



Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd is committed to maintaining the highest standards of honesty, openness and accountability. We encourage all staff, volunteers, and contractors to raise concerns where they believe wrongdoing or malpractice may be occurring.

This policy provides a safe and confidential way to report concerns about misconduct, illegal activity, safeguarding risks, or other serious issues.

Individuals who raise genuine concerns will be protected under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** and will not suffer any detriment or victimisation as a result of speaking up.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- encourage individuals to report concerns about wrongdoing
- ensure concerns are investigated appropriately
- protect individuals who make disclosures in good faith
- ensure compliance with UK whistleblowing legislation
- promote a culture of transparency and safeguarding

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- employees
- volunteers
- contractors
- sessional staff
- agency staff
- trainees

It covers concerns related to the organisation's activities, staff behaviour, and safeguarding practices.

4. What Is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when a worker reports concerns about wrongdoing or dangers at work that are in the **public interest**.

This may include concerns about:

- safeguarding or abuse of children
- criminal offences
- health and safety risks
- environmental damage
- financial misconduct or fraud
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- attempts to conceal any of the above

5. Safeguarding

If a concern involves the **safety or welfare of a child or adult**, it must be reported immediately following Little Acorns Forest Schools safeguarding procedures.

Whistleblowing may also be used where a person believes safeguarding concerns are **not being handled appropriately**.

6. Raising a Concern

Individuals are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible.

Concerns can be reported to:

- the **Lead Practitioner or Administrator**
- the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** if safeguarding related
- the **Director** where applicable

When reporting a concern, individuals should provide:

- details of the concern
- relevant dates and times
- any evidence available
- names of individuals involved (if known)

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.

7. Confidentiality

The organisation will treat all whistleblowing concerns seriously and confidentially.

The identity of the person raising the concern will not be disclosed without their consent unless required by law.

Anonymous concerns will be considered but may be harder to investigate.

8. Investigation Procedure

Once a concern is raised:

1. The concern will be acknowledged.
2. An initial assessment will be carried out.
3. An investigation will be conducted where necessary.
4. Appropriate action will be taken if wrongdoing is identified.

This may include:

- disciplinary action
- safeguarding referrals
- reporting to relevant authorities
- changes to procedures

The individual raising the concern will be informed, where appropriate, that the matter has been addressed.

9. Protection for Whistleblowers

Under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**, workers are protected from:

- dismissal
- disciplinary action
- harassment
- victimisation

when making a disclosure in the public interest and in good faith.

Any attempt to victimise a whistleblower will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

10. Raising Concerns Externally

If an individual feels unable to raise concerns internally, they may report concerns to appropriate external bodies.

These may include:

- the **NSPCC** whistleblowing helpline
- the **Department for Education**
- the local authority safeguarding partnership
- the police where criminal activity is suspected

Staff are encouraged to seek advice before making an external disclosure where possible.

11. Malicious or False Allegations

Concerns should always be raised **in good faith**.

If an allegation is found to have been made maliciously or knowingly false, this may result in disciplinary action.

12. Record Keeping

All whistleblowing concerns will be:

- recorded securely
- investigated appropriately
- retained according to data protection requirements

Records will include actions taken and outcomes where appropriate.

13. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Policy Reviewed Annually.

Policy Reviewed January 2026- Kate Morison (Lead Practitioner) – no alterations made.

Policy reviewed August 2026- Kate Morison (Lead Practitioner) - 1 addition to the policy made- in **blue**.