Safeguarding children

1.2.3 Whistleblowing policy

Definition

Whistleblowing is raising a concern about malpractice within an organisation.

Policy statement

Any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of their employment can be reported under this policy. These concerns might include.

- Conduct which a member of staff may consider to be a criminal offence.
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other staff.
- Possible fraud or corruption.
- Breaches of procedures.
- Failure to comply with legal obligations.
- Sexual, physical or verbal abuse of children, parents, staff or any other behaviour which a member of staff genuinely finds unacceptable or inappropriate.
- Other unethical conduct.
- The deliberate concealing of information relating to any of the above matters.

These procedures are in addition to any other statutory reporting procedures that may be applicable.

Protection

This policy makes it clear that staff can speak up without fear of harassment, victimisation (including informal pressure), discrimination or disadvantage. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or other procedures that already affect the member of staff. There will be no come back if a member of staff reasonably believes that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

Roles and responsibilities

School House Nurseries accepts that the decision to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable. However, we are committed to supporting individuals through the process and protecting them from any come back, victimisation or harassment. Concerns reported to the Owners (see staff list on

parent noticeboard) or any member of the management team will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. Staff who genuinely believe that people they work with are behaving in a way that seems wrong, or who have a serious concern about an aspect of the service we offer children and parents, will be doing their duty and acting in the public interest by speaking out.

How to raise a concern

The procedure seeks to encourage and enable individuals to disclose information through appropriate channels first, rather than going directly to an outside person or body.

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with the Manager (see staff list on parent noticeboard).

However, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved, and who is suspected of any wrongdoing, may impact your decision on who to approach. If you do not want to report your concerns to the Manager you may take them direct to the appropriate organisation or body. For example, staff can raise concerns with East Sussex's Single Point of Advice (SPOA) by calling 01323 464222 or emailing:

0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk.

(If it's out of hours, call the emergency Duty Services on 01273 335906 or 01273 335905).

The NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is also available. You can call 0800 0280285, 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is help@nspcc.org.uk. Or you can write to NSPCC, Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.

Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a provider. See our Making a Complaint procedure or visit the Ofsted website on GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are advised to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reasons for making the disclosure. This will make the investigation easier to complete. Although a member of staff is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, they will need to demonstrate that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

Procedure

School House Nurseries will respond to any concerns raised. In order to protect a member of staff who raises a concern and those accused of wrongdoing, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, conduct or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. Staff will be told how the nursery proposes to deal with a concern within ten working days of the concern being brought to the nursery's attention.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a staff member's identity, if they so wish. However, while making all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the

matter as a whole, at a certain stage in the investigation it will be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons the allegations concern. All concerns raised within the remit of this procedure will be assessed to determine if the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant. There would need to be a substantial reason for doing so, such as a real risk of personal harm. Complainants should be aware, however, that their identity may be revealed by inference.

Untrue allegations

School House Nurseries accepts that deciding to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable. If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

Volunteers and students

Volunteers and students will be given our quick guide to whistleblowing as part of their induction.