



St Catherine's National School
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Protected Disclosures Policy

1. Purpose of this Policy

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to set out the procedures put in place by St Catherine's National School ("**the School**") to comply with the requirements of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 ("**the Act**"). This Policy summarises the circumstances in which the Act applies to workers at the School and explains how a worker can go about making a protected disclosure.
- 1.2. For the avoidance of doubt, this Policy does not replace the provisions of the Act and does not constitute or contain legal advice.

2. What is a Protected Disclosure?

- 2.1. A *protected disclosure* (also known as whistleblowing) is defined in section 5 of the Act. In summary, a protected disclosure is a disclosure of *relevant information* by a *worker* to his or her employer or to certain other specified persons. *Relevant information* is information that has come to the attention of the worker in connection with his or her employment, and which (in the worker's reasonable belief) tends to show *relevant wrongdoing*.
- 2.2. The definition of *worker* is contained in section 3 of the Act. This policy applies to all staff at the School, including teachers, SETs, SENs, secretarial and cleaning staff.
- 2.3. The kinds of wrongdoing which can be subject of a protected disclosure are identified in section 5 of the Act. They include:

- commission of an offence;
- failure to comply with any legal obligation;
- miscarriage of justice;
- endangering health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- misuse of public money;
- oppression, discrimination, gross negligence or gross mismanagement by a public body;
- concealment or destruction of information relating to any of the above.

2.4. A disclosure of relevant wrongdoing is protected under the Act where it is made by a worker in the manner set out in sections 6 to 10 of the Act. This includes where a disclosure is made to the worker's employer, or to another prescribed person.

3. How is a Person Protected when he/she makes a Protected Disclosure?

3.1. A member of School staff who has a reasonable belief of wrongdoing and who makes a disclosure about that wrongdoing will not be penalised by the School, even if his or her belief turns out to be unfounded.

3.2. The protections available to a worker who makes a protected disclosure are set out in Part 3 of the Act. Those protections include protection from disciplinary action, suspension or dismissal; and protection from discrimination, threats or other unfavourable treatment arising from making the disclosure.

3.3. A member of School staff who penalises or retaliates against a person who has made a disclosure under this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1. The School is committed to protecting the identity of any staff member making a protected disclosure, and to ensuring protected disclosures are treated in confidence. The School's focus on receipt of a protected disclosure will be on the alleged wrongdoing, rather than on the person making the disclosure. However, there are circumstances where confidentiality cannot be maintained. Those circumstances are set out in section 16 of the Act. If circumstances arise in which confidentiality cannot be maintained, the School will make all reasonable efforts to notify the person making the disclosure in advance that his or her identity may be disclosed.

5. How should a Disclosure be made under this Policy?

- 5.1. A member of School staff wishing to make a protected disclosure, should make the disclosure to the Principal or Deputy Principal. Where that is not possible or appropriate, the disclosure should be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- 5.2. A disclosure may be made orally or in writing, although where the disclosure is made orally the Principal / Deputy Principal / Chairperson of the Board of Management may ask the person to put the matter in writing.
- 5.3. Where a disclosure is received by the School, a meeting will be arranged to discuss the staff member's concerns, and the matter will be handled as sensitively and expeditiously as possible, and where applicable in accordance with any other relevant School policy.
- 5.4. While internal reporting is encouraged, it is also open to a worker at the School to make a disclosure to the Secretary General of the Department of Education. Nothing in the Policy is intended to prevent or dissuade a staff member from reporting any matter to the appropriate authorities such as An Garda Síochána.

6. Adoption and Review

- 6.1. This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____.

6.2. This Policy is available to School staff and is published on the School website. A copy of this Policy will be made available to the patron and/or to the Department of Education if requested.

6.3. This Policy and its implementation will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management.

SIGNED:



DATE:

14/3/22

Chairperson Board of Management

SIGNED:



DATE:

14/3/22

Principal