

Mapledown School



Working and Learning Together

Whistleblowing Policy

Name of School	Mapledown School
This policy was reviewed on	10 th November 2020
This policy was reviewed on	September 2021 September 2023 September 2024 September 2025
The policy is to be reviewed in	September 2026

Date policy last reviewed: 1st September 2025

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Chair of governors Date: _____

INTRODUCTION

The Local Authority and school governing bodies seek to run all aspects of school business and activity with full regard for high standards of conduct and integrity. In the event that members of school staff, or governors become aware of activities which give cause for concern, the following whistleblowing policy, or code of practice, acts as a framework to allow concerns to be raised confidentially and provides for a thorough and appropriate investigation of the matter to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Throughout this policy, the term “whistleblower” denotes the person raising the concern.

The LA is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously. It recognises that some concerns may be extremely sensitive and has therefore developed a system, which allows for the confidential raising of concerns within the school environment but also has recourse to an external party outside the management structure of the school.

The LA is committed to creating a climate of trust and openness so that a person who has a genuine concern or suspicion can raise the matter with full confidence that the matter will be appropriately considered and resolved.

The provisions of this policy apply to matters of financial mismanagement and impropriety and not matters of more general grievance, which would be dealt with under school grievance procedures. Therefore this policy does **not** cover reports about:

- Issues affecting an employee (these should be raised through the school's relevant procedures such as the Grievance Procedure)
- Service requests or complaints about the school
- Lobbying for or against school policy
- Trade union or staff consultation
- Complaints about members of staff

This policy is mandatory for London Borough of Barnet maintained schools under paragraph 11.9 of the Scheme for Financing Schools under S.48 of the Schools Standards & Framework Act 1998.

Policy Statement

The London Borough of Barnet firmly believes in open and honest governance. It is the policy of this Council that all those who raise honest concerns about anything this Council does will be treated with respect, supported and protected from any adverse treatment. The Council is committed to being open, honest and accountable in all we do. We are committed to the highest possible standards of openness and probity, and the aims and objectives of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The essence of a whistleblowing system is that workers (a worker is defined as an individual who undertakes work to do or to perform personally any work or service for another party, whether under a contract or not – and includes staff at all levels, those permanently employed, temporary staff, agency staff, contractors, non-executives, , consultants, or other partner or contracted organisations) should be able to by-pass their direct management line arrangements, as this may be the area about which their concerns arise. They should also be able to go outside the organisation if they feel the overall management is engaged in an improper course of action.

The role of the whistleblowing policy is to assist with the deterrent and detection of wrongdoing. The Policy explains how concerns should be raised and seeks to allay any fears whistle-blowers may have.

It is our policy that any worker may raise concerns within the school, the Council (or, under certain circumstances, with a prescribed regulator or external body) without fear that they may be victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

If any worker raises concerns under this policy, they are to be perceived as and treated as a witness and not as a complainant.

All concerns, regardless of their nature, raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and sensitively by experienced staff.

Workers are encouraged to report wrongdoing and have the right to be heard and taken seriously when they do so. The school and the Council will take all reasonable steps to protect workers who make such disclosures from any detrimental action which may occur because of making the disclosure.

The school and the Council neither tolerates improper conduct by its workers, staff, members, or its partners or contractors, nor the taking of reprisals against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

The school and the Council recognises the value of both confidentiality and accountability in its core functions and fully supports the making of disclosures to reveal corrupt conduct, mismanagement of public resources, or conduct which involves risk to service users, public health and safety, or the environment.

This whistleblowing policy has been drawn up in conjunction with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Act establishes a framework for responsible whistleblowing and is intended to encourage workers to report any concerns that they may have of improper conduct or malpractice or abuse within the Council or to any of its service users.

This policy is designed to complement normal communication channels between staff members, partners, contractors and management. All workers are encouraged to continue to raise matters via their respective Line Managers, however we recognise that sometimes this is not appropriate or that workers or workers may feel more comfortable making disclosure of improper conduct using this procedure.

The scope of the policy

This policy is applicable to the governors and employees of all schools maintained by the London Borough of Barnet. The type of activity or behaviour, which is dealt with under this policy includes:

- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- fraud and deceit
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)
- deliberate concealment of the above
- terrorist related activities

What action should the Whistleblower take?

The whistleblower is encouraged to raise the matter internally in the first instance to allow those school staff and governors in positions of responsibility and authority the opportunity to right the wrong and give an explanation for the behaviour or activity.

At school level there are two designated individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter,

Headteacher
Chair of Governors

The whistleblower may prefer to raise the matter in person, by telephone or in written form marked private and confidential and addressed to one of the above named individuals. All matters should be treated in strict confidence and anonymity respected wherever possible.

Alternatively if the whistleblower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed to the **Council's Whistleblowing Officer**, who has powers to investigate all potential fraud or irregularity (whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk or 020 8359 6123). Any concerns about the safeguarding leads, the headteacher or safeguarding process should be reported to the Chair of Governors (Sue O'Halloran) or the NSPCC National Whistleblowing advice line - 0800 028 0285.

If the matter the whistleblower wishes to report does not fall within the remit of the whistleblowing policy, but concerns Fraud or the Safeguarding of a Child, Young Person or adult, they should report as directed below:

- Fraud: www.barnet.gov.uk/anti-fraud or 020 8359 2007
- Children and Young people: MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), 020 8359 4066 / 020 8359 2000
- Adults: 020 8359 5000 / socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk
- **Or the police on 101. If the danger is immediate, always call the police on 999.**

Respecting Confidentiality

Individuals reporting wrongdoing should note –

- Everything possible will be done to respect your confidentiality, if that is what you want. Sometimes, it is necessary to take a statement as part of the investigation and enforcement process. In that case the issues will be discussed with you beforehand.
- Completely anonymous reports carry much less weight. They will only be acted upon at the discretion of the Local Authority, having regard to the seriousness of the issues, the credibility of the report and the likelihood of obtaining confirmation elsewhere,
- The earlier you express concern the easier it is to take action,
- You will not be required to prove your allegation but you will be asked to give as much detail as possible. It is much better to do this in writing but as an alternative you can speak to someone at a meeting. LA officers will arrange for this process to be handled by someone outside the school. You can bring a trade union representative or a friend to a meeting if you wish.

How will the matter be progressed?

The individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation (the investigating officer(s)) will carry out a preliminary investigation. This will seek to establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. The initial assessment may identify the need to involve third parties to provide further information, advice or assistance, for example involvement of other members of school staff, LA legal, personnel or finance officers, or the police.

Records will be kept of work undertaken and actions taken throughout the investigation. The investigating officer(s), possibly in conjunction with the governing body, will consider how best to report the findings and what corrective action needs to be taken. This may include some form of disciplinary action or third party referral such as the police.

The whistleblower will be informed of the outcome of the investigation when the matter is completed unless this is not possible for legal reasons. Sometimes this can take a long time, especially if there is a long investigation or court proceedings are involved. Depending on the nature of the allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the governing body and the LA.

Protection from reprisal

Anyone who makes a report in good faith will be protected from victimisation or reprisal. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Employment Act 1996 give statutory protection for employees, workers and former workers who disclose information showing:

- a criminal offence
- a breach of a legal obligation
- miscarriage of justice
- danger to health and safety
- damage to the environment, or
- the deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.

The disclosure of this information must be in the public interest and must be made to either the school, Council, or in certain circumstances to prescribed persons such as HMRC, the Environment Agency or the Health and Safety Executive.

The legislation protects an employee from being dismissed, and protects employees/workers/former workers from being subjected to any detriment, on the grounds that they have disclosed information of the type outlined in this policy. In addition, the school will treat any victimisation or harassment of an employee who has made the report under this procedure as a serious disciplinary offence – harassment of a whistle-blower could amount to gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal without notice.

An individual who victimises or harasses an employee who has made a protected disclosure can be personally liable in court for their actions.

No action will be taken against any person if a report has been made but is not confirmed by the investigation.

Conversely, any person should not make a report, which they do not reasonably believe to be true, or which is malicious. Disciplinary proceedings may be taken against a member of staff who makes false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain.

If the worker making a report is already the subject of a related grievance, disciplinary, capability, redundancy or other school procedures they will not necessarily be halted because of a whistleblowing allegation.

Raising unfounded malicious concerns

Individuals are encouraged to come forward in good faith with genuine concerns with the knowledge they will be taken seriously. If individuals raise malicious unfounded concerns or attempt to make mischief, this will also be taken seriously and may constitute a disciplinary offence or require some other form of penalty appropriate to the circumstances.

If you are not satisfied

If you are not satisfied with the response to your whistleblowing report within your school you can contact the Chief Internal Auditor or Monitoring Officer. If you are not satisfied with the response from these officers who can contact the Chief Finance Officer or the Chief Executive, both of whom have personal responsibility for probity within the Local Authority.

The Local Authority hopes that you will be satisfied with the whistleblowing routes offered by this policy. But if you are not and you want to take the matter up outside the Council, you can contact your ward Councillor (if you live in the borough), the external auditor, the Department for Education, or the police, or take legal advice. If you do this make sure that you do not put yourself at legal risk by disclosing confidential information in circumstances where that is not allowed. Ask the person you contact about this.

Conclusion

Existing good practice within schools in terms of systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which schools operate ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistleblowing policy is provided as a reference document to establish a framework within which issues can be raised confidentially internally and if necessary outside the management structure of the school. This document is a public commitment that concerns are taken seriously and action will be taken.