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**Name of policy: Whistleblowing Policy**

**REVISION HISTORY**

	Date
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE	
RATIFIED BY GOVERNING BODY	
NEXT REVIEW	

Head Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

In line with guidance from Ofsted, Church Hill School has adopted the Whistleblowing Policy of Barnet Local Authority. This mainly focuses on aspects of financial malpractice and fraud. Further information regarding how to report concerns regarding safeguarding issues has been included in Appendix 1 and should be read in conjunction with the school safeguarding policy.

## **Introduction**

The Council 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 or making the complaint.

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.

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.

## **The Scope of the Policy**

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

- the criminal offence of fraud, corruption or theft
- manipulation of accounting records and finances
- inappropriate use of school assets or funds
- decision-making for personal gain
- serious breaches of school procedures which may advantage a particular party (for example tampering with tender documentation, failure to register a personal interest)

- unauthorized use of public funds
- false insurance claims

and also

- any criminal activity
- abuse of position
- misconduct
- miscarriages of justice
- abuse or ill treatment of any member of staff or service recipient
- abuse or ill treatment of vulnerable adults or children
- danger to Health and Safety
- deliberate non compliance to a school policy, an official code of practice, law or regulation
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

### **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 appropriate person.

### **In the case of fraud or financial malpractice**

**Council's Whistleblowing Officer** - (Head of the Corporate Anti Fraud Team (CAFT), who has powers to investigate all potential fraud or irregularity,

The Council's Whistleblowing contact details are

<p><b>Whistleblowing line:</b> 020 8359 6123  <b>Address – Corporate Anti-Fraud Team, Building 4, North London Business Park, London N11 1NP</b>  <b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk">whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk</a></p>
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Reports as a result of any investigation will be referred to other applicable Council departments unless it is clear this would be inappropriate. Reports on fraud or financial

irregularity are dealt with by the Corporate Anti Fraud Team, with some findings relating to systems and controls being referred to Internal Audit in accordance with financial regulations.

Reports on Health and Safety are likely to be referred to the Health and Safety Unit and reports on environmental issues to the relevant Environmental Service.

For independent advice individuals may also contact Public Concern at work an independent charity providing free advice for employees who want to express their concerns on 020 7404 6609 or the Comptroller and Auditor General can be contacted on 020 7798 7999

### **Respecting Confidentiality**

Individuals reporting wrong doing 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 Council, 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?**

If the matter is reported to the head or Chair of governors they will contact you within 48 hours to arrange to meet you to discuss your concerns. They will then write to you within 10 days of your initial meeting to:

- acknowledge that your concern has been received
- outline our understanding of what the issues are; and
- indicate how they propose to deal with the matter.

If the matter is being investigated by the Local Authority or other agencies the investigating officer(s) (Individual(s) in receipt of the information or allegation) will carry out a preliminary investigation.

The head, Chair of Governors or investigating officer (s) 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, 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 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 from 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 whistleblowing.

## **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 Head of CAFT. 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 Council.

The Council 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 DFE, 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.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **In the case of safeguarding concerns**

Further information can be found in the Safeguarding Policy.

If you have concerns regarding any irregularities in the safeguarding procedures and practices in the school these should be reported in the first case to the head teacher or chair of governors.

If you are not satisfied by the response or the concerns involve either of these people then there are alternative contacts either within Barnet Local Authority or External Agencies.

#### **Barnet Local Authority**

MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) team – telephone 020 8359 4066

LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) – telephone 020 8359 6056

#### **External Agencies**

Ofsted will consider any referrals made to them regarding safeguarding. Further information can be found in their policy on whistleblowing, they advise that you read this document before contacting them.

Ofsted Policy on Whistleblowing: [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:7f497f6f-0a00-4665-a0fd-73677371ef91/Whistleblowing to Ofsted about childrens social care services.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:7f497f6f-0a00-4665-a0fd-73677371ef91/Whistleblowing%20to%20Ofsted%20about%20childrens%20social%20care%20services.pdf)

You can **whistleblow to Ofsted** by:

**Telephone:** Whistleblowing Hotline (0300 1233155).

It is staffed from 8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday.

**Email:** [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)

**Post:** WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

You can contact the **NSPCC National Whistleblowing Advice Line** on 0808 800 5000.