Whistleblowing Policy

Academic year 2026/27 | Reviewed at least annually

Statement of Intent

At The Wendy House, safeguarding children and maintaining high standards of professional conduct are everyone's responsibility.

We encourage staff, volunteers, students and Management Committee members to raise concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or inappropriate conduct at the earliest opportunity.

No person should feel that they must remain silent when they genuinely believe that something is wrong.

Concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when a person raises a concern about wrongdoing or malpractice which they reasonably believe is in the public interest.

This is different from a personal grievance about an individual's own employment or working conditions, which would normally be dealt with through the appropriate grievance procedure.

Whistleblowing concerns may include:

- safeguarding concerns;
- a child's welfare being put at risk;
- unsafe or inappropriate practice;
- failure to follow safeguarding procedures;
- concerns being ignored or covered up;
- inappropriate conduct towards children;
- criminal activity;
- fraud or financial wrongdoing;
- serious health and safety concerns;
- unlawful discrimination;
- breaches of legal or regulatory requirements;
- deliberate concealment of wrongdoing; or
- attempts to prevent somebody from raising a legitimate concern.

Safeguarding Concerns

Where a concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, safeguarding procedures take priority.

Staff must report safeguarding concerns immediately in accordance with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Whistleblowing may be particularly relevant where a member of staff believes:

- safeguarding concerns are not being taken seriously;
- appropriate action has not been taken;
- concerns are being covered up;
- unsafe practice is being allowed to continue; or
- they do not feel able to raise the matter through the normal safeguarding route.

A member of staff does not need proof before raising a genuine safeguarding concern.

How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised with the Manager as soon as possible.

The person raising the concern should explain:

- what they have seen, heard or become aware of;
- when and where it occurred;
- who may be involved;
- why they are concerned; and
- any other relevant information.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing.

Staff should provide factual information and distinguish, where possible, between what they have personally witnessed and information received from somebody else.

Concerns About the Manager

Where the concern relates to the Manager, or the person raising the concern does not believe it is appropriate to approach the Manager, the concern should be raised directly with the Chair or another appropriate member of the Management Committee.

Where the concern relates to safeguarding, appropriate advice or referrals must also be sought in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

If a Concern Has Not Been Acted Upon

If a member of staff believes that:

- their concern has not been dealt with appropriately;
- no appropriate action has been taken;
- the matter has been covered up;

- raising the matter internally could place a child at greater risk; or
- they reasonably believe it is necessary to contact an outside body directly,

they should escalate the concern.

This may include contacting the appropriate local authority safeguarding service, LADO, Ofsted, NSPCC, police or another appropriate prescribed body depending on the nature of the concern.

A member of staff must never be instructed to remain silent about a genuine safeguarding concern.

External Whistleblowing Contacts

Where appropriate, staff may seek advice or raise concerns externally.

Ofsted Whistleblowing

Telephone: 0300 123 3155
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted is a prescribed body for certain whistleblowing matters.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Telephone: 0800 028 0285
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line provides advice and support where someone is concerned about how an organisation is working with children or how child-protection concerns are being handled. The NSPCC confirms that people can contact the service anonymously if they wish.

Immediate Danger

Whistleblowing procedures must never delay action where a child is in immediate danger.

Where there is an immediate risk to a child's safety, the appropriate emergency service and/or children's social care should be contacted without delay.

How Concerns Will Be Handled

Concerns will be taken seriously and considered promptly.

Depending on the nature of the concern, action may include:

- gathering relevant factual information;
- reviewing records;
- seeking safeguarding or legal advice;

- referring the matter to the Management Committee;
- contacting the LADO;
- contacting children's social care;
- notifying Ofsted;
- contacting the police;
- making a DBS referral where required; or
- taking appropriate disciplinary action.

Where the matter concerns an allegation of harm involving somebody working with children, the procedures within our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed.

We will not undertake an internal investigation where doing so could interfere with a safeguarding, LADO, police or other external investigation.

Confidentiality

Concerns will be handled sensitively.

Where possible, the identity of the person raising the concern will be treated confidentially.

However, absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. Information may need to be shared where this is necessary to:

- protect a child;
- investigate the concern properly;
- comply with a legal requirement; or
- cooperate with an appropriate authority.

Where appropriate, the person raising the concern will be informed if their identity may need to be disclosed.

Anonymous Concerns

Anonymous concerns will not automatically be disregarded.

They will be considered according to:

- the seriousness of the concern;
- the information available;
- whether the information can be verified; and
- the potential risk to children or others.

Providing contact details may make it easier to clarify information and provide feedback, but safeguarding concerns will still be considered even when raised anonymously.

Protection From Detriment

The Wendy House will not tolerate victimisation, bullying, harassment or unfair treatment of a person because they have raised a genuine concern in good faith.

Staff should feel able to speak up without fear that doing so will unfairly affect their employment, training or opportunities.

Victimising somebody for raising a legitimate concern may itself result in disciplinary action.

Concerns That Are Not Upheld

A person will not be penalised simply because a concern raised genuinely and reasonably is later found to be mistaken or is not upheld.

This is important because staff must feel able to raise concerns without first having to prove that wrongdoing has occurred.

Knowingly False or Malicious Allegations

There is a difference between a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded and an allegation that a person knowingly makes falsely or maliciously.

Where there is evidence that an employee has deliberately fabricated an allegation maliciously, this may be considered under the setting's disciplinary procedures.

Record Keeping

An appropriate record will be maintained of whistleblowing concerns and actions taken.

Records will be:

- factual;
- dated;
- stored securely;
- accessible only to appropriate individuals; and
- retained in accordance with relevant legal, safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

Safeguarding information will be recorded and retained in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

Responsibilities of the Management Committee

The Management Committee has responsibility for supporting a culture in which staff feel able to raise genuine concerns.

Where appropriate, the Committee will:

- receive concerns escalated beyond the Manager;
- ensure appropriate action is taken;
- maintain confidentiality where possible;
- ensure whistleblowers are not victimised;
- seek external advice where required; and
- ensure safeguarding concerns are referred appropriately.

Staff Awareness

All staff will be made aware of this Whistleblowing Policy.

Staff will know:

- who they should normally report concerns to;
- who to approach if the concern involves the Manager;
- how to escalate a concern;
- that safeguarding takes priority;
- that they may contact appropriate external organisations; and
- that they should never ignore or conceal a genuine safeguarding concern.

Whistleblowing will be discussed as appropriate through induction, safeguarding training, staff meetings and supervision.

Legal Framework

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and guidance including:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- relevant Ofsted requirements and guidance.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act and Employment Rights Act underpin statutory whistleblowing protections.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding procedures or the needs of the setting change.

Policy Approval & Review

Policy year	2026/2027
Approval status	Awaiting Management Committee approval
Next scheduled review	March 2027