

ST. PATRICK'S P.S. HILLTOWN

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY



NOVEMBER 2024

St Patrick's PS

Vision statement

St Patrick's Primary School is a catholic school where staff, governors and parents are committed to progressing in partnership to provide the right for each child to become the best they can be in a caring inclusive respectful community.

Our values are based on

Faith fairness friendship compassion courage

hope inclusion kindness learning growth

respect pride partnership teamwork trust

Our Mission Statement

St Patrick's Primary School is a welcoming Catholic community centred on Christ, where His Values and Gospel message is lived out through life in our school, in our thoughts, words and deeds.

We are committed to working in partnership, with the home and parish, in developing each child's personality, talents and abilities to the highest standards, in a mutually supportive and caring environment.

We will nurture our pupils' self-worth, and promote a spirit of respect, inclusion and tolerance towards others, with recognition of the value of other people, regardless of gender, ability, social or cultural background.

We expect all in our community to work hard to achieve our aims.

We show our commitment to working as a learning school through:

- Continuing professional development of all staff.
- Reflective practice in learning and teaching.
- Listening to the pupil voice.
- Promoting and sharing of good practice.

St Patrick's Primary School aims

1. To promote a caring, inclusive environment, where our Catholic ideals, values, and beliefs form the foundation of our whole school community through home, school and parish.
2. To cultivate in children, respect for themselves and others, where they have a healthy tolerance for all beliefs and respect for property and environment.
3. To help each child grow and develop spiritually, morally, intellectually, culturally, emotionally and physically so they become caring and responsible citizens of the future.
4. To develop a positive growth mind-set towards life and a love of learning.
5. To give the opportunity to achieve the highest standard of skill and knowledge in all curricular activities, enabling our children to become articulate, literate and numerate with early intervention in place as required.
6. To develop enquiring, imaginative, and creative minds with the ability to question, and reason rationally, enabling them to become highly motivated, independent, and confident life-long learners, in an ever-changing society.
7. To develop the pupils' skills of understanding our world through scientific, historical, geographical, and religious inquiry, fostering an awareness of their responsibilities to care for their local and wider environment.
8. To ensure our children become independent and confident learners through innovative teaching in a stimulating and well-resourced learning environment.
9. To strengthen our partnership where Staff, School Governors, Parents/Guardians, and community work with each other for the successful achievement of these aims.
10. To endorse the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and work towards the implementation of policies and practices which reflect the Convention.

1. Introduction

St Patrick's PS is committed to adopting high standards in and will treat any malpractice as a serious matter. Employees are often the first to suspect or realise that there may be something wrong in their place of work but may not express concerns because of feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or fears of harassment or victimisation.

In line with our commitment to openness, probity and accountability, all employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of work in St Patrick's P.S are encouraged to report them, and if necessary, in certain circumstances, on a confidential basis.

2 The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998

2.1 The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, also known as the **'Whistleblowers Act'** provides protection for employees who disclose information which may be regarded as confidential and which tends to show one or more of the following:

- 2.1.1 a criminal offence has been, is being, or is about to be committed;
- 2.1.2 the employer is failing to comply with his legal obligations;
- 2.1.3 a miscarriage of justice has happened or is likely to happen;
- 2.1.4 an individual's health and safety is being jeopardised;
- 2.1.5 the environment is, or is likely to be damaged; and
- 2.1.6 information falling into any one of the above categories which has been, is being or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

2.2 An employee must have a reasonable belief that a crime has or may be committed. An employment tribunal will decide whether or not such a belief was reasonable.

2.3 In deciding whether or not an employee has acted reasonably, all circumstances will be taken into consideration but in particular,

- the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made;
- the seriousness of the relevant 'offence';
- whether the 'offence' is continuing or is likely to occur in the future;
- whether the disclosure is made in breach of a duty of confidentiality owed by the employer to any other person;
- any action the employer or prescribed person might reasonably be expected to take as a result of a previous disclosure; and
- whether in making the disclosure to the employer the employee complied with procedures applied by the employer.

2.4 Protection applies where 'external' disclosures are made to such bodies as the police. In such instances St Patrick's Primary School would expect to be satisfied that internal sources

had been advised first or that the teacher/s believed they would have been victimised or evidence would have been concealed or destroyed. External disclosures must be made in good faith in the belief that allegations are substantially true and there should be no motive for personal gain.

3 Application of Policy

- 3.1 The Policy applies to all teaching staff of St Patrick's Primary School both full and part-time, temporary and substitute. References to teachers within the Policy covers all these categories.
- 3.2 The Policy aims to provide an avenue for staff to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken. Staff may take matters further if they are dissatisfied with responses received. Staff will be reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.
- 3.3 This policy is intended to cover concerns which fall outside the scope of other procedures which already are included in or covered by other Policies e.g. bullying and harassment, discrimination, etc.

4 Protection of Staff

- 4.1 The Board of Governors is committed to this Policy. If any employee raises a concern in good faith, CCMS will protect them against harassment or victimisation and will, if necessary, apply disciplinary procedures.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 an employee cannot be dismissed or selected for redundancy as a result of making a disclosure in good faith.
- 4.3 Employees who already are the subject of disciplinary, grievance or redundancy procedures will not have those procedures stopped or suspended as a result of their whistleblowing.

5 Confidentiality

- 5.1 The Board of Governors recognises that employees may want to raise concerns in confidence under this policy.
- 5.2 If an employee requests that their identities be protected, the Board of Governors will endeavour to honour that request.
- 5.3 If a situation arises where a concern cannot be resolved without revealing the employee's identity, the Board of Governors will discuss with the employee whether and how progress can be made. It may be that evidence, either written or verbal, is required in court proceedings.

6 **Anonymous Reports**

- 6.1 The Board of Governors of St Patrick's P.S encourage all employees to put their names to allegations because concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. However, they shall be investigated with details of the findings and the actions recorded.

7 **Independent Advice**

- 7.1 If someone is unsure whether or how to raise a concern or if they want confidential advice at any stage, they may contact their union. They may also contact the independent charity **Public Concern at Work** on **0207 7404 6609** or by email at helpline@pcaw.co.uk. Their lawyers can explain the options and help to raise a concern about malpractice at work. More information is available via the website www.pcaw.co.uk

8 **Procedures for expressing concerns**

- 8.1 All whistleblowing matters should be reported in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and marked as Private and Confidential. Contact details are provided below:

<p>Mr Eugene Byrne Chairperson of the Board of Governors C/o St Patrick's P.S, 13, Castlewellan Road, Hilltown, BT345UY</p>

8.2 This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns within St Patrick's P.S. If he/she is not satisfied and feels it is right to take the matter further, the list below shows possible contact points:

- The Chairperson of the Board of Governors or a representative thereof;
- Department of Education
- His/Her Solicitor
- The PSNI
- The Northern Ireland Ombudsman

8.3 Prescribed persons are responsible for investigating allegations that fall under their prescribed role and for protecting the whistleblower and their interests whilst investigating.

9. How we will handle the matter

9.1. Once a person has reported a concern, an assessment will be made in relation to what action should be taken. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Where it is decided that a formal investigation is necessary the overall responsibility for the investigation will lie with a nominated 'investigation officer'. In any event, the person who reported the concern will be told within 7 working days who is dealing with the matter, how they can contact that person, and whether further assistance may be needed. If they request it, a summary of the concern will be produced and the proposal for how the issue will be handled.

10. Abuse of this Procedure

10.1. It is expected that employees will use these procedures with integrity. However, use of these procedures to:

- Make cynical, frivolous, mischievous vexatious allegations;
- Distract from other issues;
- Divert attention from or action in the application of other procedures;
- Defame or perpetrate malicious falsehoods;

is likely to constitute misconduct and render the complainant subject to investigation and disciplinary penalty.

11. Conclusion

Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that the person raising the concern might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly.

12. Review Procedure

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils, parents, and Governors. It will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required, to ensure that the information contained is appropriate and amendments will be made where necessary, following consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Date Policy	November 2024
Date Policy to be Reviewed	November 2027
Signed: <i>Mrs Orla Rowley</i>	Designated Teacher
Signed: <i>Mrs Geraldine Smith</i>	Principal
Signed: <i>Mr Eugene Byrne</i>	Chair of Board of Governors