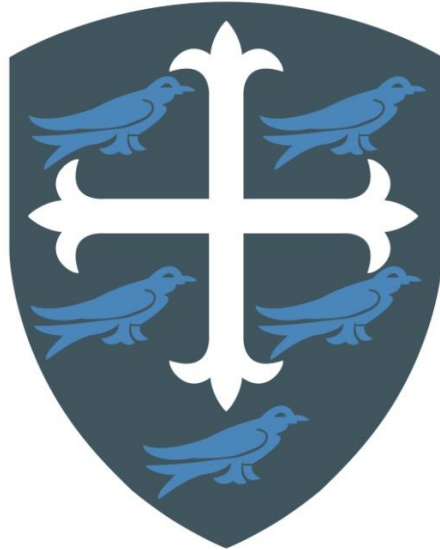


St Mary's Catholic Primary School



Whistleblowing Policy 2025-2027

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| Legal Status: | Statutory |
| Last Review: | October 2024 |
| Review date: | September 2025 |
| Next Review: | September 2027 |
| Responsible Person: | Governing Body |

Mission Statement

"The family of St Mary's strives to grow in God's love and care by learning together and valuing the uniqueness of each person."

Introduction

The staff and governors of St Mary's Catholic Primary School oversee all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity; expecting all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with their contractual obligations and the school's policies and procedures. In the event that members of school staff, parents, governors of the school community at large become aware of activities which give cause for concern, St Mary's Catholic Primary School has established the following whistleblowing policy 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 Mary's Catholic Primary School is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. We recognise that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system which allows for the confidential raising of concerns with the school environment, but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

St Mary's 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 which would be dealt with under our grievance procedures.

Aims of Policy

- To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected
- To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns
- To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken

When might the whistleblowing policy apply?

The type of activity or behaviour which St Mary's Catholic 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
- danger to health and safety
- child protection and/or safeguarding concerns
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- anything which threatens children's safety and wellbeing (refer to CP and Safeguarding Policy)

A 'whistleblower' is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the school's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

What action should the whistleblower take?

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

St Mary's 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.

Name and Position

Headteacher
Miss Lucy Black
Email: Head@stmarysrc.lbhf.sch.uk
Ph: 02076037717

Chair of Governors
Mr Alex Morley
Email: amorley2004@yahoo.co.uk
Ph: 07909926263

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.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School would prefer that a serious concern is raised responsibly rather than not at all. Despite the assurances, the whistleblower may feel that it is more appropriate to raise the concern with an external organisation. It is, of course, open for them to do so provided they have sufficient evidence to support the concern. We strongly advise that before reporting the concern externally, the whistleblower seeks advice from the charity Protect. 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 are:

Protect –
The Green House
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road
London E2 9DA
Helpline: 020 3117 2520
Email: info@protect-advice.org.uk
Website: <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

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 and the LA.

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 LA. The LA has its own procedures for dealing with such matters, and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the whistleblower.

If the whistleblower is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, St Mary's Catholic Primary School would prefer that the whistleblower raised this with them or the LA, explaining why this is the case. The concern will be looked at again if there is good reason to do so.

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 LA.

Respecting Confidentiality

Wherever possible St Mary's Catholic Primary School seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistleblower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. We 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.

Safeguarding

If a member of staff suspects that there is a serious safeguarding issue that they feel that the Headteacher is not taking seriously or that they believe there is a serious safeguarding issue involving the Headteacher they should in the first instance contact the Designated Governor.

Conclusion

Existing good practice with St Mary's Catholic Primary School in terms of its systems or 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 whistleblowing 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 structures of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned.