

08 Staff, assistants, volunteers and students procedures

08.4 Whistleblowing

Policy statement

Tolleshunt D’Arcy Pre-school is committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. If a member of staff discovers evidence of malpractice or wrongdoing within the pre-school they can disclose this information internally without fear of reprisal.

Our whistleblowing policy is intended to cover concerns such as:

- Financial malpractice or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Dangers to health and safety or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour

This policy should not be used to question business decisions made by the pre-school, or to raise any matters that are covered under other policies (e.g. discrimination or racial harassment). Any allegations relating to child protection will follow the procedures set out in the Safeguarding Children policy.

Procedures

Raising a concern

Ideally the staff member should put his or her allegations in writing, setting out the background to the situation, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why they are concerned about the situation.

In the first instance concerns should be taken to the Pre-school Manager. If, due to the nature of the problem, this is not possible then concerns should be taken to the Deputy Manager. Concerns must be raised with Committee Chairperson.

If this person or body is unwilling or unable to act on the concern, the staff member should then raise it with:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer or the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (if it concerns a child protection issue and is not already covered by the procedure set out in the pre-school safeguarding children policy)
- Ultimately, with the police (if a crime is thought to have been committed).
- Ofsted (if it concerns the safe and effective running of the Tolleshunt D’Arcy Pre-school)

If the member of staff is still uncertain about how to proceed with the concern, he or she should contact the whistleblowing charity PCAW (Public Concern at Work) for advice.

Responding to a concern

Initial enquiries will usually involve a meeting with the individual raising the concern, and will decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If a concern relates to issues which fall within the scope of other policies, it will be addressed under those policies.

If the initial meeting does not resolve the concern, further investigation is required. The appropriate person will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days, where feasible, or if this is not possible, giving a date by which the final response can be expected. The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and who to contact if the member of staff is unhappy with the response and wishes to take the matter further.

Rights and responsibilities of the whistle-blower

All concerns will be treated in confidence and Tolleshunt D'Arcy Pre-school will make every effort not to reveal the identity of anyone raising a concern in good faith. At the appropriate time, however, the member of staff may need to come forward as a witness.

If a member of staff raises a concern in good faith which is then not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that person.

If the investigation concludes that the member of staff maliciously fabricated the allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against that person.

Further guidance

Essex Initial Response team: 0345 603 7627

Ofsted: 0300 123 4666

PCAW (Public Concern at Work): 020 7404 6609