**St Andrew’s School Inverurie Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**

Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

**Introduction**

The School and Head teacher are committed to Openness, Honesty and Integrity, and expects all staff to maintain high standards of conduct in accordance with their contractual obligations and the School’s policies and procedures. Additionally, the vulnerability of our pupils means that there is a greater demand placed upon us so that all of our actions, words and ethos supports all staff to be the best that they can be at all times.

However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of **openness and accountability** is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

This procedure should only be used where all other existing internal procedures are felt to be inappropriate or when a member of staff, for whatever reason, feels inhibited in going through the normal line management.

**Aims of Policy**

* To encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;
* To provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns;
* To reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be a mistaken.

This policy does not form part of an employee’s contract of employment and is not intended to have contractual effect. It is provided for guidance to all members of staff at the School and the School reserves the right to amend its content at any time.

**What is whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

* criminal activity;
* child protection and/or safeguarding concerns; \* See note at the end of this policy
* miscarriages of justice;
* danger to health and safety;
* damage to the environment;
* failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
* negligence;
* breach of the school’s internal policies and procedures including its Code of Conduct;
* conduct likely to damage the School’s reputation;
* unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;

A ‘whistleblower’ is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the School’s activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

**Raising a whistleblowing concern**

The School hopes that in many cases Staff will be able to raise any concerns with their Line Manager, speaking to them in person or putting the matter in writing if they prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving a concern quickly and effectively.

However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your Line Manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact the Head teacher

The Head teacher will arrange a meeting with the ‘whistleblower’ as soon as practicable to discuss their concern. They will record sufficient details to enable the matter to be thoroughly investigated. As a minimum the Head teacher will record the name of the employee but also indicate whether the individual wishes his or her identity to remain confidential, if possible and the nature of the concern. In some cases it will not be possible to maintain confidentiality and the Headteacher should explain this to the employee. In such instances the employee will have the choice of either withdrawing or agreeing to his/her identity becoming known to enable the concern to be effectively dealt with.

**Confidentiality**

The School hopes that Staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wants to raise his or her concern confidentially, the School will endeavour to keep his or her identity secret in so far as it is possible to do so when following this policy and procedure. If it is necessary for anyone investigating that member of staff’s concern to know the ‘whistleblower’s identity, the School will discuss this with the member of staff first.

The School does not encourage Staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if the School cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. ‘whistleblower’s who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the contacts listed above and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

**Investigation and outcome**

Once a member of Staff has raised a concern, the School will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. The School will inform the ‘whistleblower’ of the outcome of its assessment. The member of staff raising the concern may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

The School will aim to keep the member of staff informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the School from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The member of staff is required to treat any information about the investigation as strictly confidential.

If the School concludes that a ‘whistleblower’ has made false allegations maliciously, in bad faith or with a view to personal gain, the ‘whistleblower’ will be subject to disciplinary action under the School’s Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Whilst the School cannot always guarantee the outcome a particular member of staff is seeking, the School will try to deal with the concern fairly and in an appropriate way. If a member of staff is not happy with the way in which his or her concern has been handled, he or she can raise it with one of the other key contacts outlined above.

**Protection and support for the ‘whistleblower’**

It is understandable that ‘whistleblower’s’ are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. The School aims to encourage openness and will support Staff who raise genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern in good faith. Detrimental treatment would include dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If a member of staff believes that he or she has suffered any such treatment, he or she should inform the Head teacher immediately.

Staff must not threaten or retaliate against ‘whistleblower’s’ in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

All Staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Headteacher in the first instance.

**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 action can be taken.
* Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
* Approach your immediate manager, Head teacher, or the Designated Child Safeguarding Officer.
* If your concern is about your immediate manager/ Head teacher, or you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school contact The Local Authority
* Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don’t let matters rest.
* A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

**What happens next?**

You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries. Your employer 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.

Allegations made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain will be seen in a different light and disciplinary action may be taken.