

Smartkidz Play and Learn are committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. We recognise that its staff are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the setting. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or they may fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be suspicion of malpractice. If a member of staff discovers evidence of malpractice or wrongdoing within Smartkidz Play and Learn, they can disclose this information internally without fear of reprisal.

Our Whistleblowing policy is intended to cover concerns such as

- Financial malpractice or fraud.
- Failure to comply with legal obligation.
- Dangers to health and safety or the environment.
- Criminal activity.
- Improper conduct, poor practice or unethical behaviour.

The policy should not be used to raise business decisions by Smartkidz, or to raise any matters that are covered in other policies (discrimination or racial harassment). Any allegations relating to child protection will follow the procedures set out in the **safeguarding policy**. Any concerns relating to the employment conditions of an individual member of staff should be raised according to the procedures set out in the **Staff grievance policy**.

Principles

The policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- The staff have a right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff.
- The settings will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- The setting will do its best to protect a whistle blowers' identity when he/she raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g., disciplinary procedure, the worker may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
- In some circumstances the setting may have to disclose the identity of the worker without his/her consent, although this will be discussed with the worker first.
- Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff.
- Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.
- The setting will not tolerate malicious allegations, and this may be considered a disciplinary offence.

Procedures

Procedures for reporting and investigating "whistle blowing" concerns have been developed to ensure that:

- Staff can raise a concern, 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.
- Staff are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.
- Staff can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the setting response and seek external advice and guidance.
- Issues raised are addressed via other procedures and policies as appropriate e.g.
- safeguarding, allegations against an adult working in a setting, grievance, disciplinary, health and safety.

- Appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

Raising a concern

Staff should raise concerns with their club DSL manager. 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 concerns.
- Names, date and places (where possible).
- The reason why the individual is concerned about the situation.

Staff who feel unable to put their concern in writing, can telephone or meet with the club DSL.

If this person or body is unwilling or unable to act on the concern, the staff member should arrange a meeting with Smartkidz the Manager.

If this person is unwilling or unable to act on the concern, the staff member should then raise it with:

- Ofsted- if it concerns the safe and effective running of the club.
- The Local designated officer (LADO) or local safeguarding Partnership- If it concerns a child protection issue and is not already covered by the procedure set out in the clubs safeguarding policy.
- Ultimately, The police- if a crime is thought to have been committed.

contacts:

Overall Safeguarding leads within Smartkidz Play and Learn	Emma Lythgoe - Manager Adam Smart – Managing Director
Girton DSL	Gemma Bateman, Sharon Howlett
Haddenham DSL	Jess Hew-Martin
Ridgefield DSL	Helen Esgate
Mayfield DSL	Faiza Djermane-Aoune
Cherry Hinton DSL	Ellie Baldwin
Warboys DSL	Samantha Duffy, Jess Hew-Martin

LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer): 01223 727967

Ofsted: 0300 123 1231

Senior Adviser and safeguarding (Gemma Hope) 01223 714760

Responding to a concern

Initial enquiries will usually involve a meeting with the individual raising a concern, and will decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If a concern relates to issues which fall within the scope of other policies. It will be addressed under those policies.

If the initial meeting does not resolve the concern, further investigation is required. The appropriate person will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days where feasible, or if this is not possible, giving a date by which the final response can be expected. The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and who to contact if the member of staff is unhappy with the response and wishes to take the matter further.

Rights and responsibilities of the whistle-blower

All concerns will be treated in confidence and the club will make every effort not to reveal the identity of anyone raising a concern in good faith. At an appropriate time, however, the member of staff may need to come forward as a witness.

If a member of staff raises a concern in good faith which is then not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that person.

If the investigation concludes that the member of staff maliciously fabricated the allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against that person.

Further Advice and Support

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) whistleblowing helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their setting. Staff can: call 0800 028 0285, the line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support is available from your line manager and your HR provider (Redwing solutions).

"Absolutely without fail - challenge poor practice or performance. If you ignore or collude with poor practice it makes it harder to sound the alarm when things go wrong". Sounding the Alarm - Barnardos

This policy was adopted by: Smartkidz Play and Learn	Date: 20/01/2024
To be reviewed: 20/01/2025	Signed: 