

CHBP School Federation



Brunswick Park Primary and Nursery School
Osidge Lane,
Southgate,
London
N14 5DU

Tel: 020 8368 3468
Email: office@brunswickpark.barnetmail.net

Church Hill Primary School
Burlington Rise
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8NN

Telephone: 020 8368 3431
Email: office@churchhill.barnetmail.net

'As a federation, and as individual schools, we are committed to the wellbeing of all of our community - this is an integral part of each school's culture and ethos. Policies are formulated and implemented with this in mind, placing the wellbeing of all at the forefront at all times.'

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

MARCH 2023

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Statement of intent

CHBP Federation is committed to operating with the highest ethical standards and acting with integrity in all activities. The risks of fraud, theft, irregularity and cyber-crime are taken seriously, and proportionate controls will be implemented to mitigate the risks.

This policy sets out our responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud and corruption, and the promotion of an ethical culture. The policy also sets out the procedures that will be followed where fraud or corruption are discovered or suspected.

1. Legal framework

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

- Bribery Act 2010
- Fraud Act 2006
- Companies Act 2006
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Charities Act 2011
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
- Terrorism Act 2000

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Financial Management Policy
- Gifts, Hospitality and Anti-bribery Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

2. Definitions

Fraud is a criminal offence, which is defined in the Fraud Act 2006 as:

- Deceiving through false representation.
- Failing to disclose information where there is a legal duty to do so.
- Abusing a position of trust.

Corruption is the offering, giving, soliciting or accepting of any inducement or reward which may influence the actions taken by the body, its members or officers.

Theft is dishonestly appropriating property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it.

Bribery is defined by the Bribery Act 2010 as inducement for an action which is illegal, unethical or a breach of trust. Inducements can take the form of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages.

In this policy, 'fraud' will be used to refer to all the definitions outlined above.

Examples of what could constitute fraud include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Theft of cash
- Substitution of personal cheques for cash
- Travelling and subsistence claims for non-existent journeys or events, or inflating claims
- Manipulating documentation to increase salaries
- Payment of invoices for goods received by an individual rather than the trust

- Unauthorised borrowing of equipment
- Failure to declare a conflict of interest
- Concealing a generous gift or reward
- Creation of false documentation

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for dealing with fraud lies with the Executive Headteacher alongside the School Business Manager. Responsibilities of the SBM will include:

- Overseeing the development and implementation of a system of internal controls that aim to minimise the risk of fraud.
- Overseeing the financial transactions and the development and implementation of effective financial regulations, policies and procedures to prevent losses and misuse.
- Ensuring bank accounts, financial systems and financial records are operated by more than one person.
- Ensuring resources are being managed in an ethical, efficient and economical manner.
- Ensuring that rigorous investigations of potential fraud are carried out promptly.
- Ensuring the appropriate legal and/or disciplinary action is taken where fraud is proven.
- Ensuring that appropriate action is taken to recover assets and minimise loss.

The LA and routine checks from the external auditor will be responsible for certifying whether the school's financial management is appropriate.

4. Indicators for potential fraud

Some actions and behaviours may give cause for concern, arouse suspicion and possibly indicate fraudulent activity. These are outlined in Appendix 1. The list provided in Appendix 1 is not exhaustive; fraud can take many different forms. All employees will be vigilant to the indicators of fraud.

Clarification will be sought from the Executive Headteacher or SBM if there are any questions over whether something could be considered an indicator of fraud. The presence of any of these indicators may not be a cause for concern; however, they will always be investigated appropriately in accordance with section 10 of this policy.

5. Creating an ethical culture

An ethical, anti-fraud culture will underpin all the work done by the federation to counter fraud. All employees and third parties that work with the federation and individual schools will be expected to act with high levels of integrity and to adhere with the rules outlined in this policy.

Employees will be encouraged to report any concerns, and clear reporting mechanisms will be implemented and communicated. Victimisation or harassment of anyone who has made a report will not be tolerated.

6. Preventing Fraud

The Executive Headteacher and SBM will assess the areas of the federation that are most vulnerable to fraud risks on a regular basis. Fraud risks will be identified for all areas and processes of the trust and will be assessed in terms of impact and likelihood. Both monetary and non-monetary impacts will be considered, such as the impact on the federation's reputation.

Robust internal controls will be put in place to manage the risk of fraud - these will cover areas including the following:

- Process of authorising transactions
- Access restrictions and transaction controls
- Account reconciliations
- Physical security of assets
- Segregation of responsibilities
- Pre-employment checks

All employees that are involved in the implementation of these controls will be provided with relevant training. Internal controls will be reviewed on a regular basis by the resources committee, in conjunction with the Executive Headteacher, to ensure they remain effective and are being consistently applied.

All employees will follow the Staff Code of Conduct and will be required to declare any business or pecuniary interests, or other conflicts of interest, to the Executive Headteacher.

Following a case of fraud, the risk management strategy will be reviewed to ensure it considers all relevant risks and that the internal controls are effective.

7. Record Keeping

Financial records will be kept, along with evidence for the business reasons for making payments to third parties.

All invoices, accounts and related documents will be prepared and maintained with the highest accuracy and completeness. No accounts will be kept "off-book" and any reports of fraud, and subsequent investigations, will be recorded.

8. Gifts and Hospitality

All employees will act in line with school policy. It is not acceptable for employees to:

- Give, promise or offer payment, gifts or hospitality, with the expectation or hope that an advantage for the federation will be received or to reward an advantage already received.

- Give, promise or offer a payment, gift or hospitality to a government official, agent or representative to facilitate or expedite a routine procedure.
- Accept payment from a third party if they know or suspect that it is offered with an expectation of a business advantage in return.
- Threaten or retaliate against another employee who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns regarding bribery.
- Engage in any activity that may lead to a breach of school policy.

The federation will not prohibit normal and appropriate hospitality or gifts (both given and received) if the following requirements are met:

- It is not made with the intention of influencing a third party to obtain or retain business or business advantage, or to reward the provision or retention of business or business advantage, or in exchange for favours or benefits.
- It is given in the federation or individual school's name, not the individual's name.
- It complies with the law.
- It does not include cash or a cash equivalent, e.g. vouchers or gift certificates.
- It is appropriate in the circumstances, e.g. the giving of small gifts at Christmas.
- The type and value of the gift is reasonable given the reason the gift is offered.
- It is given openly, not secretly.

Gifts should not be offered to, or accepted from, government officials or representatives without the prior approval of the Executive Headteacher. In all circumstances, employees should consider whether the gift or hospitality is reasonable and justified and consider the intention behind the gift.

Any gifts and hospitality given or received will be recorded on an appropriate register.

9. Reporting Concerns and Making Allegations

Any allegations or concerns of suspected fraud will be reported to the Executive Headteacher. Allegations involving the Executive Headteacher will be reported to the governing body. Allegations involving governors will be made to the SBM or other appropriate Local Authority accounting officer.

Third parties will report any concerns to the Executive Headteacher or the governing body, depending on what the allegation involves. Any person with a concern or allegation will not investigate the matter themselves.

Procedures outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy can be followed to report concerns.

10. Investigating Reports

Reports will be initially investigated by the Executive Headteacher and SBM, who will ascertain the facts of the report, seeking HR and legal advice as necessary. The Executive Headteacher will notify the governing body of any serious financial irregularities at the first opportunity following the completion of an initial investigation.

Following the initial investigation, the matter will be reported to the audit and risk committee who will undertake the management of the investigation. When a report has been escalated to the resources committee, the individual(s) the allegation has been made against will be informed of the investigation. They will not be informed of who made the allegation.

In undertaking an investigation of a report, the resources committee will:

- Conduct an investigation to gather factual information and reach an initial view as to whether further action is required.
- Collect relevant evidence, interview all relevant people and analyse any related documentation.
- Decide if the evidence suggests that the allegation or concern is proven.
- Recommend any changes to the internal controls in light of the findings.
- Determine whether the findings, conclusions and any recommendations arising from the investigation should be reported to the chair of trustees.
- If further investigations are required, determine which outside agencies should be involved, e.g. auditors or the police.

The resources committee will, where possible, quantify any potential or actual financial loss and ensure steps are taken at an early stage to prevent further loss occurring. The resources committee will notify the LA's external auditor of any cases it is investigating, and of the outcome of these cases.

All concerns and reports will be taken seriously and investigated in line with the process outlined above. Reporters will be asked to provide any evidence they have to support their allegations. Any person who makes a report will be reassured that they will not suffer recrimination as a result of raising any reasonably held suspicion.

Reports will be investigated objectively; the facts will be considered as they appear, based on the information to hand. Individuals about which a report is made will not be accused or approached directly prior to an investigation.

11. Reporting to the LA

The chair of governors will report any instances of fraud, theft and/or irregularity exceeding £5,000 individually, or £5,000 cumulatively in any financial year, to the LA as soon as possible. Unusual or systematic fraud, regardless of value, will also be reported. When making a report to the LA, the SBM will provide the following information:

- Full details of the event(s) with dates
- The financial value of the loss
- Measures that have been taken to prevent recurrence
- Whether the matter was referred to the police, and, if not, the reasoning behind this
- Whether insurance or the risk protection arrangement (RPA) have offset any loss

Following a report, the LA may conduct or commission its own investigation into actual or potential fraud, theft or irregularity. Other authorities, including the police, may be involved in the investigation.

12. Following an Investigation

The federation will seek to apply appropriate criminal, civil and disciplinary sanctions to all cases of proven fraud and corruption. Where fraud involving an employee is proven, this constitutes as gross misconduct and cases will be dealt with accordingly in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees that make malicious reports of fraud.

Where appropriate, cases will be referred to the police in order for them to consider taking criminal action.

Following any incident of fraud, a 'lessons learned' exercise will be conducted. All individuals involved in the investigation of the case will be involved in the activity, which will aim to identify areas of internal controls or other procedures that should be improved to prevent further cases occurring.

13. Cyber-crime and Cyber-security

The trust will be vigilant to cyber-crime and clear cyber-security measures and proportionate controls will be implemented. Appropriate action will be taken where a cyber-security incident occurs, in line with school policy.

The following measures will be implemented specifically relating to addressing the risk of fraud:

- Firewalls, anti-virus software and strong passwords will be used
- Data will be routinely and securely backed up
- A restricted number of devices will be used to access financial or other sensitive data

Staff will receive routine reminders and training (where appropriate) to ensure they:

- Check the sender of an email is genuine before, for example, sending payment, data or passwords.
- Make direct contact with the sender where an email requests a payment - this will be done in person where possible, but at a minimum staff must use another method other than the direct reply function, such as a phone call.
- Understand the risks of using public WiFi.
- Understand the risks of not following payment checks and measures.

Any suspected incidents of fraud relating to cybersecurity will be reported and investigated as outlined in section 9 and section 10 of this policy.

The federation will follow the National Crime Agency's (NCA) recommendation to not pay cyber ransom demands. Any decision to pay a cyber ransom demand will only be made if permission has been obtained from the appropriate body.

14. Money laundering

"Money laundering" describes offences concerning the possession, concealment, conversion, transfer or making of arrangements relating to the proceeds of crime. This is not limited to money or cash.

The SBM will take appropriate and reasonable steps to ascertain where funds received come from. This includes:

- Identifying who they are dealing with.
- Verifying identities, where appropriate, and there are high risks.
- Checking the nature of the organisation's or individual's business to be assured that this is appropriate for the trust to be involved with.
- Watching out for unusual, complex or suspicious activities, conducts or requests.
- Ensuring that any conditions attached to receiving the funds are appropriate and can be accepted and there is reasonable assurance that the funds are not from any illegal or inappropriate source.

Payments by cash will only be accepted by the school up to a value of £500 from known individuals and organisations.

15. Confidentiality

The federation understands that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. Victimisation or harassment of anyone who has made a report will not be tolerated.

Where possible, the identity of the person who made the report will be kept confidential; their identity will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. The identity of the individual(s) about whom an allegation is made will be also be kept confidential, and only shared on a need-to-know basis. Where an allegation is proven to be unfounded or malicious, the individual about whom the allegation was made will be provided with appropriate support.

16. Accounts

The SBM will submit forecasts and other budgetary requirement actions in accordance with LA policy.

The external auditor will certify whether the annual accounts present a true and fair view of the trust's financial performance and position. The school will be externally audited every 5 years, in line with LA policy.

17. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Executive Headteacher and SBM. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to governors and all members of staff.

Indicators for Potential Fraud

Personal Motives for Fraud

- Personnel believe they receive inadequate compensation and/or rewards, e.g. recognition, job security, holidays or promotions
- Expensive lifestyle, e.g. cars and holidays
- Personal problems, e.g. gambling, alcohol, drugs or debt
- Unusually high degree of competition or peer pressure
- Related party transactions (business activities with personal friends, relatives or their companies)
- Conflicts of interest
- Disgruntled employee, e.g. being recently demoted or reprimanded
- Recent failure associated with specific individual
- Personal animosity or professional jealousy

Organisational Motives for Fraud

- Organisation experiencing financial difficulty
- Commercial arm experiencing financial difficulty
- Tight or unusually tight time deadlines to achieve level of outputs
- Organisational governance lacks clarity, direction or substance
- Organisation closely identified with, or dominated by, one individual
- Organisation under pressure to show results, e.g. budgetary matters or exam results
- Organisation recently suffered disappointment or consequences of bad decisions
- Organisation wants to expand its scope or obtain additional funding
- Funding award or contract for services is up for renewal or continuation
- Organisation due for a site visit by auditors, Ofsted or others
- Organisation has a for-profit component
- Organisation recently affected by new and/or changing conditions, e.g. regulatory, economic or environmental
- Organisation faces pressure to use or lose funds to sustain future funding levels
- Record of previous failure(s) by one or more organisational areas, associated business or key personnel
- Sudden change in organisation practice or pattern of behaviour

Weakness in Internal Controls

- There is a general lack of transparency about how the organisation works, and its procedures and controls
- Management demonstrates a lack of attention to ethical values - including a lack of communication regarding the importance of integrity and ethics, a lack of concern about the presence of temptations and inducements to commit fraud, a lack of

concern regarding instances of fraud, and no clear fraud response plan or investigation policy

- Management fails to specify and/or require appropriate levels of qualifications, experience or competence for employees
- Management displays a penchant for taking risks
- Lack of an appropriate organisational and governance structure with defined lines of authority and reporting responsibilities
- Organisation lacks policies and communication relating to individual accountability and best practice, e.g. related to procurement, expenses, use of alcohol and declarations of interest
- Lack of personnel policies and recruitment practices
- Organisation lacks personnel performance appraisal measures or practices
- Management displays a lack of commitment towards the identification and management of risks relevant to the preparation of financial statements
- There is inadequate comparison of budgets with actual performance and costs, forecasts and prior performance - there is also no regular reconciliation of control records and a lack of proper reporting to the board of trustees
- Management of information systems is inadequate, e.g. no policy on ICT security, computer use, verification of data accuracy, or completeness or authorisation of transactions
- There is insufficient physical security over facilities, assets, records, computers, data files and cash
- Failure to compare existing assets with related records at reasonable intervals
- There is inadequate or inappropriate segregation of duties regarding initiation, authorisation and recording of transactions, maintaining custody of assets and alike
- Accounting systems are inadequate, i.e. they have an ineffective method for identifying and recording transactions, no tracking of time periods during which transactions occur, insufficient description of transactions and to which account they should be allocated to, no easy way to know the status of funds on a timely basis, no adequate procedure to prevent duplicate payments or missing payment dates
- Purchasing systems and/or procedures are inadequate, e.g. poor or incomplete documentation to support procedure, purchase, payment or receipt of goods or services
- Subcontractor records and/or systems reflect inadequate internal controls
- There is a lack of internal, ongoing monitoring of controls which are in place and/or failure to take any necessary corrective actions
- Management is unaware of or displays a lack of concern regarding applicable laws, e.g. Companies Act, Charities Act
- Specific problems and/or reportable conditions identified by prior audits or other means of oversight have not been corrected

- No mechanism to exist to inform management, directors, trustees or governors of possible fraud
- General lack of management oversight

Transactional indicators

- Related party transactions with inadequate, inaccurate, or incomplete documentation or internal controls, e.g. business activities with friends
- Not-for-profit entity has for-profit counterpart with linked infrastructure, e.g. shared board of trustees, governors or other shared functions and personnel
- Specific transactions that typically receive minimal oversight
- Previous audits with findings of questioned costs, evidence of non-compliance with applicable laws or regulations, weak internal controls, a qualified audit opinion, or an inadequate management response to any of these issues
- Transactions and/or accounts which are difficult to audit and/or subject to management judgement and estimates
- Multiple sources of funding with inadequate, incomplete or poor tracking, failure to segregate funds, or existence of pooled funds
- Unusual, complex or new transactions, particularly if they occur at year end or end of reporting period
- Transactions and accounts operating under time constraints
- Cost sharing, matching or leveraging arrangements where industry money or other donation has been put into a foundation without adequate controls to determine if money or equipment has been spent/used and whether it has gone to allowable costs and at appropriate and accurate valuations
- Outside entity provided limited access to documentation
- Travel accounts with inadequate, inaccurate or incomplete documentation or poor internal controls, variances between budgeted amounts and actual costs, claims in excess of actual expenses, reimbursement for personal expenses, claims for non-existent travel, or collecting duplicate payments
- Credit card accounts with inadequate, inaccurate or incomplete documentation or internal controls such as appropriate authorisation and review
- Accounts in which activities, transactions or events involve handling of cash or wire transfers
- Payroll (including fringe benefits) system is outsourced but there is poor oversight of starters, leavers and payments
- Consultant and subcontract agreements which are vague regarding the work, time period covered, rate of pay or product expected
- There is a lack of proof that a product or service was actually delivered by a consultant or subcontractor
- Sudden and/or rapid growth of newly contracted or existing education providers, e.g. significant increase in pupil numbers for newly contracted providers

Methods used to commit and/or conceal fraud

Employee indicators such as:

- Eagerness to work unusual hours
- Access to or use of computers at unusual hours
- Reluctance to take leave or seek support
- Insistence on doing their job alone
- Refusal of promotion or reluctance to change their job

Auditor/employee issues such as:

- Refusal or reluctance to provide information or hand over documents
- Unreasonable explanations
- Annoyance or aggressive responses to questions or requests, in an attempt to deter auditors
- Trying to control the audit process
- Employee blames a mistake on a lack of experience with financial requirements or regulations governing funding
- Promises of cooperation followed by subsequent excuses to limit or truncate cooperation
- Subtle resistance
- Answering a question that was not asked
- Offering more information than asked
- Providing a lot of information in some areas and little to none in others
- Uncharacteristic willingness to settle questioned costs in an attempt to deter further investigation or analysis

General indicators such as:

- A general lack of transparency about how the organisation works and its procedures and controls
- Fabricated explanations to support inability or unwillingness to evidence transactions or assets, such as stated loss of electronic data or theft of business records

Record keeping, banking and other

- Materials, goods and or services fictitiously erroneously reported as purchased, and evidence has been fabricated to support the claim. This could potentially be evidenced by:
 - Repeated purchases of the same items
 - Identical items purchased in different quantities within a short time period
 - Anomalies in the format of purchase invoices
 - Goods or equipment are not used as promised, or they do not work or exist

