

# St. Robert of Newminster Catholic School and Sixth Form College



## Whistleblowing Policy

2014-2015

Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_

Head Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Next Review: September 2015

## **Whistleblowing Policy**

### **School Motto**

***Sic Luceat Lux Vestra: Let Your Light Shine.***

### **Our Vision**

*All individuals are children of God, created equally in his image to share an eternal future. We promise to play our full part in their education and formation.*

### **Our Mission**

*We strive to meet the academic, moral, physical, social and spiritual needs of all pupils so that they may take their place as caring, committed, self-aware adult members of society.*

### **Our Aims**

*In striving to create the school climate, which will nurture this mission, the school aims:*

- \* To offer to all students a broad, balanced, appropriate, relevant and flexible curriculum.*
- \* To develop as an integral part of the local community and in particular the local Catholic community;*
- \* To develop and maintain the partnership between school and parents, parishes, primary schools and the wider community.*
- \* To develop as a worshipping community, in which prayer and liturgy are encouraged as part of faith development.*
- \* To encourage all members of our school community; students, parents, staff and governors to follow the example of Christ in their daily work and relationships; to treat one another with justice and dignity, tolerance and respect and to be aware of and respond to each other's needs, hopes and aspirations.*
- \* To provide and maintain an attractive, happy, secure, safe and healthy school environment.*

### **Professional Requirements of Staff**

*In the light of our mission statement:*

*All members of Staff have a professional responsibility to meet the academic, moral, social and spiritual needs of all pupils.*

*To enable this to happen:*

- \* We will strive to provide an excellent teaching and learning experience for all pupils.*
- \* We will encourage pupils to come to a fuller understanding of the difference between right and wrong. To be good citizens of the school community the pupils have to follow school rules, which are enforced by every Staff member.*
- \* The pupils will be given every opportunity to develop healthy lifestyles inside and outside the curriculum time. The school has a responsibility to encourage healthy eating and exercise during the school day.*
- \* The Gospel values of respect and value for others will be made explicit to the pupils in their interaction with every member of the community. All members of the community have a responsibility to live out Gospel values in their work relationships.*
- \* Opportunities will be provided for all community members to develop spiritually. The growth of the whole person must be implicit in the ethos of the school.*

# **Whistleblowing Policy**

## **1. Preamble**

- 1.1 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their organisation. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to their Head Teacher. 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.
- 1.2 The School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we encourage employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the School's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This policy document makes it clear that employees can do so without fear of reprisals. This Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the School rather than overlooking a problem or simply reporting it outside. It should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct already available to employees.
- 1.3 This policy has been discussed with the relevant trade unions and professional organisations and has their support.

## **2. Aims and Scope of this Policy**

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
  - provide avenues for you to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
  - allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the School's response, and
  - reassure you that you will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for 'whistleblowing' in good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. This policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

That concern may be about something that:

- is unlawful; or
- is against the School's policies; or
- falls below established standards or practice; or
- amounts to improper conduct.

### **3. Safeguards**

#### **3.1 Harassment or Victimisation**

The School recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. The School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

3.2 However, this does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your disclosure.

#### **3.3 Confidentiality**

The School will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern and do not want your name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

#### **3.4 Anonymous Allegations**

This policy strongly encourages you to put your name to your allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful and unlikely to be effective, but they will be considered at the discretion of the Head Teacher/Governing Body/Council/Diocese.

3.5 In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

#### **3.6 Untrue or Malicious Allegations**

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

### **4. How to Raise a Concern**

4.1 As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your line manager or Headteacher or school governor. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in the malpractice. For example, if you believe that a member of the leadership team other than the Headteacher is involved, you should approach your Headteacher in the first instance. If however your concern is regarding the Headteacher, please contact a member of the Education Personnel Advice Team for guidance.

4.2 Concerns are better raised in writing. You are invited to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, please contact the Education Personnel Advice Team for further advice.

- 4.3 The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. You may also wish to involve your Trade Union representative at this stage.
- 4.4 Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.
- 4.5 You may also invite your trade union or professional association to raise a matter on your behalf.

## **5. How the School will respond**

- 5.1 The action taken by the School will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:
- be investigated internally or in conjunction with representatives of the Personnel Advice Team
  - be referred to the Police
  - be referred to the external Auditor
- 5.2 In order to protect individuals and the School, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, Safeguarding) should be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 5.3 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.
- 5.4 Within ten working days of a concern being received, the person or body with whom you raised your concern will write to you:
- acknowledging that the concern has been received
  - indicating how it proposes to deal with the matter
  - giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
  - telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made, and
  - telling you whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.
- 5.5 The amount of contact between the person(s) or Body considering the issues and you, will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from you.
- 5.6 When any meeting is arranged, you have the right, if you so wish, to be accompanied by a Union or professional association representative or a friend who is not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.
- 5.7 The School will take steps to minimise any difficulties, which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Personnel Advice Team will advise you about the procedure. If you require personal advice and/or support during the process, please contact the Personnel Advice Team and ask to speak to an Adviser.
- 5.8 The School accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations.

## **6. How the matter can be taken further**

6.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue to raise concerns within your School. If you are not satisfied and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the School and Governing Body, the following are possible contact points:

- your local Council member (if you live in the area of the Council)
- the external Auditor
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- your solicitor
- the Police
- the Ombudsman

If you do take the matter outside the School, you need to ensure that you do not disclose confidential information or that disclosure would be privileged. Please see Section 2 of the Code of Conduct for employees.