WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors, paid and unpaid, working in Salesian College including governors. On-going training is provided on whistleblowing as part of the safeguarding and child protection training by the college in keeping with its specific Salesian identity; to develop principally as a place of "loving kindness". The College has adopted this policy and the accompanying procedure on whistleblowing to enable members of staff to raise concerns internally and in a confidential fashion about fraud, malpractice, health and safety, criminal offences, miscarriages of justice, a failure to comply with legal obligations, inappropriate behaviour or unethical conduct. The policy also provides, if necessary, for such concerns to be raised outside the organisation. Members of staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern, including low-level concerns, 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. Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right. Transparently doing the right thing for the educational and personal welfare of the school community, constitutes a hall mark of the Salesian Preventive System.

ABOUT THIS POLICY

The College is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. In keeping with its Salesian identity, a culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.

AIMS

The College's policy on whistleblowing is intended to demonstrate that it:

- will not tolerate malpractice, prejudice or discrimination;
- encourages staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated, as appropriate;
- encourages a culture of safety and of raising concerns;
- encourages a culture of valuing staff and of reflective practice;
- respects the confidentiality of staff raising concerns and will provide procedures to maintain confidentiality so far as is consistent with progressing the issues effectively;
- will provide the opportunity to raise concerns outside of the normal line management structure where this is appropriate;
- will only invoke the College's disciplinary procedure in the case of false, malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations. The policy seeks to reassure staff that they can raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisal, even if they turn out to be mistaken; and
- will provide a clear and simple procedure for raising concerns, which is accessible to all members of staff

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This procedure is separate from the College's adopted procedures regarding grievances. Individuals should not use the whistleblowing procedure to raise concerns relating to their own personal

circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work. In those cases, the College's Grievance Procedure Policy should be used, as appropriate. If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this procedure you should first seek advice from the Head or the Bursar. This procedure is to enable members of staff to express a legitimate concern regarding suspected malpractice within the College.

Malpractice is not easily defined; however, it includes allegations of fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff code of conduct, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment (negligence).

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to suspected malpractice within the College. If staff have any genuine concerns related to suspected malpractice affecting any of the College's activities (a whistleblowing concern) they should report it under this procedure.
If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the College or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may report their concerns to other whistleblowing channels, such as:

- Protect, an independent whistleblowing charity, previously known as Public Concern at Work (helpline: 020 3117 2502, email: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk, website: www.pcaw.co.uk).
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (tel: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk).

CONFIDENTIALITY

The College hopes that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. However, if they wish to raise a concern confidentially, the College will make every effort to keep staff identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know staff identity, this will be discussed with the member of staff. If there is evidence of criminal activity then the Police will in all cases be informed. The College does not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously.

RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

It is hoped that in many cases staff will be able to raise any concerns with the Head or the Bursar. However, where the matter is more serious, or staff feel that their concern has not been addressed, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, they are at liberty to raise a whistleblowing concern with the Chair of Governors.

A meeting will be arranged as soon as possible/practical to discuss the concern. Staff may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Their companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. Staff may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information as the concerns raised are investigated.

Any concern raised will be investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner, and appropriate corrective action will be pursued. Staff will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. Whenever possible and subject to third party rights, they will be informed of the resolution. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent the College giving staff specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Staff should treat any information about the investigation as confidential. If they are not satisfied that their concern is being properly

dealt with, they will have a right to raise it in confidence with the Governing Body. Alternatively, they can follow the external procedure below.

EXTERNAL PROCEDURES

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in college. In most cases staff should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally. However, where all internal procedures have been exhausted, a member of staff shall have a right of access to an external person/body. This may include (depending on the subject matter of the disclosure) HMRC, the Audit Commission, the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the disclosure relates to a child protection issue. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate for staff to alert the media.

It should be noted that under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, there are circumstances where a member of staff may be entitled to raise a concern directly with an external body where the individual reasonably believes:-

- that exceptionally serious circumstances justify it;
- that the College would conceal or destroy the relevant evidence;
- where they believe they would be victimised by the College; or
- where the Secretary of State has ordered it.

MALICIOUS ACCUSATIONS

False, malicious, vexatious or frivolous accusations will be dealt with under the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

PROTECTION FROM REPRISAL OR VICTIMISATION

It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

No member of staff will suffer a detriment or be disciplined for raising a genuine and legitimate concern, providing that they do so in good faith and following the Whistleblowing procedures. If staff believe that they have suffered any such treatment, they should inform the Head or Bursar immediately. If the matter is not remedied, they may raise it formally using the College's Grievance Procedure. Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If staff are involved in such conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

This Whistleblowing Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:
2.12 Staff Code of Conduct
2.24 Staff Grievance Policy
9.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2023-24 (Appendix G)
9.2.2 Child on Child Abuse Policy

FURTHER INFORMATION

Freedom to Speak Up Report: freedomtospeakup.org.uk
Whistleblowing procedure for maintained schools: www.gov.uk/whistleblowing-procedure-for-maintained-schools
Whistleblowing: www.gov.uk/whistleblowing
Whistleblowing to Ofsted about safeguarding in local authority children's services (April 2014): www.safeguardinginschools.co.uk/ofstedwhistleblowing
Whistleblowing Reports to the PCAW in 2013: www.safeguardinginschools.co.uk/pcaw2013

POLICY CONTROL	
Author	Deputy Head
SLT Approved Date	June 2024
Governors Approved Date	19 June 2024
Review schedule	Biennial
Date of next review	01 June 2026