Whistleblowing

The Play Corner is committed to promoting a culture of transparency, openness, and accountability. We believe all staff, volunteers, students, and other individuals working with us have a responsibility to raise concerns about poor practice, wrongdoing, or risks to the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and colleagues.

Children's welfare is at the heart of everything we do. Every individual working in the nursery has a **legal and moral duty** to report any concerns, no matter how small, if they believe a child is at risk or if organisational practice may compromise care quality or safety.

This policy applies to:

- All nursery staff
- Volunteers
- Work experience students
- Visitors
- External professionals working with the nursery

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. It enables staff to raise concerns about:

- Risks to child safety or wellbeing
- Poor or unsafe childcare practice
- Staff conduct, including bullying, discrimination, harassment
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Criminal offences (e.g. theft, fraud, abuse)
- Miscarriages of justice
- Deliberate attempts to conceal any of the above
- Breach of nursery or safeguarding policies
- Actions which could seriously damage the nursery's reputation

This is different from a grievance, which relates to a personal concern (e.g. issues with pay, workload, relationships).

The Play Corner

The Play Corner are committed to keeping a safe environment where concerns can be raised without fear, we listen to concerns, and taking timely, fair and proportionate action. We protect whistleblowers from harassment or victimisation. We will keep disclosures confidential, where possible and appropriate. Ensuring staff know how and where to raise concerns, both internally and externally.

All managers and DSLs are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture of **openness and vigilance**
- Encouraging early reporting of concerns
- Ensuring all whistleblowing disclosures are handled sensitively and in line with policy
- Keeping accurate records of concerns, investigations, and outcomes
- Reporting safeguarding-related concerns to the **LADO** or **local safeguarding partners** as required

When and How to Raise a Concern

- Staff are encouraged to speak up early
- Concerns are welcomed and not judged
- Whistleblowing training and safeguarding induction are part of the onboarding process
- Policies are revisited regularly in team meetings and supervision sessions

Internal Reporting Route (Preferred)

We encourage staff to first raise concerns internally so that issues can be addressed quickly and appropriately.

You can speak to:

- **Nursery Manager**
- **Deputy Manager**
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

You may raise your concern:

- Verbally (in person or by phone)
- In writing (email or confidential letter)

- Anonymously, though this may limit investigation scope

Your concern will be:

- Taken seriously and recorded in writing
- Investigated promptly, objectively, and confidentially
- Shared only with those who need to know

The manager will provide feedback on the outcome, where appropriate.

Escalating Concerns (If Not Resolved or Inappropriate to Raise Internally)

If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, or the concern involves senior managers or owners, you can escalate it to:

Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline

- **Phone:** 0300 123 3155
- **Email:** whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Online form:** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-about-childrens-social-care-services-to-ofsted

You can also contact:

- The **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** for concerns involving a professional working with children; 02392882500 or LADO@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- The **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**: 0800 028 0285

Protection for Whistleblowers

If you raise a genuine concern in the public interest:

- You **will not be penalised** even if the concern turns out to be unfounded
- You are protected by the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**
- The nursery will take **appropriate action** against any colleague who harasses, victimises or retaliates against a whistleblower

Malicious, false, or knowingly untrue allegations may result in disciplinary action.

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