



## **SAFE START SCHOOL**

**WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT**

### **Whistle Blowing Policy**

**Policy Reviewed:** October 2026

**Reviewed by:** Grace Speakman

**Review Date:** October 2027

**Checked by:** Rachel Pilling

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an organisation.

However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Organisation.

They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

Safe Start is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the organisations work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

The policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

This whistle-blowing policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns **within** the organisation rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.

The policy applies to all employees, volunteers and those contractors working for the organisation on SafeStart premises, for example, agency staff, builders, student placements, internships. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with Safe Start.

These procedures are in addition to the organisation's complaints procedures. Managers are responsible for making service users aware of the existence of these procedures.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Low-Level Concerns Policy, Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy, Grievance Policy and Complaints Policy. Where a concern involves an immediate safeguarding risk, the relevant safeguarding procedures must be followed without delay.

## **1.AIM & SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

This policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken

- ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- Reassure workers that they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation. Statutory whistleblowing protection applies where the legal requirements for a protected disclosure are met, including a reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show relevant wrongdoing and that disclosure is in the public interest.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to your own employment. The whistle-blowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- disclosures related 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 public funds
- possible fraud and corruption
- sexual or physical abuse of children, young people or vulnerable adults
  - other unethical conduct
- Failures to safeguard children or follow statutory safeguarding requirements.
- Unsafe recruitment practices or failures to carry out required safeguarding checks.
- Deliberate concealment of safeguarding incidents, wrongdoing or regulatory breaches.
- Serious failures to comply with legal obligations, including education and examination regulations.
- Attempts to conceal any of the types of wrongdoing listed above.

Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of provision or the conduct of Board members, staff or volunteers can be reported under the whistle-blowing policy. This may be about something that:

- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the organisation subscribes to;

Or

- is against the organisation's policies; or falls below established standards of practice; or amounts to improper conduct.

This policy does **not** replace the complaints procedure

## **2. SAFEGUARDS**

### **Harassment or Victimisation**

Safe Start is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees.

Safe Start School is committed to ensuring that workers can raise concerns about wrongdoing without fear of dismissal, detriment, harassment or victimisation. Workers who make protected disclosures under the Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended, are

entitled to statutory protection where the applicable legal conditions are met. Workers are encouraged to report concerns where they reasonably believe that the information disclosed tends to show wrongdoing and that making the disclosure is in the public interest. They are not required to prove their concerns before reporting them. Safe Start School will not tolerate retaliation against individuals raising genuine concerns. Any allegation of victimisation will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Confidentiality**

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish.

At the appropriate time, however, you may need to come forward as a witness.

### **Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.

Anonymous concerns will be taken seriously and considered according to the nature, seriousness and credibility of the information provided. The school recognises that anonymity may make it more difficult to investigate concerns or provide feedback, but it will not automatically prevent appropriate action.

When considering anonymous concerns, the school will take account of:

- the seriousness of the issues raised
  - the credibility of the concern; and
  - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

### **Untrue Allegations**

Where a concern is raised but is not substantiated following investigation, no action will be taken against the individual solely because the concern was not upheld. Deliberately fabricated or knowingly false allegations may be considered under the school's disciplinary procedures. A disclosure made in good faith is not a prerequisite for statutory whistleblowing protection.

### **HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN**

Concerns should normally be raised with the individual's line manager or the Headteacher, unless the concern involves that person or there is another reason why this would be inappropriate.

Where a concern involves the Headteacher, it should be raised with a proprietor/director who is not implicated.

Where a concern involves a proprietor/director, it should be raised with another uninvolved proprietor/director, where available.

Where the concern involves all relevant senior leaders or proprietors/directors, or the individual reasonably believes internal reporting is inappropriate, they may contact an appropriate external authority or seek independent whistleblowing advice.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Individuals are encouraged to provide relevant dates, details and supporting information where available, but they are not required to investigate the concern themselves.

Staff who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

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

The earlier you express the concern the easier it is to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

### **Responsibilities and Oversight**

The proprietor has overall accountability for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively. The Headteacher is responsible for its day-to-day operation, including ensuring that concerns are appropriately recorded, investigated and escalated. Where a concern involves the Headteacher or proprietor, responsibility will transfer to an appropriate uninvolved person.

The governing board will receive anonymised information about whistleblowing concerns and their outcomes, where appropriate, to support its oversight responsibilities without compromising confidentiality.

You may invite your trade union, or a work colleague to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

### **Whistleblowing and Safeguarding Concerns**

All staff have a responsibility to report concerns about safeguarding practices, unsafe conduct, failures to follow child protection procedures or attempts to conceal safeguarding incidents.

Concerns relating to a child's immediate safety must be reported without delay in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where a concern relates to the conduct of an adult working with children, the school will follow the applicable procedures for managing allegations, including consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the relevant threshold is met.

Where the concern involves the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher or a proprietor/director, staff must use an alternative reporting route that avoids the person implicated.

Staff may contact children's social care, the police or other appropriate safeguarding authorities directly where necessary. They must not delay reporting an urgent safeguarding concern while waiting for an internal whistleblowing response.

Staff who believe safeguarding concerns are not being addressed appropriately may also seek advice from the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line.

### **How we will respond**

Safe Start will respond to your concerns. Do not forget that testing out your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them.

Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, or through the disciplinary process
- be referred to the police and or LADO
- be referred to an external auditor
- be referred to a regulatory body.

In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, 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, child protection 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.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person will write to you:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received
- indicating how we propose to deal with the matter
- giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made
- supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms, and
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

The ten-working-day acknowledgement period does not apply to urgent safeguarding concerns, which must be acted upon immediately. The school will maintain a confidential record of concerns raised, actions taken, investigation outcomes and any subsequent measures to prevent retaliation.

The amount of contact between the managers considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, Safe Start School will seek further information from you.

Where any meeting is arranged, off-site if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

Safe Start School will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings Safe Start School will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

### **How you can take a matter further**

We hope you will be satisfied with any action we take.

If you're not, and you want to take the matter outside the school, you could contact: -

- Ofsted – concerns relating to independent school standards and safeguarding within its remit.
- Department for Education – relevant concerns about independent school regulation.
- Health and Safety Executive – reportable workplace health and safety matters within

its remit.

- Police or children's social care – suspected criminal activity or safeguarding concerns.
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line – concerns about child protection practices.
- Protect – independent, confidential advice about whistleblowing.
- Other prescribed persons or bodies, where appropriate to the nature of the disclosure.

Individuals may seek independent advice before making an external disclosure. Statutory protection depends on the circumstances of the disclosure and the applicable legal requirements. Staff are not required to report internally first where an appropriate direct safeguarding referral or legally protected external disclosure is necessary.

## **Appendix**

|                                              |                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Kate Collins – Head Teacher                  | headteacher@safestartschooltameside.com    |
| Emily Pilling - Designated Safeguarding Lead | emily.pilling@safestartschooltameside.com  |
| Amina Grant - HR Manager                     | amina.grant@safestartschooltameside.com    |
| Rachel Pilling – Proprietor                  | director@safestartschooltameside.com       |
| Grace Speakman - Director                    | grace.speakman@safestartschooltameside.com |

| <b>External organisation</b>     | <b>Contact</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line | 0800 028 0285                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Protect (whistleblowing advice)  | protect-advice.org.uk                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Ofsted                           | <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted</a>                                                                                                         |
| Department for Education         | <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education</a>                                                                     |
| Prescribed persons and bodies    | <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2">www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2</a> |

## The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line



I'm worried malpractice  
at work is affecting children.



## Whistleblowing advice line

If you're a professional with concerns over how child protection issues are being handled in your own or another organisation you can talk to us anonymously

**0800 028 0285**