

# Whistle-Blowing / Raising Concerns Policy (Updated for EYFS 2025)

## Policy Statement:

At **Westacre Montessori School** we are committed to **maintaining a safe, transparent, and open environment** where staff members, parents, and stakeholders **feel empowered to raise concerns** without fear of reprisal. This policy ensures that all **concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures** are taken seriously and **addressed promptly** to uphold the highest standards of care and safety for children.

## Definition of Whistle-Blowing

Whistle-blowing refers to the act of **raising concerns** about suspected **misconduct, malpractice, risks, or violations of policies** within the childminding setting. This includes:

- Concerns about **safeguarding practices**
- Reports of **staff misconduct**
- Breaches of **policies and procedures**
- **Health and safety failures**
- Any actions that could **put a child at risk**

## Clear Procedures for Reporting Concerns

We have a **clear and well-defined process** for reporting concerns to ensure a **safe and supportive environment** for whistle-blowers.

- **Step 1: Raising a Concern**
  - Staff, parents, or stakeholders can **report concerns in confidence** to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
  - Concerns should include **specific details** such as dates, times, individuals involved, and any supporting evidence.
- **Step 2: Confidential Investigation**

- All reports will be **investigated promptly and thoroughly** while maintaining **confidentiality**.
- The individual raising the concern **will not face retaliation or discrimination** for making a report in good faith.
- **Step 3: Outcome and Action**
  - If misconduct is found, **appropriate action** will be taken, such as **staff training, policy reviews, disciplinary action, or referrals to external authorities**.
  - The whistle-blower will be informed **of the outcome where possible** while respecting confidentiality laws.
- **Step 4: Right to Appeal**
  - If the whistle-blower is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may **escalate the concern** to a higher authority, such as Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

### **Confidentiality and Protection for Whistle-Blowers**

- **All reports will be handled with confidentiality** to protect those raising concerns.
- Staff, parents, and stakeholders are **encouraged to provide their name** when reporting concerns to allow for follow-up, but anonymous reports will still be investigated.
- **No staff member will face disciplinary action or retaliation** for reporting concerns in good faith.

### **Creating a Supportive Environment**

- Our setting **promotes a culture** where raising concerns is encouraged and seen as a **positive step toward safeguarding**.
- Staff **receive training** on whistle-blowing procedures and how to report concerns.
- Parents and staff are made aware of this policy **upon registration and during induction**.

## **False or Malicious Reports**

- Whistle-blowing should always be done in **good faith**.
- **Deliberate false or malicious reports** will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

## **Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be **reviewed annually** or more frequently if required, to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with any **changes in legislation or local guidelines**. Feedback from **staff, parents, and stakeholders** will be welcomed to continuously **improve our whistle-blowing procedures**.

## **Alignment with EYFS 2025 Changes**

This policy has been updated in line with the **September 2025 EYFS reforms**, which introduce **enhanced safeguarding measures**. The EYFS 2025 framework emphasises:

- **Stronger whistle-blowing procedures** to ensure all concerns are taken seriously.
- **Increased protection for staff** raising concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures.
- A **clearer, more structured reporting process** to address issues **promptly and thoroughly**.
- A **supportive and transparent culture** where staff **feel confident to speak up** without fear of retaliation.

**Signed:** Rosie Reynolds

**Date:** June 2025