

ST KATHARINE'S CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL, SAVERNAKE

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

[approved by Governing Body on 13 October 2010]

Introduction

1. St Katharine's School (like Wiltshire Council) is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. This whistle blowing policy and procedure supports this commitment.
2. This policy gives *Governors, employees and others* with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the School a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimisation.
3. Those external to the School are encouraged to raise any concerns they have about the way in which the School operates through its Complaints Procedure.
4. It is often those closest to an organisation, eg *Governors, employees and volunteers*, who realise that there may be something wrong. However, sometimes they are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they feel that they would be disloyal or because they are afraid that they might be victimised.
5. *Governors, employees and volunteers* are encouraged to raise their concerns within the School by applying the approach described in this document, rather than overlooking a problem.

Scope of the Policy

6. There are existing procedures in place (eg *grievance, harassment and bullying*) which make provision for employees to lodge a concern relating to their own employment. This whistleblowing policy is intended to complement those procedures by covering concerns that appear to fall outside their scope. These concerns may be about something that is:
 - any unlawful act, including financial malpractice, bribery, corruption, fraud or other dishonesty;
 - breach or failure to comply with School's standing orders, policies or established standards or practice ;
 - any form of improper conduct;

(Please note this is not a comprehensive list but is intended to illustrate the range of issues which might be raised under this policy.)

7. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures, eg *child protection*, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Please refer directly to the guidance contained on Wiltshire Council Wisenet for specific procedures relating to safeguarding. The direct link is: <http://wisenet.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/dsweb/View/Collection-744>

8. The Local Authority will not accept liability for any actions, claims, costs or expenses arising out of a school's decision not to follow this policy where it is found that the school's Governing Body has been negligent or has in an unfair or discriminatory manner.

Definitions

9. A "Nominated Governor" is a governor identified by the Governing Body as the first point of contact for whistle blowing queries. He or she cannot be a staff Governor. The Nominated Governor at St Katharine's is Mrs Gill de Berry (phone no: 07990 592180, email:the_de_berrys@hotmail.com)

Aim of this policy

10. The purpose of this policy is to provide you with the help and support you need to speak up and be confident that you can do so safely. We will take your concerns seriously and ensure that they are dealt with promptly and fairly.

How to Raise a Concern - General

10. Initial concerns should be raised with the Nominated Governor. If the person with the concern believes that this governor is implicated, then he/she should approach the Chair of Governors (if not the Nominated Governor). If the Chair of Governors is the Nominated Governor, the person with the concern should, in those circumstances, approach the Vice Chair.

11. Within 48 hours, the Nominated Governor will contact the person with the concern to arrange a meeting to discuss the concern.

12. Persons with concerns are encouraged to write down what they consider the problem to be, giving names, dates and places where possible. It would be helpful to have that written description at the meeting. If there are any other documents that might be helpful at the meeting, they should be brought to the meeting as well. Immediate notes of relevant details, eg what was said in a telephone or other conversation, are particularly helpful. You are advised to take a friend, colleague or School professional association/union representative with you to the meeting with the Governor.

13. You are encouraged to raise your concern in person, or through your professional association/union representative on your behalf, because concerns that are expressed anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, the School will exercise its discretion in deciding whether to investigate an anonymous allegation. The factors taken into account will include:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the allegation; and
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources.

14. You are encouraged to express your concerns at the earliest opportunity. The earlier a concern is raised, the easier it is normally to take action.

How we will respond

15. After the initial meeting, the Nominated Governor will arrange discreet initial enquiries to be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

16. The Nominated Governor will write to you within 10 days of your initial meeting to:

- acknowledge that your concern has been received;
- outline his understanding of what the issues are; and
- indicate how it is proposed that the matter should be dealt with.

17. If the Nominated Governor decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, this will be done either by the Nominated Governor or by another Governor who is asked to investigate - the investigating officer. However, it may sometimes be necessary for a concern to be referred to the police or an external auditor or for it to be the subject of an independent inquiry. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves issues of bullying or unlawful discrimination, it will be necessary to involve Human Resources.

18. If an investigation is carried out, you will always be informed of the final outcome. It might not be possible to give you full details of the outcome if it contains personal details of a third party, because we have a duty to protect personal information under the Data Protection Act.

How will the School treat whistleblowers?

19. If you make an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If you knowingly make a malicious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

20. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who tries to stop another employee or volunteer from raising a concern or who is responsible for any act of reprimand or victimisation against an employee or volunteer who raises a concern.

21. Where an employee may have been party themselves to an act of possible gross misconduct on which they are now "blowing the whistle", this could be considered in mitigation. They are not, however, exempt from disciplinary action.

22. Disciplinary action may be taken against employees if they contact the media with concerns about conduct at work without first following the steps set out in this policy.

22. The Governing Body will make every reasonable effort to protect an employee's identity when he or she raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated, however, that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the employee or volunteer may be required as part of the evidence.

23. If you raise a concern, you will be given the opportunity to feed back any issues or problems you may have experienced as a result. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees or volunteers who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result.

Queries

24. If you have any queries about this policy, please contact the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors.

25. This policy will be kept under review and, as a result, may be subject to amendment.

Consultation with Trade Unions and Staff Associations

26. Relevant trade unions and professional organisations have been consulted about this policy and procedure, and it has their support.

October 2010

Next Review: November 2011

Governor:

Headteacher:.....

Date