

ST AGNES

Catholic Primary School

With Jesus beside us, we do our best



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Created on:	Autumn 2020	Author: CES
Approved by:	Governing Board	Date: Spring 2022
Last reviewed on:	November 2024	By: FGB
Next review due by:	November 2025	By: FGB

Our Vision and Values

At St. Agnes we believe that although we are all very different we have a way of living, behaving and doing things that allow us to serve as a witness to the Catholic Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our school motto is: **With Jesus Beside Us We Do Our Best to:**



Believe

We are all valued in God's family and the school family. We **believe** in ourselves and in our abilities.

Persevere

When things get difficult we will **persevere** so that we will grow stronger, realising we can turn to each other and God.

Contribute

We will **contribute** to the life of the school, the parish, the local community and the wider world to which we all belong.

By doing these we will:

Achieve

By being the best we can be, we will **achieve** in making a difference to others and living as God would want us to.

Commitment to equality:

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

Introduction

The staff and governors of St Agnes Catholic Primary School seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors or the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, St Agnes Catholic Primary School has established the following whistle blowing policy, or code of practice, 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.

Throughout this policy, the term *whistleblower* denotes the person raising the concern or making the complaint. It is not meant in a pejorative sense and is entirely consistent with the terminology used by Lord Nolan as recommended in the *Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Local Spending Bodies* published in May 1996.

St Agnes Catholic Primary School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. The School recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system that allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

St Agnes Catholic Primary School is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of suspected fraud and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance that would be dealt with under the School's grievance procedures.

When might the whistle blowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour which St Agnes Primary School considers should be dealt with under this policy includes:

- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud and deceit
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- Concerns of physical or mental abuse.

What action should the *whistleblower* take ?

St Agnes Catholic Primary School encourages the *whistleblower* to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

St Agnes Catholic Primary School has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

All staff members have a responsibility to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in any aspect of the school’s safeguarding arrangements and staff should feel confident that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they should consider other channels available including:

Name and Position	Contact details
Brid McDaid (Headteacher)	bmcdaid.211@lgflmail.org
John Hayward (Chair of Governing Body)	jhayward40.211@lgflmail.org
David Waller (School Finance Consultant))	or via School Office in a sealed letter addressed to Chair of Governing Board marked Private and Confidential
NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line	811 Wharfside Point South, 4 Prestons Road, London, E14 9EL 07782 206017 or by e-mail to david@schoolaccounts.co.uk
	0800 028 0285, more information available at nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing .

For safeguarding concerns, other than financial – see the Safeguarding policy. The external body in Tower Hamlets to report concerns to is LBTH Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Melanie Benzie

Email: Melanie.Benzie@towerhamlets.gov.uk or LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Telephone: 0207364 0677

The *whistleblower* may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively, if the *whistleblower* considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Chief Internal Auditor.

LBTH whistle blow hotline number (0800 528 0294).

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the *whistleblower*. The Borough will ensure relevant officers of the Department for Education (DfE) are informed as appropriate.

In addition, information and advice can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work. This charity offers free legal advice in certain circumstances to people concerned about serious malpractice

at work. Their literature states that matters are handled in strict confidence and without obligation. Contact details for the charity are as follows:

Public Concern at Work
Suite 306
16 Baldwins Gardens
London
EC1N 7RJ
Telephone number 0207 404 6609.

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 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, legal or personnel advisors, the police, the Department for Education and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the governing body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral such as the police.

The *whistleblower* will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the governing body and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

If the *whistleblower* is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the governing body and/or directed to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Respecting confidentiality

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

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt 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.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within St Agnes Catholic Primary School in terms of its systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistle blowing 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 school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.

See also:

- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF
- REPORTING OF LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS