



Whistleblowing Policy

'Where Happy Children Grow'

UN CRC Article 12

Children have the right to give of their opinion and for it to be heard

Ratified by Governors:	March 2024
Review Date:	September 2025

Our Ethos and Vision:

Knockloughrim Primary School will always be concerned with creating a caring, Christian learning community in which every member feels valued, supported and happy. All staff will strive to provide an ethos in which fairness, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness permeate all relationships within the school community. High standards of respect, self-discipline, commitment and sensitivity will be sought and everyone will be encouraged to set and achieve the highest personal, academic and social goals. The safety, welfare and development of everyone in our school community will be of paramount importance to all staff.

In Knockloughrim Primary School the pastoral care structures are based on a shared understanding that:

- Each person is unique and worthy of respect.
- Pastoral care is for the entire school community and not just for those experiencing difficulties.
- Each member of the school community has responsibility for the caring life of the school.
- Pastoral care permeates the life of the school.
- Pastoral care avails of the support and expertise provided by statutory and voluntary bodies in the wider community.
- Appropriate resources, policies, procedures and training are provided to ensure the effective implementation of the pastoral care programme.
- This stated ethos is clearly evidenced in the daily operation of the school with a clear sense of purpose and identity present among both pupils and staff. This is supported by the maintenance and development of a high quality learning environment.

Time, effort and attention is allocated to ensuring that positive relationships exist at all levels within the stakeholders of our school community and this investment is rewarded by staff and pupils consistently working together in a purposeful and supportive manner.

Introduction

Knockloughrim Primary School is committed to adopting high standards and will treat any malpractice as a serious matter. Employees are often the first to suspect or realise that there may be something wrong in their place of work but may not express concerns because of feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or fears of harassment and victimisation.

In line with our commitment to openness, probity and accountability, all employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of work in Knockloughrim Primary School are encouraged to report them, and if necessary, in certain circumstances, on a confidential basis.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1988

The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order, also known as the 'Whistleblowing Act' provides protection for employees who disclose information which may be regarded as confidential and which tends to show one or more of the following:

- A criminal offence has been, is being, or is about to be committed;
- The employer is failing to comply with his legal obligations;
- A miscarriage of justice has happened or is likely to happen;
- An individual's health and safety is being jeopardised;
- The environment is, or is likely to be damaged;
- Information falling into any one of the above categories which has been, is being, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

An employee must have a reasonable belief that a crime has or may be committed. An employee tribunal will decide whether or not such a belief was reasonable.

In deciding whether or not an employee has acted reasonably, all circumstances will be taken into consideration, in particular:

- The identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made;
- The seriousness of the relevant 'offence';
- Whether the 'offence' is continuing or is likely to occur in the future;
- Whether the disclosure is made in breach of a duty of confidentiality owed by the employer or any other person;
- Any action the employer or prescribed person might reasonably be expected to take as a result of a previous disclosure;
- Whether in making the disclosure to the employer, the employee complied with procedures applied by the employer.

Protection applies where the 'external' disclosures are made to such bodies as the police. In such instances Knockloughrim Primary School would expect to be satisfied that internal sources had been advised first or that the employee believed they would have been victimised or evidence would have been concealed or destroyed. External disclosures must be made in good faith in the belief that allegations are substantially true and there should be no motive for personal gain.

Application of this policy

This policy applies to all employees of Knockloughrim Primary School both full and part time, permanent or temporary. The policy aims to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns and receive feedback on any actions taken. Employees may take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the response.

Protection of Employees

If an employee raises a genuine concern under this policy, he/she will not be at risk of losing their job or suffering retribution as a result.

In accordance with the Public Interest Disclosures (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 an employee cannot be dismissed or selected for redundancy as a result of making a disclosure in good faith.

Employees who already are the subject of disciplinary, grievance or redundancy procedures will not have those procedures stopped or suspended as a result of their whistleblowing.

Confidentiality

The Board of Governors recognises that employees may want to raise concerns in confidence under this policy.

If an employee requests that their identities be protected, the Board of Governors will endeavour to honour this request.

If a situation arises where a concern cannot be resolved without revealing the employee's identity, the Board of Governors will discuss with the employee whether and how progress can be made. It may be that evidence, either written or verbal, is required in court proceedings.

Anonymous Reports

The Board of Governors of Knockloughrim Primary School encourage all employees to put their names to allegations because concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. Regardless, we will endeavour to investigate, the Governors cannot formally respond to an allegation if submitted anonymously.

Independent advice

If you are unsure how to raise a concern or you want confidential advice at any stage, you may contact your union. You may also contact the independent charity Public Concern at Work on 0207 7404 6609 or by email at helpline@pcaw.co.uk. Their lawyers can talk you through your options and help you raise a concern about malpractice at work. For more information you can visit their website www.pcaw.co.uk.

Procedures for expressing concerns

All whistleblowing matters should be reported in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors and marked as Private and Confidential. Contact details are provided below:

Mrs Margaret Rainey
Chairperson of the Board of Governors
C/o Knockloughrim Primary School, 337 Hillhead Road, Knockloughrim, Magherafelt,
Northern Ireland BT45 8QT

This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue to raise concerns within Knockloughrim Primary School. If he / she is not satisfied and feels it is right to take the matter further, the list below shows possible contact points:

- Department of Education and/or the Education Authority
- His/her Solicitor;
- The PSNI;
- The Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

Prescribed persons are responsible for investigating allegations that fall under their prescribed role and for protecting the whistleblower and their interests whilst conducting an investigation.

How we will handle the matter

Once you have told us of your concern, an acknowledgement receipt from the Chair of Governors will be delivered and consequently we will assess initially what action should be taken. This may involve an informal review, an internal inquiry or a more formal investigation. Where it is decided that a formal investigation is necessary the overall responsibility for the investigation will lie with a nominated 'investigation officer'. In any event, once the acknowledgement receipt from the Chair of Governors has been delivered, we will tell you within 7 school days who is dealing with the matter, how you can contact that person, and whether your further assistance may be needed. If you request, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it.

Abuse of this Procedure

It is expected that employees will use these procedures with integrity. However, use of these procedures to:

- Make cynical, frivolous, mischievous vexatious allegations;
- Distract from other issues;
- Divert attention from or action in the application of other procedures;
- Defame or perpetrate malicious falsehoods

Is likely to constitute misconduct and render the complainant subject to investigation and disciplinary penalty.

Conclusion

Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will strive to handle the matter fairly and properly. By using the whistleblowing arrangements, you can help us achieve this.

Review Procedure

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and Governors. It will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required, to ensure that the information contained is appropriate and amendments will be made where necessary.