



# St Augustine's Catholic College

## Whistleblowing Policy

### 1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The College is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. This whistleblowing policy and procedure supports this commitment.
- 1.2 Relevant trade unions and professional organisations have been consulted about this policy and procedure, and it has their support.

### 2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy gives employees and others with genuine concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing in the College a way to voice those concerns without fear of victimisation.
- 2.2 Often it is those closest to an organisation who realise that there is something wrong. Sometimes people are reluctant to act upon their concerns because they think that they are being disloyal, or because they are afraid that they might be victimised if they speak up.
- 2.3 There are existing procedures in place (e.g. Grievance and Dignity at Work policies) 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. This concern may be about something that is:
  - Unlawful, including financial or fraudulent malpractice such as embezzlement, bribery, corruption, dishonesty, etc.
  - Against establishment standards of practice
  - Improper conduct
- 2.4 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures, e.g. child protection or financial irregularities will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

### 3 DEFINITIONS

A 'nominated governor' is the governor identified by the College as the first point of contact for whistleblowing queries. The nominated governor could be the Chair of Governors or another governor (but not a staff governor).

### 4 AIMS

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

### 5 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

- 5.1 Initial concerns should be raised with the nominated governor. If the employee believes that this governor is implicated, then the employee should approach the Chair of Governors if

they are not the nominated governor. If the Chair of Governors is the nominated governor, then they should approach the Vice Chair of Governors.

5.2 Within 48 hours, the nominated governor will contact you to arrange to meet with the employee to discuss concerns. Before the meeting, it would be helpful if the employee writes down what the problem is, giving names, dates and places where possible. If there are any other documents that may be helpful, they should be brought to the meeting if possible. The employee is advised to take a friend, colleague or professional association/trade union representative to the meeting with the governor.

5.3 Employees are encouraged to raise concerns in person, or through their professional association/trade union representative, because concerns that are expressed anonymously are difficult to investigate. However, the College 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
- the likelihood of being able to confirm the allegation from attributable sources

## **6 HOW THE COLLEGE WILL RESPOND**

6.1 After the initial meeting, the nominated governor will arrange for discreet initial enquiries to be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take.

6.2 The nominated governor will write to the employee within 10 days of the initial meeting to:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received
- outline his/her understanding of what the issues are
- indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter

6.3 If the nominated governor decides that it is appropriate for an investigation to be carried out, this will either be done by them, or by a governor who is asked to investigate – the investigating officer. However, it may sometimes be necessary for a concern to be referred to the police, an external auditor, or for it to be the subject of an independent enquiry. In addition, where it is established that the complaint involves issues of bullying or unlawful discrimination, it will be necessary to involve the College's legal advisers.

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

## **7 HOW WILL THE COLLEGE TREAT WHISTLEBLOWERS?**

7.1 If an employee makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. If an employee knowingly makes malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against the employee.

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

7.3 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.

- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 The Governing Body will make every effort to protect an employee's identity when she/he raises a concern and does not want her/his 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 may be required as part of the evidence.
- 7.6 If an employee raises a concern, they will be given the opportunity to feed back any issues or problems they may have experienced as a result. The purpose of this is to ensure that employees who have raised concerns in good faith do not suffer as a result.

*Approved: 2017  
Review: 2018*