

The St Michael Steiner School

Whistle Blowing Policy and Guidance for Employees

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when someone raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity or any wrongdoing within their organisation.

Raising a concern is known as "blowing the whistle" and is a vital process for identifying risks to people's safety.

Sharing information or talking through a concern can be the first step to helping an organisation identify problems and improve their practices. NSPCC 2018

This guidance is 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 (DSL) or deputy (DDSL). 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 repercussions for yourself. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. 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.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern:

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness to the DSL or DDSL 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.
- If you don't feel ready to speak to the DSL, approach someone you trust and who you believe will respond.
- You may also approach any of our trustees.
- Try to pinpoint what is causing you concern and why.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing.
- You will not be expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response- don't let matters rest.

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 DSL, DDSLs and the trustee responsible for Safeguarding, as well as Hounslow Children's Services and the NSPCC.

The DSL is:

Dorothea van Breda (dorotheavanbreda@stmichaelsteiner.com)

The DDSLs are:

Amanda Bell, (amandabell@stmichaelsteiner.com)

Julian Coxon (juliancoxon@stmichaelsteiner.com)

Maria da Costa (mariacosta@stmichaelsteiner.com)

The trustee responsible for Safeguarding is:

Roy Allen (royallen@stmichaelsteiner.com)

You can also visit the NSPCC website which has a dedicated page on Whistleblowing: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>

The NSPCC has a Whistleblowing advice line for professionals who have concerns about how workplace child protection issues are being handled.

The number is 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

This is a free and anonymous service.

Review date: April 2023



Approved by Chair of trustees on behalf of trustees

April 2022