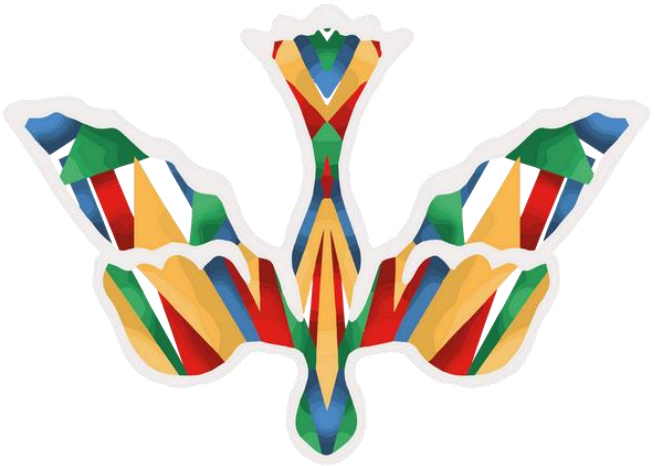
Whistle Blowing Policy

The McAuley Catholic High School



Approved:	January 2025
Next review :	January 2026

1 - This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors, paid and unpaid, working in the school including governors.

1.1 This guidance should be read in conjunction with:
The Doncaster Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures
Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021)
Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)
The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including Prevent)

1.2 The School is committed to delivering services of the highest possible standard, having a culture of safety and of raising concerns where staff are valued and reflective practice is promoted. Therefore, we welcome and encourage you (and others) to come forward and voice any concerns that you have about any aspect of the School's work, including poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime, so that they can be dealt with effectively. We want you to feel able to raise concerns within the School without fear of reprisals, rather than overlooking a problem. The school promotes a culture of transparency and accountability in relation to how concerns are raised and handled, so you should feel supported in coming forward.

1.3 Employees must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult, this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

1.4 As an employee you may be the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the School. However, you may not feel able to express your concerns because you feel that speaking up would be disloyal to your colleagues or to the School. You may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier for you to ignore the concern rather than report it. 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 child or young person who is 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

2 - Reasons for whistleblowing

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

3 - What concerns should you raise?

Concerns that fall within the scope of the whistleblowing policy may be about something that:
3.1 is unlawful; or
3.2 is against the School's policies; or
3.3 falls below established standard or practice; or
3.4 amounts to improper conduct.
3.5 where you believe that the internal processes in school are not robust enough to safeguard a child
3.6 Remember: as a School employee, you have the right to raise concerns, which could be about the actions of other employees or private contractors and, under the School's Health & Safety Policy, you are expected to raise concerns about potential health and safety risks.
3.7 If you are concerned about something to do with your own terms and conditions of employment, you should raise this under the School's Grievance Procedure.

4 - Self-reporting

4.1 Any person employed by the school must report immediately to the Head any convictions they receive.
4.2 There may be occasions when an employee has a personal difficulty, maybe a physical or mental problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.
4.3 Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.
4.4 Please note: before blowing the whistle you should consider the following:
• the responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all employees;
• you should use staff meetings and other opportunities to raise questions and seek clarification on issues that concern you;
• whilst it can be difficult to raise concerns about the practice or behaviour of a colleague, you must act to prevent the problem getting worse, to reduce potential risks to the health and safety of others, and to prevent yourself potentially being implicated.

5 - How should you raise a concern?

5.1 The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier and sooner it is possible to take action.
As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your:
• immediate line manager; OR
• the Deputy Head or Head for more serious worries.
5.2 However, if you believe that management is involved, you should approach:
• the Chair of Governors
5.3 In some cases it may be appropriate for you to ask your trade union to raise the concern on your behalf.
Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, stating clearly:
• the background and history of the concerns;
• names, dates and places where possible;
• the reasons why you are particularly concerned about the situation; AND
• your name and post title. (Concerns provided anonymously are much less powerful, are not likely to be as effective and will be considered at the discretion of the School).
• If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet the appropriate person from the list given above.

5.4 Although you will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person, whom you contact, that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.
Remember: the earlier you express a concern, the easier and sooner it is possible for the School to take action.

5.5 - What happens next?

Once you have raised a concern the School will:
• give you information on the nature and progress of any enquiries;
• take action to protect you from harassment or victimisation;
• provide mediation and dispute resolution if appropriate
• do its best to protect your identity if you do not want your name disclosed (although this might not be possible in all cases, especially if a signed statement is needed from you in order to address the concern via another procedure, e.g. the disciplinary procedure); and
• take no action against you, if you raise a concern, in good faith, that is later confirmed to be unfounded.

5.6 - The School will make initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with you), to decide whether an investigation is required and what form it should take.

For example, the matter raised may:

- be resolved simply without the need for further investigation;
- be investigated internally by an appropriate manager;
- be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer for advice;
- be referred to the Police;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

6 - Concerns or allegations that raise issues covered by other School policies/procedures will normally be addressed under those procedures, e.g. disciplinary, health and safety, grievance, child protection and adult abuse procedures.

6.1 Within ten working days of your concern being received, the person receiving the concern will send you a written response:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- indicating how he/she proposes to deal with the matter;
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and/or
- indicating whether any initial enquiries have been made, and whether further investigations will take place; or
- explaining the reasons for not investigating further if that is the decision; and/or
- indicating when you can expect to receive further details, if the situation is not yet resolved.

6.2 Remember: if your concern, once investigated, is confirmed as unfounded, the School will deem the matter to be concluded and will not expect you to raise the matter via another procedure, or with the person on the list given above, unless new evidence becomes available.

Please note that, if there is clear evidence that you have deliberately made a malicious or false statement, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

6.3 - The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday

Remember: if you raise a concern externally, it is your responsibility to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed, i.e. you must not hand over confidential information, in whatever format, to a third party.

7 - Further advice and support

7.1 It is recognised that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from the Deputy Head and/or your professional body or trade union. You can also seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school.

* Public Concern at Work is a registered charity that you can contact for advice on how to raise a concern at work about poor practice. The charity will also provide the School with advice as to the best possible ways to address your concern(s).

The Designated Safeguarding Lead, Prevent Strategy Lead and Behaviour Lead.