



MARTIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whistleblowing policy

Reviewed and ratified by the Finance Committee: Spring 2026

Reviewed every year

Statement of intent

Martin Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the physical, mental and emotional welfare of all members of the school community. In doing so, it is committed to ensuring the school has an open and supportive culture which values integrity and honest communication at all levels of the organisation.

It is recognised that people working at the school are often the first people to witness any type of wrongdoing within an organisation and, that information uncovered could prevent wrongdoing, which may damage an organisation's reputation or performance, and could even save people from harm or death.

In line with the school's commitment to openness, probity and accountability, all individuals working at the school will be encouraged to report concerns to the school, or appropriate prescribed body, if they see or suspect that something is wrong - this is known as "blowing the whistle".

The implementation of this policy will:

- Give confidence to members of staff when raising concerns about any suspected danger or wrongdoing which is inconsistent with school standards and policies.
- Provide members of school staff with appropriate pathways and avenues to raise concerns.
- Ensure that members of staff receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken where appropriate.
- Offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action within the meaning of the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- DfE (2025) Keeping children safe in education 2025

This policy has been created with regard to the following guidance documents:

- GOV.UK (2015) 'Whistleblowing for employees'
- DfE (2014) 'Whistleblowing procedure for maintained schools'
- Sir Robert Francis (2015) 'Freedom to speak up report'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies and procedures:

- Staff Conduct Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Barnet's Capability Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2. Introduction

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) protects employees who "blow the whistle" where the employee reasonably believes that the disclosure falls within the remit of the prescribed person or body and that the information and any allegations are substantially

true. Disclosures made under this procedure will be monitored for statistical purposes as required under the PIDA. The details of any disclosure will remain confidential.

The headteacher, Ziz Chater, is the first point of contact for whistleblowing queries. If the headteacher is not available, the deputy headteacher, Chantal Lust, should be contacted. If the allegation is related to the headteacher, the concern should be raised with the Chair of Governors.

Any member of the school community or the general public is able to "blow the whistle"; however, the PIDA only protects employees. [Section 7](#) includes further details on how whistleblowing affects non-employees.

3. Definitions

Whistleblowing: Whistleblowing is when an employee reports suspected wrongdoing, or 'qualifying disclosures', at work to their employer.

Qualifying disclosures: As outlined by the PIDA, qualifying disclosures pertain to when any of the following takes place:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is likely to be committed or is being committed
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which they are subject
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur
- the health or safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered
- the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged
- information tending to show any matter falling within any of the preceding points has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

Protected disclosure – this means a qualifying disclosure as defined above.

For a **qualifying disclosure** to be **protected**, it must be made by a worker using one of the following permitted methods of disclosure:

- Disclosure to the employer or other person responsible for the failure
- Legal advisers
- Government Ministers
- A person prescribed by an order made by the Secretary of State
- Other disclosures may be protected where in the particular circumstances they are either reasonable, or special provision is made for disclosures relating to exceptionally serious problems.

A worker who blows the whistle, by making a disclosure in accordance with the relevant criteria set out is making a protected disclosure and has the right not to be unfairly dismissed or suffer a detriment, e.g. being dismissed or being denied a promotion, as a result of having made that disclosure.

Worker: defined by section 230(3) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as: 'an individual who has entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, worked under):

- A contract of employment.
- Any other contract, whether express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing, whereby the individual undertakes to do or perform personally any

work or services for another party to the contract whose status is not by virtue of the contract that of a client or customer of any profession or business undertaking carried on by the individual.'

In relation to protected disclosures, section 43k of the PIDA 1998 provides an extension to the definition of a worker, this includes certain agency workers, homeworkers, NHS practitioners, nurses and midwives in training, trainees, police officers and crown employees.

Prescribed person - If an individual decides to blow the whistle to a prescribed person rather than the school, they must make sure that they choose the correct person or body for their issue. The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014 sets out a list of over 60 organisations and individuals that a worker may approach outside their workplace to report suspected or known wrongdoing. The organisations and individuals on the list have usually been designated as prescribed persons because they have an authoritative or oversight relationship with their sector, often as a regulatory body. An up-to-date list for the education sector can be found [here](#); there is also a brief description about the matters that can be reported to each prescribed person.

In the public interests means that an individual acted outside of their own personal interest – they acted for more than personal gain. It is not necessary for the disclosure to be of interest to the entire public. The following considerations are often used as a test to establish whether something is within the scope of public interest:

- the number of people in the group whose interests the disclosure served
- the nature of the interests and the extent by which individuals are affected by the wrongdoing disclosed
- the nature of the wrongdoing disclosed
- the identity of the alleged wrongdoer.

Blacklisting refers to an individual who is being refused work because they are viewed as a whistleblower.

Grievances involve someone filing a complaint because they personally have been mistreated in some way – the person making the complaint will have a direct interest in the outcome. It is important to understand the difference between raising a grievance and blowing the whistle.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- establishing and agreeing the whistleblowing procedure
- monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and undertaking any necessary reviews, e.g. in relation to good practice recommendations or changes in legislation
- ensuring all members of the school community have access to this policy
- investigating, in liaison with the headteacher, any concerns that are raised
- ensuring this policy provides an open and transparent framework where members of the school community can raise their concerns
- taking the necessary action against members of staff following an investigation into any alleged malpractice
- ensuring that the minutes of the Governing Body include a record of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and who, both internally and externally, staff members should report concerns to

- ensuring that all concerns raised by whistleblowers are responded to properly and fairly
- ensuring that whistleblowing forms part of the staff behaviour policy as part of a wider approach to having in place appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- ensuring all members of staff have read and understood this policy
- receiving, investigating and responding to any concerns that have been raised by the school community
- being the first point of contact regarding whistleblowing.

The Chair of the Governing Body will be responsible for receiving any concerns raised about the headteacher.

All members of the school community will be responsible for:

- raising any concerns that meet the definitions of section 3 of this policy
- being truthful and reasonable with any concerns that they have
- not raising malicious or unfounded concerns.

5. Scope

This policy will:

- give confidence to members of the school community when raising concerns about conduct or practice that is potentially illegal, corrupt, improper, unsafe or unethical, or which amounts to malpractice or is inconsistent with school standards and policies
- provide members of the school community with avenues to raise concerns
- ensure that members of the school community receive a response to the concerns they have raised and feedback on any action taken
- offer assurance that members of staff are protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing action undertaken in good faith and within the meaning of the PIDA.

This policy will not be confused with the procedure on dealing with harassment at work or the school's Staff Conduct Policy or Barnet's Capability Policy.

Under this policy, any of the following can raise a concern:

- employees of the school
- voluntary workers working with the school
- trainees, such as student teachers.

6. Harassment and victimisation of staff

The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to take, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice or from the school as a whole; however, the school will not tolerate any such harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action to protect staff who raise a concern in good faith.

Staff are protected in law by the PIDA, which gives employees protection from detriment and dismissal where they have made a protected disclosure, providing the legal requirements of the Act are satisfied, e.g. the disclosure was in the public interest.

Any member of staff who victimises or harasses a member of staff as a result of their having raised a concern in accordance with this policy will be dealt with under the school's Staff Conduct Policy and Barnet's Capability Policy.

7. Non-employees

The PIDA and the Employment Rights Act 1996 **do not** protect non-employees as far as whistleblowing is concerned.

Irrespective of 7.1, the school will not allow harassment, dismissal or exclusion for any non-employee who raises a genuine concern.

Where an individual feels that they have been unfairly treated following blowing the whistle, they should make a complaint under the school's Complaints Policy.

Governors are not employees and, while they are responsible for ensuring there is a whistleblowing procedure in place, they are not protected under the PIDA.

8. Good practice principles

The school will implement the core whistleblowing principles, as outlined in the 'Freedom to speak up report', to ensure that whistleblowing procedures are fair, clear and consistent.

The school operates a Rights Respecting Agenda and ensures that the following principles are reflected in our ethos and values – there will be a culture:

- of safety in the school
- where people feel confident with raising concerns
- free from bullying
- of visible leadership
- of valuing staff
- of reflective practice.

By providing a clear procedure for mediating and resolving cases, as outlined in [section 9](#), the school will ensure that all cases are efficiently handled. This procedure includes:

- how to raise and report concerns
- how investigations will be conducted
- how the school will mediate and resolve disputes.

The school will implement measures to support good practice by ensuring adherence to the following principles:

- offering relevant training to staff
- providing the necessary support to staff
- providing support to staff who are seeking alternative employment
- being transparent
- being accountable
- conducting an external review of any concerns raised, where necessary
- undertaking regulatory action as required
- informing staff what protection is available to them if they report someone
- ensuring that alternative whistleblowing channels are in place for members of staff who feel unable to raise an issue with their employer.

The school will ensure there are particular support measures in place for vulnerable groups by ensuring that:

- non-permanent staff are taught, and receive training on, the same principles as permanent staff
- trainees are subject to all the safeguarding and whistleblowing principles

- staff from ethnic minorities are supported, as they may feel particularly vulnerable when raising concerns
- staff are empowered and protected, enabling them to raise concerns freely.

9. Procedure

When raising concerns, individuals will express them in writing, by letter or email, to the headteacher. If an individual is raising a concern about the headteacher, they should express their concerns in writing, by letter or email, to the Chair of Governors. Where this is the case, the Chair of Governors will take on the headteacher's duties outlined in [section 10](#).

When individuals raise their concern, they will include the following information as far as possible:

- the background and history of the concern
- any relevant names, dates and places
- the reasons for the concern.

The school encourages individuals to let their identity be known when they raise concerns, as anonymous concerns can be challenging to investigate; however, it respects individuals' right to anonymity and confidentiality and will protect the identity of the individual making a disclosure where requested. Where it is necessary for anyone investigating concerns to know a worker's identity, this will be discussed with the appropriate worker.

Individuals who would like to seek professional and confidential advice should contact Protect, a registered charity that advises on whistleblowing queries. The Protect website can be accessed [here](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk) (www.protect-advice.org.uk), or they can be contacted on 020 31172520.

Once an individual has raised a concern, the school will be responsible for investigating it.

In certain instances, it may be appropriate for the individual to raise the concern with an outside agency, e.g. the police, depending on the severity of the concern. Equally, it may be appropriate for the individual to request that their trade union raises the matter.

If a member of staff feels they should report a concern to the LA, they should contact Barnet's Whistleblowing team at:

telephone: 020 8359 6123

email: whistleblowing@barnet.gov.uk

Appropriate whistleblowing procedures will be put in place for concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding system to be raised with the SLT.

If a member of staff feels like they are unable to raise a safeguarding-related concern with the school, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they are able to contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline on 0800 028 0285 or the LADO.

The school, or the appropriate external agency, will acknowledge receipt of a disclosure but, unless additional information is required, will not contact or engage in dialogue with the whistleblower, as this may undermine the legitimacy of the investigation outcome.

10. Interview and Investigation

The headteacher will write to the individual within 10 working days of the initial meeting to confirm that the concern has been received, as well as to indicate proposals for dealing with the matter.

The initial stage will be an interview with the whistleblower, and then an assessment of further action will be discussed. During this initial stage, the headteacher will establish if:

- there are grounds for a concern and that it is genuine
- the concern was raised in accordance with this Policy.

During the initial interview, the headteacher will request the individual puts their concern in writing, if they have not already done so. The headteacher will write a summary of the concern if the individual is unable to put it in writing.

The headteacher will explain the following to anybody raising a concern:

- how they will communicate with the complainant throughout the process. It should be noted, the need for confidentiality may prevent the school giving the complainant specific details of any necessary investigation or any necessary disciplinary action taken as a result of the concern
- that the complainant's identity will be kept confidential from the alleged wrongdoer
- that the Governing Body will do everything in its power to protect the complainant from discrimination
- that if the concern is genuine, even if the concern is not confirmed, no disciplinary action will be taken against the complainant.

If clear evidence is uncovered that the complainant's concern is malicious or unfounded, disciplinary action may be brought against them.

If an investigation is carried out, the whistleblower will be informed of the final outcome.

A record will be kept of the seriousness of the issues raised and the credibility of the concern. All records will be kept confidential and will be stored in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

It may be possible for the concern to be resolved by simply agreeing the necessary action or explaining procedures to the alleged wrongdoer; however, depending on the severity and nature of the concern, it may:

- be investigated by management, an internal audit or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police or an external auditor
- form the subject of an independent inquiry.

If the investigating officer needs to talk to the whistleblower, they are permitted to be accompanied by a trade union representative, a professional association representative, a friend or a fellow member of staff not involved in the area of work that the concern relates to. This person will provide support only and will not be allowed to become involved in the proceedings.

A record will be made of the nature and outcome of the concern. The purpose of this is to ensure that a central record is kept which can be cross-referenced with other complaints to monitor any patterns of concern across the school and to assist in monitoring the procedure.

The whistleblower will be informed of the results of the investigation, and any action that is proposed will be subject to third party rights. Where action is not taken, the individual will be given an explanation.

11. What the school asks of its employees

The purpose of this policy is to enable individuals to raise concerns in confidence, without any fear of reprisal; therefore, it is imperative that whistleblowers:

- do not take the concern outside the school, e.g. gossiping
- declare any personal interest in the matter, as the policy is designed to be used in the interest of the public and not for individual matters.

12. Appeal process

If no action is to be taken and/or the individual is not satisfied with the way the matter has been handled, they can make a complaint under the school's Complaints Policy.

13. Unfair treatment

An individual can take a case to an employment tribunal if they feel that they have been treated unfairly as a result of whistleblowing. Further information can be sought from the [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#), the whistleblowing charity [Protect](#), or from an individual's trade union.

Any claims of unfair dismissal needs be made within three months of the investigation ending.