



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

March 2019

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1 The College is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect staff and others that we deal with and who have serious concerns about any aspect of the College's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy is intended to encourage and enable staff and others to raise serious appropriate concerns **within** the College rather than overlooking a problem or immediately resorting to external avenues. Staff are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the College and this policy seeks to encourage and reassure those who genuinely feel there may be something wrong.
- 1.2 The policy applies to all staff and governors and also those contractors working for the College on College premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the College.
- 1.3 These procedures are in addition to the College's complaints procedures and any other statutory reporting procedures.

2. OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy aims to:
- encourage staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
 - provide avenues for staff to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
 - ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that staff are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
 - reassure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that a disclosure has been made in good faith.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to lodge a grievance relating to their employment or users of the College to complain about the quality of service. This policy on whistle blowing and dealing with fraudulent matters is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of these and other procedures. Concerns might include but are not limited to:
- Unlawful acts or practice
 - Unauthorised use of public funds
 - Fraud and corruption

- Serious Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees – beyond the scope of the College Health and Safety Policy
- Sexual or physical abuse of students – beyond the scope of the College Student Protection Policy
- Damage to the environment
- Other unethical conduct.

3. HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

- 3.1 The College is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of staff who raise concerns in good faith. The College will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith.
- 3.2 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that might affect you.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY & ANONYMITY

- 4.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible. However, all concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.
- 4.2 Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the College subject to:
- the seriousness of the issues raised
 - the credibility of the concern; and
 - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

5. UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

- 5.1 If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation that is determined to have been made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

6. RAISING A CONCERN

6.1 As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with the relevant Associate Principal or Strategic Director of Financial & Physical Resources and, where they might be implicated in your concern, with another member of the Senior Leadership / Management Team. Depending on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and whom is suspected of the malpractice it may in certain circumstances be appropriate to raise the issue directly with the Principal, the Clerk to the Governors or the Chair of Governors.

6.2 If the concern is related to the governance of the College then the following reporting matrix applies.

| Allegation against: | Allegation should be communicated to: |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| The Finance & Resources Committee | The Chair of the Audit Committee |
| The Audit Committee | The Chair of Governors |
| The Chair of Governors | The Chair of the Audit Committee |
| The Governing Body | The Clerk to the Governors |
| An individual Governor | The Chair of Governors |

6.3 The earlier you express your concern the easier it is to take action. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff 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 why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

6.4 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

6.5 You may also wish to consider confidentially discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

- 6.6 You may invite your trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

7. HOW THE COLLEGE WILL RESPOND

- 7.1 The College will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them. Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:
- investigated by management or through the disciplinary process
 - referred to the police
 - referred to the College Auditors
 - the subject of an independent inquiry.
- 7.2 Where the concern does not implicate the Principal, all confidential reporting matters will be brought to the attention of the Principal, who is the Responsible Person for the purposes of this policy. The Responsible Person will maintain a record of all such reports and their outcomes and communicate these, as appropriate, to the Governors
- 7.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If necessary, the College will seek further information. Where any meeting is arranged, the person raising the concern may be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.
- 7.4 The overriding principle which the College will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, misconduct or discrimination issues) will normally be considered under those procedures.
- 7.5 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 7.6 Where practicable to do so, within ten working days of a concern being raised, the Responsible Person will write to you to:
- acknowledge that the concern has been received
 - indicate how we propose to deal with the matter
 - give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
 - tell you whether any initial enquiries have been made

- supply you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
- tell you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

7.7 The College accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the outcome of any investigation.

7.8 The College will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the College will arrange for you to receive appropriate advice.

8. HOW THE MATTER MIGHT BE TAKEN FURTHER

8.1 This policy provides you with an avenue within the College to raise your concerns. The College hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the College, the following are possible avenues you may wish to consider:

- the Education Commission (Catholic Diocese of Southwark)
- Public Concern at Work, a registered charity whose services are free and strictly confidential <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>
 - the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
 - the College Auditors
 - your trade union
 - your local Citizens Advice Bureau
 - relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
 - the police.

8.2 If you do decide to take the matter outside the College you should ensure that you do not disclose any confidential information. Any direct contact with the media may be the subject of disciplinary procedures.

9. RELATED POLICIES: Available to download from the College website and Intranet

9.1 Anti-Fraud, Corruption, Bribery and Malpractice Policy

9.2 College Financial Regulations

10. PUBLICATION AND REVIEW

- 10.1 This policy will be approved by the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Audit Committee and published on the college website and intranet.
- 10.2 This policy will be reviewed in March 2021 or in response to changes in legislation, regulation or guidance.

APPENDIX: HELPFUL CONTACTS

| Name | Telephone | Electronic |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Principal | 020 8772 6000 | s.flannery@sfx.ac.uk |
| Clerk to the Governors | 020 8772 6062 | e.lewis@sfx.ac.uk |
| Chair of Governors | via the Clerk to the Governors | |
| Strategic Director of Financial & Physical Resources | 020 8772 6009 | a.taylor@sfx.ac.uk |
| Associate Principal, Ethos & Welfare | 020 8772 6047 | c.graham@sfx.ac.uk |
| Associate Principal, Curriculum | 020 8772 6030 | g.thompson@sfx.ac.uk |
| Education Commission | 01689 829 331 | ecenquiries@rcaos.org.uk |
| Public Concern at Work | 020 3117 2520 | whistle@protect-advice.org.uk |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | www.citizensadvice.org.uk | |
| Police | 101 | content.met.police.uk/Borough/Wandsworth/Contact |