



LORETO PREPARATORY SCHOOL
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Registered Charity No. 250607

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Mission Statement

At Loreto Preparatory School
We are eager and inspired to do our best,
Meeting the challenges and opportunities of a changing world
With love in our hearts.

We are called to be joyful and prayerful,
Living the Gospel and the Catholic faith
And celebrating the values of Mary Ward
With our parents and the whole Loreto family.

Women in time to come will do much.
Mary Ward

This policy has been written with regard to and in the spirit of our school aims, in particular that the pupils

'have an understanding of the values of Mary Ward and their relevance to everyday life.'
'feel secure and valued within a safe and well-maintained environment.'
'are physically and mentally fit.'

This policy applies to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, and before and after school provision and activities.

This policy has regard to current Statutory Guidance: Keeping Children Safe in Education KCSIE (Sept 2016) and current Independent School Standards Regulations Part 3 (September 2014).

Introduction

At the heart of the school's activities are the principles of the Gospel in the tradition of the Catholic faith and Mary Ward's values of Freedom, Justice, Sincerity, Truth and Joy. We aim to affirm and value each member of the community, recognising the dignity and unique nature of each individual, whether pupil, support staff or teacher. This entails sharing each other's strengths, being tolerant of each other's weaknesses, as well as striving for the highest standards of achievement. This philosophy under-pins everything we try to do. All colleagues are encouraged to be open and to work with mutual trust and confidence.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Safeguarding Policy and Staff Code of Behaviour and Safe Working Practices. It applies to all staff, volunteers and Governors, who are responsible for the success of this policy.

Aims of this Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.
- To ensure staff that their confidentiality will be respected.
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise concerns.
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals – a reasonable belief is sufficient.

The School is committed to high standards of openness and accountability and encourages staff with serious concerns to come forward and raise those concerns without fear of dismissal, being disloyal or subjected to victimisation or harassment as a result. It is in everyone's interest that potential failings or malpractice are identified early so that appropriate action can be taken.

What is Whistleblowing?

It is the disclosure of information relating to suspected wrongdoing or danger at school which may include:

- Child Protection concerns
- Criminal activity
- Damage to the environment
- Danger to Health and Safety
- Financial fraud
- Breach of the school's policies and procedures, including Code of Conduct.
- Failure to comply with legal or regulatory requirements
- Negligence
- Conduct likely to damage the School's reputation
- Miscarriage of justice
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- The deliberate concealment of the above matters

A '**whistleblower**' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of those matters above. If staff are unsure about raising an issue within the scope of this policy they should seek advice from the Headteacher, or if the alleged wrongdoing involves the Headteacher, then staff should seek advice from the Chair of Governors or the nominated Governor for Child Protection.

Key Principles

- a) The School values its staff coming forward if they have serious suspicions or concerns, in relation to the above areas, and hopes they will raise the matter as soon as possible if it is warranted and not wait for or search for proof.
- b) The School makes it clear that no member of staff will be subject to any detrimental action by reporting concerns which they believe to be true.
- c) All reported issues will be taken seriously and investigated.
- d) All reported issues will be treated in a confidential manner and feedback will be given on any action taken subject to legal constraints that may apply.
- e) Whistleblowers should put their names to the allegation made wherever possible. Anonymous correspondence will be taken seriously but subsequent investigations may prove difficult where all facts are not known.
- f) If any meeting or interview is arranged, the whistleblower has a right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union rep.
- g) If a whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, advice and support will be arranged by the School.

- h) Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such activity will be subject to disciplinary action.

The advantages of a procedure for whistleblowing are:

- to provide a channel and process for individual staff to raise genuine and legitimate concern;
- to protect our pupils from abuse and harm
- to deter serious malpractice;
- to avoid crisis management and public criticism;
- to promote accountability throughout the school.

It gives everyone the opportunity to act professionally and with propriety to forestall or prevent any act or acts which may damage people in the School or the School itself and its reputation.

Confidentiality

We recognise that raising a concern needs to be done in confidence and as stated in the following procedure. The School will try to protect the identity of those staff who raise a serious concern and do not wish their identity to be disclosed. However, it may not be possible to resolve such concerns without revealing identity. In such cases, the whistleblower (staff member) will be advised about how any investigation proceeds and will be supported fully.

The following procedure should be followed:

Raising a concern

- 1) As a first step, a member of staff should normally discuss raising a concern with the Headteacher, a nominated Governor or the Chair of Governors – the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue and who is thought to be involved will dictate who to approach initially.
- 2) If a concern is against a Governor then it will be raised by the Headteacher with the Chair of Governors. Should it be raised against the Chairman then the Vice-Chairman will be consulted.
- 3) The sooner a concern is raised the easier it is to take action.
- 4) Concerns are better in writing for the avoidance of doubt. If they are raised verbally, the person receiving the concern should record it in writing immediately, including the date and time and sign it. Where possible it should be read back to the whistleblower (staff member) to confirm its accuracy.
- 5) Members of staff may also ask their union or professional association to raise the matter on their behalf or to support them when raising the concern. They may bring a colleague or union representative to any meeting.
- 6) If the concern relates to a child protection matter, it must be passed to the Headteacher, or if it involves the Headteacher or the Headteacher is absent, the Chair of Governors should be contacted and Child Protection procedures must be followed.
- 7) Although the whistleblower (staff member) is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they need to believe that there is sufficient cause for concern and action.

Response from the School:

The action taken by the School will depend upon the seriousness of the concern. The matters raised may:

- need an initial assessment by the School and the Chair of Governors
- be investigated internally by a panel of three Governors and may involve staff with relevant experience in this investigation.
- need to be passed to the police if criminal activity is involved

- need to be passed to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is responsible for Child Protection issues and will give advice.
- need to be referred to a regulatory body, for example DBS, NCTL, ISI
- result in an independent inquiry

The School will aim to keep the whistleblower (staff member) informed of the outcome of the assessment, of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale.

Timescale for response:

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will reply in writing:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it is likely to take to provide a final response
- stating whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying information on support mechanisms and
- stating whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

See Key Principles for care of whistleblowers in dealing with their experiences as a result of raising a concern.

False allegations

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith that cannot be confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against him/her. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation for an ulterior motive, for example – a malicious reason, disciplinary action will be taken against him/her that could result in dismissal.

At the conclusion of any investigation or action, the member of staff (whistleblower) who raised the concern will be informed of the outcomes.

Check list:

The Whistleblower

Please do:

Raise the matter as soon as possible if you feel your concerns are warranted.

Tell your suspicions or concerns to someone who has the appropriate authority to deal with them.

Be assured that the School will take concerns based on honest and reasonable suspicions seriously.

Consider writing down the key points and details as to why you are concerned.

Please do not:

Do nothing. -the School would prefer you to raise your concerns so that we can carry out a full and fair investigation.

Be afraid of raising your concerns – the School has safeguards in place to protect staff, who raise concerns.

Try to investigate the matter yourself - this may complicate any later enquiries, particularly if a criminal investigation becomes necessary.

The School:

Please do:

Be fully responsive to staff concerns.

Respect the fact that staff can raise a concern confidentially.

Take detailed notes of the information provided, including details such as who, what, where, why and how in relation to the matter of concern.

Please do not:

Ridicule or ignore the concerns raised.

Approach or accuse any individuals directly.

Divulge the concerns to anyone other than the Governors or the Headteacher.

Do nothing as the School is committed to a culture of openness where staff feel able to communicate their concerns freely and in confidence.

Delay for the speed of response may be important.

[For the purposes of this Policy 'staff' or 'member of staff' includes employees, volunteers and Governors in the School.]

This Policy must be linked with the Child Protection Policy and read by all staff at their induction and when it is updated. The school ensures that there will be transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are received and handled. Governors will review this policy annually in conjunction with the review of the Safeguarding policies.

Reference: previous policy and KCSIE – July 2015, ISSR – September 2014

Last update: September 2016

Reviewed and ratified by Governors February 2017

Next review February 2018