

Beatle Woods

Whistleblowing Policy

Statement of Intent

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their setting. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just suspicion of malpractice and wrongdoing at work.

Beatle Woods is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, we encourage employees and others with genuine concerns about any person linked with the setting and/or others (e.g. Parents / Carers) to come forward and voice those concerns.

This policy document makes it clear that employees, Parents/Carers and others can do so without fear or reprisals. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise such concerns within Beatle Woods rather than overlooking the problem.

The procedure allows employees, Parents/Carers and outside agencies to raise concerns about the Management/Staff of Beatle Woods.

Aim

This policy aims to:

- Provide avenues for you to raise genuine concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- Allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome or response;
- Reassure you that steps will be taken to protect you from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to staff's own employment, Parent / Carer concerns or complaints, and issues raised by outside agencies.

This Whistleblowing policy is intended to cover genuine concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

That concern may be about something that:

- Is against the policies and procedures of Beatle Woods;
- Falls below established standards of practice;
- Amounts to improper conduct;
- Is a Health and Safety risk, including risks to the public as well as children, other colleagues, Parents / Carers and others;
- Contradicts Beatle Woods Code of Conduct;
- Contributes to a safeguarding risk involving children in the care of Beatle Woods;

The procedure will be communicated to all employees as well as Parents / Carers and others.

Harassment or Victimisation

Beatle Woods recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. Beatle Woods will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. However, should you feel that you have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern, you should refer to the Complaints Policy.

This does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your whistleblowing. This applies to Parents / Carers of the setting who then decide to seek alternative childcare.

Confidentiality

Beatle Woods will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern. However, it must be appreciated that, in the interests of natural justice, any investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

Anonymous Allegations

You are strongly encouraged to put your name to any allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. Anonymous allegations will be considered and any action taken at the discretion of Beatle Woods and in conjunction with the relevant agencies where appropriate.

In exercising this discretion, the following factors will be taken into account when considering how to deal with any allegations:

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

Malicious or Vexatious Allegations - Staff

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against you in accordance with the Beatle Woods Procedures.

How to Raise A Concern: Employees

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate Line Manager or the setting Manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who you think may be involved in the malpractice. For example, if you believe that your Line Manager is involved, you should approach Management.

If you feel your Manager may be involved, you should approach Little Forest Folk's owner, Rachel Macbeth-Webb.

With specific regard to Safeguarding issues that may involve a member of staff, you should initially consult with the senior management of Beatle Woods. If you suspect they or the owner may be related to the issue you should contact relevant childcare officer attached to the setting (Early Help Solihull – Ehs or MASH).

For more information refer to Beatle Woods Safeguarding Policy.

Concerns are better raised in writing. You are advised to set out background and history of your concerns, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier you express your concern, the easier it is for Beatle Woods or the relevant Childcare Officer attached to the setting to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for initial enquiries to be made.

How Beatle Woods will Respond

The action taken by Beatle Woods will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:

- Be investigated internally;
- Be referred to the Police.

If the allegation is made against another Beatle Woods employee, the MASH team and the Local Authority Designator Officer (LADO) will be contacted within 4 hours of the allegation being made. Beatle Woods will not investigate such allegations. Contact details are available at the end of this policy. Ofsted will also be informed no later than 14 days after the allegation is raised.

Allegations include direct verbal or written comments which call into question a member of staff's appropriate handling of a child, abuse of a child, or their inability to protect children from unsuitable adults or unsuitable / unsafe resources / environment.

Allegations referred directly to the Childcare Officer or Social Services will be dealt with in accordance with their policies and procedures. Any person who is the subject of an allegation should, at the appropriate times be given details of the allegation in order to respond.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for an investigation. The following process will be followed in the event of complaints:

- Beatle Woods will ensure that a letter is sent to confirm the receipt of the complaint.
- The complaint will then be fully investigated and within 5 days of when the complaint was first received. Beatle Woods will endeavour to investigate all complaints in a non-discriminatory manner.
- A letter will be sent detailing how Beatle Woods has dealt with the complaint.

How the Matter Can Be Taken Further

If the complaint has not been dealt with in a manner which is satisfactory to the employee, Parent / Carer or others involved, then they can contact Ofsted directly at the following address.

Early Years OFSTED
Royal Exchange Building
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA
TEL: 0300 123 1231
Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

By registering a formal complaint with Ofsted an Officer in most cases will be sent to the Nursery to carry out a further investigation. If applicable, a report would then be sent with action points.