



Whistleblowing Policy

At Coppetts Wood School and Children's Centre we have adopted Barnet's Whistleblowing Policy, updated in line with the new statutory safeguarding guidance 2014

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:

- 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

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 either:

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

or

- the **Council's Monitoring Officer** - (the Borough Solicitor), who has a duty to the Council to deal with illegality, maladministration and wrongdoing and is responsible for the overall operation and maintenance of the Council's whistleblowing policy.

The Council's Whistleblowing telephone number is 020 8359 6123 or e-mail whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk

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?

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, 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 Chief Internal Auditor or Monitoring Officer at Barnet Council. If you are not satisfied with the response from these officers who can contact the Chief Finance Officer or the Chief Executive at Barnet Council, 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 Department for Education & Skills, 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.

Safeguarding Children and Young People

All employees have a duty to report concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils/students.

Concerns about any of the following should be reported to the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection (DSP) or their deputy:

- physical abuse of a pupil/student
- sexual abuse of a pupil/student
- emotional abuse of a pupil/student
- neglect of a pupil/student
- an intimate or improper relationship between an adult and a pupil/student

The school's DSP is Sarah Deale (Head teacher). The Deputies are Julie Locke (Pastoral Manager) and Julie O'Dwyer (Inclusion Leader). Faramade Alawaye (Deputy Head) and Spencer Guy (Assistant Head) are also Child Protection trained. Sandra Greenyer (Children's Centre Manager) is the designated person for the Children's Centre.

The reason for the concern may be the actions of a colleague (including a more senior colleague), a Governor, another pupil/student or someone outside the school. Whatever the reason, concerns must be reported. Failure to report a Child Protection related allegation will be in itself, a disciplinary matter.

Procedures

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you are able.
- Usually, you should report your concerns to the Headteacher (the Designated Person for Child Protection). Make sure you are satisfied with the response.
- Pinpoint what your concerns are. Ideally, these should be put in writing. Your report, written or verbal, should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason for your

concern. You will not be expected to prove the truth of your allegations but you should demonstrate sufficient cause for concern.

- Concerns will be treated in confidence and we will make every effort to maintain your anonymity, if you wish. However, at the appropriate time, you may need to provide evidence.
- You will be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries and supported, as necessary.

Self-reporting

We recognize that staff may experience difficulties, such as physical or mental ill health or personal problems, which could impinge on their professional competence. Staff should report such difficulties to their manager so that professional and personal support can be offered. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where the difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

If you are not satisfied with the response, then concerns can be raised directly with the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) in Barnet who is contactable through the MASH (Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub).

If a staff member feels unable to raise the issue with their employer or feels their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they can phone the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on 0800 0280285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

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.

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