



Saint Fatima School – Nasr City (SFS)

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY FOR SFS SCHOOL STAFF

SFS is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness, probity and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, to ensure that all its activities are open and effectively managed, and that integrity and principles of public interest disclosure are sustained.

In line with that commitment we encourage our staff and others that we deal with who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns with a member of the DDSL or DSL, or any member of the senior management team of SFS. Where a member of staff decides to report a serious incident, whether anonymous or not, this will be treated as a 'protected, internal disclosure' i.e. there will be no adverse repercussions for the member of staff.

All the school staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they, their colleagues and others working in the school follow safe working practices so that students are kept safe at all times. The school staff must also understand that they have a duty to report unsafe practices that could lead to a child being harmed or put at risk of harm. Failure to report such practices may lead to disciplinary action being taken against them if as a result of the failure to report, a child is harmed or put at risk of harm.

Whistle Blowing Policy Rationale

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In the



circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

This policy document makes it clear that a staff member of SFS can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This confidential reporting policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns **within** the school rather than overlooking a problem or “blowing the whistle” outside.

This policy applies to all school staff including full and part time, casual, temporary, agency staff, individuals undertaking work experience in the school, volunteers and all contractors working for the school on school premises, for example drivers and builders.

These procedures are also in addition to the SFS’ Complaints Policy.

Aims and Scope of Policy

This policy aims to:

- ✓ give confidence to members of staff about raising concerns about conduct or practice which is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies so that they are encouraged to act on those concerns;
- ✓ provide members of staff with avenues to raise concerns;
- ✓ ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken;
- ✓ offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable members of staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This policy does not enable them to raise a concern about a breach of their own contract of employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

This policy covers whistleblowing relating to alleged:

- ✓ sexual, physical or emotional abuse of members of staff or students;
- ✓ health and safety issues including risks to the public as well as risks to students and members of staff;
- ✓ action that has caused or is likely to cause physical danger to any person or risk serious damage to school property;
- ✓ unlawful conduct;
- ✓ miscarriages of justice in the conduct of statutory or other processes;
- ✓ failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation;
- ✓ potential maladministration, misconduct or malpractice;
- ✓ action that has caused or is likely to cause danger to the environment;
- ✓ abuse of authority;
- ✓ fraud or corruption;
- ✓ mistreatment of any person;
- ✓ unfair discrimination or favouritism;
- ✓ racist incidents or acts, or racial harassment;
- ✓ inappropriate use of social media and other technologies;
- ✓ any attempt to prevent disclosure of any of the issues listed.



Safeguard Against Reprisal, Harassment and Victimisation

The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of members of staff when matters are raised in accordance with our good faith. Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with the whistleblowing policy will be dealt with under the school's staff disciplinary procedures. The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. It also recognizes that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to safeguard students.

SFS recognises that support will need to be provided to the staff member, at the time the allegation is raised, during the investigation itself and following the outcome of the investigation. The nature and type of support offered will need to be discussed and agreed with the individual staff member.

SFS will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern.

Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect you.

Confidentiality

The school recognises that members of staff may want to raise concerns in confidence and will do its utmost to protect the identity of members of staff who raise a concern and do not want their name disclosed.



However, investigation into the concern could reveal the source of the information; and statements may be required from the member of staff as part of the evidence, which would be seen by all parties involved.

Anonymous Allegations

Staff should put their name to allegations whenever possible - anonymous concerns are much less powerful. Nonetheless anonymous allegations may be considered under this whistleblowing procedure especially concerns raised relating to the welfare of children. In relation to determining whether an anonymous allegation will be taken forward the school governing body will take the following factors into account:

- ✓ the seriousness of the issue raised;
- ✓ the credibility of the concern;
- ✓ the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources, and obtaining information provided.

Untrue and Malicious/Vexatious Allegations

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by further inquiry the matter will be closed and no further action taken. If, however, the inquiry shows that untrue allegations were malicious and/or vexatious or made for personal gain then the school governing body will consider taking disciplinary action against the member of staff. In the most serious of cases this may include dismissal.

Allegations Concerning Child Protection Issues

If an employee raises a concern relating to a child protection issue, the Head Teacher (or the Principal, or the School Governor) or the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead must deal with the matter in accordance with the school's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*.

Procedure for Making a Whistleblowing Allegation

Concerns should be expressed to the Head Teacher or the Principal. If the concerns involve the Principal, then the Board of Governors should be the first point of contact.

If the member of staff feel they cannot express their concerns within the school, it is open to them to raise their concerns with someone outside the school setting from the list of organisations in the section of this policy 'Taking the Matter Further'.

Where the concern relates to a child protection matter the school *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* must be followed. If the concern needs to have Police or other authority involvement, the whistleblowing process will be halted until such authorities have completed their investigations and confirmed that it is appropriate to continue with the whistleblowing process.

The member of staff should put their concern in writing for the avoidance of doubt. They should set out the background and history of the concern; giving names, dates and places where possible, and explaining the reason for their concerns. If they feel unable to put the matter in

writing, they can still raise their concern verbally and should telephone or arrange to meet the appropriate person.

It is recommended that the whistleblowing written concern is presented as a filled out Whistleblowing Disclosure Form, which can be downloaded from the school's website, and submitted either via e-mail/hard copy to the relevant person or placed in the Complaints and Suggestions Box.

Response to Whistleblowing

The matter raised may:

- ✓ need to be passed to the Police if it relates to alleged criminal activity;
- ✓ need inquiry internally in the school.

At this stage concerns/allegations are neither accepted nor rejected.

Timescale for Response

The member of staff will normally receive a written response within 5 school days (except in the case of anonymous allegations):

- ✓ acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- ✓ indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
- ✓ giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- ✓ advising whether any enquiries have been made;
- ✓ advising whether further enquiries will take place;
- ✓ informing them of support available whilst matters are looked into and following the outcome of the investigation;
- ✓ maintaining confidentiality wherever possible.

The Inquiry Process

The person receiving the allegation will be the Head Teacher unless the concern involves the Head Teacher in which case the Principal or the School Governors will be the first point of contact.

Where there is a concern about a child protection matter, the school's DSL may also be the first point of contact. There will be a duty on the first point of contact to deal promptly with the matter, to become the contact point for the employee raising the concern and write to the staff member within 5 school days to advise them how their concern will be addressed.

If an investigating officer needs to talk to the member of staff, they are permitted to be accompanied by a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work to which the concern relates.

The first point of contact will seek to keep the staff member informed of progress with their concern in a timely manner. However, the timescales to be followed will vary depending on the nature of the issue raised and the procedure that is being followed to address the matter.

The Report

A report will be produced following an investigation into the concern in accordance with the appropriate process. The matter and action to be taken, if any, will be determined by the person(s) who are identified in the procedure as having the delegated authority to deal with the matter. The school accepts that the staff member needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, the member of staff will be informed when an investigation has been concluded. The Head Teacher must report, in a general way, all whistleblowing cases on a termly basis to the Principal.

All information relating to the disclosure of information will be securely held. Accurate information relating to any subsequent investigation will be retained securely and where allegations have been proven to be unfounded this will be clearly recorded.

Taking the Matter Further

If no action is to be taken and/or the member of staff is not satisfied with the way the matter has been dealt with, they can raise their concerns with other organisations as listed below:

- ✓ the local authority

- ✓ a relevant professional body or regulatory organisation
- ✓ the Police - for concerns of criminal behaviour
- ✓ or other relevant organization/body

Revised by:

QA Manager: J. Kovalenko

Principal: M. Alfred

Date: 5. August, 2022