



Introduction to policy

Burgh Wood Montessori Nursery School and The Orchard School (*hereafter the "Nursery Schools"*) believe that safeguarding our children is vital and as such we create an environment to enable staff to raise a grievance. This *Confidential Reporting policy* is intended to cover concerns which include:

1. Conduct which a member of staff may consider to be a criminal offence;
2. Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other staff and children;
3. Possible fraud or corruption;
4. Breaches of procedures;
5. Failure to comply with legal obligations;
6. Sexual, physical or verbal abuse of children, parents or staff;
7. Any other behaviour which a member of staff genuinely finds unacceptable or inappropriate; and
8. The deliberate concealing of information relating to any of the above matters.

Any concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of their employment can be reported to the Principal Joanne Stewart-Nash at Burgh Wood Montessori Nursery School and Sarah Davies, the Manager at The Orchard School.

If a member of staff does not report their concerns to the Principal/Manager they may take their concerns direct to: LADO 0300 200 1650 (option 3) or the Ofsted Whistle Blowing hotline on 0300 123 4666, Monday – Friday 8.00am – 6.00pm; or e-mail whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or write to OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.

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

Summary of procedures

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

Joanne Stewart-Nash accepts that the decision to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable. The Nursery Schools are committed to supporting individuals through the process and protecting them from any 'come back', victimisation or harassment. Concerns reported will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. A member of staff who genuinely believes that people they work with are behaving in a way that seems wrong, or have a serious concern about an aspect of service, will be doing their duty and acting in the public interest by speaking out.

How to raise a concern

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with the Principal/Manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of any wrongdoing. 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

The Manager will respond to any concerns raised. In order to protect a member of staff who raises a concern and those accused of wrong-doing; 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 concern/allegation will be dealt with within ten working days of the concern being brought to the Manager's attention.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated with 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, 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 will be assessed to determine if the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant. There shall 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

The Nursery Schools accept 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.

Further reading/contacts

Ofsted: <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

Information Commissioners Office: <https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>