WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

St George's CE Primary School

September 2026

Person responsible for policy and implementation	Executive Headteacher / Head of School
Approval	Governing Body
Review frequency	Annually, and following significant changes to legislation or guidance
Date approved	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Linked policies	Child Protection and Safeguarding; Staff Code of Conduct; Grievance; Disciplinary; Complaints; Health and Safety; Data Protection

1. Introduction

St George's CE Primary School is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. Staff and others working with the school should feel able to raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing, malpractice, unsafe practice or failures in safeguarding without fear of victimisation or reprisal.

This policy provides a clear route for raising concerns in the public interest. It is intended to support early reporting so that concerns can be considered and addressed appropriately.

If in doubt - raise it.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to employees and, where appropriate, agency and supply staff, volunteers, contractors and others carrying out work on behalf of the school. The statutory protection available to an individual will depend on whether the legal requirements for a protected disclosure are met.

Whistleblowing is generally concerned with wrongdoing that affects others or the wider public interest. It is different from a personal employment complaint.

- A personal complaint about an employee's own employment or treatment should normally be raised through the Grievance Procedure.
- A complaint from a parent, carer or member of the public about the school should normally be raised through the school's Complaints Procedure.
- A safeguarding concern about a child must be acted on immediately in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.

- A safeguarding concern or allegation about an adult working with children must be reported through the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, including the school's arrangements for low-level concerns.

3. Legal Framework

The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, provides protection for workers who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest through the appropriate channels. These are commonly known as protected disclosures.

A worker may be protected where they reasonably believe that the information disclosed tends to show that one or more of the following has happened, is happening or is likely to happen:

- a criminal offence;
- a breach of a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health or safety of any individual;
- damage to the environment;
- sexual harassment; or
- the deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above.

Whether a disclosure is legally protected depends on the circumstances. Staff who are unsure may seek independent advice before or after raising a concern.

4. Our Assurances to You

4.1 Protection from detriment

The Executive Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to a culture in which genuine concerns can be raised safely. A person who raises a genuine concern should not suffer harassment, victimisation or other detrimental treatment because they have spoken up.

It does not matter if a genuine concern later proves to be mistaken. However, deliberately making an allegation known to be false may be dealt with under the appropriate school procedure.

4.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Concerns may be raised confidentially. Where a person asks for their identity not to be disclosed, the school will respect this as far as it lawfully and practically can. There may be circumstances in which identity needs to be disclosed, for example where evidence is essential to an investigation; where possible, this will be discussed with the person first.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, but anonymity can make it more difficult to investigate a matter, seek further information, provide feedback or offer the same level of protection to the person raising the concern.

5. How to Raise a Concern Internally

You do not need firm proof of wrongdoing before raising a concern. Explain as fully as you can the information or circumstances that have caused concern. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Step 1 - Line Manager, Head of School or Executive Headteacher

In most cases, concerns should first be raised with your line manager, the Head of School or the Executive Headteacher, depending on the nature of the concern and who is involved.

Step 2 - Chair of Governors

If you feel unable to raise the matter through Step 1, or the concern involves the Executive Headteacher, you should raise the matter with the Chair of Governors, Mrs J Bach.

Step 3 - Salford City Council Internal Audit / Corporate Counter Fraud

If you feel unable to use the school routes, or believe it is appropriate to raise the matter with the local authority, Salford City Council's Internal Audit / Corporate Counter Fraud arrangements may be used. Current published contact routes include:

- confidential whistleblowing / counter-fraud hotline: 0808 100 1235;
- email: audit@salford.gov.uk;
- post: Internal Audit, Salford Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, Salford, M27 5AW;
- the council's online fraud / whistleblowing reporting route.

If you want the matter treated confidentially, say so at the outset.

6. Safeguarding Whistleblowing

All staff must read Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 Part One in full and follow the school's safeguarding procedures. Concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practice, or potential failures in the school's safeguarding provision, must be taken seriously.

At St George's, the DSL is Mrs S Downey and the Deputy DSL is Mrs L Peters. Staff should raise safeguarding concerns internally without delay. Where a member of staff feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern internally, or believes a genuine concern is not being addressed, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line provides an alternative route on 0800 028 0285.

7. How the School Will Handle a Concern

The school will acknowledge receipt of a whistleblowing concern within 10 school days where contact details have been provided. The concern will be assessed and the appropriate next steps determined. This may involve an initial review, an internal inquiry, a formal investigation or referral to another body.

Where possible and appropriate, the person raising the concern will be told who is handling the matter, how they can be contacted, whether further information is required and, where requested, the broad proposed approach and likely timescale.

Concerns that fall more appropriately under another procedure, such as safeguarding, grievance, disciplinary, complaints or fraud procedures, may be redirected. Matters within the remit of an external organisation may be referred to that organisation.

Where possible, feedback will be provided about the outcome. However, confidentiality, data protection, employment law or the rights of others may limit the detail that can be shared.

8. Independent Advice

A person who is unsure whether or how to raise a concern may seek confidential advice from their trade union or professional association, a legal adviser, or Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity.

9. External Disclosures and Prescribed Persons

There may be circumstances in which a worker makes a disclosure outside the school. The Government maintains a current list of prescribed people and bodies to whom certain disclosures may be made. The correct body depends on the subject of the concern.

A person considering an external disclosure should check the current Government guidance and, where appropriate, obtain independent advice. The legal tests for protection can differ depending on who receives the disclosure.

For child-protection failures, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line is an established alternative route for education staff who feel unable to raise a concern internally or have concerns about the way a matter is being handled.

10. Money Laundering, Fraud and Financial Irregularity

Suspected fraud, corruption, theft, money laundering or other financial irregularity should be raised promptly through the appropriate school and/or Salford City Council route. Staff must not alert a person whom they suspect of criminal financial activity where doing so could prejudice an investigation or amount to unlawful "tipping off".

Where there is doubt about the correct route, staff should seek advice from the Executive Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Salford City Council Internal Audit / Corporate Counter Fraud, unless one of those individuals or functions is implicated in the concern.

11. Records, Confidentiality and Data Protection

Records of whistleblowing concerns will be handled securely and confidentially, with access limited to those who need the information to consider, investigate or oversee the matter. Records will be retained in accordance with the school's data-protection and records-management arrangements.

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for oversight of this policy and for ensuring that appropriate records of concerns and outcomes are maintained, subject to confidentiality requirements.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will monitor the operation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where there is a significant change to legislation, statutory guidance, local authority arrangements or school procedures.

13. Key References

- Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- GOV.UK: Whistleblowing for employees and current list of prescribed people and bodies
- Salford City Council: Internal Audit / Corporate Counter Fraud arrangements
- St George's CE Primary School Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy