

Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare

1.10.1 Whistleblowing

Policy statement for St Joseph's Out of School Club

Policy statement for St Joseph's Out of School Club Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff, committee members and parents/carers can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Staff who use whistle blowing procedures will have their employment rights protected¹. St Joseph's Out of School Club is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others we deal with, to recognise their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Play Leader/Chair of Committee and/or relevant external agencies and that to not do so may result in charges of serious neglect on their part where the welfare of children may be at risk.

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; and
- 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.

St Joseph's Out of School Club recognises that a decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what is being said is true, there should be nothing to fear because the relevant party with be doing their duty to their employer and those that St Joseph's Out of School Club provides a service for. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistleblower if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness.

St Joseph's Out of School Club is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. The Out of School Club will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect their staff when they raise a concern. Any investigations 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 wherever possible.

Please note that:

- staff/committee members/parents must disclose information in good faith;
- staff/committee members/parents must believe it is substantially true;
- staff/committee members/parents must not act maliciously or make false allegations; and
- staff/committee members/parents must not seek any personal gain.

¹(c23) the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the committee. In exercising this discretion the factors taken into account 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 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 relating to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees;
- damage to the environment;
- the unauthorised use of funds;
- possible fraud and corruption;
- sexual or physical abuse of customers or staff; or
- other unethical conduct.

Thus, any serious concerns staff have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees of St Joseph's Out of School Club or others acting on behalf of St Joseph's Out of School Club can be reported under the whistleblowing policy. This may be something that:

- makes anyone feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, their experience or the standards they believe St Joseph's Out of School Club subscribes to; or
- is against St Joseph's Out of School Club's 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 individual's immediate manager. This may depend, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. If St Joseph's Out of School Club is closed then the individual should escalate their concerns to the Chair of the Committee.

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

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

If a concern is raised immediately after it has happens; the easier it becomes to take action. The whistleblower will not be expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, but will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern. It could be that the person noticing the issue may wish to consider discussing the concern with a colleague first or may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) people who have the same experience or concerns. It is also possible to invite a professional representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns that have been raised.

St Joseph's Out of School Club has in place a complaints procedure for further guidance as to what procedures to follow. This policy does NOT replace the complaints procedure.

St Joseph's Out of School Club will respond to any concerning using the guidelines within this policy and the complaints policy and procedure. St Joseph's Out of School Club hopes this will satisfy the relevant parties especially with regard to any action taken. If this does not answer the concerns, and it is felt that it is right to take the matter further, the following are possible contact points:

Protect (previously known as Public Concern at Work). For whistleblowing advice call 020 030 3117 2520. Protect is a registered charity whose services are free and strictly confidential. [website: www.protect-advice.org.uk]

- Gloucestershire Early Years team – 01452 427224
- Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) (www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Your trade union
- The police

If the matter is taken outside St Joseph's Out of School Club, it should be ensured that no confidential information is disclosed. Please check with our confidentiality and data protection policy for guidance.

Version Number	Author	Purpose of change	Date
1.0	NP and HS	Updating policies	23.01.2023