Whistleblowing Policy

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Orchard Nursery is committed to promoting a culture of transparency, openness, and accountability. We believe all staff, volunteers, students, and other individuals working with us have a responsibility to raise concerns about poor practice, wrongdoing, or risks to the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and colleagues.
Children's welfare is at the heart of everything we do. Every individual working in the nursery has a **legal and moral duty** to report any concerns, no matter how small, if they believe a child is at risk or if organisational practice may compromise care quality or safety.

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2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy is underpinned by:

- **The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**
- **The Children Act 1989 & 2004**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)**
- **EYFS Statutory Framework (2026)**
- **Ofsted whistleblowing guidance**

These documents support the right of individuals to raise concerns in the **public interest**, protect those who speak up from reprisal, and ensure that serious concerns are acted upon swiftly and effectively.

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4. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. It enables staff to raise concerns about:

- Risks to child safety or wellbeing
- Poor or unsafe childcare practice
- Staff conduct, including bullying, discrimination, harassment
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Criminal offences (e.g. theft, fraud, abuse)
- Miscarriages of justice
- Deliberate attempts to conceal any of the above
- Breach of nursery or safeguarding policies
- Actions which could seriously damage the nursery's reputation

This is different from a grievance, which relates to a personal concern (e.g. issues with pay, workload, relationships). Grievances should be raised through the staff grievance procedure.

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5. OUR COMMITMENT TO WHISTLEBLOWERS

The Orchard Nursery is committed to:

- Creating a **safe environment** where concerns can be raised without fear

- **Listening seriously** to concerns, and taking timely, fair and proportionate action
- **Protecting whistleblowers** from reprisals, harassment, victimisation, or disadvantage
- **Keeping disclosures confidential**, where possible and appropriate
- Ensuring staff know **how and where to raise concerns**, both internally and externally

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6. WHEN AND HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN
6.1 INTERNAL REPORTING ROUTE (PREFERRED)
We encourage staff to first raise concerns internally so that issues can be addressed quickly and appropriately.
You can speak to:

- **Nursery Manager / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**
- **Deputy Manager**

You may raise your concern:

- Verbally (in person or by phone)
- In writing (email or confidential letter)
- Anonymously, though this may limit investigation scope

Your concern will be:

- Taken seriously and recorded in writing
- Investigated promptly, objectively, and confidentially
- Shared only with those who need to know

The manager will provide feedback on the outcome, where appropriate.

If a concern relates to the Manager, it must be reported to the nursery's Committee or the School Improvement Officer (SIO) from Plymouth CAST.

Mike Carter: 01202 533537 / 07468 480837 mikegcarter@yahoo.com

Charlotte Targett – 07862 282275 charlotte.targett@plymouthcast.com

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6.2 ESCALATING CONCERNS (IF NOT RESOLVED OR INAPPROPRIATE TO RAISE INTERNALLY)
If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, or the concern involves senior managers or owners, you can escalate it to:
OFSTED WHISTLEBLOWING HOTLINE

- **Phone:** 0300 123 3155
- **Email:** whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Online form:** https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-about-childrens-social-care-services-to-ofsted

We would also contact:

- The **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** for concerns involving a professional working with children.
- We would also contact CAST Safeguarding lead, the SIO, and HR, if appropriate

- The **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**: 0800 028 0285

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7. PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS
If you raise a genuine concern in the public interest:

- You **will not be penalised** even if the concern turns out to be unfounded
- You are protected by the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**
- The nursery will take **appropriate action** against any colleague who harasses, victimises or retaliates against a whistleblower. Malicious, false, or knowingly untrue allegations may result in disciplinary action.

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8. ROLE OF MANAGERS AND DSLS
All managers and DSLs are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture of **openness and vigilance**
- Encouraging early reporting of concerns
- Ensuring all whistleblowing disclosures are handled sensitively and in line with policy
- Keeping accurate records of concerns, investigations, and outcomes
- Reporting safeguarding-related concerns to the **LADO** or **local safeguarding partners** as required

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The Orchard Nursery will also follow Plymouth CAST's Whistle blowing policy and procedures

Signed on behalf of the nursery.....Emma Middleton.....Date:… August 2026