raise genuine concerns about malpractice internally within the College, rather than overlooking a problem or, indeed, raising the concern outside. Any disclosure would need to satisfy a requirement that it is made in the public interest. This policy outlines how such concerns may be raised, without fear of reprisal.

This policy is to inform staff:

- of their right to raise genuine concerns
- of the manner in which this may take place
- they will be protected from victimisation or reprisals if they raise genuine concerns

This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside of other procedures, including the following (this list is not exhaustive):-

- a criminal offence (this may include for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- a failure to carry out a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- endangering an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- concealment of any of the above
- personal conduct

SAFEGUARDS

Victimisation

The Principal (Governors) will protect any employee who makes a good faith disclosure from any form of victimisation and reprisals. Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who engages in any form of harassment or victimisation against an employee who has raised a genuine concern.

Anonymous Allegations

The scope to investigate anonymous concerns is limited. However, where an employee wishes to remain anonymous, an attempt will be made to protect their identity. This may not always be possible as employees who report concerns may be required to give evidence as a witness, in situations where disciplinary or criminal action is taken.

The Principal will use discretion in maintaining the anonymity of the individual concerned. The following factors would need to be taken into account:-

- the seriousness of the issue(s) raised
- the likelihood of obtaining information from alternative sources, which would confirm, or refute, the allegation

Untrue Allegations

Staff will be protected from false and malicious allegations, as is their right. Allegations will be investigated before determining what action, if any, should be taken. Where it is established that an employee makes an allegation which is known to be false, malicious or for personal gain, they will be subject to disciplinary action, under the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

Where allegations made in good faith are found to be untrue, no action will be taken against the employee raising the concern and the Principal will ensure that the negative impact on the person accused is minimised.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A WHISTLE-BLOWER BELIEVES THEY HAVE BEEN UNFAIRLY TREATED?

If a whistleblower believes that they have been unfairly treated because they have blown the whistle they may decide to take their case to an employment tribunal. The process for this would involve attempted resolution through the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) early conciliation service.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Employees should initially raise concerns with the Vice Principal or the Principal, depending on the seriousness of the allegation. In the event of the Principal being the subject of concern, then the Chair of Governors should be contacted.

Employees do not have to provide evidence of an allegation but will be expected to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for raising the concern.

Employees must raise concerns in writing identifying the nature of the concerns and the grounds on which these are based. Information on the background, history, names, dates and places should be provided if possible.

RESPONDING TO A CONCERN

All concerns raised will be treated confidentially if this is possible.

Action taken will be dependent on the nature of the concern raised.

They may:-

- be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation
- be investigated by College managers or Internal Audit
- (at the discretion of the Principal or Governors), be the subject of an independent inquiry; or
- be referred to the police

Initial enquiries will be made to determine the most appropriate form of investigation.

Employees will receive an initial response to any concerns raised within ten working days. Due to the nature of the concerns it may not always be possible to indicate how the investigating person proposes to deal with the matters raised and the timescales involved. The person who raises the concern will be informed of the process and outcome where this does not compromise the process.

At any meeting arranged to investigate a concern the employee will have the right to be accompanied by their professional association representative or a work colleague, who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The Principal will take the necessary steps to minimise any difficulties that an employee may experience as a result of raising a concern.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue for raising concerns with those responsible for the malpractice in question i.e. the College as an employer.

Employees are able to rely on their rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which came into force on 2 July 1999 and provides the following:-

- protection from suffering any detriment as a result of making a 'qualifying disclosure', as defined within the Act
- a list of prescribed persons employees can contact when raising a concern

Employees who decide that it is necessary to take a concern outside the College should ensure that they **do not disclose confidential information**, except in accordance with this procedure.

If you feel that it is right to take the matter outside the College the following are possible contact points:

- Audit Commission (telephone 020 7828 1212 / Whistleblowers hotline 0845 052 2646)
- The Police (Avon & Somerset Constabulary – 101)
- Your Professional Association
- Solicitor
- Public Concern at Work (an independent registered charity who can give advice) – telephone number 020 7404 6609 or whistle@pcaw.co.uk. An employee who approaches this organisation does not breach the duty of confidence which is owed to the Governors.