



Whistleblowing Policy

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Whistleblowing Policy

In line with the London Safeguarding Children Board and the London Child Protection Procedures, Northgate School operates a whistleblowing policy that protects staff members who report colleagues they believe are doing something wrong or illegal, or who are neglecting their duties.

The school whistleblowing policy has a key role to play in safeguarding children.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy and the following procedures apply to all paid staff, agency staff, student teachers, school experience placements, interns, volunteers, contractors and members of the Management Committee working with or at Northgate School. For the purpose of this policy these staff shall all be referred to as employees.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this document is to assist all staff to whistleblow if they have concerns about any adult in the school setting, whether paid or voluntary.

DEFINITIONS

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports suspected wrongdoing at work. Employees and workers who make a 'protected disclosure' are protected from being treated badly or being dismissed. If they are, they can claim unfair dismissal when the reason for the 'whistleblowing' meets any of the 'qualifying disclosures' criteria.

Wrongdoing covered by this 'public interest disclosure' includes:

- actions that negatively affect the welfare of children
- someone's health and safety is in danger
- damage to the environment
- a criminal offence
- not obeying the law
- covering up wrongdoing
- misusing public funds

SECTION A: CHILD PROTECTION WHISTLEBLOWING

If a member of staff believes a colleague has

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children

Staff should report their concerns to the Headteacher, who will report to the LADO on the same working day.

If the allegation concerns the Headteacher, the member of staff will immediately inform the Chair of the Management Committee who will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) .This must be done on the same working day. If the Chair of the management Committee is not available the member of staff must make direct contact with the LADO at Barnet (Also see our Safeguarding Policy).

SECTION B: ALL STAFF WHISTLEBLOWING

POLICY STATEMENT

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that to speak up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the school. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report something which after all, may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

Northgate School is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect and encourage employees, and others whom we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis (i.e. between the employee voicing the concern and the person to whom the concern is voiced).

This policy document makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of victimisation, reprisal, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise concerns within the school rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

This whistleblowing policy does not apply to pupils/students. Where applicable, employees are responsible for making students aware of the existence of the school's complaints procedure and other appropriate reporting procedures.

The procedure is designed to enable employees to notify the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee of any reasonable suspicion of illegal or improper conduct. Some examples might include:

- financial irregularity
- illegal and/or improper conduct
- health & safety concerns (but consider SECTION A because of the impact of this on the possible safety of the child)
- corruptly receiving any gift or advantage
- allowing private interests to override the interests of the school
- adult bullying (not involving children) or relationships caused by abuse of power
- cheating/changing assessment and exam results
- that someone is covering up a wrongdoing

It is a procedure in which the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee will be expected to act swiftly and constructively in the investigation of any concerns in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure. The Head of the Management Committee should ensure that, where this procedure has been used in the public interest, employees are not subjected to harassment and/or victimisation for doing so.

Concern about a colleague's professional capability should not be dealt with using this procedure.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee

- The Headteacher, or where the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of the Management Committee is expected to act swiftly and constructively in the investigation of any concerns in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.
- Where concerns are raised with outside agencies the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee must fully cooperate with any resulting investigation(s).
- Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee will make every effort to meet any request of anonymity where possible.
- Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee where possible, should inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation.

Employees

- All employees are expected to bring to the attention of the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee any serious impropriety or breach of procedure.
- All employees who report concerns under the whistleblowing policy must be prepared to justify and support their claim in writing.
- If another member of staff (other than the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee) is approached by a colleague on a matter of concern as defined in this document, he/she should be advised to take the matter to the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee.
- Employees must act in the public interest and must have reasonable grounds for believing the information to be accurate
- This procedure is not designed to replace or be used as an alternative to the schools' grievance procedure, which should be used where an employee is only aggrieved about his/her own situation. Employees who are worried about wrong doing at work do not necessarily have a personal grievance.
- No employee who uses this procedure in the public interest will be penalised for doing so. The school will not tolerate harassment and/or victimisation of any employee raising concerns.
- An employee who is not sure whether the conduct he/she is concerned about does constitute illegal or improper conduct or is unsure about how to proceed can contact the Headteacher/Chair of the Management Committee or Public Concern at Work (www.pcaw.co.uk) for advice.

SAFEGUARDS

The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If you have a reasonable belief that what you are saying is true, you will have nothing to fear.

The school will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) which arises as a result of making a disclosure in accordance with this policy and will take appropriate action to protect staff when they raise a concern in the public interest. In the event of reprisals or victimisation against a member of staff because they have acted in accordance with this policy, the school will consider and may take disciplinary action against the employee responsible for such victimisation and/or reprisal.

In some circumstances it is recognised that a person making information known about their colleagues may find it difficult to return to his/her normal job. The school

has a duty of care to provide a safe working environment and treat its employees with respect. If this is not possible in the employee's normal job because of the situation surrounding the disclosure of confidential information, the school will seek to redeploy the individual, taking account of their generic and specialist skills, abilities and experience.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the person(s) raising the concerns. At the appropriate time, however, the employee(s) may need to come forward as a witness.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This policy encourages staff to put their name to an allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. If made anonymously, the concern will be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If a member of staff makes an allegation in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation that is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the member of staff.

MECHANISM FOR RAISING CONCERNS

Where the issue concerns the Headteacher or, or if the member of staff believes that the headteacher has failed to take appropriate action regarding an allegation, this should be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Management Committee. If the member of staff has reason to believe that the Head of the Management Committee has failed to take appropriate action, this should be reported to the LADO.

Depending on the nature of the concern the complainant will be asked to justify and support their claim. Normally the complainant will be asked to do this in writing. It will, therefore, be helpful to note down any facts and dates as they happen.

Financial regulations require any employee who suspects fraud, corruption or other financial irregularity to ensure this is reported to the schools' internal auditor for possible investigation. Normally staff must first report any suspicion of such irregularities to the Headteacher or Chair of the Management Committee.

Employees who want to use the procedure but feel uneasy about it may wish to consult their trade union initially and bring a colleague or trade union representative along to any discussions, so long as the third party is independent of the issue. Where anonymity is requested efforts will be made to meet the request where appropriate but that might not always be possible. The earlier and more open the expression of concern the easier it will be to take appropriate action. Each case will be investigated thoroughly with the aim of informing the complainant of the outcome of any investigation as quickly as possible.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

This policy reflects the requirements of

- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*. This requires organisations to have arrangements in place that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:
... clear whistleblowing procedures, which reflect the principles in Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review and are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*

All staff must be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

Staff must also be aware that they are protected by law if they 'blow the whistle'. Current government guidelines can be accessed [here](#).