**WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

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| **Policy:** | Whistleblowing Policy |
| **Policy Lead:** | Vice Principal: Planning and Resources |
| **Category:** | Public |
| **Statutory:** | Yes |
| **Website (www.loreto.ac.uk):** | Yes |
| **Reviewed by:** | SLT, Finance and General Purposes Committee, Audit Committee |
| **Approved by:** | Board of Governors |
| **Date Approved:** | March 2025 |
| **Review Period:** | 3 years |
| **Next Review Date:** | March 2028 |

**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 people 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. The College is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty and integrity, and it is the expectation that all staff maintain these standards. However, all organisations face the risk of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring or to address them when they do occur.

**Scope and purpose**

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 and Child Protection 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 member of staff who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, or subjected to victimisation, because they have made the disclosure.

The College encourages members of staff to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance. If a member of staff is not sure whether to raise a concern, they should discuss the issue with their line manager or the HR 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 attention which inevitably accompanies allegations of fraud or dishonesty.

This policy should not be used for complaints relating to a member of staff's own personal circumstances, such as the way they have been treated at work; in those cases the Complaints or Harassment policies should be referred to.

If uncertain about whether something is within the scope of this policy, advice should be sought from a member of the Senior Leadership Team or HR Manager.

**1. Procedure**

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

1.2 At the outset of a problem, staff should recognise the importance of selecting someone outside the area of difficulty and unconnected to the particular issue. 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.

1.3 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 the HR Manager, a senior manager or the Principal;
or c. where both (a) and (b) are inappropriate, with the Chair of Governors by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

## 2. How the College will Respond

2.1 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

2.2 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.

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

## 3. Confidentiality

3.1 Members of staff should feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if a member of staff wishes to raise a concern confidentially, every effort will be made not to disclose their identity. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the concern to know the identity of the whistleblower, this will be discussed with the member of staff beforehand.

3.2 Anonymous disclosures are discouraged as this can hinder thorough investigation if further information about the allegations cannot be obtained. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to one of the other contact points listed in paragraph 1.3 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

3.3 Staff can seek further advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offers a confidential helpline. Their contact details are provided at the end of this policy.

3.4 Where an anonymous complaint is received a decision will be made about whether to investigate based on:

a) the severity of the issue raised;
b) the credibility of the concern;
c) the likelihood of confirming the allegation from other sources.

3.5 As part of the application of this policy, the College may collect, process and store personal data in accordance with its Data Protection Policy -in the collecting, holding and sharing of information in relation to our workforce.

## 4. External Disclosures

4.1 The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases it should not be necessary to alert anyone externally.

4.2 The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to report concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely, if ever, be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage all staff to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. Public Concern at Work holds a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern.

4.3 Whistleblowing concerns may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a contractor, supplier or service provider. The law allows you to raise a concern with a third party, where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. Staff are encouraged to report such concerns internally first either via a direct line manager or one of the individuals set out in paragraph 1.3.

## 5. Contacts

### 1. Senior Leadership Team

| Post | Current Post-holder | Contact point |
|---|---|---|
| Principal | Michael Jaffrain | mjaffrain@loreto.ac.uk |
| Vice Principal (Planning & Resources) | Tracy Livesey | tlivesey@loreto.ac.uk |

### 2. Governing Body

| Post | Current Post-holder | Contact point |
|---|---|---|
| Chair of Governors | Ann Wilkinson | Via Clerk to the Governors: clerk@loreto.ac.uk |
| Chair of Audit Committee | Niall Wright | Via Clerk to the Governors: clerk@loreto.ac.uk |

### 3. External contacts

| Current contact | Contact point |
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| External Audit<br>RSM UK | RSM UK Audit<br>LLP<br>Bluebell House<br>Brain Johnson Way<br>Preston<br>Lancashire<br>PR2 5PE<br><br>Tel: 01772 216000 |
| Education & Skills Funding Agency | Customer Service Team<br>Education and Skills Funding Agency<br>Cheylesmore House<br>Quinton Road<br>Coventry CV1<br>2WT |

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| | complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk |
| Greater Manchester Police | Online: https://www.gmp.police.uk/contact/af/contact-us/ |

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| | By phone: 101<br><br>CrimeStoppers: https://crimestoppers-uk.org/<br>Tel: 0800 555 111 |

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| Protect | The Green House<br>244-254 Cambridge Heath Road<br>London<br>E2 9DA<br><br>Protect Advice Line: (020) 3117 2520 Website:<br>https://protect-advice.org.uk/ |