



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

Christ is our teacher.

At St Bernard's we believe that all persons are created by God, unique and equal. We strive to create a caring Christian community in which we provide education based on Gospel values where all people reach their full potential. We aim to develop positive relationships with every individual and family, the parishes and the wider community.

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"

John 10:10

Reviewed by:	A Hallford, Finance & Operations Manager, February 2023
Reviewed at:	Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee Meeting, 1 st March 2023
Approved at:	Full Governing Body Meeting, 22 nd March 2023
Signed:	Austin Senior, Chair of Governors

1 Introduction

The Academy is a Catholic school, founded by and forming part of the Catholic Church. In addition to the Church's funds which established the school, it is sustained in its mission by receipt of public funds. Accordingly it is accountable to the Catholic community of which it is a part and which provided the school and to the public whose funds it expends.

The school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others with whom we deal, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

This policy makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage. This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the school in the first instance so that it is not necessary to resort to outside agencies.

2 Aims and Scope of this Policy

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. This policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is an offence, a breach of the law or contrary to Church teaching;
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- damage to the environment;
- the unauthorised use of public or Church funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- abuse of students; or
- other unethical or immoral conduct.

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees or governors of the school or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported under this policy. This may be something that makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the values, beliefs and standards to which the school subscribes; is against the school's trust deed or instrument of government or policies; falls below established standards of practice; or amounts to improper conduct.

3 Safeguards

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence you or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that might affect you.

4 Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness. You also have a duty to observe this confidentiality.

5 Anonymous Allegations

You are encouraged to put your name to your allegation wherever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account will include:

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

6 Untrue 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 an allegation frivolously, maliciously, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

7 How to Raise a Concern

If you reasonably believe that you have discovered serious malpractice within the school you should ideally raise these concerns with your line manager. However, if, for whatever reason this is not possible or appropriate, you should contact the Principal.

You will be given the opportunity to discuss your suspicions and an appropriate person will be designated as investigating officer, who will arrange for an investigation to take place.

If you suspect that the Principal may be involved in the malpractice then you should contact the chair of the governing body. If you also suspect involvement by the chair, then you should contact the Diocesan Co-Director of Schools.

Within ten working days of your initial meeting, the investigating officer will write to confirm the details of your concern and that an investigation will take place. Throughout the investigation, you will be kept informed of progress and you will normally be advised of the eventual outcome, subject to third party rights. All correspondence will be addressed to your home. If a meeting is needed, it may be arranged off site if you wish, and a union representative or a friend may accompany you. Although records will need to be kept as the enquiries progress, these will be of an anonymous nature.

There can be no prescribed time limits for completion of the investigative process, but it will obviously be in the interests of all concerned if the issue is resolved without delay.

If you have any complaint about the way in which the investigation is being handled then you should raise this with the designated investigating officer in the first instance. If the complaint remains unresolved then you may contact the Diocesan Co- Director of Schools with your concerns.

When the investigation is complete a report will be presented to the governing body, which will decide upon the appropriate course of action. Subject to any relevant legal constraints, you will be informed of the action to be taken. If you do not agree with the outcome then you will have seven days in which to make your concerns known to the governing body, via the chair. If you remain dissatisfied with the response from the governing body, then you may consider contacting the Secretary of State, Department for Education, who has the power to intervene if the governing body appears to be acting unreasonably. You should be aware, however, that this course of action could have serious implications for the school.

At no stage should you contact the media without the written permission of the Chair of the Governing Body. Such action would be a breach of confidentiality and could result in disciplinary proceedings against you.

8 List of Contacts

- Acting Principal* - *Mrs K Crawford, St Bernard's Catholic High School
Tel No. 01709 828 183*
- Chair of the Governing Body* - *Mr A Senior, St Bernard's Catholic High School
Tel No. 01709 828 183*
- Clerk to the Governing Body* - *Mrs V Smith, St Bernard's Catholic High School
Tel No. 01709 828 183*

The Director of Schools
Diocese of Hallam
The Hallam Pastoral Centre
St Charles Street
Sheffield
S9 3WU
T. 0114 2566 440

Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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T. 020 7925 5000

Please Note:

This policy document is adapted from and draws heavily upon an original prepared by Paul Barber MA, currently Director of School for the Archdiocese of Westminster which was updated by him in October 2007.

The Diocese of Hallam has the full permission of the Archdiocese of Westminster to adapt and use the said policy and extends its grateful thanks.