

MANAGING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In rare instances, staff of educational institutions have been found to be responsible for child abuse and, because of their frequent contact with children and young people, members of staff may have allegations of child abuse made against them.
- 1.2 The Trust recognises that an allegation of child abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. As such, those dealing with an allegation must maintain an open mind, ensure that investigations are thorough and are not subject to unnecessary delay.
- 1.3 Whilst the Trust recognises the welfare of the child is the paramount concern, it is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence and career.
- 1.4 When dealing with allegations of abuse, the Trust will do so with sensitivity, acting in a careful and measured way but with due regard to conducting matters as quickly as possible in a fair and consistent way that provides for effective child protection as well as supporting the member of staff who is the subject of the allegation.
- 1.5 Allegations of abuse against employees will not be dealt with under the complaints procedure.
- 1.6 This policy is compliant with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018.

2. Receipt of an allegation

- 2.1 Any allegation of abuse of a student by a member of staff must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in a School / Academy and the Headteacher.
- 2.2 Should the initial allegation first be made to any other member of staff they must either request the person raising the allegation to report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or if that is not possible, they should pass details of the allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- 2.3 Should an allegation be made against the Designated Safeguarding Lead, than this should be brought to the attention of the Headteacher immediately.
- 2.4 Should an allegation be made against the Headteacher, than this should be brought to the attention of the Chair of Governors immediately.
- 2.5 Should the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Headteacher (or in the case of an allegation against a Headteacher, the Chair of Governors) agree that the allegation raised concerns that a member of staff (i.e. a teacher, support employee, member of the management team or volunteer) has:
 - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicated they would pose a risk of harm to children

the Headteacher should report the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (the Designated Officer) immediately.

Note: Where the term Headteacher is used through the remainder of this document this refers to the Chair of Governors in the case of an allegation against a Headteacher.

- 2.6 The School/ Academy will not investigate the allegation at this stage.

3. Initial review

- 3.1 An initial discussion will take place between the Headteacher and the Designated Officer to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action.
- 3.2 The Designated Officer may request that the Headteacher provides or obtains additional relevant information such as previous history, whether the child or their family have made similar allegations previously, and the member of staff's current contact with children.
- 3.3 This initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action is to be taken; in which case this decision and the justification for it will be documented. The Headteacher with the Designated Officer will agree what information should be put into writing the individual(s) concerned and by whom and what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the allegation.
- 3.4 The Headteacher should inform the accused member of staff about the allegation as soon as possible after consulting the Designated Officer, providing as much information as possible and as agreed with the Designated Officer, regardless of the decision as to whether further action will be taken or not. However, where a strategy discussion is needed, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, the Headteacher should not do so until those agencies have been consulted, and have agreed what information can be disclosed.
- 3.5 Even when no further action is taken the Headteacher should inform the member of staff that they will receive notification in writing.

4. Suspension

- 4.1 The Headteacher should determine whether the circumstances warrant a member of staff being suspended from contact with children at the School/ Academy or whether alternative arrangements can be put in place until the allegation is resolved. Suspension should not be the default position and if required it should be noted that suspension is a neutral act and does not imply that a decision has been made on the merit or otherwise of the allegations.
- 4.2 If the Designated Officer, Police and Children's Social Care Services have no objections to the member of staff continuing to work during the investigation, the Headteacher should aim to avoid suspension.
- 4.3 Based on an assessment of risk, the following alternatives should be considered by the Headteacher before suspending a member of staff:
 - redeployment within the School/ Academy so that the member of staff does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned;
 - providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children;
 - redeploying the member of staff to alternative work in the School/ Academy so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children;
 - moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the member of staff, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted; or
 - temporarily redeploying the member of staff to another role in an alternative School/ Academy within the Trust.

- 4.4 If suspension is considered necessary, the rationale and justification for this course of action will be agreed and recorded by the Headteacher and the Designated Officer and should also include what alternatives to suspension have been considered and why they were rejected.
- 4.5 Where it is appropriate to suspend the member of staff, written confirmation will be dispatched to them within one working day providing as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension confirming who their named contact is and their contact details.

5. Investigations

- 5.1 In some cases, further enquiries will be needed to enable a decision to be made about how to proceed. If so, the Headteacher will discuss and agree with the Designated Officer how and by whom the investigation will be undertaken.
- 5.2 In straightforward cases, the investigation will normally be undertaken by a member of the Senior Leadership team. In more complex cases, or as a result of a lack of appropriate resource or due to the nature of the allegation, it may be investigated by the Trust's Head of HR or in special circumstances, by an independent investigator. In all cases an investigation report will be compiled.
- 5.3 The following definitions, as contained within Keeping Children Safe In Education 2018, will be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:
- The allegation is **Substantiated** which means that there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.
 - The allegation is **Malicious** which means that there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive.
 - The allegation is **False** which means that there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
 - The allegation is **Unsubstantiated** which means that there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. This term does not imply guilt or innocence.
 - The allegation is **unfounded** which reflects cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.
- 5.4 On receipt of the investigation report, the Headteacher will consult the Designated Officer and they will collectively determine whether a disciplinary hearing is needed within two working days of receiving the report.
- 5.5 If a hearing is required it should be held within 15 working days' and in any event providing the member of staff with 10 working days' notice.

6. Supporting members of staff

- 6.1 The member of staff who is the subject of the allegation will be kept informed of the progress of the case and consideration will be given to what other support is appropriate. The member of staff will have a named contact within the School/ Academy to support them, be provided with contact details for the Employee Assistance Programme and reminded to contact their trade union. Such support will continue where required by the employee once the process has concluded.
- 6.2 Social contact with colleagues and friends will not be prevented during a period of suspension unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

7. Information to be provided to parents and carers

- 7.1 Parents or carers of a child or children involved should be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. However, where a strategy discussion is required, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, the Headteacher should not do so until those agencies have been consulted and have agreed what information can be disclosed to the parents or carers. Parent or carers should also be kept informed about the progress of the case and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process. The deliberations of a disciplinary hearing, and the information taken into account in reaching a decision, will not be disclosed, but the parents or carers of the child should be told the outcome in confidence.

8. Resignations

- 8.1 If the accused person resigns this will not prevent an allegation from being followed up and the procedure outlined in this document will continue regardless.
- 8.2 Every effort will be made to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children, including any in which the person concerned refuses to cooperate with the process.

9. Settlement agreements

- 9.1 Settlement agreements will not be used in cases of allegations of abuse.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 The Trust will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and ward against unwanted publicity whilst an allegation is being investigated or considered.
- 10.2 The Trust complies with the reporting restrictions within the Education Act 2002 in that it will not provide any material that may lead to the identification of a member of staff who has been accused until the point that the accused person is charged with an offence or until the Secretary of State publishes information about an investigation or decision in a disciplinary case arising from the allegation or if the individual waives their right to anonymity.

11. Record keeping

- 11.1 Details of allegations that are found to have been malicious will be expunged from an employee's record. However, for all other allegations a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken and decisions reached, must be retained on the confidential personnel file of the member of staff and they will be provided with a copy of the same.
- 11.2 The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference, where appropriate. It will provide clarification in cases where future DBS Disclosures reveal information from the police about an allegation that did not result in a criminal conviction and it will help to prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, an allegation re-surfaces after a period of time.
- 11.3 This record will be retained at least until the accused has reached normal retirement age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

12. References

- 12.1 In cases in which an allegation was proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious it will not be included in employer references.

12.2 Where allegations are found to be substantiated, this will be included in employer references.

13. Timescales

13.1 It is in everyone's interest to resolve cases as quickly as possible consistent with a fair and thorough investigation.

13.2 All allegations should be investigated as a priority to avoid any delay.

13.3 The time taken to investigate and resolve individual cases depends on a variety of factors including the nature, seriousness and complexity of the allegation but most cases should be resolved within one month, and all but the most exceptional cases should be completed within 12 months

13.4 For cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious, they should be resolved within one week.

14. General Data Protection Regulation

14.1 All data within this policy will be processed in line with the requirements and protections set out in the General Data Protection Regulation.

Document management

Review cycle:	Annually
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Policy owner	Head of Human Resources
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