

# HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL



## Whistle Blowing Policy

<b>Date agreed</b>	Draft TBC
<b>Next review date</b>	June 2027

## 1. Statement of Commitment

Holy Family Catholic School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, accountability and safeguarding.

The Governing Body recognises that a culture in which concerns can be raised openly and honestly is essential to maintaining high standards of conduct and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and the wider school community.

All staff, governors, volunteers, agency workers, contractors and others working on behalf of the school are encouraged to raise concerns where they believe wrongdoing, malpractice or unsafe practice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.

No individual who raises a genuine concern under this policy will suffer disadvantage, victimisation or detriment as a result of speaking up.

***As a Catholic school, Holy Family Catholic School is committed to promoting a culture of honesty, integrity, dignity and respect, recognising the unique value of every person. We encourage all members of our community to speak up where they have concerns, ensuring that the welfare of children and the common good remain at the heart of all decision-making.***

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage individuals to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide a clear framework for reporting concerns.
- Ensure concerns are investigated fairly and appropriately.
- Promote a culture of transparency and accountability.
- Protect individuals who raise concerns in the public interest.
- Support the school's commitment to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

This policy reflects the requirements of:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- The Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)
- The School's Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy

- Grievance Policy

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Agency workers
- Volunteers
- Governors
- Contractors and consultants
- Apprentices
- Supply staff
- Individuals undertaking work experience
- Any person working on behalf of the school

This policy should be used where concerns relate to wrongdoing that affects others or the wider public interest.

Concerns relating solely to an individual's own employment circumstances should normally be addressed through the school's Grievance Policy.

### **4. What is Whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is the reporting of concerns regarding suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, misconduct or illegal acts occurring within the school.

Examples include:

- Safeguarding failures.
- Abuse or neglect of a child.
- Criminal offences.
- Fraud, theft or financial irregularity.
- Corruption or bribery.
- Breach of statutory obligations.
- Misuse of public funds.
- Health and safety risks.
- Deliberate concealment of wrongdoing.
- Serious breaches of school policies.
- Conduct that damages public confidence in the school.

- Discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- Abuse of authority or position.

This list is not exhaustive.

## **5. Safeguarding Concerns**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Any concern that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering harm must be reported immediately in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Whistleblowing procedures do not replace safeguarding reporting procedures. However, concerns regarding the actions or omissions of staff, leaders, governors or others in relation to safeguarding may be raised under this policy.

Examples include:

- Failure to act upon safeguarding concerns.
- Attempts to suppress safeguarding information.
- Unsafe recruitment practices.
- Inappropriate relationships with pupils.
- Failure to follow statutory safeguarding guidance.

Where safeguarding concerns involve the Headteacher, concerns should be raised directly with the Chair of Governors and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## **6. Protection for Whistleblowers**

The school will not tolerate:

- Harassment
- Bullying
- Victimisation
- Discrimination
- Detriment
- Retaliation

against any individual who raises a concern in good faith.

Any employee who victimises or retaliates against a whistleblower may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Protection applies even where an investigation concludes that no wrongdoing occurred, provided the concern was raised honestly and reasonably.

## **7. Confidentiality and Anonymous Reports**

The school will make every effort to protect the identity of an individual who raises a concern.

However, there may be circumstances where disclosure of identity becomes necessary as part of an investigation or legal proceedings. Where possible, this will be discussed with the individual beforehand.

Anonymous concerns will be considered but may be more difficult to investigate.

When deciding whether to investigate an anonymous concern, the school will consider:

- The seriousness of the allegation.
- The credibility of the information provided.
- The likelihood of obtaining corroborating evidence.

## **8. How to Raise a Concern**

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible.

Employees should normally raise concerns with:

1. Their Line Manager.

If this is not appropriate, concerns should be raised with:

2. A member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If concerns involve senior leaders:

3. The Headteacher.

If concerns involve the Headteacher:

4. The Chair of Governors.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing and should include:

- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant dates and times.
- Names of those involved.
- Any supporting evidence.
- Details of any witnesses.

Individuals are not expected to prove allegations but should have a reasonable belief that the information disclosed is true.

## **9. Investigation Process**

Upon receiving a concern:

- An acknowledgement will normally be issued within five working days.
- A preliminary assessment will be undertaken.
- The appropriate course of action will be determined.

This may include:

- Internal investigation.
- Referral to safeguarding agencies.
- Referral to the Local Authority.
- Referral to the police.
- Referral to external auditors.
- Referral to regulatory bodies.

The investigating officer will maintain appropriate records throughout the process.

The whistleblower will normally receive updates regarding progress, subject to confidentiality and legal constraints.

## **10. Outcomes**

Following investigation, the concern may be:

- Substantiated.
- Partially substantiated.
- Unsubstantiated.
- Unfounded.

Appropriate action will be taken where concerns are upheld.

This may include:

- Disciplinary action.
- Policy review.
- Staff training.
- Changes to procedures.
- Referral to external agencies.

## **11. Malicious or Knowingly False Allegations**

Individuals who raise concerns honestly and in good faith will be supported.

However, where it is determined that an allegation has been deliberately fabricated, maliciously made or knowingly false, disciplinary action may be taken.

## **12. Raising Concerns Externally**

Where an individual believes that concerns have not been appropriately addressed internally, concerns may be raised with prescribed external bodies, including:

- Local Authority
- Ofsted
- Department for Education
- Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- Police
- Charity Commission
- External Auditors
- Professional Regulatory Bodies
- Trade Unions

Further information regarding whistleblowing rights can be found via GOV.UK.

Confidential information must not be disclosed inappropriately when reporting concerns externally.

## **13. Record Keeping**

The Headteacher will ensure that a confidential record is maintained of:

- Concerns raised.
- Investigations undertaken.
- Outcomes.
- Actions implemented.

Records will be retained in accordance with data protection legislation and the school's records retention schedule.

#### **14. Monitoring and Review**

The Governing Body will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.

An annual report on whistleblowing activity, anonymised where appropriate, may be provided to governors.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or operational requirements change.