

# Mapledown School



Working & Learning Together to Achieve our Best

## Whistleblowing Policy

|                                        |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name of School</b>                  | Mapledown School                                                                                                          |
| <b>This policy was reviewed on</b>     | September 2020<br>September 2021<br>September 2023<br>September 2024<br>September 2025<br>July 2026 (Barnet model policy) |
| <b>The policy is to be reviewed in</b> | September 2027                                                                                                            |

Date policy last reviewed: 30 July 2026

Signed by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of governors Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

The Local Authority and Mapledown 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 or making the complaint.

The LA and Mapledown school are committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treat 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.

We are 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 staff grievance and school complaints procedures. This policy is mandatory for all London Borough of Barnet maintained schools under the Scheme of Financing Schools and the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.

### **Wrongdoing at work**

This procedure is designed to deal with disclosure of information by an employee\* which relates to some safeguarding concern, danger, bribery, corruption, fraud or other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace. Employment legislation governs the making of disclosures concerning workplace activities and is intended to protect employees who blow the whistle on bad practice from being subjected to any detriment or from being unfairly dismissed as a result. This procedure is available to all employees who discover something they feel that they should pass on in the interests of the public. All types of wrongdoing are included whether they are acts committed by fellow employees, faults in Mapledown school procedures or oversights which should be rectified. The procedure should be used even in the event that the act or omission causing you concern has finished or has not yet started. Employees\* have a duty of care to report any wrongdoing at work.

### **Availability of the Policy**

\*As well as its designation to be used by an employee to disclose suspected wrongdoing, the policy should also be used, if necessary, by individuals working at Mapledown school under different arrangements, such as agency workers, contractors, self-employed staff and volunteers.

### **Context**

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 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
- 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.

This policy forms part of the list of documents which, with regard to *Keeping Children Safe In Education* (DfE 2026), must be introduced and explained to staff during their safeguarding induction.

### **Safeguarding**

Nothing within this policy is intended to prevent staff from complying with their statutory obligations in accordance with the DfE guidance documents, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) or *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (WTSC). In particular:

- **Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy:** You should raise any initial safeguarding concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with Mapledown School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

- **Whistleblowing Policy:** You should follow this procedure to raise concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practices at Mapledown school or potential failures by the school or staff to properly safeguard the welfare of pupils if you are concerned that Mapledown's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are not being followed correctly.
- **Children's Social Care:** In exceptional circumstances, or if at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care immediately.

### Grievances

This procedure is not designed to be used where you have a complaint relating to your personal circumstances in the workplace. **The Grievance Policy** should be used in such a situation.

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

### Detriment

Provided that this procedure is used appropriately and correctly you will not suffer any detriment as a result of reporting the wrongdoing. A failure to follow this procedure may, however, make the disclosure unreasonable and the protection given to you by this procedure may be lost. Maliciously or knowingly making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.

## 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

## Stage one

### Procedure

You should disclose the suspected wrongdoing first to your immediate manager. In the event that your manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you are entitled to proceed directly to Stage Two of this procedure. In the event that the **Headteacher** is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you should take your concern to the **Chair of Governors**.

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. The whistleblower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter:

- **Sandra Chaaya, Headteacher**
- **Ajith Das Menon, 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 either,

- The Chief Internal Auditor on behalf of the Chief Finance Officer (currently the Local Authority Treasurer), who has powers to investigate all potential fraud or irregularity.
- Or
- The Local Authority's Monitoring Officer, who has a duty to the Local Authority to deal with illegality, maladministration and wrongdoing and is responsible for the overall operation and maintenance of the Local Authority's whistleblowing policy.
- The Local Authority's whistleblowing telephone number is 020 8359 6123 (**see Appendix 1 for additional information**)

### **Response**

You can expect a response detailing to whom the disclosure has been notified or any action taken within seven days of your manager becoming aware of the disclosure.

## **Stage two**

### **Procedure**

If no response is forthcoming after seven days or if your manager is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, you shall be entitled to notify the **Headteacher**, as appropriate.

### **Response**

You can expect a response detailing any action taken within seven days of the **Headteacher** becoming aware of the disclosure.

## **Stage three**

### **Procedure**

If no such response is forthcoming you should once more inform the Headteacher of the disclosure or, if the Headteacher is involved in the suspected wrongdoing, once more inform the Chair of Governors of your concern.

## **Stage four**

### **Outside organisations**

If you do not receive a response within seven days you shall be entitled to notify a relevant and appropriate body outside the college, which may include:

- Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Children's Social Care;
- Health and Safety Executive;
- Environment Agency;
- Information Commissioner's Office;
- Department for Education (DfE);

- Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform;
- Police;
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted);
- Channel Police Practitioner.

## Further notes

### Bypassing the procedure

In extreme circumstances you will have the right to raise your concern directly with a relevant and appropriate outside body, without first having followed the stages above. This may, however, cause damage to Mapledown School and its reputation as well as constitute a breach of your own duty of confidentiality towards Mapledown School. This action should only be taken in extreme circumstances and after careful thought.

### Extreme circumstances

Mapledown School will consider extreme circumstances exist where you have a reasonable belief that

- Mapledown School will subject you to detriment if you inform your manager or the Chair of Governors in accordance with Stage one above or if you inform the Headteacher in accordance with Stage two or Stage three;
- a cover-up is being mounted by the school;
- a disclosure made previously to your manager, the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors in accordance with the stages above has not prompted a satisfactory response.

### The media

Even where extreme circumstances are thought to exist, you should under no circumstances approach a commercial body or the media with details of the suspected wrongdoing. If you approach any such body and/or where your concern is disclosed for personal gain, Mapledown School may consider this to be gross misconduct and immediate disciplinary action may be taken against you.

### Confidentiality and Feedback

Mapledown School is committed to treating disclosures consistently and fairly. Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially (unless Mapledown School is required by law to break that confidentiality). Feedback on timings and actions will be given, where possible and appropriate, so that those raising concerns understand how their disclosure has been handled and dealt with. The outcome of the investigation will be reported back to the employee who raised the issue. Individuals reporting wrongdoing should note:

- Everything possible will be done to respect your confidentiality, if that is what you want. Sometimes though, 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. Local Authority 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.

### Protection from reprisal

Anyone who makes a report in good faith will be protected from victimisation or reprisal. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives statutory protection for employees who report in good faith on crime, illegality, or deliberate concealment of these. The protection covers reports to the employer or a regulating authority. The Act protects the employee from being subjected to discipline or dismissal or any other detriment for making the report.

If you are already the subject of disciplinary, capability or redundancy procedure, they will not necessarily be halted as a result of your whistle blowing.

### **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 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 you 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 whistle blowing routes offered by this policy, but if you are not and you want to take the matter up outside the Local Authority, you can contact your ward Councillor (if you live in Barnet borough), the external auditor, the Department for Education, 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.

### **Queries**

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the Headteacher. If you would like free independent advice and support about concerns over how well child protection concerns are being handled, you can contact the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/whistleblowing-advice-line/). Call 0800 028 0285 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) for further information.

### **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. The 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.

## Making a Whistleblowing report

If you wish to raise any concerns directly with Barnet Council, there is a dedicated confidential whistleblowing phone line **020 8359 6123** to leave a message and an appropriate officer will call you back.

Alternatively, the phone line will be answered in person by an appropriate officer during the hours of midday – 2pm on Mondays.

Or, there is a dedicated email address [whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk) that you can use.

There are a number of dedicated **Whistleblowing Reporting Officers** that may deal with your report. These are: **Executive Director of Assurance and Public Protection Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive** (or designated deputy), **Section 151 Officer** (Director of Resources), **Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Protection, Head of Internal Audit** or the **Head of Governance**.

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Alternatively, if the matter you wish to report does fall within the remit of our Whistleblowing Policy but specifically concerns **Fraud** or the **Safeguarding of a Child, Young Person or an Adult** you can also make your report as directed below. These matters are considered whistleblowing and merit the protections granted under the policy but can also be reported through the process below:

- **Fraud** - To report a fraud, visit [www.barnet.gov.uk/anti-fraud](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/anti-fraud) or call our **fraud hotline on 020 8359 2007**.
- **Children and Young People** - Contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team on **020 8359 4066** if you are concerned about a child or young person in Barnet and provide as much information as you can. Outside of these hours, care and welfare concerns about children and young people that need an immediate response should be reported to the **Emergency Duty team on 020 8359 2000**.
- **Adult Social Care** - contact Social Care Direct on **020 8359 5000** (9am- 5pm, Mon to Fri), or **020 8359 2000** (out of hours) / [socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:socialcaredirect@barnet.gov.uk) Or the police on **101**.

**If the danger is immediate, always call the police on 999.**

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Additionally, both staff or members of the public also have the option to contact **Protect**, the whistleblowing charity, for advice and support:

- [www.protect-advice.org.uk](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk)
- **020 3117 2520**