St Mary’s Church of England Primary School & Nursery

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| **Whistleblowing Policy** |
| What is Whistleblowing? Someone blows the whistle when they tell a designated person about a dangerous, illegal or unethical activity that they are aware of through their work. This can include health and safety risks, environmental issues and fraud.  **Why is Whistleblowing important?**  Our school is committed to the highest possible standards of service and being open, fair and honest. It recognises that staff, governors and others associated with the schools may be the first to identify possible wrongdoing. Whistleblowing provides a structured way for important information to be confidentially reported.  **Why do schools need a Whistleblowing policy?**  Under the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, it will:   1. encourage employees, governors and others who have serious concerns about any aspect of the schools’ work to voice them; 2. recognise that certain cases have to proceed on a confidential basis; 3. enable participation without fear of reprisals; 4. enable employees, governors and others to raise serious concerns rather than overlook a problem.   **Who does the Whistleblowing policy apply to?**   * All school employees, whether full- or part-time, permanent or temporary * School governors * All contractors, agencies and partners |

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| **What is covered by the Whistleblowing policy?**   * The Policy: * provides avenues for raising concerns; * provides procedures for how action taken will be reported back to the whistleblower; * allows for the matter to be taken further if there is dissatisfaction with the school’s decision; * The Policy does not replace: * the schools’ complaints procedure; * the schools’ grievance procedure; * the schools’ Employee Code of Conduct; * specific school or Local Authority procedures; * managerial responsibilities.   **When should I raise a concern?**  If you find out about, or have suspicion of, any activity that could be detrimental to the school or its community. These activities may include:   * conduct which is an offence or a breach of law; * disclosures relating to miscarriages of justice; * health & safety risks to pupils, general public or employees; * damage to the environment; * unauthorised use of public funds; * possible fraud and corruption; * breaches of the school or relevant Local Authority policies, rules and regulations; * falling below established professional standards or practices; * improper or unethical conduct; or * the abuse or neglect of pupils.   (This list is not exhaustive).  **What if I don’t want to reveal my identity?**  The school / Local Authority will respect the confidentiality of anyone raising a concern and will do everything possible to protect the identity of that individual, whether they are an employee, governor or an external source. However, as a result of the investigation process, a statement may be requested to contribute to the evidence collected. In all such cases the provision of a statement will be discussed with you.  **Can I raise my concern anonymously?**  Yes. However, the school / Local Authority would encourage you to put your name to an allegation. Formal statements do help to build a case and add credibility to allegations. The key factors to be taken into account when investigating allegations are:   * seriousness of the issues raised; * credibility of the concern and likelihood of confirming the allegation.   **Will I be protected from possible harassment or victimisation?**   * It is recognised that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for malpractice. The school / Local Authority will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect anyone raising a concern in good faith. * If an employee is the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures when they raise their concerns, then those procedures will not automatically be affected. The information provided would be assessed in the light of the new circumstances and a decision taken as to how, if at all, those proceedings should be affected.   **Will I be subject to any sanctions if the allegation is not proven?**   * When an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person voicing the concern. * If, however, an employee or governor makes a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken.   **How do I go about raising a concern?**  This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue(s) and who is thought to be involved in the matter that concerns them.   * Staff and governors should raise concerns with the Headteacher and / or the Chair of Governors. * If it is a matter which cannot be raised with either the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, the concern should be reported to the Bath & North East Somerset Council’s Strategic Director – People & Communities, Riverside, Temple Street, Keynsham. BS31 ILA. * Outside agencies and partners that cannot raise concerns with the Headteacher should contact the Bath & North East Somerset Council’s Strategic Director – People & Communities, Temple Street, Keynsham. BS31 ILA.   **Who will be told about my concern?**  There are also certain officers with delegated responsibilities who will need to be contacted on certain matters. However they will not be advised of your identity without your approval. They are:  a) Council Solicitor, in respect of actual / potential unlawful conduct.  b) Divisional Director Risk & Assurance, in respect of any actual / potential financial irregularity.  c) Head of Human Resources, in respect of any matters relating to human resource or personnel issues.  **How should I raise my concern?**  Concerns are better raised in writing and should incorporate relevant information about specific incidents. The background and history of the concern including names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about certain situations should also be provided. If you are unable to express your concerns in writing, then you should contact the appropriate individual by telephone or arrange to meet them.  **Do I have to provide proof of the allegation?**  Although you are not expected to provide evidence of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the appropriate individual contacted that there are sufficient grounds for raising the concern.  **How will the school / Local Authority respond to my concern?**   * The action taken by the school / Local Authority will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be :  1. Resolved without the need for investigation; 2. Investigated internally by the school. 3. Investigated internally by the Local Authority; 4. Referred to the Police;  * In order to protect individuals and the school / Local Authority, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall under the scope of specific procedures (e.g. safeguarding) will be referred for consideration under those procedures. * As soon as possible after a concern has been raised (normally within 10 working days) the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Local Authority representative will write to the individual concerned to acknowledge the issue that has been raised and to indicate the future course of any action.   **Will I be involved with the investigation?**   * The amount of contact between the individual raising the concern and those investigating the reported issue will depend on the nature of the matters raised. The individual may be approached to provide further information. * If a meeting is arranged then the individual concerned has the right to be accompanied by an appropriate person (e.g. colleague or Trade Union representative). The name and details of the appropriate person should be provided in advance to enable the suitability of this person to be considered in advance of any meeting.   **Will I be informed of the outcome of the investigation?**  The person raising a concern will need to be assured that the issue has been appropriately addressed. Therefore the school / Local Authority, subject to legal constraints, will inform them in writing about the outcomes of any investigations.  **How can I take a concern further?**  This Policy is intended as an avenue for individuals to raise concerns **within** the school / Local Authority. The objective will be to investigate reported concerns to the satisfaction of all parties. However, if you are not satisfied you may take your concerns outside of the school / Local Authority and these are possible contact points:   * Local Councillors; * Your Member of Parliament: * The External Auditor; * Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations; * A solicitor; * The police. |