

1st Step Pre-school Ltd: Whistleblowing Policy

Our Commitment

At 1st Step Pre-school Ltd, we are committed to creating a safe, transparent, and accountable environment where staff, parents/carers, and stakeholders feel confident to raise concerns.

Children's welfare is at the heart of everything we do. All individuals working with us have a legal and moral duty to report any concerns about poor practice, misconduct, or risks to the health, safety, or wellbeing of children. Concerns will always be taken seriously, handled fairly, and addressed in line with safeguarding law and the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), Section 3.7.

This policy supports our safeguarding responsibilities and ensures compliance with:

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

The Children Acts 1989 & 2004

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)

Equality Act 2010

Ofsted Whistleblowing Guidance

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of reporting information about suspected wrongdoing, malpractice, or risks. It may include concerns about:

- Risks to a child's safety or wellbeing
- Poor or unsafe childcare practice
- Staff behaviour, including bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Failure to comply with safeguarding or legal obligations
- Criminal activity (e.g. fraud, theft, abuse)
- Miscarriages of justice
- Attempts to conceal any of the above

This is different from a personal grievance (e.g. disputes over pay or workload), which should be addressed via the staff grievance procedure.

Who Does This Policy Apply To?

This policy applies to:

- All staff (permanent, temporary, part-time)
- Volunteers and students
- Agency staff and contractors
- Parents/carers and external professionals working with the setting

How to Raise a Concern

Internal Reporting (Preferred Route)

- Concerns should be reported as soon as possible to one of the following:
 - Lead Practitioner
 - Deputy Lead Practitioner
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Concerns may be raised:
 - Verbally (in person or by phone)
 - In writing (email or confidential letter)
 - Anonymously (though this may limit our ability to investigate fully)
- All concerns will be:
 - Taken seriously and recorded in writing
 - Investigated promptly, fairly, and confidentially
 - Shared only with those who need to know

External Reporting

- If you feel unable to raise your concern internally, or if the concern involves senior leaders/owners, you can contact:
 - Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155 / whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
 - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – for concerns about professionals working with children LADO@northumberland.gov.uk
 - NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline: 0800 028 0285 / help@nspcc.org.uk
 - Police – if a child is in immediate danger

Protection for Whistleblowers

- Individuals who raise genuine concerns in good faith are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- Whistleblowers will not face dismissal, discrimination, or victimisation.
- Confidentiality will be maintained where possible.
- Malicious or knowingly false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

Responsibilities

- Lead Practitioners and DSLs must promote a culture of openness, take concerns seriously, and ensure whistleblowing disclosures are investigated appropriately.
- All staff have a duty to speak up if they have safeguarding or practice concerns.
- Management must ensure staff receive training on whistleblowing procedures during induction and as part of ongoing safeguarding updates.