



Whistle Blowing Policy

Procedure in the event of an allegation against a member of staff

Children can be subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any setting. All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional, including a staff member or volunteer must be taken seriously and acted upon by having robust procedures in place to prevent and respond to abuse by someone in a position of trust. Further information can be found in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

When an allegation of abuse is made either by a child, colleague, parent/carer or member of the public, the person receiving the allegation must take it seriously and deal with it by informing the Setting Manager/Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the allegation is against the Setting Manager, the Chair of the Parent Management should be informed. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures for managing allegations and concerns regarding professionals and volunteers working directly with children and young people can be found below on website:
<https://www.safeguardingbedfordshire.org.uk/>

What to do when an allegation is made;

If an allegation is made against an employee of Toddington Childcare & Forest School, the Setting Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed immediately and the following action will be taken:

- Immediate contact must be made with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Children's Services on 0300 300 8142;
- Ofsted should be notified immediately (Tel: 0300 123 4666);
- The Chair of the Committee should be informed that an allegation has been made;
- No discussions should be made at this stage with the member of staff concerned;
- Suspension is a neutral act and therefore not automatic. Any decision to suspend must take into account the seriousness of the allegation and the initial weight of the presenting evidence.

The LADO and Ofsted can advise further on the action that Toddington Childcare & Forest School should take in regard to the member of staff, specifically with regard to Safeguarding children. The decision as to whether or not to suspend rests with the Setting Manager and Parent Management Committee and will be based on risk and safety as far as possible at the time of the allegation.

If the allegation relates to the Setting Manager/Designated Safeguarding Lead then the next most senior member of staff from the staff leadership team who is a (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) must follow the procedure listed above.

Deciding to suspend

Although suspension is not automatic, the member of staff may be asked to refrain from some or all duties until further assessment has been actioned to determine the nature and level of risk. This does not imply innocence or guilt.

The staff member may have questions as to why this has been requested. If asked, the Setting Manager/DSL will inform the staff member that a safeguarding concern has been brought to their attention. This cannot be discussed any further, however, there will be an opportunity to formally respond at a later date.

The setting must not question the staff member or investigate the matter. Confidentiality should be maintained throughout this matter, in order that any subsequent investigation is not prejudiced.

Guidance for Setting Staff receiving an allegation:

1. Do not promise total confidentiality to children as the staff member must inform the Setting Manager/DSL;
2. Make written notes of the allegation/concerns including a note of anyone else witnessing the incident. Witnesses should also make a record, these should be signed and dated;
3. Only record what the child is saying and do not interview the child about the allegation.
4. If the staff member has any reason to suspect that a child may have been abused by another member of staff, the Setting Manager/DSL and Chair of the Parent Management Committee must be informed immediately.

When suspicions or allegations of abuse against a child attending Toddington Childcare & Forest School involving a member of the staff are received by a person outside the group e.g. other professional, parent, relative or family friend, the Setting Manager/DSL should be informed as soon as possible and immediately

report to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and Ofsted. The person reporting the allegation may already have contacted Ofsted and/or the LADO.

In the event of a third party hearing the allegation, Toddington Childcare & Forest School will:

Contact Ofsted and the Integrated Front Door team who will advise further on what action the setting should now take in regard to the member of staff.

The setting may talk to the member of staff concerned but should not interview the child until Ofsted and the Integrated Front Door team give the go-ahead. Disciplinary procedures may be followed dependent on the outcome of investigations.

If the allegation relates to the Setting Manager or Chair of the Parent Management Committee, the next most senior member of staff must follow the procedure listed above, e.g Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and report to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).

Confidentiality should be maintained throughout this matter so that any subsequent investigation is not prejudiced.

Setting Staff:

1. Cannot promise total confidentiality to children as the allegation must be reported to the Setting Manager/DSL and the Chair of the Parent Management Committee.
2. Must make a written note of the allegation/concerns including a note of anyone else witnessing the incident. Witnesses should also make a record and these should be signed and dated;
3. Will only record what the child is saying and will not interview the child about the allegation;
4. If the staff member has any reason to suspect that a child may have been abused by another member of staff, the Setting Manager/DSL and the Chair of the Parent Management Committee must be informed immediately.

Where suspicions or allegations of abuse against a child attending the Setting and involving members of Setting Staff are received by a person outside the group e.g. social worker, police, by a parent, relative or family friend, then the Setting Manager and/or Chair of the Committee should be informed as soon as possible and immediately report to the LADO and Ofsted.

In the event of a third party hearing the allegation the setting should:

1. Obtain details of the allegation in writing, signed and dated by the person who received the allegation (not the child who is the subject of the allegation);
2. Record any information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses;
3. Establish whether Ofsted and the Integrated Front Door team have been informed about the allegation;
4. Follow the main procedure outlined above.

Following completion of the investigation by Ofsted and the Integrated Front Door team/LADO, there will be four possible outcomes;

Criminal	Ofsted and (IFD) will decide if there is sufficient evidence to carry forward a prosecution of the member of staff and if so will liaise with the police directly.
Disciplinary	Ofsted and the (IFD) may determine that there is not sufficient evidence to prosecute, however, there may be concerns which require disciplinary action to be taken via the setting's disciplinary procedure.
Training	The investigations may indicate that the allegation was unfounded, however, the case may have shown that there are concerns with training and performance, which need to be addressed by additional specific staff training.
Safeguarding Children	There may be other Safeguarding Children concerns which do not involve the member of staff, however, Ofsted and (IFD) team may identify other areas that need to be addressed with Safeguarding Children procedures within the setting.

Where the allegation after investigation is unfounded, Ofsted and the (IFD) will write to the setting summarising the outcome of the investigation.

Records

Where an allegation has been found to be unfounded, a summary of the allegation and subsequent investigation should be kept on the setting's confidential Safeguarding Children's File. Where disciplinary action has been taken, documents relating to the investigation should be retained, together with a written record of the investigation on the staff members personnel file.

This policy was accepted at the Committee Meeting of Toddington Childcare & Forest School held in January 2025 and reviewed in September 2025.

Signed on behalf of Toddington Childcare & Forest School

Sarah Malcolm
Chair to the Committee of Toddington Childcare