Parish of St Edmund and St Mark, Wootton Bridge
A parish within the East Medina Plurality

Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose of this policy

We are committed to serving our community with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff and volunteers to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.
This policy covers all church officers, employees and volunteers. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time. Church officers and volunteers are made aware if this policy when they begin their role.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This includes bribery, facilitation of tax evasion, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations. It also includes the following matters specific to this place of worship: the reporting of historic sexual abuse regarding a current staff member.

Whistleblowing is not the raising of a complaint that is an expression of your dissatisfaction, if you want to make a complaint about the parish, the complaints policy should be followed. It is also not for raising a complaint against a church officer, member of staff or volunteer for which the grievance policy should be followed or for raising concerns about other organisations, these should be raised through that organisation following their whistleblowing procedures.

The guardian of this policy is the Rector. If you have any difficulties with complying with this policy, please contact her. Contact details are at the end of this policy.

How to raise a concern

You should raise your concerns as soon as possible; this will make it easier to act and to enable any problems to be resolved or reported quickly. You can make your disclosure either verbally or in writing. In your disclosure, you should include:

- any relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names etc.
- clearly state the reason why the situation causes for concern
- state that you are raising your concern using the whistleblowing policy and whether you wish to keep your identity confidential.

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with the Rector or one of the Churchwardens. However, if the matter concerns the Rector, then you should contact the Isle of Wight Archdeacon (contact details below).

We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a friend to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

How concerns will be handled

Depending on the nature of the concern, it may be investigated by the Whistleblowing Officer, or it may be referred externally to the police, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, a regulator, other agencies, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

Wherever possible, you will be given feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation. Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following:

- no action required
- action being taken under another policy or procedure
- an internal investigation under this policy
- a referral to the police or other relevant statutory body
- referral to the Church Commissioners
- a referral to the parish's external auditors
- a Serious Incident Report being made to the Charity Commission
- an independent enquiry.

Confidentiality

We encourage all church officers, employees and volunteers to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern. You will be informed where this is the case.

External disclosures

The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.
The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. "Protect" operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

Protection and support for whistleblowers

We aim to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. Whistleblowers must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a genuine concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform either the Whistleblowing Officer, the Archdeacon.

You must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. If you are involved in such conduct you may be subject to disciplinary action. However, if we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously, the whistleblower may be subject to disciplinary action.

Contact details

Whistleblowing Officer / Safeguarding Officer:
Steve Beynon: email safeguarding@cofeparishofwoottonbridge.org.uk

Rector:
Vacancy

Churchwarden
Harry Kirby churchwarden@cofeparishofwoottonbridge.org.uk

Archdeacon:
Ven Barry Dugmore barry.dugmore@portsmouth.anglican.org

Protect: **020 3117 2520**

Policy and Procedures Review
Reviewed by: Safeguarding Officer
Agreed by the PCC:
Signed and Agreed
Incumbent: Rev'd Sandra Matthews
Churchwardens: Harry Kirby
Next review: May 2027