

1.7 Whistleblowing policy

Policy Statement

It is important to Meadow Lane Children's Nursery that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by employees, or people engaged in the organisation's business, is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore encourage all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the early years setting or the way in which the early years setting is run.

We recognise that effective and honest communication is essential if malpractice is to be effectively dealt with and the organisation's success ensured.

Whistleblowing relates to all those who work with, or within, the early years setting, who may from time-to-time think that they need to raise with someone in confidence certain issues relating to the organisation.

Whistleblowing is separate from the grievance procedure. If you have a complaint about your own personal circumstances, you should use the normal grievance procedure. If you have a concern about malpractice within the organisation, then you should use the procedure outlined below.

Procedure

- Report any concerns to your line manager. If this is not possible, then report your concerns to a more senior manager.
- All employees and those involved with the early years setting should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing within the organisation. You should be watchful for illegal, inappropriate or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that you become aware of.
- You should be watchful and report any wrongdoing. Wrongdoing could include:
 - abuse of a child or vulnerable person
 - a child, parent, employee or volunteer being put at risk of harm

- unsafe working practices
 - a failure to comply with statutory or legal obligations
 - a criminal offence which has or is about to be committed
 - the use of unsafe equipment
 - falsification of financial records
 - bribery and/or corruption which has taken or is about to take place
 - covering up wrongdoing or malpractice
- Any matter you raise under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation will be reported back to you.
 - You will not be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that your continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training will not be prejudiced because you have raised a legitimate concern.
 - Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualifying disclosure (something that it is in the public interest to disclose) will be a disciplinary offence.
 - If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure the early years setting's disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
 - If you make a malicious or false allegation then this will be considered a disciplinary offence and disciplinary action will be taken against you.
 - An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If you are told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, you should not agree to remain silent. In this event you should report the matter to a more senior manager.

Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff who raise concerns, and they will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.

Raising a Concern

Staff, students and volunteers should raise concerns with the manager or management team. Concerns should be raised in writing and include:

- reference to the fact that it is a whistle blowing disclosure
- the background and history of the concerns
- names, dates and places (where possible)
- the reasons why the individual is concerned about the situation.

Staff who feel unable to put concerns in writing, can telephone or meet either the manager or a member of the management team.

Who should you contact?

You should contact one of the following people in confidence:

Sophia Covill 07576 659 729

Emma Biggs 074115 527 599

Investigation

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. All matters raised, **with the exception of allegations of abuse against a staff member, or unlawful activity**, will be investigated internally.

The appropriate person/s will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days.

The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and whom to contact should the staff member be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter.

If the investigation cannot be completed within the timescale above, the staff member should receive a response that indicates:

- progress to date
- how the matter is being dealt with
- how long it will take to provide a final response.

In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with the individual raising the concern), will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that raise issues

that fall within the scope of other policies/procedures, will be addressed under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved at this initial stage simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern, without the need for further investigation.

If you do not feel that the complaint has been dealt with effectively or you still have concerns, you have a right to refer your concerns to Ofsted.

Allegations of abuse against adults who work or volunteer in the setting:

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, the following action will be taken (as per the 'Allegations of Abuse against Adults who Work or Volunteer in a Childcare Setting' flowchart and guidance):

- The setting will ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- The setting will not investigate and will immediately contact the Early Years Named Senior Officer (if the Early Years Named Senior Officer is not contactable, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be contacted direct).
- The setting will notify Ofsted of a significant incident.
- The Early Years Named Senior Officer will notify the LADO, who will decide if it could be a child protection concern.
- If the LADO decides that there is a child protection concern, external/internal agencies (e.g. police) will be informed by the LADO and the setting will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised.
- It may be necessary for the employer to suspend the alleged perpetrator. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
- If it is agreed that there is not a child protection concern, the setting will investigate further and feed back the outcome of the investigation to the Early Years Named Senior Officer and Ofsted.

Further information and help regarding whistle-blowing can be found on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk