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## 1. Introduction

This policy is designed to encourage employees, volunteers, and contractors of Storyybrook, to report suspected or actual occurrence of illegal, unethical, or inappropriate events (behaviours or practices) without retribution.

This policy is in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which provides legal protection for workers who make disclosures in the public interest. Individuals who raise concerns under this policy are protected from dismissal or detrimental treatment, provided the disclosure is made in good faith and relates to a matter of public interest.

## 2. Scope

The policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and parents associated with Storyybrook. It covers, but is not limited to, irregularities, misconduct, malpractice, child abuse, neglect, and any risk to the safety of the children and young people we serve.

## 3. Safeguarding:

Storyybrook recognises that whistleblowing is a vital part of safeguarding and plays a key role in protecting children from harm. All staff have a duty to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice, including concerns about the behaviour or conduct of colleagues, volunteers or other adults working with children.

Any concerns that relate to the safety or welfare of a child must be treated as a safeguarding concern and reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL, in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where a concern relates to the Headteacher or DSL, staff should report directly to the Chair of Governors or use alternative reporting routes, including external whistleblowing channels.

Staff are reminded that they may also contact external safeguarding agencies directly if they feel concerns are not being taken seriously or acted upon appropriately. This may include the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline.

In an SEMH setting, staff understand that behaviour may be a form of communication, and that concerns about staff practice or responses to pupil behaviour may indicate safeguarding risks. All concerns will be taken seriously and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.

### **Allegations against staff and low-level concerns**

Storyybrook recognises the importance of maintaining a culture of openness and transparency in relation to staff conduct.

Concerns about the behaviour of staff, volunteers or contractors that may meet the threshold of an allegation must be reported in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will be managed through formal procedures, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate.

Low-level concerns, including behaviours that may not meet the harm threshold but are inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, must also be reported and recorded in line with





the school's low-level concerns procedures. This ensures that patterns of behaviour can be identified and addressed at an early stage.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which outlines procedures for managing allegations and low-level concerns.

#### **4. Protection**

This policy is intended to protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith and in the public interest. Storybrook will not tolerate any form of detriment, harassment or victimisation as a result of raising a concern.

All disclosures will be taken seriously and handled appropriately in line with this policy.

#### **5. Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

#### **6. Procedure**

Safeguarding concerns take priority over all other reporting routes and must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL where a concern relates to the safety or welfare of a child, or the behaviour of an adult working with children.

These concerns must not be delayed or managed solely through line management processes. The DSL will take lead responsibility for assessing the concern and determining appropriate next steps, including referral to external agencies where necessary.

##### **In the first instance:**

Any concerns should be raised with immediate line managers, but for serious matters, or in the case of an inadequate response, it can be escalated to Headteacher or proprietor, and will remain confidential when shared with appropriate members of the Senior Management, governing body or Board of Directors.

##### **Escalation:**

If the concern is about the immediate line manager, the individual should report to the next level of management. If the concern is about the highest authority within the Group, the individual can report any concern to external company, called Say so.

You can visit [www.say-so.co.uk](http://www.say-so.co.uk) for all information about the service.

To report any concerns visit [www.say-so.co.uk](http://www.say-so.co.uk) and use the online report too (available 24/7), where you will be able to read explanations of your options to 1) reporting openly 2) reporting in confidence or 3) reporting anonymously.

**OR**

Call Say So on (freecall) 0800 321 3546 where you will be directed to an available agent who will note your information and explain your options with regard to:

- reporting openly





- reporting in confidence
- reporting anonymously

Please note this service is available Mon-Fri 0900-1700 (Excl. bank holidays).

Say So are commissioned to securely manage these reports and pass the concerns raised to a nominated board level manager with the company in such a format that confidential or anonymous reporters are not identified.

### **Internal Stages:**

Once a concern has been received, Storyybrook or Say so will assess concern raised and consider what action may be appropriate. This may involve an informal review, an internal enquiry or a more formal investigation. Where we can, we will tell you who will be handling the matter, how you can contact them and what further assistance we may need from you. We pledge to carefully consider all reports received in this way for enquiry and further action where justified. We also pledge to feedback the results to known reporters.

When you raise the concern, it will be helpful to know how you think the matter might best be resolved. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you report this at the outset. If we think your concern falls more properly within our grievance, harassment and bullying or other relevant procedure, we will inform you accordingly (if your identity is known to us).

Storyybrook pledge that matters raised will be dealt with promptly. Where appropriate, immediate steps will be taken to remedy the situation as soon as practicably possible.

### **Outcome:**

Timescales for investigating concerns will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue. Storyybrook will aim to address all concerns promptly and proportionately, keeping the individual informed of progress where possible. Some matters, particularly those involving safeguarding or external agencies, may require extended timeframes.

Storyybrook will treat all disclosures sensitively and, where possible, will maintain the confidentiality of the individual raising the concern. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in all circumstances. There may be situations where it is necessary to share information, for example where there are safeguarding concerns, legal obligations, or where external agencies are involved. In such cases, the school will aim to inform the individual of any disclosure where appropriate.

To confirm, it is the aim of the school and proprietor that this process becomes established and accepted as an additional means to report matters of concern and that it plays an important part in achieving an ever more open communication culture.

### **Other concerns:**

For concerns that do not relate to safeguarding, individuals should normally raise the matter with their line manager in the first instance. If the concern is serious, involves senior staff, or has not been addressed appropriately, it may be escalated to the Headteacher, proprietor, or through external whistleblowing channels.





## **7. Responsibilities:**

All employees, volunteers, and contractors should understand and comply with this policy and should take steps to disclose any wrongdoing or malpractice. It plays an important part in achieving an ever more open communication culture. All managers and supervisors must address these concerns seriously, promptly, and professionally.

## **8. Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed based on changes in legal requirements.

## **9. Endorsement**

All parties must acknowledge this policy and indicate their agreement to abide by its provisions. Failure to comply can result in disciplinary actions up to and including termination.

