

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Last Review:	March 2014
Approved by Governors:	March 2015
Next Review:	March 2017

Vision

Loreto College is centred in God, rooted in Christ and animated by the spirit of Mary Ward, the founder of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our vision is that it will be an educational community where each person has the experience of being loved and valued as a sacred individual created by a loving God; a community where students enjoy an enriching and liberating education that helps them grow into the fullness of life and empowers them to be men and women of courage who are alive to the needs of humanity and committed to making a better world.

Introduction

The College aims to be an educational community which gives expression to the core values of Mary Ward - freedom, justice, sincerity, truth, joy, excellence and internationality.

Loreto College has the highest expectations of personal, academic and professional excellence. This document sets out the College's policy and guidance on the procedures it will follow in the event that a member of staff raises a legitimate concern about a specified matter i.e. whistleblowing. Whilst ensuring it fulfils all associated legal responsibilities, the college will be mindful of its Mission and core values. It will exercise its duty of care to all its staff and students and will endeavour to act at all times with justice, compassion and respect for the dignity and worth of all those involved in the process.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Safeguarding Policy.

Preamble

The public interest disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith by an employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. It is not necessary for the worker to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. The worker has no responsibility for investigating the matter - it is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

A worker who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, or subjected to victimisation, because he/she has made the disclosure.

The College encourages workers to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If a worker is not sure whether to raise a concern, he/she should discuss the issue with his/her line manager or the personnel department.

The advantages of a procedure for whistleblowing are as follows:

- to provide a channel and process for individual employees to raise genuine and legitimate concern;
- to deter serious malpractice;
- to avoid crisis management and public criticism;
- to promote accountability throughout the college.

It gives everyone the opportunity to act professionally and with propriety and forestall the media circus which inevitably accompanies allegations of fraud or dishonesty.

Procedure

Staff must have confidence that they will be free to disclose their concerns without prejudice or penalty and with total confidentiality.

At the outset of a problem, staff should recognise the importance of selecting someone outside the area of difficulty. Legitimate concerns should be raised if they are in the interests of the college, staff, students or the public and should not be raised merely for the purpose of furthering any private dispute. Where an employee has concerns about a possible malpractice and it is not appropriate to raise them through other procedures such as grievance procedures, they should be raised with:

- either a. the employee's line manager
or b. where appropriate, with a senior manager or principal
or c. where both (a) and (b) are inappropriate, with the Chairman of Governors.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Colleagues who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)
- the reason for the particular concern about the situation.

The employee may be accompanied by either a trade union representative or work colleague during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

How the College will Respond

Where appropriate the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police
- be referred to the external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Within **ten** working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person (a, b or c above) will reply in writing:

- 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
- stating whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying information on staff support mechanisms and
- stating whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

At the conclusion of any investigation or action, the colleague who raised the concern will be informed of any outcomes.