



## **Our Mission Statement – the reason our College exists**

### **“Learning & Growing in the Light of the Gospel”**

*With Christ at the centre of our learning, we:*

- *Help young people to achieve their greatest potential*
- *Guide their intellectual growth, nurture their God-given talents, and inspire them to live in service to others*
- *Aim to develop honest, confident, responsible and compassionate members of society, based on the educational values of Blessed Antonio Rosmini*

## **Our Vision Statement – the long-term change resulting from our work**

### ***“Strength of Mind, Strength of Values, Strength of Purpose”***

#### ***Strength of Mind***

We aim to enable our students to be truly independent thinkers and to think ‘big’ ideas, using their creative instincts. We aim to empower our students to develop resilience through a growth mind set adopting a ‘not yet...’ rather than a ‘can’t do...’ attitude to their learning and their personal development. We aim to develop young people to become critical thinkers with the capacity for original thought and ideas. We aim to cultivate young minds to accept and welcome failure as a natural part of self-improvement and personal growth – how can we know how to improve unless we first fail?

#### ***Strength of Values***

Ratcliffe College’s educational ethos and Christian values are emphasised by a strong sense of moral purpose and commitment to doing what is right for children and young people. With Christ at the centre of our learning, we educate young people to live their lives based on the Gospel Values: faithfulness and integrity, dignity and compassion, humility and gentleness, truth and justice, forgiveness and mercy, tolerance and peace, service and sacrifice.

As Christians, we hear the call of the Gospel to seek perfection by loving God and others with all our strength, anchored by our School motto, *Legis Plenitudo Charitas*: ‘Love is the fulfilment of the Law’. We aim to educate young people to see Christ in others and to help those less fortunate than themselves or those in need. As a through school with children from 3 to 18, we aim to instil a deep sense of community and belonging to the Ratcliffe College family of Schools: Nursery, Preparatory and Senior.

#### ***Strength of Purpose***

Finally, we aim to educate young people to have a strong sense of who they are and their purpose in the world. We aim to inspire our young people to become the leaders of the future. Our aim is to nurture the God-given talents of every student, whether academic or part of the co-curriculum, so that they achieve their greatest potential and are equipped academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually to go forth and make a positive difference to the communities in which they live and work.

## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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### RATIONALE

#### Definition of 'Whistleblowing'

Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker passes on information concerning wrongdoing – making a disclosure or blowing the whistle. The wrongdoing will be typically, although not necessarily, something they have witnessed or believe to be happening at work.

To be covered by whistleblowing law, a worker who makes a disclosure must reasonably believe two things. The first is that they are acting in the public interest. The second is that they must reasonably believe that the disclosure tends to show past, present or likely future wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- That a crime has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed.
- That a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject.
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.
- That the health and safety of an individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered.
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged.
- That information tending to show any of the above has been concealed, is being, or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

The whistle blowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the School in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee towards a student or colleague is inappropriate or that safeguarding policy or other guidelines including the Staff Code of Conduct are not being followed.

Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- speaking inappropriately towards a child;
- bullying, humiliation or aggressive behaviour towards a student/colleague;
- showing favouritism towards a specific group of children or child/colleague;
- contravening health and safety guidelines;
- serious breaches of the School's code of ethical practice;
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards;

- compromising students' welfare but in a way that does not meet the threshold for child protection intervention;
- developing inappropriate relationships with a child's parents to gain access to a child.

### **Reasons for blowing the whistle**

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, each individual must take responsibility for ensuring that students are fairly treated. If poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

### **Our Commitment**

Ratcliffe College is committed to achieving a high standard of integrity and accountability with an open and honest culture of co-operation. In line with this commitment, we encourage employees with serious concerns about any aspects of the organisation's work to come forward and voice those concerns with us. Employees can raise concerns without fear of harassment or detriment and we will ensure that all complaints will be given full and proper consideration.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is possible. It is guaranteed at the point of making a protected disclosure and will be maintained during investigations and hearings, other than when there is a need for disclosure of identity due to cross-examination of the staff member as a witness in any subsequent procedure. In some cases, where the individual is considered to be at risk, evidence may be given in such a way as to protect the identity of the individual concerned.

The person making the disclosure and the person the disclosure is about have the right to be accompanied and/or represented by their trade union representative or a work colleague at all stages of the procedure.

The organisation will implement training, mentoring, advice and other support systems to ensure employees can easily approach a range of people within the organisation.

### **Reporting procedure**

- It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member were involved.
- You may raise your concern verbally or ideally in writing. The report should include: background and history of concern, names, dates and places where

possible, as well as the reason why the employee making the disclosure is particularly concerned about the situation. If verbally communicated the employee should arrange to meet the person they have decided to make the disclosure to and that person should seek advice from HR if relevant/necessary.

- You should report your concern directly to the Headmaster or in an emergency report to the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- If the Headmaster is the subject of your concern, speak to the Chair of Governors.
- A friend, colleague or union representative may accompany you to the meeting, and subsequent meetings, if you wish and you may request for these to happen off-site if appropriate.
- Ensure the Headmaster or Chair informs you of their proposed action and sets a date for a second meeting.
- Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial inquiry but the case should not be allowed to stall and you should receive initial feedback within 10 working days. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed. This communication will include: acknowledging that the concern has been received; indicating how it is proposed to deal with the matter; giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; telling the employee whether any initial enquiries have been made; telling the employee whether further investigations will take place, and if not, the reason why.
- Ask for clarification about confidentiality and ensure that you have your wishes regarding the protection of your identity recorded.
- Steps will be taken to minimise any difficulties which the employee may experience as a result of raising a concern, and appropriate support will be provided. For instance, if the employee is required to give evidence in disciplinary or criminal proceedings, HR will advise the employee about the procedure.
- The whistle blowing procedures also apply to all those staff working within the boarding community.

### **Next steps**

- The Headmaster or Chair will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred. If it is not appropriate for the Headmaster or Chair of Governors to do this, it may be investigated internally by another appropriately skilled and experienced individual, knowledgeable in the area concerned.
- Members of the school community, including governors, may be asked to provide information or advice.
- External advice, for example, from legal or human resources or children's services, may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct established facts and outcome of the inquiry will be kept.
- The whistle blower will be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry. If the employee is dissatisfied with the response, s/he can put their concerns in writing

to the Chair of Governors who will arrange any further investigation as appropriate. If the Chair of Governors has already been involved in the case, they should not be approached at this stage. Instead, the employee can put their concern to someone else within the organisation but external to their place of work. HR can provide advice if necessary.

- If once the facts have been established and it is decided an investigation is appropriate, further advice will be sought. This will be to establish what form the investigation should take and which specific concerns or allegations are subject to investigation and from which specific guidelines this should be conducted in conjunction with, e.g. Child Protection, Health and Safety.
- Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action by the manager with whom the employee raised the matter without the need for investigation.
- Any employee who is the subject of the allegation should be given details of the allegation in order to respond and to be adequately represented during the investigation. Any employee in this position is strongly advised to seek advice/representation from their trade union.

### **Blowing the whistle externally**

In some circumstances an employee will want to 'blow the whistle' outside of the organisation. In all cases the employee is encouraged to exhaust all internal procedures before contacting external agencies. This whistleblowing policy is designed to reduce the need for external disclosure and to encourage cooperation, cohesiveness and honesty.

An employee may make an external disclosure to an outside agency without losing their rights to make a protected disclosure to certain third parties under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), as incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996.

One option for external whistleblowing is via 'prescribed persons'. Prescribed persons are mainly regulators and professional bodies. A complete list of prescribed persons can be found at: [gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies)

Any employee who approaches the media with their concerns is likely to lose their rights under whistleblowing law. In doing so an employee cannot be acting for personal gain and must reasonably believe the information they disclose is substantially true. If an employee bypasses this internal procedure or a prescribed person before contacting the media, they must reasonably believe that the organisation will subject them to detriment for making the disclosure internally.

### **Harassment or victimisation**

We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. We will not

tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect the employee when s/he has raised a concern. This does not mean that if the employee is already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, those procedures will be halted as a result of confidential reporting. If an employee feels they have been treated unfairly as a result of making a disclosure, they can decide to take the case to an employment tribunal. It is strongly advisable for any employee considering this course of action to seek advice from their HR department/union representative.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality at the point of raising a complaint with the person who it is made to is guaranteed and all steps will be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained throughout the process. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information if it is required by law to reveal it.

### **Anonymous allegations**

It may be appropriate for anonymous complaints to be made although employees are encouraged to make their identity known. Concerns expressed anonymously will still be investigated but the process may be hampered if there need to be follow-up enquiries but the employee making the disclosure cannot be contacted.

If an employee makes an anonymous allegation it can be more difficult for them to qualify for protection as a whistleblower. This is because there would be no documentary evidence linking the worker to the disclosure for a tribunal to consider.

In the case of an anonymous allegation, the following factors will be taken into account when establishing the scope and depth of the investigation:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources and information.

Employees can make a disclosure via their trade union rather than personally, in order to further maintain confidentiality. In this circumstance the employee making the disclosure will still be protected by the workers' legal right to make a protected disclosure to certain third parties under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), as incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996.

### **The outcome of the inquiry will be one of the following:**

- No poor practice or wrong doing is established and the case is closed
- The concern has some substance, and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the Headmaster to improve practice

- Poor practice or wrong-doing is established and disciplinary proceedings are initiated
- The concern is more serious, and an investigation is initiated. This investigation may involve the local authority's legal team, children's social care or the police.
- If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, children's social care will be immediately involved.

### **Malicious allegations**

If an employee makes a malicious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against him or her under the disciplinary policy. In determining whether an employee has acted in a malicious and/or vexatious way, the investigator will consider whether the employee was motivated to make the allegation(s) simply out of a desire to pursue a personal vendetta or grudge.

**NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline Telephone: 0800 028 0285**

**Web:** [www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing)

Written in conjunction with all other policies but with specific reference to the following:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality Policy