

SPRINGHILL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*We strive to achieve excellence in all that we do
as we follow the Gospel values of Jesus Christ.*



Together, we will do our best for Jesus.

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

Adopted by the Governing Body: February 2023
Next review: February 2025

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff in the trust know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing in or by the trust
- Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

The requirement to have clear whistle-blowing procedures in place is set out in the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

This policy has been written in line with the above document, as well as [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#)

All of us at one time or another has had concerns about what is happening at work. Usually these concerns are easily resolved. However, when they are about unlawful conduct, illegality, financial malpractice, endangering an individual's health or safety, or dangers to the public, employees, pupils or the environment, it can be difficult to know what to do.

Whistleblowing is a way for employees of an organisation to raise reasonably and honestly held concerns they may have about serious matters that could put the school and/or the wider public at risk.

Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staff health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about the trust count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

You may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to yourself, perhaps feeling it's none of your business or that it's only a suspicion. You may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, managers or to the organisation. You may decide to say something but find that you have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

Springhill Catholic Primary has introduced this policy, which reflects the legal framework and the legal obligations placed upon the school, to enable you to raise your concerns about such malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. We would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than wait for proof.

IF IN DOUBT - RAISE IT!

If you are concerned about any issues regarding the conduct of any personnel in school in relation to child protection, you must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. If your concern is in relation to the conduct of the Headteacher, you must inform the Chair of Governors. All issues of alleged misconduct must be reported to someone immediately.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 provides legal protection, in certain circumstances, to workers making disclosures about malpractice. The Act makes it unlawful for Springhill to dismiss anyone or allow them to be victimised on the basis that they have made an appropriate lawful disclosure in accordance with the Act.

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, you will not be at risk of losing your job or suffering any form of retribution. Providing you reasonably believe what you are reporting, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Of course we do not extend this assurance to someone who maliciously raises a matter they know is untrue. In that case disciplinary action may be taken against you. The important point is that you are reporting what you consider to be a serious issue.

We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. Taking reprisals against an employee who has raised a concern in good faith is unacceptable, and may give rise to disciplinary proceedings. If you have raised a concern and feel at any stage subsequently that you are suffering as a result of doing so, please let the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors know.

We recognise that you may want to raise a concern in confidence under this policy. If you ask us to protect your identity by keeping your confidence, we will not disclose it without your consent. If the situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing your identity (for example because your evidence is needed in court), we will discuss with you whether and how we can proceed.

Remember that if you do not tell us who you are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter or protect your position or to give you feedback. Accordingly, while we will consider anonymous reports, this policy is not well suited to concerns raised anonymously.

Once you have told us of your concern, we will look into it to assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. We will tell you who is handling the matter and whether your further assistance will be needed. If you request it, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.

When you raise the concern you may be asked how you think the matter might best be resolved, depending on the issue raised. If you do have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset.

While the purpose of this policy is to enable us to investigate possible malpractice and take appropriate steps to deal with it, we will give as much feedback as we properly can. If requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. Please note, however, that we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

How to raise a concern initially

Step One

If you have a concern about malpractice, we hope you will feel able to raise it first with the Headteacher. This may be done orally or in writing.

Step Two

If you feel unable to raise the matter with the Headteacher, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with the Chair of Governors, email chairofgovernors@springhillcatholic.net. Please say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that appropriate arrangements can be made to ensure total confidentiality.

Step Three

If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel the matter is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, please contact:-

Catherine Hobbs – The Diocesan Director for Education – 02392 893600

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or you want independent advice at any stage, you may consider contacting

- your union
- or your professional body (Teaching Regulation Agency)
- or the independent charity Protect (previously Public Concern at Work) on 020 3117 2520 or <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

If you are dissatisfied

If you are unhappy with our response, remember you can go to the other levels detailed in this policy.

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will try to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using this policy, you will help us to achieve this.