



MOUNT

ST MARY'S | BARLBOROUGH HALL

Policy Name

ISI Regulatory Code – 7b

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Policy Date: September 2018

This Policy is for: Mount St Mary's College

Linked Policies: safeguarding policy, behaviour policy

Review date: September 2019

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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Policy Statement

The School is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with the Code of Conduct. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur. It is understandable that whistle-blowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

The aims of this policy are 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;
- Provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns; and
- Reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Scope

The School is Mount St Mary's which incorporates Mount St Mary's College and Barlborough Hall School. This policy covers all employees whether permanent, temporary, casual, part-time or on fixed term contract, ex-employees, governors, consultants, contractors, volunteers, work placement students, casual workers and agency workers, but who work at the School (collective workers).

This procedure should not be used where you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace. The grievance procedure contained in the Employment Handbook should be used in such cases. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Head, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Public Concern at Work or the NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline.

Definitions

Whistleblowing - is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- Criminal activity;
- Safeguarding concerns;
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- Miscarriages of justice;
- Danger to health and safety;
- Damage to the environment;
- Bribery;
- Financial fraud or mismanagement;
- Breach of our internal policies and procedures;
- Disclosing data in breach of GDPR;
- Conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- Other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace;

- The deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

Whistleblower – is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

Detriment – provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly, you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing. A failure to follow this procedure may however make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost.

Procedure

1 Safeguarding

Nothing within this policy is intended to prevent staff from complying with their statutory obligation in accordance with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2016). In particular:

1.1 Safeguarding/ Child Protection Policy

You should raise any concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

1.2 Safeguarding – Member of staff

You should raise any concerns about another staff member with the Head, or if the concern is about the Head, with the Chair of Governors (without first notifying the Head) in accordance with the procedures in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

1.3 Safeguarding - General

You should follow this procedure to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practices at the School or potential failures by the School or staff to properly safeguard the welfare of pupils if you are concerned that the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are not being followed correctly.

1.4 Referral

If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and/or the Police immediately. Anyone can make a referral.

1.5 Exit interviews

All staff are expected and encouraged to raise concerns they have, whether related to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils, the conduct of staff or other matters, during the course of their employment in accordance with this policy. Safeguarding children is at the centre of the School's culture and is accordingly considered formally during staff performance development reviews and appraisal and finally within exit questionnaire's or at exit interviews which are available to all leavers. Staff who raise concerns about working practices at the School to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or an appropriate senior member of Staff will be protected from detriment under this policy.

2 Confidentiality

We would hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, the School will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

3 Anonymous disclosure

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible.

4 Procedure Stages

4.1 Stage One

You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your Line Manager. In the event that your Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you proceed directly to Stage Two of this procedure.

4.2 Stage Two

If no response is forthcoming after seven days from your Line Manager; if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled; or if your Line Manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing; you should notify the Head / Bursar, as appropriate. If the Bursar is suspected of wrongdoing, you should notify the Head directly. If the Head is suspected of wrongdoing, you should notify the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk of Governors.

4.3 Stage Three

If no response is forthcoming after seven days, or if you are not satisfied with the way in which your concern has been handled, the disclosure should be escalated to the next level of management.

5 Relevant external reporting

5.1 Outside body

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. The law recognises, as does this policy, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to a relevant outside body including:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer
- Children's Social Care
- The NSPCC
- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Information Commissioner
- The Department for Education
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
- The Channel Police Practitioner

- The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

5.2 Advice

Staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone external but before you do, as well as considering the internal help and support available which is identified above, please seek external advice from:

Public Concern at Work – If you have any concerns about disclosing a suspected wrongdoing the independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work, operates a confidential helpline. Staff can call 020 7404 6609 for advice.

NSPCC – The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failure internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (8.00 am to 8.00 pm Monday to Friday) or e-mail help@nspcc.org.uk

5.3 The media

You should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and/or where your concern is disclosed in a malicious manner or for personal gain, this may make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Additionally, the School may consider this to be gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken against you.