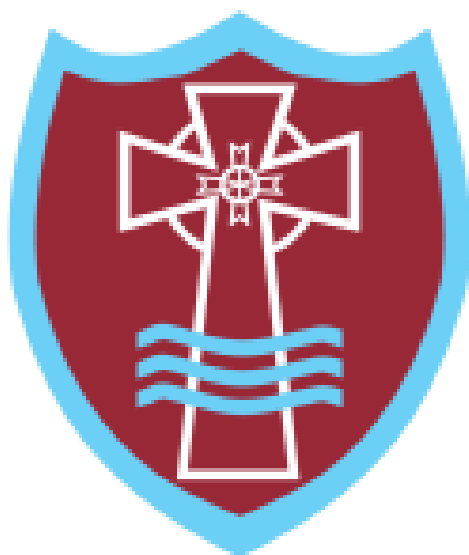


St Aidan's Catholic Primary Academy



Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed: September 2021

Review date: September 2023



Mission Statement

“Together we all enjoy learning, achieving, sharing and praying. Let Jesus’ love shine through in everything we do”

Rationale

The staff and governors seek to run all aspects of Academy business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. If members of the Academy staff, parents, governors or the community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, the Governing Board has this whistleblowing policy, which acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, under the Academy’s disciplinary procedure.

Introduction

The Governors are committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. The Governing Board recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the academy environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the Academy.

When might the whistleblowing policy apply?

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns knowing they will be taken seriously. A whistleblower should ask a few questions before taking action:

1. Is it, or do you believe it to be, illegal?
2. Is it, or do you believe it to be, against codes of practice issued by the Academy or professional body?
3. Is it about an individual’s behaviour or is it about general working practices?
4. Has the whistleblower witnessed the incident?

If any individual raises malicious unfounded concerns or attempts to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

The allegations should be capable of being dealt with through the disciplinary procedure and will be considered appropriately.

Where the alleged activity or behaviour cannot be dealt with under the scope of the other procedures then consideration should be given to using this whistleblowing policy e.g.

1. manipulation of accounting records and finances
2. inappropriate use of school assets or funds
3. decision-making for personal gain
4. any criminal activity
5. damage to the environment of the academy
6. dangerous practices
7. abuse of position
8. fraud and deceit or corrupt practices
9. serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering tender documentation, failure to register a person interest)
10. sexual or physical abuse of pupils or others
11. other unethical conduct

Anonymous allegations will only be considered if the issues raised are:

- very serious
- the credibility of the allegation is considered to be high
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation is high

Procedure

The Governing Board encourages the whistleblower to raise the matter internally in the first instance with their line manager (or the Headteacher if the line manager is the one under suspicion). This will allow them to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity. Alternatively the whistleblower may request a private and confidential meeting in the first instance with person who is causing concern. He/she may be accompanied by a representative of their choice if they so wish for example (Union representative or friend).

All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible. Written, dated and signed supporting evidence and statements should always be taken to any meetings if possible.

Alternatively, if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the Academy, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the Chair of Governors (via the Academy) or the Academy auditors.

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can or should be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of school staff, the school's external auditors, legal and personnel advisors, the police or DFE.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the Chair of Governors or nominee, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be considered there to be a case to answer, the disciplinary procedure of the school may be applied. Where a case is proven on the balance of probability the matter will be reported to the full Governing Board and where appropriate other professional bodies.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns may be raised by the Chair of Governors or, financial impropriety, the Academy's auditors. For any concerns taken outside of the academy this policy will not apply and any employee raising issues on a wider basis for example with the press, without following the procedure in this policy may be liable to disciplinary action.

Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible the Academy seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. The academy will not tolerate any attempt to harass or victimise the whistleblower, or attempts to prevent concerns being raised, and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within the Academy in terms of its system of internal control, both financial and non-financial, and the external regulatory environment in which the academy operates, ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary

outside the management structure of the Academy. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned. Any actions arising from allegations/investigations must be in accord with the Academy's disciplinary procedure, which should cover all the potential areas of concern.

At all times the information and advice which can be obtained from the Centre for Education and Finance Management help and advice line should be utilised,

This policy has been agreed by:



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.....Date: October 2021

Headteacher



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.....Date: October 2021

Chair of Governors

To be reviewed in September 2023