

Date of Review:	Summer 2024
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Author:	Headteacher



St Mary's CE High School

"Everyone is equal : everyone deserves the best"

Whistleblowing Policy

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"Our vision, as a school with a Christian ethos, is founded on The Parable of the Sower, where

***Through God's love, we are the rich soil where seeds flourish and roots grow,**
based on the Parable of the Sower, Mark 4: 3-9*

*This underpins our motto, **We believe everyone is equal, everyone deserves the best,** and is key to what we do. We believe that we are all equal, irrespective of our background and beliefs. We provide a safe, nurturing environment in which we can all flourish. We have the very highest aspirations for our students, their families, our local community, and ourselves, and want nothing but the best. We challenge students by having a rich and exciting curriculum provision and by making learning practical, engaging and enjoyable. We enable students to succeed by providing the best possible personalised support."*

Richard Vaughan – Head Teacher

1 Introduction

This policy applies to all employees and governors. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the organisation, such as agency workers and contractors, should have access to it.

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The Governors of St Mary's have made safeguarding a fundamental priority and are committed to ensuring that safeguarding of children and young people remains at the core of their work. For this reason, the principles of excellent safeguarding practice are integral to the culture of St Mary's and every aspect of the school's work. This policy supports this commitment to safeguarding and should be read in conjunction with other school policies as appropriate.

It is every person's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and it remains a paramount concern of all who work in and who are part of the St Mary's community.

It is important to the school that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by employees or governors of the school is reported and properly dealt with. The Governing Body will, therefore, respond to all individuals who raise any genuine concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the school, **which are in the public interest**. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

- 1.1** The Governors expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees and governors and will treat seriously any concern raised about illegal or improper conduct.
- 1.2** Any individual covered by this policy will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the Head teacher (or the Chair of Governors if the concerns relate to the Head teacher) any serious impropriety or breach of procedure.
- 1.3** Employees who do not follow the steps identified in this procedure or other agreed internal procedures, and take their concerns to other outside sources (e.g. the press), may be subject to a formal disciplinary investigation.
- 1.4** This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. The school may also vary any time limits as appropriate in any case.

2 Background

The law provides protection for employees who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called 'qualifying disclosures' A qualifying disclosure is one made in the public interest by the employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence
- A miscarriage of justice
- An act creating risk to health and safety
- An act causing damage to the environment
- Allowing private interests to override the interests of the school
- A breach of any legal obligation; or
- Concealment of any of the above

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. It is not necessary for the employee to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be committed,- a reasonable belief is sufficient. The employee

has no responsibility for investigating the matter; it is the school's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place

- 2.1 Where the concerns are about **safeguarding children or young people**, the school's Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection should be notified (see 7 below).
- 2.2 It is a procedure in which the Head teacher or Chair of Governors will be expected to act swiftly and constructively in the investigation of any concerns in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.
- 2.3 Concern about a colleague's professional capability should **not** be dealt with using this procedure (but see section 7 below).

3 **When should it be used?**

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. If an employee is concerned that his/her own contract has been, or is likely to be, broken he/she should use the school's Grievance procedures.

Where a disclosure is merely an expression of opinion or a generalised allegation that fails to show that one of the six categories of wrongdoing has been or is likely to occur, it **cannot** amount to a protected or qualifying disclosure for the purposes of the whistle blowing legislation

A qualifying disclosure means any disclosure of information that in the reasonable belief of the worker is made in the public interest.

- 3.1 So this procedure is not designed to replace or be used as an alternative to the grievance procedure, which should be used where an employee is only aggrieved about his/her own situation. Nor should this policy apply where the employee simply disagrees with the way the school is run.
- 3.2 Employees must have reasonable grounds for believing the information they have is accurate and not just idle gossip or rumour.
- 3.3 An employee who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subject to any other detriment, or victimised, because he/she has made a disclosure, provided it has not been made maliciously. Any employee who uses this procedure will not be penalised for doing so. The employer will not tolerate harassment and/or victimisation of any employee raising concerns.
- 3.4 An employee who is not sure whether the conduct he/she is concerned about does constitute illegal or improper conduct or is unsure about how to proceed may contact the Head of Schools' HR - (details in section 8) or their Professional Association/Trade Union.
- 3.5 Financial regulations require that any suspicion of fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity is reported to Internal Audit for possible investigation. Normally an employee must first report any suspicion of such an irregularity to the Head teacher or Chair of Governors (but see 5), who will in turn report it to Internal Audit. Similar principles apply to Academies where the funding agency must be informed.

4. Principles

- 4.1 Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially. Whilst the school will aim to keep the employee informed of the progress of the investigation and likely timescales, sometimes the requirement for confidentiality will prevent full information about the investigation and any consequential disciplinary action from being disclosed.

- 4.2 No employee will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the employee will not be prejudiced because he/she has raised a legitimate concern.
- 4.3 Victimisation of a worker for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- 4.4 If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure the matter will be considered under the disciplinary procedure, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- 4.5 Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- 4.6 An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is in itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority, employees should not agree to remain silent.

5. Procedure

- 5.1 In the first instance, unless the employee reasonably believes his/her Headteacher to be involved in the wrongdoing, any concerns should be raised with the employee's Head Teacher. If he/she believes the Head teacher to be involved, then the employee should proceed straight to stage 3 (see below 5.3).
- 5.2 The Head Teacher/Chair of Governors will arrange an investigation into the matter (either by investigating the matter himself/herself or immediately passing the issue to someone in a senior position). The investigation may involve the employee and others involved giving written statements. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above.

Employees who want to use the procedure but feel uneasy about it may wish to consult their Professional Association/Trade Union initially and bring a colleague or Professional Association/Trade Union Representative along to any discussions, so long as the third party is not involved in the issue.

Where anonymity is requested efforts will be made to meet the request where appropriate but that might not always be possible. The earlier and more open the expression of concern the easier it will be to take appropriate action.

- 5.3 The Headteacher (or the person who carried out the investigation) will then report to the Chair of Governors/Governing Body who will take the necessary action, including reporting the matter to any appropriate department or regulatory agency. If disciplinary action is required this will be taken forward by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors/Governing body in consultation with the School's HR Advisory Team. On conclusion of any investigation the employee will be told the outcome of the investigation and what the next steps will be (subject to issues of confidentiality). If no action is to be taken the reason for this will be explained.

The aim of this procedure is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the school. In most cases employees should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally and employees are strongly advised to seek advice before reporting a concern in this way. Employees who feel unable to follow this internal route, for whatever reason, have the option of contacting a prescribed person and the Public Interest Disclosure

6 What should be done if an issue is raised with a member of staff?

- 6.1 If a member of staff, other than the Headteacher, is approached by a colleague on a matter of concern as defined in this document, he/she is advised to take the matter to the Headteacher (but see 5).

7 Safeguarding Children and Young People

7.1 Separate to the obligations under this policy, all employees have a duty to report concerns about the safety and welfare of students.

7.2 Concerns about any of the following should be reported to the Designated Senior Lead for Child Protection (DSL):

- physical abuse of a student
- sexual abuse of a student
- emotional abuse of a student
- neglect of a student
- an intimate or improper relationship between an adult and a student

The school's DSL's are:

- the Headteacher
- the Deputy Headteacher responsible for Standards in Behaviour
- the Safeguarding Officer
- the Family Support Coordinator
- the Family Support Worker
- the Behavioural Support Manager
- the SEN Co-Ordinator
- 4 x Year Leads
- 3 x Student Managers

7.3 The reason for the concern may be the actions of a colleague (including a more senior colleague), a Governor, another pupil/student or someone outside the school. Whatever the reason, concerns must be reported. Failure to report a Child Protection related allegation will be in itself, a disciplinary matter.

8 General

The legislation protecting individuals who make a protected disclosure applies not only to employees, but also to any person who undertakes to do or perform personally (or otherwise) any work or service for the employer, regardless of the nature of the contractual relationship between them.

Section 43J of the Employment Rights Act 1996 provides that a settlement agreement made between an employee and employer cannot prevent future protected disclosures.

Any confidentiality obligations in contracts of employment that would prevent an employee making a protected disclosure will be void.

9 Contacts

St Mary's CE High School Headteacher email: head@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk Tel: 01992 629124
St Mary's CE High School Chair of Governors email: clerk@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk Tel: 01992 629124

Herts HR (HCC)	Assistant Director	Tel: 01438 544463
Legal, Member & Statutory Services	Chief Legal Officer	Tel: 01992 555527
County Internal Audit	Head of Assurance Services	Tel: 01438 845502

Or via your professional association or trade union representative.

Or the independent whistleblowing charity Public Concern at Work;
Helpline (020) 7404 6609 email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk