Through Jesus in Faith, Love and Learning

POLICY – WHISTLEBLOWING

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Office use only:

Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing is a way for employees of an organisation to raise reasonably and honestly held concerns they may have about serious matters that could put the school and/or the wider public at risk.

Whistleblowing usually involves bringing forward concerns that it is in the public interest to investigate and resolve. Examples are crime, fraud, the giving or taking of bribes, financial malpractice, or practices that might endanger individuals or the environment.

The aim of this policy is to outline what you can do if you believe you need to raise an issue of this nature, and how you will be protected if you do. All of us at one time or another have concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, illegality, financial malpractice, endangering an individual's health or safety, or dangers to the public, employees, pupils or the environment, it can be difficult to know what to do. You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

St Paul's Catholic Primary has introduced this policy, which reflects the legal framework and the legal obligations placed upon the school, to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. We would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof. lf something is troubling you which you think we should know about or look into, please use this policy. lf, however, you are aggrieved about your personal position, please use the Grievance Policy.

This Whistleblowing Policy is primarily for concerns where the interests of others or of the organisation itself are at risk.

IF IN DOUBT - RAISE IT! If you are concerned about any issues regarding the conduct of any personnel in school in relation to child protection, you must inform the Headteacher immediately.

If your concern is in relation to the conduct of the Head Teacher, you must inform the Chair of Governors.

All issues of alleged misconduct must be reported to someone immediately. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legal protection, in certain circumstances, to workers making disclosures about malpractice. The Act makes it unlawful for St Paul's to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act. If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution. Providing you reasonably believe what you are reporting, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue. In that case disciplinary action may be taken against you. The important point is that you are reporting what you consider to be a serious issue.

We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. Taking reprisals against an employee who has raised a concern in good faith is unacceptable, and may give rise to disciplinary proceedings. If you have raised a concern and feel at any stage subsequently that you are suffering as a result of doing so, please let the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors know.

We recognise that you may want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for example because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed. Remember that if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter or protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly, while we will consider anonymous reports, this policy is not well suited to concerns raised anonymously.

Once you have told us of your concern, we will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who is handling the matter and whether your further assistance will be needed. If you request it, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it. When you raise the concern you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved, depending on the issue raised. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset.

While the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give as much feedback as we properly can. If requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else

How to raise a concern initially:

Step One

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with the Headteacher. This should be done in writing or verbally communicated if preferred.

Step Two

If you feel unable to raise the matter with the Headteacher, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with the Chair of Governors, email cscott@stpauls.w-berks.sch.uk

Please say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that appropriate arrangements can be made to ensure total confidentially.

Step Three

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact: - Catherine Hobbs – The Diocesan Director for Education – 02392 893600.

INDEPENDENT ADVICE If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want independent advice at any stage, you may consider contacting:

- your union
- or your professional body (Teaching Regulation Agency)
- or the independent charity 'Protect' on 020 3117 2520 or https://protect-advice.org.uk/

If you are dissatisfied If you are unhappy with our response, remember you can go to the other levels detailed in this policy. While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will try to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help us to achieve this.