



WOHL ILFORD JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Reviewed by Headteacher:	November 2023
Ratified by the Governing Body:	November 2023
Next review:	November 2024

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Encourage individuals affected to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated and that their confidentiality will be respected
- Let all staff at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School (WIJPS) know how to raise concerns about potential wrongdoing
- Set clear procedures for how the trust will respond to such concerns
- Let all staff know the protection available to them if they raise a whistle-blowing concern
- Assure staff that they will not be victimised for raising a legitimate concern through the steps set out in the policy even if they turn out to be mistaken (though vexatious or malicious concerns may be considered a disciplinary issue)
- WIJPS is committed to tackling fraud and other forms of malpractice and treats these issues seriously
- WIJPS 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

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time. The policy applies to all employees or other workers who provide services to the trust in any capacity including self-employed consultants or contractors who provide services on a personal basis and agency workers.

2. Legislation

This policy has been written in line with the [government guidance on whistle-blowing](#). We also take into account the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#). This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Definition of whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing covers concerns made that report wrongdoing that is "in the public interest". Examples of whistle-blowing include (but are not limited to):

- Criminal offences, such as fraud or corruption
- Pupils' or staffs' health and safety being put in danger
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutory requirement
- Breaches of financial management procedures
- Attempts to cover up the above, or any other wrongdoing in the public interest
- Damage to the environment

A whistle-blower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to the above.

Not all concerns about WIJPS count as whistle-blowing. For example, personal staff grievances such as bullying or harassment do not usually count as whistle-blowing. If something affects a staff member as an individual, or relates to an individual employment contract, this is likely a grievance.

When staff have a concern, they should consider whether it would be better to follow our staff grievance or complaints procedures.

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work) has:

- [Further guidance](#) on the difference between a whistle-blowing concern and a grievance that staff may find useful if unsure
- A free and confidential [advice line](#)

4. Procedure for staff to raise a whistle-blowing concern

WIJPS encourages the whistle-blower 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.

WIJPS has designated a number of individuals to specifically deal with such matters and the whistle-blower is invited to decide which of those individuals would be the most appropriate person to deal with the matter.

- Headteacher
- Chair of Governors
- Other person in whom the whistle-blower wishes to confide

The whistle-blower 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 will be treated in strict confidence and anonymity will be respected wherever possible.

Alternatively, if the whistle-blower considers the matter too serious or sensitive to raise within the internal environment of the school, the matter should be directed in the first instance to one of the LA senior officers, as follows:

	Chief Executive	020 8708 2100
For financial concerns:	Corporate Director of resources	020 8708 3588
**	S151 Officer	020 8708 3013
	Head of Legal	020 8708 2201
	Head of Audit	020 8708 3130

** A S151 officer is appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires every local authority to appoint a suitably qualified officer responsible for the proper administration of its affairs.

Concerns may be raised verbally, or in writing. Contact may be made in confidence on: 0800 6335267 or e-mail whistleblow@redbridge.gov.uk. There is also an online form which can be found on the Intranet.

WIJPS would prefer that a serious concern is raised responsibly rather than not at all. Despite the assurances, the whistle-blower may feel that it is more appropriate to raise the concern with an external organisation, such as a regulator. It is, of course, open for them to do so provided they have sufficient evidence to support the concern. WIJPS strongly advises that before reporting the concern externally, the whistle-blower seeks advice from one of the following:

- Public Concern at Work, a registered charity which advises on serious malpractice within the work place, can be contacted on 020 7404 6609.
- Their own union.

4.1 When to raise a concern

Staff should consider the examples in section 3 when deciding whether their concern is of a whistle-blowing nature. Consider whether the incident(s) was illegal, breached statutory or trust procedures, put people in danger or was an attempt to cover any such activity up.

4.2 Who to report to

Staff should report their concern to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. If the concern is about the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to local authority senior officers.

4.3 How to raise the concern

Concerns should be made in writing wherever possible. They should include names of those committing wrongdoing, dates, places and as much evidence and context as possible. Staff raising a concern should also include details of any personal interest in the matter.

5 Investigating the concern

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, legal or personnel advisors, the police and the LA.

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 whistle-blower will be informed of the results of the investigation and the action taken to address the matter. Depending on the nature of the concern or allegation and whether or not it has been substantiated, the matter will be reported to the Governing Body and the LA.

The LA has its own procedures for dealing with such matters and will ensure every effort to respect the confidentiality of the whistle-blower. If the whistle-blower is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, WIJPS would prefer that the whistle-blower raised this with them or the LA, explaining why this is the case. The concern will be looked at again if there is good reason to do so.

If the whistle-blower is dissatisfied with the conduct of the investigation or resolution of the matter or has genuine concerns that the matter has not been handled appropriately, the concerns should be raised with the investigating officer(s), the Governing Body and/or directed to the LA.

6. Respecting confidentiality

Wherever possible WIJPS seeks to respect the confidentiality and anonymity of the whistle-blower and will as far as possible protect him/her from reprisals. WIJPS will not tolerate any attempt to victimise the whistle-blower or attempts to prevent concerns being raised and will consider any necessary disciplinary or corrective action appropriate to the circumstances. The Public Interest Disclosure Act became law in 1999 and gives a "worker" the right not to be victimised or dismissed because he or she has made a protected disclosure.

7. Malicious or vexatious allegations

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns when they believe there to potentially be an issue. If an allegation is made in good faith, but the investigation finds no wrongdoing, there will be no disciplinary action against the member of staff who raised the concern.

If, however, an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the person making the allegation.

8. Conclusion

Existing good practice within WIJPS in terms of its systems of internal control both financial and non-financial and the external regulatory environment in which the school operates ensure that cases of suspected fraud or impropriety rarely occur. This whistle blowing 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 commitment that concerns are taken seriously and will be actioned but we recognise that staff may feel the need to report concerns to an external body. A list of prescribed bodies to whom staff can raise concerns with is included [here](#). The Protect advice line, linked to in section 3 of this policy, can also help staff when deciding whether to raise the concern to an external party.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- School Complaints procedure
- Staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy