



## Whistleblowing Procedure

### Aim & Scope

St Stephen's Junior School Academy Trust, hereafter known as St Stephen's Academy, is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. We encourage employees and others working with us to raise any concerns of suspected wrongdoing, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated and that their confidentiality will be respected.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees, volunteers or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

This procedure is separate from the academy's Complaints Procedures and other statutory reporting procedures. Managers are responsible for making staff and service providers aware of these procedures.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affects an individual.

This procedure aims to ensure individuals are:

- encouraged to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provided with avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- given a response to their concerns and are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied.
- reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief any disclosure has been made in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable individuals to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment including issues relating to harassment and bullying. This procedure is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other complaint processes.

### What is Whistleblowing?

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but aren't limited to):

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur the result of which St Stephen's Academy fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, sexual or physical abuse of staff or pupils or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- disclosures related to past, current or likely miscarriages of justice



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- past, current or likely Health and Safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- past, current or likely damage to the environment
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest.

Concerns about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff or St Stephen's Academy Members or others acting on behalf of St Stephen's Academy, can be reported under the Confidential Disclosure Procedure. This may be about something that you:

- feel uncomfortable about in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe St Stephen's Academy subscribes to
- is against the St Stephens's Academy's Standing Orders and policies
- falls below established standards of practice
- amounts to improper conduct .

St Stephens's Academy's Safety Complaints Procedure should be used to raise any issues, concerns or complaints of a health and safety nature and which are not confidential.

### **Whistleblowing procedure**

#### When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples above when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

#### Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the School Manager or Finance Manager. If the concern is about the School Manager or Finance Manager, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to the Chair of Governors/Trustees.

#### How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

#### Investigating the concern

When a concern is received by the School Manager or Finance Manager- referred to from here as the 'recipient' - they will:

- Meet with the person raising the concern within a reasonable time. The person raising the concern may be joined by a trade union or professional association representative
- 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 recipient should handle the concern in line with the appropriate policy/procedure



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- 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.
- Explain that confidentiality will be maintained where possible

	Contact Name	Email
Chair of Governors/Trustees	Vic Hester	vhester@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk
School Manager	Jayne Dowkes	admin@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk
Finance Manager	Nik Oakes	finance@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk
Independent Helpline	PUBLIC CONCERN AT WORK	020 3117 2520

St Stephen's Academy has an **Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement** and all suspected financial irregularities must be reported to the Internal Auditor – Wilkins Kennedy 01233 629255

The action the academy takes will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- be investigated internally by management, Internal Audit or through the disciplinary or other internal process
- be referred to the Police
- be referred to the External Auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and St Stephen's Academy, 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 within the scope of specific procedures (e.g., child protection or discrimination issues), will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

### Outcome of the investigation

Within 10 working days of the investigation – whether this was just the initial investigation of the concern, or whether further investigation was needed – being completed, the investigating person(s) 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 local authority or police.

They will inform the person who raised the concern of the outcome of the investigation, though certain details may need to be restricted due to confidentiality.

Beyond the immediate actions, the headteacher, trustees and other staff if necessary will review the relevant policies and procedures to prevent future occurrences of the same wrongdoing.



Whilst we cannot always guarantee the outcome sought, we will try to deal with concerns fairly and in an appropriate way.

## **Malicious or vexatious allegations**

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.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

## **Escalating concerns beyond the trust**

The trust encourages staff to raise their concerns internally, 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 below.

- Public Concern at Work 020 3117 2520
- National Audit Office 020 7798 7999
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- a solicitor
- the Police

If a matter is taken outside the academy, you must take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidential or privileged information is not disclosed. If in doubt, check with the named academy contacts

## **Support**

The academy will take steps to minimise any difficulties you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the academy will advise or arrange for you to have advice about the procedure.

St Stephen's Academy will not tolerate harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take action to protect individuals who raise a concern in good faith.

St Stephen's Academy accepts that you need to be assured that concerns will be properly addressed and, subject to legal constraints, will provide information about the outcomes of any investigations.

## **Public Interest Disclosure**

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives employees safeguards in respect of disclosures of information.