

St Vincent's Catholic Primary School



Whistleblowing Policy

Approved by: Governing Body

Last reviewed on: September 2025

**Next review due
by:** September 2026
Governing Body

Mission Statement

“We live, love and learn with Christ.”

At St Vincent’s Catholic Primary School, we aim to provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment where everyone feels valued, respected and supported. We promote a culture of honesty, integrity and accountability, where concerns can be raised openly and confidently. As a school community, we are committed to safeguarding children, maintaining high professional standards and continually improving our practice.

1. Introduction

St Vincent’s Catholic Primary School is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty, integrity and accountability.

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an organisation. However, they may feel unable to express concerns because they fear repercussions, victimisation, or believe that speaking up may be disloyal to colleagues or the school.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage and enable employees and others working with the school to raise serious concerns internally at an early stage and in an appropriate way.

The school is committed to creating a culture where:

- all concerns are taken seriously;
- individuals feel safe to speak up;
- concerns are investigated fairly and appropriately;
- no individual suffers detriment for raising genuine concerns.

Whistleblowing is an essential part of safeguarding and promoting a strong culture of accountability and transparency.

This policy has been written in line with:

- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Academy Trust Handbook
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- all school employees;
- agency staff;
- contractors;
- volunteers;

- governors;
- supply staff;
- trainees and apprentices;
- anyone working on behalf of the school.

This policy is intended for concerns where there is a public interest issue involved rather than a personal employment grievance.

Examples of whistleblowing concerns include:

- safeguarding failures;
- unsafe practice;
- criminal offences;
- fraud or financial irregularity;
- failure to comply with legal obligations;
- health and safety risks;
- abuse of authority;
- unethical conduct;
- deliberate concealment of wrongdoing;
- misuse of public funds;
- breaches of professional standards;
- concerns about leadership culture;
- actions likely to damage the reputation of the school or Trust.

Concerns relating to an employee's own employment or contractual position should normally be raised through the school's Grievance Procedure.

Complaints from parents or members of the public should be raised through the school's Complaints Procedure.

3. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility.

Any concerns relating to:

- the safety or welfare of a child;
- unsafe safeguarding practice;
- allegations against adults working with children;
- low-level concerns about adults;
- behaviour that may pose a risk to children;
- safeguarding culture within the school;

must be reported immediately in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Staff should never assume that someone else has reported a concern.

There should be no culture of silence where safeguarding concerns are involved.

Where appropriate, concerns may be referred to:

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Children’s Social Care;
- the Police;
- the Trust safeguarding lead;
- Ofsted;
- the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

4. Protection for Whistleblowers

The school recognises that raising concerns can be difficult.

No individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith will suffer harassment, victimisation, disciplinary action or any other detriment as a result of whistleblowing.

Examples of detrimental treatment include:

- bullying or harassment;
- denial of promotion or training;
- unfair monitoring;
- exclusion from opportunities;
- disciplinary sanctions;
- dismissal;
- unfavourable treatment;
- intimidation or threats.

Any employee who subjects another person to detrimental treatment for whistleblowing may face disciplinary action.

Individuals who believe they have suffered detriment should raise this through the Grievance Procedure.

5. Confidentiality

The school hopes that individuals will feel able to raise concerns openly.

However, where confidentiality is requested, the school will make every effort to protect the identity of the whistleblower.

There may be circumstances where confidentiality cannot be maintained, including:

- where disclosure is required by law;
- where safeguarding concerns require referral;
- where the Police or courts require disclosure;
- where evidence is needed as part of formal proceedings.

Information relating to whistleblowing concerns will be handled sensitively and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Records will be stored securely and access limited to those who need to know.

6. Anonymous Allegations

Anonymous concerns are discouraged because they can be more difficult to investigate fully.

However, anonymous allegations will still be considered depending on:

- the seriousness of the concern;
- the credibility of the allegation;
- the likelihood of confirming the information.

7. Malicious or False Allegations

If a concern is raised in good faith but is not upheld following investigation, no action will be taken against the individual raising the concern.

However, where an allegation is found to be knowingly false, malicious or vexatious, disciplinary action may be taken.

8. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised with:

- the Headteacher; or
- the Deputy Headteacher.

If the concern relates to the Headteacher, it should be raised with:

- the Chair of Governors; or
- the Chief Executive Officer of the Trust.

If the concern relates to the Chair of Governors, it should be raised directly with:

- the CEO of the Trust; or
- the Trust Board.

Concerns should preferably be made in writing and include:

- the nature of the concern;
- relevant dates and times;
- names of individuals involved;
- any evidence available;
- details of witnesses;
- whether confidentiality is requested.

Individuals are not expected to prove allegations but should have reasonable grounds for concern.

Staff may seek advice from:

- their trade union;
- professional association;
- Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work);
- legal adviser.

Employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague at meetings relating to whistleblowing concerns.

9. How the School Will Respond

The school will take all concerns seriously.

The Headteacher is the designated officer responsible for overseeing whistleblowing concerns unless the concern relates to the Headteacher.

Upon receipt of a concern, the school may:

- undertake an internal investigation;
- refer the matter to external agencies;
- refer the matter to the Police;
- involve safeguarding authorities;
- commission an independent investigation.

Initial enquiries may be carried out to determine whether a full investigation is necessary.

Where possible, the whistleblower will:

- receive acknowledgement of the concern;
- be informed how the matter will be progressed;
- receive updates where appropriate;
- be informed when the investigation has concluded.

The school may not be able to provide full details of outcomes where confidentiality obligations apply.

10. Escalating Concerns Externally

Where individuals feel unable to raise concerns internally, or believe concerns have not been addressed appropriately, they may contact:

- Ofsted
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Police
- Protect
- relevant professional or regulatory bodies

- Member of Parliament

Individuals should seek advice before disclosing confidential information externally.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and Local Governing Body will monitor the operation and effectiveness of this policy.

The policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following changes in legislation;
- following updated safeguarding guidance;
- or following significant incidents or concerns.

12. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Behaviour Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Online Safety Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Health and Safety Policy