



**SAINT JOHN
SOUTHWORTH**
———— CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE (WHISTLEBLOWING) POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Saint John Southworth Catholic Academy Trust is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. The purpose of this policy is to encourage those who have concerns about a wrongdoing to raise them, to offer the reassurance of protection against reprisals or victimisation and to set out the procedure to be followed should any member of staff in our schools have serious concerns about any aspect of our work.

2. LEGISLATION

2.1. 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](#). This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. SCOPE

3.1. Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is “in the public interest”. The types of wrongdoing within the scope of this policy include:

- Pupils or staff health and safety being put in danger
- A damage to the environment
- A criminal offence, such as fraud or corruption
- Actions that negatively affect the welfare of children including poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school’s child protection and safeguarding systems
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up any of the above or other wrong-doing in the public interest

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

3.3. Not all concerns about the trust, or individual schools in 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.

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

- 3.5. [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 and a free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. APPLICATION

- 4.1. This policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the Saint John Southworth Catholic Academy Trust in any capacity, including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and casual, agency staff and volunteers.
- 4.2. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

5. MAKING A DISCLOSURE

- 5.1. Staff should consider the examples in the 'Scope' section of this policy when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover up any such activity.
- 5.2. If you have reasonable concerns about a matter which you believe to be a wrongdoing, you should disclose these concerns to the relevant designated individual.
- 5.3. In the first instance, you should raise your concern about a wrongdoing with **your line manager or the headteacher**. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively.
- 5.4. If your concern about a wrongdoing is more serious, or your line manager or headteacher has not resolved your concern, or your concern relates to your line manager or the headteacher, you should make your disclosure to the **Catholic Executive Officer (CEO)**, Paul Stubbings, ceo@sjscat.co.uk.
- 5.5. If your concern about a wrongdoing relates to the CEO, you should make your disclosure to the Academy Trust's Designated Whistleblowing Director, Cornelius Kelly, clerksjscat@sjscat.co.uk
- 5.6. If your concern about a wrongdoing relates to the Academy Trust itself or a Trust director, you should make your disclosure to the **Director of Education at the Diocese of Westminster**, Peter Sweeney, education@rcdow.org.uk.
- 5.7. You should raise your concern in writing wherever possible, setting out the background, the nature of the suspected wrong-doing, relevant dates, the reasons for your concern, the names of any individuals suspected of wrongdoing, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

5.8. Wherever possible, a disclosure will be treated in strict confidence and the right to request anonymity will be respected. The academy trust will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressure) and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.

6. SAFEGUARDING DISCLOSURES

6.1. All staff within Saint John Southworth Catholic Academy Trust schools have a responsibility to report breaches of safeguarding policies and procedures. Disclosures about safeguarding and child protection should be addressed to the headteacher of the relevant school unless they concern the headteacher. In which case, they should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Directors chair@sjscat.co.uk.

6.2. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and consulted as to whether immediate intervention by children's social services and/or the police is needed. The school will also inform and consult the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day and follow the relevant procedures set out in Part Four of [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). If you do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally, you can contact the NSPCC [whistleblowing helpline](#) by telephone on 0800 028 0285 (8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email to help@nspcc.org.uk.

7. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

Investigation

7.1. If the concern is an allegation of abuse against a member of staff in one of the Trust's schools, the guidance set out in Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education will be followed.

7.2. Otherwise, once a concern is raised, the designated individual will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union, professional association representative or a friend
- Get as much detail as possible about the concern at this meeting, and record the information. If it becomes apparent the concern is not of a whistle-blowing nature, the designated individual should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure
- Reiterate, at this meeting, that they are protected from any unfair treatment or risk of dismissal as a result of raising the concern. If the concern is found to be malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken (see Malicious or Vexatious Allegation below).
- Establish whether there is sufficient cause for concern to warrant further investigation. If there is:

7.3. The designated individual should then arrange a further investigation into the matter, seeking advice from other parties, if appropriate. In some cases, they

may need to bring in an external, independent body to investigate, for example auditors or the police.

- 7.4. Within two weeks of the concern being raised, the designated individual will contact the person who raised the concern to explain how the disclosure will be dealt with and the timescale for any investigation. If there is not going to be an investigation, the reasons for this will be explained. Any internal investigation should not take longer than 3 months to complete from the date the disclosure was made.

Outcome

- 7.5. Once the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – is complete, the designated individual will prepare a report detailing the findings and confirming whether or not any wrongdoing has occurred. The report will include any recommendations and details on how the matter can be rectified and whether or not a referral is required to an external organisation, such as the diocese or the police.
- 7.6. They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted. There may be legal or other constraints which prevent the Trust from providing full details of the investigation. In this case, a summary of the outcome will be provided.
- 7.7. Beyond the immediate actions, the CEO, Board of Directors, local governing body trustees and other staff, if necessary, will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.
- 7.8. Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.
- 7.9. Any person who is dismissed, or would have been dismissed, because of a safeguarding issue will be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Any teacher who is dismissed for professional misconduct will be referred to the Teaching Regulation Agency

8. MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS ALLEGATIONS

- 8.1. Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.
- 8.2. If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the academy trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

9. ESCALATING CONCERNS BEYOND THE ACADEMY TRUST

9.1. The trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, in line with the section 'Making a Disclosure'; but recognises that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#).

9.2. The Protect advice line, linked to in the 'Scope' section of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

10. MONITORING

10.1. A summary of concerns raised under this policy will be kept and reported to the Board of Directors of the Academy Trust.

11. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

[SJSCAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)