

The St Michael Steiner School

Whistle Blowing Policy and Guidance for Employees

This guidance is written for staff working with children and young people at the St Michael Steiner School. Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the designated safeguarding lead. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think what if I'm wrong – think what if I'm right

Reasons for whistle blowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistle-blowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner it is possible for action to be taken.
- Try to pinpoint what is causing you concern and why.
- Approach someone you trust and who you will believe will respond.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response- don't let matters rest.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- You may also approach any of our trustees.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The school has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Self-reporting

There may be occasions when a member of staff has a personal difficulty, maybe a physical or mental health problem which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their colleagues in order that professional and personal support may be offered to the member of staff concerned.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

A culture of openness and understanding where members of staff feel comfortable to confide when personal circumstances i.e. tiredness, home life, health, make them short-tempered, etc. However a strong ethic of what is expected as professional behaviour goes hand in hand within this supportive environment. Our own meditative and study life as individuals and school colleagues strengthens us.

Further advice and support

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the designated safeguarding leads, the trustees and the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship as well as Hounslow Children's Specialist Services. The NSPCC have a Whistleblowing advice line for professionals who have concerns about how workplace child protection issues are being handled. The number is 0800 020 0285. This is a free and anonymous service.