

Bury Catholic Preparatory School

Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy

Introduction

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the School. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to colleagues or to the School. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just a suspicion of malpractice.

We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

This policy makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

The policy applies to all employees and those contractors working for the School on School premises, e.g. supply staff, peripatetic staff etc.

Aim and scope of this policy

This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied;
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. This policy is not to be used for pursuing individual grievances or private disputes since these are covered by existing procedures/policies. This policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
- disclosures related to a miscarriage of justice

- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- damage to the environment
- the unauthorised use of school funds
- possible fraud or corruption
- abuse of pupils, or
- other unethical conduct.

Therefore, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of educational provision or the conduct of employees of the School or members of the Governing body or other acting on behalf of the school can be reported under the Confidential Reporting Policy. This may be something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the School subscribes to; or
- is directly against the School's Mission Statement, Aims and policies; or
- falls below established standard of practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

Safeguards

Harassment or Victimisation

The School is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive to employees.

The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and to the School as a whole.

The School will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that might already affect you.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegations whenever possible.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the School.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigations, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with the head teacher. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. If your head teacher is not appropriate for any reason you should raise your concerns with the Chair of the Governing Body.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
- the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

Advice and guidance on how matters of concern may be pursued can also be obtained from your Union Representative.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

You may invite your union representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

How the School will respond

The School will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as accepting or rejecting them.

Where appropriate, the matter raised may:

- be investigated by the Head teacher, or through the disciplinary process;
- be referred to the police
- form the subject of an independent enquiry.

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if

so, what form it should take. Whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the complainant, the individual complained of must be given details of the allegations so that they can respond. The overriding principle which the School will have in mind is in the public interest.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken into account before any investigation is conducted.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person ? will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how we propose to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- supplying you with information on support, and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not;
- indicating when you can expect a further report.

The amount of contact between the staff considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the School will seek further information from you.

Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a union representative or a friend.

The school will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Therefore, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcomes of any investigation.

The responsible person

The Head teacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. She maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Governing Body.

How the matter can be taken further

This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school to raise concerns. The School hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, you may raise it, in confidence, with Mrs J. Riley, Chair of Governors (via Mrs Wendy Paylor, Clerk to the Governors). If you are still not satisfied you may feel it is

right to take the matter outside the School. The following are possible points of contact:

- your trade union;
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau;
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- A relevant voluntary organisation;
- The police.

Review

The policy, including the handling of complaints under the procedures, shall be reviewed on an annual cycle. The review process will involve discussion at a meeting of the Governing Body.

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