



## **Whistleblowing Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

St Giles Nursery School is committed to the highest standards of honesty, openness, accountability and integrity. We expect all staff and others working with or on behalf of the Federation to share this commitment.

This Whistleblowing Policy is based closely on the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Whistleblowing Policy and has been adapted to reflect the governance and operational arrangements of St Giles Nursery School. It meets statutory requirements set out in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) and Department for Education guidance for maintained schools.

The Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to agree, establish and publish the Federation's whistleblowing procedure

### **2. Scope**

You can use this whistleblowing policy if you are:

- an employee of St Giles Nursery School
- a school governor
- agency staff, contractor staff or suppliers providing goods or services to St Giles Nursery School
- a partner organisation
- a member of the public

This whistleblowing policy does not replace the following procedures, which should normally be used where appropriate:

- safeguarding reporting procedures for children and adults
- disciplinary policy
- grievance policy
- complaints procedure

If your concern relates to:

Safeguarding a child or young person, please follow the [Safeguarding Procedure](#)

You must make immediate contact with the safeguarding team:

- Email: [lscp@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:lscp@lincolnshire.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 01522 782333

Or Safeguarding an adult at risk

You must contact the safeguarding adults team:

- Email: [lsab@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:lsab@lincolnshire.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 01522 782155
- Out of hours: 01522 782333

### **3. When to Use Whistleblowing Arrangements**

You should only consider raising concerns through whistleblowing arrangements if:

- you have genuine reasons why you cannot use the relevant employment or [complaints procedures](#), or
- you reasonably believe those procedures are failing or are not being properly applied, and
- there is an identifiable public interest aspect to the concern
- Whistleblowing arrangements are not intended to provide an alternative route for pursuing personal grievances (such as bullying, harassment or discrimination), unless there is a wider public interest.

### **4. What is Whistleblowing?**

A whistleblower is someone who raises an honest and reasonable concern about possible wrongdoing or malpractice that is in the public interest.

Concerns may relate to:

- fraud, theft, bribery or corruption
- misuse of public funds or resources
- criminal offences
- failure to comply with legal obligations or statutory requirements
- health and safety risks or violations
- safeguarding failures

- discrimination or harassment where there is a public interest
- environmental damage
- abuse of authority
- concealment of information about any of the above

This list is not exhaustive.

## **5. Protected Disclosures and Confidentiality**

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, individuals who make a disclosure in the public interest and in accordance with this policy are legally protected from dismissal, harassment or victimisation. This is known as a protected disclosure.

Members of the public are not legally protected under PIDA. However, St Giles Nursery School allows concerns to be raised confidentially or anonymously.

### Confidentiality

We will respect confidentiality as far as possible. However, there may be circumstances where we cannot guarantee confidentiality, for example:

- where a criminal offence may have been committed
- where child protection or adult safeguarding issues arise
- where disclosure is required by law or court order

Where disclosure of information could identify the whistleblower, we will seek consent wherever possible before releasing information.

St Giles Nursery School will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a concern in good faith. Any such behaviour will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

## **6. Anonymous or Malicious Allegations**

Anonymous disclosures will be considered at the discretion of those handling the concern. This will depend on:

- the seriousness of the issue
- the credibility of the concern
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation
- the evidence provided

If a concern is raised in good faith but not substantiated, no action will be taken against the whistleblower. Malicious or knowingly false allegations may result in disciplinary action and will not be protected under PIDA.

## **7. How to Raise a Concern**

We encourage concerns to be raised internally wherever possible. This allows St Giles Nursery School to address issues promptly.

Concerns should initially be raised with:

- your Phase Leader

If you are not satisfied then concerns should be escalated to:

- the Headteacher
- the Chair of Governors (where the concern relates to the Headteacher)

Concerns should be raised as whistleblowing disclosures and preferably in writing, including:

- background and history
- relevant names, dates and locations
- copies of any relevant documents
- why you believe the matter is of concern

You are not expected to prove the allegation but must have reasonable grounds for concern.

## **8. Raising Concerns Externally**

If you feel unable to raise concerns internally, or believe they have not been handled appropriately, concerns may be raised externally.

[Lincolnshire County Council – Audit and Counter Fraud](#)

[Local Authority Designated Officer \(LADO\)](#)

[Lincolnshire Police](#)

Email: [CounterFraud@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:CounterFraud@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

LCC Confidential Whistleblowing Reporting:

Email: [whistleblowing@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Freephone: 0800 085 3716 (9am–5pm, answerphone out of hours)

Independent advice can be obtained from:

- Protect (Whistleblowing charity) Advice line: 020 3117 2520

You may also refer concerns to appropriate regulators such as Ofsted, the Department for Education or the Local Government Ombudsman.

## **9. Low Level Concerns**

The term '**Low-Level**' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**

Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority

Examples of such behaviour could include:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

Reporting a Low Level Concern

- Low level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the Headteacher as per the school's [Child Protection procedures](#).
- If the concern is about the Headteacher this should be reported to the Chair of Governors.
- Low level concerns about supply staff, contractors and local authority visiting staff will also be reported to their employers.

Staff should use the school's Low-Level Concerns [Reporting Form](#)

## **10. How the Nursery School Will Respond**

All whistleblowing disclosures will be taken seriously.

We will:

- acknowledge receipt within five working days
- explain within ten working days how we propose to deal with the matter
- carry out proportionate enquiries or investigations
- keep the whistleblower informed, where appropriate

Concerns may be:

- resolved through agreed action
- investigated internally
- referred to LCC, auditors, safeguarding teams or the Police
- subject to independent inquiry

Where investigations proceed, whistleblowers may be asked to provide further information or statements. Meetings can be held off-site if preferred and employees may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

### **11. Record Keeping**

All records relating to whistleblowing concerns will be held securely and confidentially in line with data protection and records retention requirements.

### **12. Taking the Matter Further**

If you are dissatisfied with how your concern has been handled, you may raise this with the investigating officer or Chair of Governors.

Employees must not raise Federation-related matters directly with the media. Doing so may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Adopted: May 2026

Review: May 2028