

# The Whistleblowing Policy

## for St Mary Federation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As a stakeholder of St. Mary Federation you may be the first to realise that there could be something seriously wrong. However, you may feel that speaking up would be disloyal to your colleagues or to St Mary Federation. You may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

1.2 St Mary Federation is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and accountability. We expect staff, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of St Mary Federation's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

1.3 The purpose of this Policy and the accompanying Whistleblowing Procedure is to make it clear that you can raise your concerns in confidence without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. St Mary Federation encourages you to raise serious concerns in the first instance **within** St Mary Federation rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside, and we would rather that you raised the matter when it is just a concern rather than waiting for proof.

1.4 You should continue to raise appropriate concerns with relevant external agencies such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, and utility regulators.

1.5 The Policy and Procedure applies to all staff and those contractors working for St Mary Federation on St Mary Federation premises, for example, agency staff.

1.6 St Mary Federation recognises staff may wish to seek advice and be represented by their trade union representative when raising a concern under the Policy, and acknowledges and endorses the role trade union representatives play in this area. Trade union representatives acting in accordance with the Policy and Procedure will not suffer detriment in their employment with St Mary Federation.

## 2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

2.1 This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns;
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied;
- reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have raised any concern in good faith.

2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge grievances relating to their employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, including the corporate complaints procedure. This Policy therefore includes your concerns about:-

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
- harassment of others\*;
- sex, race or disability discrimination against others\*;
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- damage to the environment;
- the unauthorised use of public funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- sexual or physical abuse of clients;
- breaches of St Mary Federation's policies;
- anything that makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe St Mary Federation subscribes to; or
- other unethical or improper conduct (not otherwise included in this list)
- concealing information about any of these matters

\* Complaints relating to harassment of, or discrimination against, you will be dealt with under the specific procedures relating to those matters.

2.3 It should be emphasised that this Policy is intended to assist individuals who have discovered malpractice or serious wrongdoing, provided they make the disclosure in accordance with the Policy. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the Federation/Local Authority nor may it be used to reconsider any matters that have already been addressed under the harassment, complaint or disciplinary procedures. Individuals who make disclosures outside the

arrangements set out here will not be protected under this Policy and may not be protected under the Act.

### **3. ST MARY FEDERATION'S PROMISE TO YOU**

3.1 St Mary Federation is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of staff and others who work for St Mary Federation.

3.2 St Mary Federation recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you raise your concern based on reasonable belief and in good faith, you have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and the public and The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 will protect you from dismissal or other detriment. If your concern is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

3.3 St Mary Federation will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith, even if you are genuinely mistaken in your concerns. Any harassment or victimisation of a whistleblower may result in disciplinary action against the person responsible for the harassment or victimisation.

3.4 Any investigations into allegations arising from your whistleblowing will not influence or be influenced by any other personnel procedures to which you may be subject.

### **4. CONFIDENTIALITY**

4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. If we are not able to resolve your concern without revealing your identity (e.g. because your evidence may be needed in Court), we will discuss this with you.

### **5. ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS**

5.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

5.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but may be considered by St Mary Federation taking into account:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

5.3 The Executive Headteacher will decide in each case whether a complaint made anonymously should be investigated.

## **6. THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

6.1 The Executive Headteacher and the Chair of Governors, have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this Policy. The Executive Headteacher will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not endanger your confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Governing Body.

**Reviewed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**Signed .....**

**John Ward, Chair of Governors**

**Next Review Date: Spring 2019**