



Whistleblowing Policy for St Anne's RC Primary School

Mission Statement

We grow together as a Catholic Faith Community, as we follow and promote Gospel values in all we do. We grow together in wisdom, as we encourage each child to achieve their full potential, academically, spiritually, and socially, in a spirit of confidence. We grow together in respect, friendship, and responsibility, as we reach out to those in our wider community. We Grow Together in God's Love.

Rationale and Purpose

Our whistleblowing policy enables concerns of malpractice to be raised confidentially, either internally or, if necessary, externally. This policy is rooted in the 1998 Public Interest Disclosure Act. St Anne's RC Primary School will respond to whistleblowing in conjunction with Oldham LA. This policy applies to all employees and other adults working in the school in any capacity, including volunteers.

We recognise that whistleblowers have the right not to suffer any form of detriment as a result of speaking out against professional wrongdoing. Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the workplace but may feel constrained from speaking out due to loyalty to colleagues and fear of repercussions such as harassment and victimisation.

At St Anne's, we are committed to a philosophy of openness, probity, and accountability. This policy makes it clear that staff who are concerned about possible malpractice have a framework in place to air their concerns initially within the school setting. This policy does not replace our complaints or grievance procedures.

Aims of this Policy

- To encourage members of staff to feel confident in questioning and acting upon serious professional concerns.
- To set out the process by which concerns should be voiced.
- To outline how school leaders will respond.
- To prevent or stop malpractice.

Qualifying Disclosure

The scope of this policy covers serious concerns such as:

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- Illegal conduct
- Miscarriage of justice
- Breaches of health and safety requirements
- Damage to equipment, the premises, and the wider environment
- Financial maladministration, fraud, and corruption
- All forms of abuse and harassment against pupils and colleagues
- Any form of conduct deemed to be unethical

Any serious concerns about any aspect of practice within the school should be reported if:

- It makes you feel uncomfortable regarding the standards expected of the school.
- It is contrary to the school's policies.
- It appears to be improper conduct.

Safeguards

We recognise that the decision to report a serious concern is a very difficult step to take and will be supportive in this situation. Any form of reprisal will not be tolerated. Disclosures will be treated in confidence, and the identity of the whistleblower will not be revealed unless it becomes unavoidable, for example, if the whistleblower is required to become a witness in an external investigation.

Confidentiality

Proceedings conducted within the scope of this policy should be regarded as confidential and should not be disclosed to persons except where this is part of the investigation. Any disclosure is regarded as privileged and falls within the scope of the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

Anonymous Allegations

Anonymous disclosures are much less powerful. For this reason, reports should be attributable to a known source. Anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the school depending upon the gravity of the issue raised, the credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation.

Untrue Allegations

Concerns raised in good faith but not confirmed when investigated will not result in any action being taken against the whistleblower. However, malicious allegations are likely to trigger disciplinary action.

Procedures – How to Raise a Concern

1. In the first instance, concerns may be expressed verbally or in writing.

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2. Persons considering making a report may wish to contact their professional association before doing so, and may have a representative present when making the report.
3. A written report must include background and history, giving dates and the reason for the particular concern.
4. Persons reporting a concern will be expected to demonstrate there are reasonable grounds.
5. A written report may be compiled in consultation with the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors.
6. Concerns should normally be raised with the Headteacher.
7. If the concern relates to the Headteacher, it should be reported to the Chair of Governors (or to any other Governor).
8. Alternatively, advice may be obtained from Oldham Council Human Resources Services or the Director for Education.

Dealing with Reported Concerns

Persons receiving a report under the terms of the Whistleblowing Policy will take the matter seriously. Careful consideration will be given to the matter, and initial inquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

In dealing with any concern reported, the matter may be:

- Investigated internally.
- Those falling within the scope of specific procedures will be dealt with accordingly, e.g., disciplinary procedures for staff employed in schools.
- Referred to the Police.
- Referred to the audit commission.
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Employees raising a concern will receive a written response within 10 working days:

- Acknowledging receipt of the concern raised.
- Indicating how the matter is to proceed.
- Giving an indication of how long it will take to provide a final response, telling you about any initial inquiries made and what further investigations are necessary.
- Explaining why, should it be deemed that no further investigation is necessary.

The investigating officer will produce a written report that:

- Outlines the concern.
- Details the investigation process.
- Gives the outcome of the investigation.
- Details recommendations where appropriate.

Concerns Relating to a Child Protection or any other Safeguarding Issue

The matter should, in the first instance, be raised with the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. Alternatively, duty and advice team should be contacted.

Concerns Relating to Financial Malpractice

Oldham Council's Finance Department will guide one through this process.

How the Matter can be Taken Further

This policy is intended to provide a protocol that enables employees to speak out against professional malpractice and to address the issues arising. If the person raising a concern is not satisfied with the response, this should be communicated to the investigating officer.

Other bodies that could be approached in these circumstances include:

- Oldham Council.
- Salford Diocese
- Any Member of the School Governing Body.
- The Audit Commission.
- The Professional Association of the person raising the concern.
- The Police.
- A legal representative.

Employees who feel in need of independent advice regarding the use of this policy may approach the charitable body – Public Concern at Work, Tel 0207 404 6609.