

Little Dukes: Whistleblowing Policy

St Margaret's Montessori Nursery School

Policy adopted September 2025

1

Little Dukes Nursery Schools, 58 Buckingham Gate London SW1E 6AJ



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This policy will be continuously monitored, refined and audited by the Headteacher who will also review it annually to assess how efficiently duties have been carried out over the year. This review will take place no later than one year from the date shown below, or sooner if needed due to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines.

Adopted September 2025

Reviewed by:

- Joanne Allen - Director of Education - Little Dukes
- Nazish Usman - Head of Safeguarding and Compliance - EYFS
- Geoff Marston - Group Compliance Director Dukes Education
- Claudia Neves – Head Teacher – St Margarets Montessori

Next review due: August 2026

Any reference to 'Little Dukes' applies to nursery named above.

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2

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Statement of intent:

At Little Dukes, we are committed to the highest possible standards, and we recognise that team members, students, visitors and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the nursery environment. We also recognise they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues, or they may fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it can feel safer to ignore a concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Little Dukes nurseries under The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 actively encourages any team members with concerns about any aspect of the nursery's practice or about any adult's, volunteer's or student's conduct, to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the nurseries rather than overlooking a problem.

Policy aim:

The aim of this policy is to encourage and enable team members, students, visitors and volunteers to raise concerns about any aspect of the nurseries practice (which do not meet the criteria for being dealt with as a complaint or grievance). Staff will be able to submit any concerns confidentially and without the fear of reprisals. This policy therefore ensures to that Little Dukes nurseries continue to work within best practice and to safeguard children and young people.

This whistleblowing Policy and procedure aims to help and protect both team members* and children. By following the procedure team members are acting to:

- **Prevent a problem getting worse.**
- **Safeguard children and young people**
- **Reduce the potential risks to others.**

The earlier team members raise a concern, the easier and sooner it is possible for the nursery to act.

Concerns that should be raised via this whistleblowing policy may be in relation to the actions/behaviours of other team members, students or volunteers, or about something that is perceived as:

- **Putting children at risk of harm**
- **Unlawful**

- **Failing to comply with the nursery's policy and procedures**
- **Poor practices of significant concerns (For Low-level concerns please refer to our safeguarding policy)**
- **Improper conduct.**

* Throughout this policy the terms 'staff' or 'team member/s' includes paid staff, volunteers and students, apprentices and agency staff.

Key points:

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles and is informed by Our Safeguarding policy:

- All team members, students, visitors (including contractors) and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- All visitors will be asked to log any concerns they have with the nursery's DSL or DDSL.
- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all team members, students and volunteers.
- Little Dukes will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- Little Dukes will do its best to protect a whistleblower's identity when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g., disciplinary procedure, the individual may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
- Appropriate advice and support will be made available to team members, students, visitors and volunteers who raise concerns.
- Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation where appropriate.
- Little Dukes will not tolerate malicious allegations; as a result of any investigation any allegation found to be malicious or untrue could subject the staff member to disciplinary actions.

According to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), whistleblowing is protected under law, and you should not be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle' because you blow the whistle in good faith.

What counts and what doesn't count as whistleblowing

In terms of safeguarding children, whistleblowing should be done if you have concerns that a person:

- Has harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm
- Has behaved in a way that raises concern about the adult's suitability to work with children
- Has displayed behaviour related to a child that might constitute a criminal offence.

Reporting the following also counts as whistleblowing:

- a criminal offence, for example fraud
- someone's health and safety are in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing.

Personal grievances (for example bullying, discrimination) are generally not counted as whistleblowing law; you should report these under our Little Dukes grievance policy.

Procedures:

Procedures for reporting and investigating 'whistleblowing' concerns have been developed to ensure that:

- Team members, students, visitors and volunteers can raise concerns (no matter how small they may appear) internally as a matter of course and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- Team members, students, visitors and volunteers are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.
- Team members, students, visitors and volunteers can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the nursery's response and seek external advice and guidance.

- Issues raised are addressed via other procedures and policies as appropriate, e.g., safeguarding policy, allegations against an adult working in a nursery within the safeguarding policy, grievance, disciplinary, health and safety.
- Appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

Raising a concern:

Team members, students, visitors and volunteers should raise concerns with the one of the contacts below.

You should contact one of the following people in confidence: (Add contact details)

- 1. Your Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL/DDSL).** Details on which can be found in your nursery Safeguarding Policy.
- 2. Your nursery Head Teacher/Manager and Principal (lead DSL) if not the DSL or DDSL**
- 3. Head of Safeguarding and Compliance EYFS: Nazish Usman**
Telephone: 07356063431 Email: Nazish.usman@dukeseducation.com

Concerns should be raised in writing and include:

- Reference to the fact that it is a whistle-blowing disclosure
- The background and history of the concern(s)
- Names, dates and places (where possible)
- The reasons the individual is concerned about the situation.

Investigation:

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. Any course of action will take into account our local authorities threshold continuum of need document. (Example: www.londonsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk).

Referral Process:

1. If any concern does not meet the threshold the DSL will follow our low-level concerns procedures as laid out in our safeguarding policy.
2. Allegations which do meet the threshold our DSL will immediately contact the LADO for further advice.

3. On no account will any investigation take place without referring to the local authority's LADO / Duty Safeguarding Team for advice.

Investigation Process:

The appropriate person/s (NI and DSL) will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days.

The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and whom to contact should the team member be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter further.

If the investigation cannot be completed within the timescale above, the team member should receive a response that indicates:

- Progress to date
- How the matter is being dealt with
- How long it will take to provide a final response.

In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries for low level concerns (may involve a meeting with the individual raising the concern). A decision will then be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take.

For all other concerns of a higher nature which meets the local authority threshold, the Investigation will follow the advice from LADO.

Concerns or allegations that raise issues falling within the scope of other policies/procedures, will be addressed under those procedures e.g. Safeguarding, complaints or grievance.

Some low-level concerns may be resolved at the initial stage, by agreed action(s) or an explanation regarding the concern, without the need for further investigation.

Suspension:

Suspension may be considered for one or both parties Involved with the concern or allegation raised. This is a neutral act to enable a cooling off period on both sides as a supportive measure. It may be necessary to suspend the alleged perpetrator to allow a thorough and fair investigation, to maintain confidentiality to allow HR process to take place.

If the outcome of any Investigation is not satisfactory to the whistleblower, they have a right to refer the concerns to the Lead DSL (Principal/NI) or to Rik McShane Director of Operations.

If the whistle blowing is of a safeguarding concern, then our nursery safeguarding policy and procedures will be adhered to. All staff have the right to contact LADO or Social services directly. If they feel appropriate procedures have not been followed or if they feel a child is still at risk of immediate harm.

Independent advice:

If you are unsure whether to use this policy or want independent advice at any stage, you may contact the independent charity Protect on 020 3117 2520 or whistle@protect-advice.org.uk.

If needed, Protect will be able to advise you on the circumstances in which you may be able to contact an outside body safely.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other channels are open to them:

- Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a childcare provider: [Complaints procedure – Ofsted – GOV.UK](#).
- [NSPCC whistleblowing advice line](#) is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 – 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is: help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.
- General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: [Whistleblowing for employees](#).

Legislative Framework:

1. **Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework September 2025**
2. **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (Sep 2025 update)**
3. **DfE Guidance - What to do if you're worried a child is being abused, March 2015**
4. **Children Act, 1989 and 2004 Childcare Act, 2006**
5. **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006**
6. **Children and Social Work Act, 2017**

Further reading:

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Whistleblowing video:

<https://www.scie.org.uk/contact/concerns/whistleblowingvideo/>

Whistleblowing website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/whistleblowers.htm>