All Saints Catholic High School

Whistleblowing Policy

"We will provide a Christian Education for all pupils based on the teachings of Jesus and the Spirit of the Gospels. The whole life of the school will be determined by the Gospel Values of Love and Justice. We will always value and care for all members of the All Saints Community according to their needs, and will affirm and nurture the development of all"

School Mission Statement

Date Reviewed: October 2026

Next Review Date: October 2027

Background

All Saints Catholic High School is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness, integrity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we encourage staff, volunteers, governors and others with whom we deal with, to come forward and voice their concerns about any aspect of the school's work, in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously, investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

Staff are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong; however, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their 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 just be a suspicion of malpractice; however, everyone working at All Saints not only has the right, but also a duty to report any improper actions or omissions.

This document makes it clear that concerns may be reported without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable staff and governors to raise serious concerns within the school rather than overlooking a concern or raising the matter externally.

The procedure applies to all staff (including trainees, apprentices, agency and casual workers and volunteers), governors and those contractors working for the school on school premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services to the school.

The procedure supplements the school's complaints and grievance procedures and other relevant statutory reporting procedures e.g. safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Aims and Scope of the Procedure

Whistleblowing may be defined as the disclosure, by staff and governors (former or current) and other individuals, of illegal or illegitimate practices.

This procedure aims to:

- Encourage staff and governors to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practices and procedures within the school
- Provide avenues for staff and governors to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure that staff and governors receive a response to concerns raised and are aware of how to pursue those concerns further if necessary
- Reassure employees and governors that they will be protected from possible reprisal or victimisation where they have a reasonable belief that they have made any such disclosure in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance or a complaint. The whistleblowing procedure is intended to cover major concerns that fall out of the scope of the other procedures. These include:

- Concerns about the harm or risk of harm to children
- Health and safety risks, including risks to pupils, the public as well as other colleagues
- Criminal activity
- Miscarriages of justice

- Unauthorised use of school funds (e.g. expenditure for improper purpose)
- Fraud and corruption (e.g. to give or receive any gift/reward as a bribe)
- Maladministration (e.g. not adhering to policies and procedures, negligence)
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Damage to the environment
- Failure to comply with codes of conduct
- Abuse of power
- Poor value for money
- Other unethical conduct
- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters

Therefore, any serious concerns that staff and governors have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of members of staff or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported under the whistleblowing procedure. This may be about something that:

- Makes an employee feel uncomfortable in terms of generally acceptable standards, their own experience or the standards they believe the school subscribes to
- Is contrary to the school's rules of order and policies, or falls below accepted standards of practice
- Amounts to improper conduct.

Assurances to Staff and Governors

Disclosures made in good faith by staff and governors will be taken seriously and treated sensitively and confidentially under this procedure.

When made, requests for anonymity will normally be met; however, if a disclosure leads to disciplinary action or prosecution against a colleague, it may be necessary for the member of staff or governor who raised the concern to give evidence as a witness.

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) of anyone who reports concerns and will take appropriate action to protect those who have raised a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations made under this procedure will not influence or be affected by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures in relation to members of staff who raise concerns under this procedure.

Anonymous Allegations

Concerns expressed anonymously may be conveyed at the discretion of the school; however, staff and governors are encouraged to put their name to any concerns raised to aid investigation of those concerns.

In exercising discretion in relation to anonymous allegations, the following factors would be taken into account:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the allegation
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Untrue Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not substantiated by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person raising the concern. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, this will also be taken seriously and may lead to action being taken under the school's disciplinary procedure.

The Procedure for Raising Concerns

All concerns should be reported to the Headteacher. If employees feel unable to do this or the concern is about the Headteacher, then the matter should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

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

- The background and the nature of the concern (giving relevant dates)
- The reason why he/she is particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier a concern is expressed then the easier it is to take action. Although individuals are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

The school would prefer that a serious concern is raised responsibly rather than not at all. If someone does not feel comfortable raising the issue within the school, the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) allows disclosures to be made to "prescribed bodies".

Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK

How the School will Respond

The school will respond to all concerns raised except those anonymous allegations where discretion is exercised not to do so.

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take including who should undertake the investigation. In some cases, an investigation may be completed without the subject of the complaint being aware of the investigation.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. The overriding principle is to act in the public interest. In these cases, confirmation will be sought from the employee that they are satisfied that the matter is resolved. This does not prevent further concerns being raised in the future if they should arise.

If it is determined that the concern or allegation falls within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. disciplinary issues), it will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

NB. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

If it is decided that an investigation is required, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors should notify the school's external Human Resources provider before any further action is taken.

Depending on the nature of the concern, an investigation may be undertaken using the school's internal procedures and/or by involving third parties such other members of staff, the council's internal auditor, the LADO, legal or personnel advisors, the Police or Department for Education.

The person raising the concern will be contacted within ten working days of the disclosure:

- To acknowledge that the concern has been received
- To indicate how the school proposes to deal with the matter
- Indicating whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Supplying information on staff support mechanisms
- Stating whether further investigation will take place and if not, why not.

The level of contact between those investigating the concern and the person who raised the initial concern will depend on the nature of the concern, the potential difficulties involved and the complexity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the person who raised the initial concern.

Where any meeting is arranged, the person who raised the initial concerns can be accompanied by a colleague, friend, union or professional association representative who is not involved in the area to which the concern relates.

Where a complaint involves the Headteacher, then an investigating officer must be appointed who does not work at or with the school. In any event, investigating officers must be at an appropriate level of seniority and must have sufficient experience and/or training to allow a thorough investigation to take place.

The investigation should normally be completed within 30 working days of the complaint being registered. Where cases prove more complicated and it may not be possible to complete within the timescale, it will need to be extended to accommodate the particular circumstances. Where the timescale will probably exceed 30 working days, the investigating officer will advise the person who raised the concern.

This procedure seeks to minimise any problems, which may arise as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the person who raised the concern will be given advice and guidance on the procedures.

The governors accept that assurances need to be given that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints, whoever raised the initial concerns will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.

How the Matter can be Taken Further

This procedure is intended to provide an avenue within the school to raise concerns. If the person raising the concern is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they should contact the Chair of Governors. The matter may be investigated further if the person raising the concern can identify evidence that was not previously available or was overlooked at the time; however, the Chair of Governors decision will be final.

If the person raising the concern is still dissatisfied and feels it is right to take the matter outside of the school, they have the right to do so. The following are possible contact points:

- Director of Children's Services – Call 0151 0151 443 5690 or email
- Mark.Mirfin@knowsley.gov.uk
- Knowsley's Internal Audit Manager – Call 0151 443 2617
- Trade union
- Local Citizens Advice Bureau - Call 0808 278 7839 or email advice@citizensadviceknowsley.org.uk
- Relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- Relevant voluntary organisation
- Police
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - https://www.lgo.org.uk
- Equality and Human Rights Commission - https://www.equalityhumanrights.com
- www.gov.uk/whistleblowing for general guidance
- National Audit Office - Call 0207 798 7264 or use the NAO Contact Form
- Protect (previously Public Concern at Work) – www.protect-advice.org.uk or call 0203 117 2520
- or email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff and governors who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Call 0800 028 0285 (8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

If the whistleblowing procedure is applied properly, it should prevent the need for staff and governors to take their concerns outside of school; however, if they do, they must ensure that they do not disclose confidential information about the school's business and its employees.

Contact with the press about matters under this procedure should only be made via the Knowsley Council Communications Team.