



Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing is an important aspect of safeguarding where our staff, volunteers and students are encouraged to share genuine concerns about a colleague's behaviour. The behaviour may not be child abuse but rather may not be following the code of conduct or they could be pushing the boundaries beyond normal limits.

All staff, volunteers and students will be aware of, and follow, Heatherside Pre-school's whistleblowing policy and procedures. Heatherside Pre-school is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice their concerns and if unsure whether or not to raise a concern can contact an independent body for advice such as Public Concern at Work (PCaW) or Ofsted Whistleblowing hotline.

By using this policy, we aim to:

- Provide avenues for relevant parties to raise concerns in confidence and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Ensure that they receive a response to their concerns and that if they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.
- Reassure them that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be difficult one to make. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistle blower if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness.

Heatherside pre-school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. We will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect staff when they raise a concern. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect the staff.

This policy encourages the staff however to put their name to the concern whenever possible. Please note that:

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the committee. In exercising this discretion, the factors considered would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources. If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person who made the disclosure. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the informant.

The whistleblowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of law
- Disclosures related to a miscarriage of justice
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- The unauthorised use of funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Sexual or physical abuse of parents, carers or staff
- Other unethical conduct

Thus, any serious concerns that staff have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees of Heatherside Pre-school or others acting on behalf Heatherside Pre-school can be reported under the whistleblowing policy. This may be about something that:

- Is against Heatherside Pre-school Policies and Procedures
- Falls below established standards of practice; or
- Amounts to improper conduct

How to raise a concern

As a first step the concerns should be raised either verbally or in writing with the pre-school's immediate supervisor. This may depend, however on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved who is suspected of malpractice. For example, if it is believed that management is involved a more senior level of management should be approached if possible or the chairperson of the committee.

The person who has been notified of the concerns will normally:

- Ensure that the concerns raised are taken seriously
- Treat the matter in confidence, within the parameters of the case
- Seek advice and guidance by contacting the LADO

- In consultation with LADO and where advised investigate properly and in line with legal requirements
- Keep the employee advised of progress, without breaching confidentiality
- Ensure that the necessary action is taken to resolve the concern is taken
- Take steps to ensure that the employee's working environment is not prejudiced by the fact of the disclosure

Staff/volunteers who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates)
- The reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

This policy does NOT replace the complaints procedure.

Heatherside Pre-school will respond to any concerns using the guidelines within this policy and the complaints policy and procedure.

Useful numbers

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding Child Protection failures internally or have concerns about a way a concern is being handled by their setting. Staff can call: 0808 800 5000– line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline 0300 123 3155

Ofsted General Enquiries 0300 123 1231

LADO 0300 1231650

Local Citizens Advice Bureau 0344 411 1444

Local police

If the matter is taken outside Heatherside Pre-school, it should be ensured that no confidential information is disclosed. Please check with our confidentiality policy for guidance.

Reviewed & re-agreed at AGM held 07th October 2022 Chair Alex Constantine

Reviewed & re-agreed at AGM held 20th October 2023 Chair Alex Constantine

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