



# Whistleblowing Policy for All Staff

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St Christopher's Church of England High School

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Approved by:	Full Governing Body		
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# St Christopher's CE High School Mission Statement

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**St Christopher's is a Church of England Academy where pupils and staff work together, in the knowledge and love of God. We try to act out our faith in daily life, with Christ as our example.**

Within our strong Christian, Anglican context, we seek to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development of our pupils, growing together as a caring and supportive community whilst preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of their adult lives.

We aim to achieve our mission by providing an environment which

- recognises that each member of the school community is an individual with specific needs and strengths
- fosters mutual respect and concern for others
- values the contribution made by each member of the school community
- encourages and celebrates positive achievement
- actively supports those in need.

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The Governing Body is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.
- 1.2 Under this Whistleblowing Policy you can raise such concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. Any employee who raises a concern is protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, part of which was updated by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. The Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the school or the council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside.
- 1.3 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the school/council. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues, the school or to the council. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.
- 1.4 The policy applies to all employees and applies equally to those designated as casual, temporary or agency workers and authorised volunteers, those on work experience and governors. It also applies to contractors working for the school or the council on the school's premises e.g., agency staff, builders, drivers, and covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the school in their own premises. Members of the public should raise concerns relating to any aspect of school business under the school's Complaints Procedure.
- 1.5 This policy is in addition to the schools/council's complaints procedures and other statutory reporting procedures, including safeguarding procedures. Employees should be made aware of the existence of these procedures.
- 1.6 This policy has been discussed with the recognised trade unions/professional associations and the Diocesan Authorities and has their support.

## 2. Aims and scope of this policy

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- 2.1 This policy aims to:
  - encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
  - provide avenues for you to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
  - ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied; and
  - reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have a reasonable belief that you have made any disclosure which is in the public interest.
- 2.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance or complaint relating to your own employment. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:
  - conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
  - failure to comply with a legal obligation;
  - disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
  - racial, sexual, disability or other discrimination where other procedures, such as the school's Bullying and Harassment Procedure, do not apply;
  - health and safety risks, including risks to the public/pupils as well as other employees;
  - damage to the environment;
  - the unauthorised use of public funds;
  - possible fraud, bribery and corruption, including but not limited to, theft of property, financial irregularities, misuse of property and school systems, nepotism, conflicts of interest, or supplier kickbacks;
  - sexual or physical abuse of pupil. Disclosures of this nature must always be made and dealt with under the school's safeguarding procedures;
  - other unethical conduct; and
  - actions which are unprofessional or inappropriate or conflict with a general understanding of what is right and wrong.

Note: There is a requirement under the Scheme for Financing Schools in Lancashire for the Governing Body to notify the council's Internal Audit Service immediately of all (actual or suspected) financial or accounting irregularities. This requirement is not superseded by this Whistleblowing Policy and the Governing Body will need to act accordingly if a financial issue is raised.

- 2.3 Thus, any serious concerns that you have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of school staff, governors, officers/members of the council or others acting on behalf of the school can be reported under the Whistleblowing Policy. This may be about something that
- makes you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, your experience or the standards you believe the governors and the school subscribe to;
  - is against the school's policies, procedures or School Governance Regulations 2013;
  - falls below established standards of practice; or
  - amounts to improper conduct.
- 2.4 This policy does not replace the school or the council's complaints procedures.

### 3. Key principles

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- 3.1 The school is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of all its employees.
- 3.2 The school recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what you are saying is true, you should have nothing to fear because you will be doing your duty to your employer and to those for whom you are providing a service.
- 3.3 The Governing Body will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect you when you raise a concern which is in the public interest. Any member of staff who harasses or victimises a whistleblower may not only be personally liable but will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 3.4 All disclosures will be treated seriously and will be reviewed in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). As a member of the school's staff or a worker at the school, you have statutory protection against victimisation and dismissal under the PIDA if you speak out genuinely against corruption and malpractice at work, if the reason for the victimisation or dismissal is because you have made a disclosure which is protected under PIDA.
- 3.5 "Malpractice" includes any kind of improper practice or conduct which falls short of what is reasonably expected whether it relates to a positive act or omission and includes any form of harassment. The school will not tolerate harassment or victimisation.
- 3.6 It is essential for all concerned that disclosures of wrongdoing or irregularity are dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly. This is in the interests of the school, its employees, any persons who are the subject of such allegations, as well as the person making the disclosure.
- 3.7 Investigations into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy proceedings that are already taking place.

### 4. Confidentiality

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- 4.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if you so wish. However, it must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information, and you may need to come forward as a witness and provide a statement as part of the evidence.
- 4.2 It may be possible to establish the truth about allegations from another independent source and the school will seek to do this where possible.
- 4.3 The school expects all organisations that deal with us and who have serious concerns about any aspect of the school's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

## 5. Anonymous allegations

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- 5.1 This policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation whenever possible.
- 5.2 Where an individual chooses to report their concerns anonymously, such anonymity will be respected. However, our ability to investigate anonymous complaints can be hampered by not being able to further explore issues or obtain evidence during the investigative process. Furthermore, if we do not know who has provided the information, it is not possible to either reassure or protect you.
- 5.3 Concerns expressed anonymously may be less powerful and will only be considered at the discretion of the school. In exercising such discretion, the following factors may need to be taken into account:
- the seriousness of the issues raised;
  - the credibility of the concern; and
  - the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.
- 5.4 If the allegation suggests criminal activity and the case warrants police assistance, the identity of the person reporting the details may be important at a later date if criminal proceedings are to be pursued effectively. Identification is therefore preferred and will assist the investigation.

## 6. Untrue allegations

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- 6.1 If you make an allegation which you believe is in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make an allegation frivolously, maliciously, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against you if you are a school employee.
- 6.2 If you are a School Governor, you may breach the Code of Conduct for School Governing Bodies. If you are a contractor or partner, such allegations may put you in breach of your contractual responsibilities to the school.
- 6.3 Malicious or vexatious allegations include those that are trivial and do not have substance and are made persistently to cause trouble.

## 7. How to raise a concern

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- 7.1 In raising a concern, you should provide the following information:
- the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
  - the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation;
  - the name(s) of any colleagues/employees who you consider are directly involved; and
  - the name(s) of any colleagues/employees who you believe may be able to help provide further information
- 7.2 Concerns should normally be raised with the Headteacher (or the Chair of Governors if the concerns relate to the actions of the Headteacher). This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.
- 7.3 If, however, you feel that you still want to raise your concerns with the council, there are a number of options to choose from. Concerns may be raised verbally to the whistleblowing telephone line, by email, or in writing.
- 7.4 To make a confidential telephone call please ring the dedicated whistleblowing number 01772 532500, where you will be requested to press 1 for financial matters (directed to the Internal Audit Service) and 2 if it relates to any other concern (directed to Human Resources).
- 7.5 Financial matters include the following:
- theft of property including assets and cash;
  - financial irregularities including those affecting cash, stores, property, remuneration or allowances;
  - fraud;
  - misuse of school property, vehicles or equipment;
  - misuse of school systems;

- nepotism;
  - conflicts of interest giving rise to fraud, bribery or corruption;
  - supplier kickbacks.
- 7.6 An officer will answer your call and if the officer is unavailable, there will be an opportunity to leave a voicemail message. An officer will return your call if you so wish but please remember to leave a telephone number in your message.
- 7.7 If you prefer to use email there are two dedicated email addresses:
- For financial concerns – [internalauditinvestigations@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:internalauditinvestigations@lancashire.gov.uk)
  - For any other concern - [WhistleblowingComplaints@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:WhistleblowingComplaints@lancashire.gov.uk)
- 7.8 Concerns can also be made in writing and correspondence should be sent to:
- For financial concerns to – Head of Service Internal Audit, Internal Audit Service, Resources, Lancashire County Council, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD.
  - For any other concern to – Head of School's HR Team, People Services, Lancashire County Council, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD.
- 7.9 Alternatively, you may contact a representative of the Schools Human Resources Team directly:
- Jeanette Whitham, Head of Schools HR Team - 01772 530436
  - Steve Lewis, Senior HR Manager 01772 531776 (Districts 1 & 2 – Lancaster & Morecambe and Wyre)
  - Claire Neville, Senior HR Manager - 01772 530435 (Districts 4 & 6 – Fylde and Preston)
  - Vic Welch, Senior HR Manager - 01772 531814 (Districts 7 and 8 - South Ribble and West Lancashire)
  - Andy Cooper, Senior HR Manager – 01772 535781 (Districts 9 and 11 – Chorley and Hyndburn)
  - Karen Tracey, Senior HR Manager - 01772 535175 (Districts 12, 13, 14 - Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale)
- 7.10 The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is for action to be taken.
- 7.11 Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.
- 7.12 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter as a collective concern if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.
- 7.13 You may invite a fellow worker, a trade union representative or an official employed by a trade union to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.
- 7.14 If you believe that you have to take the matter externally, possible contacts are listed at Section 10 of this policy.

## 8. How the school/council will respond

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- 8.1 The school/council will provide a response to your concerns. If you confirm your wish to raise the concerns formally under this policy, a responsible person will be designated by the school management, where appropriate, or by the management of the council, to co-ordinate the response to the concerns you have raised, in consultation with the Internal Audit Service as necessary. The responsible person will respond to you in accordance with paragraph 8.6 below and where the responsible person is outside the management of the school, s/he will notify the council's Internal Audit Service for registration, monitoring and annual reporting purposes.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:
- be investigated by school/council management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary procedure;
  - be referred to the police;
  - be referred to the external auditor; or
  - form the subject of an independent inquiry.
- 8.3 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Such testing out of your concerns is not the same as either accepting or rejecting them. The overriding principle which school management/the council will have in mind is the public interest.

- 8.4 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 8.5 Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- 8.6 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the responsible person will write to you to:
- acknowledge that the concern has been received;
  - indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter;
  - provide an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
  - inform you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
  - supply you with information on staff support mechanisms (where appropriate); and
  - inform you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.
- 8.7 The amount of contact between those considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved, and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary further information will be sought from you.
- 8.8 Where any meeting is arranged under this policy, away from school premises if you so wish, you can be accompanied by a trade union or professional association representative or work colleague.
- 8.9 The Governing Body will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For example, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, arrangements will be made for you to receive appropriate advice about the procedure.
- 8.10 It is accepted that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.



## 9. The Responsible Officer

- 9.1 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy in respect of concerns raised formally within the school, and should maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcome to report as necessary to the Governing Body.
- 9.2 The council's Internal Audit Service has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy in respect of concerns raised formally outside the management of the school and will maintain appropriate records of concerns raised and report as necessary to the council.

## 10. How the matter can be taken further

- 10.1 This policy is intended to provide you with an avenue within the school/council to raise concerns. The Governing Body hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and if you feel it is right to take the matter outside the school/council, you may wish to contact your trade union/professional association or one of the following possible contact points:

<b>External Auditor</b>	 Grant Thornton LLP 4 Hardman Square, Spinningfields, Manchester, M3 3EB  0161 953 6900  <a href="http://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/office-locations/?location=manchester">www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/office-locations/?location=manchester</a>
<b>Protect</b>	 Protect The Green House, 244-254 Cambridge Heath Road, London, E2 9DA  020 3117 2520  <a href="http://www.protect-advice.org.uk/contact-us/">www.protect-advice.org.uk/contact-us/</a>

<b>Lancashire Constabulary</b>	 Lancashire Constabulary Headquarters PO Box 77, Hutton , Preston, PR4 5SB  101  <a href="http://www.lancashire.police.uk/">www.lancashire.police.uk/</a>
<b>Action Fraud</b>	 0300 123 2040  <a href="http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/">www.actionfraud.police.uk/</a>
<b>HM Revenue and Customs</b>	 HMRC Fraud Hotline Cardiff, CF14 5ZN  0800 788 887  <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-excise-and-vat-fraud-reporting">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs/contact/customs-excise-and-vat-fraud-reporting</a>
<b>The Information Commissioner</b>	 The Office of the Information Commissioner Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF  0303 123 1113  <a href="https://ico.org.uk/">https://ico.org.uk/</a>
<b>The Environment Agency</b>	 National Customer Contact Centre PO Box 544, Rotherham, S60 1BY  03708 506 506  <a href="mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk">enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency</a>
<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>	 Redgrave Court Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 7HS  0300 003 1647  <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm">www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm</a>

10.2 If you do take the matter outside the school/council, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information that falls outside the scope of the complaint. You should check with the relevant contact point about that.

## Safeguarding Policy Annexe : Allegations of abuse made against staff

Please note that this policy information meets the requirements of KCSIE 2022.

### 1: Allegations that may meet the harms threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, 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,
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children,
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school

If there is any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, the DSL will consult the local authority designated officer (LADO).

We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of governors, where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity and usually work in consultation with the DSL.



Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

## Suspension of the accused until the case is resolved

Suspension of the accused will not be the default position and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual 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 individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children
- Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted
- Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school or other work for the academy.

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the LCC HR advisor and the LADO, as well as the police and children's social care where they have been involved.

## Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive, or to cause harm to the subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

## Procedure for dealing with allegations

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the case manager will take the following steps:

- Conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with the steps below
- Discuss the allegation with the DSL and LADO. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or children's social care services. (The case manager may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police before consulting the LADO – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the case manager will notify the LADO as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)
- Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the DSL/LADO (and the police or children's social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or children's social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies
- Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the LADO, police and/or children's social care services, as appropriate
- Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the individual's family, these concerns will be discussed with the DSL and a risk assessment made of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to children's social care
- **If immediate suspension is considered necessary**, the case manager will agree and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details

- **If it is decided that no further action is to be taken** in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation
- **If it is decided that further action is needed**, take steps as agreed with the LADO to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or children's social care services as appropriate
- Provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and considering what other support is appropriate. (The individual may also seek support through a trade union representative, or via counselling support e.g. through LCC HR.)
- Inform the parents of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible (following agreement with children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice
- Keep the parents of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case (only in relation to their child – no information will be shared regarding the staff member)
- Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child

If St. Christopher's is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

If the police are involved, wherever possible St. Christopher's will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

### **Additional considerations for supply teachers and all contracted staff**

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the school, such as a supply teacher or contracted staff member provided by an agency, we will take the actions below in addition to our standard procedures.

- We will not decide to stop using an individual due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome
- The governing board will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of the school, while the school carries out the investigation
- We will involve the agency fully, but the school will take the lead in collecting the necessary information and providing it to the LADO as required
- We will address issues such as information sharing, to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (we will do this, for example, as part of the allegations management meeting or by liaising directly with the agency where necessary).

When using an agency, we will inform them of our process for managing allegations, and keep them updated about our policies as necessary, and will invite the agency's HR manager or equivalent to meetings as appropriate.

### **Timescales**

We will deal with all allegations as quickly and effectively as possible and will endeavour to comply with the following timescales, where reasonably practicable:

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious should be resolved within 1 week
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be taken within 3 working days
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, this should be held within 15 working days

However, these are objectives only and where they are not met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter.

## **Specific actions**

### **Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution**

The case manager will discuss with the LADO whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or children's social care services.

### **Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated**

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the school will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the school will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

### **Individuals returning to work after suspension**

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The case manager will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the school.

### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports**

If a report is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious allegations**

If an allegation is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and case manager will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it.

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The case manager will take advice from the LADO, police and children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press and social media interest if, and when, it arises.

### **Record-keeping**

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- Notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

In these cases, the school will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate. Where records contain information about allegations of sexual abuse, we will preserve these for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. We will retain all other records at least until the individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

## References

When providing employer references, we will:

- Not refer to any allegation that has been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious, or any repeated allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious
- Include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions

## Learning lessons

After any cases where the allegations are substantiated, the case manager will review the circumstances of the case with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual

For all other cases, the case manager will consider the facts and determine whether any improvements can be made.

## Non-recent allegations

Abuse can be reported, no matter how long ago it happened.

We will report any non-recent allegations made by a child to the LADO in line with LCC procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child, we will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police.

## 2. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (also referred to as 'Low level concerns')

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school
- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

## Definition of low-level concerns

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LCC designated officer (LADO)

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone against school policy
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating pupils

### **Sharing low-level concerns**

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns (with the DSL, Headteacher or Chair of Governors)
- Empowering staff to self-refer (through the DSL, headteacher or Chair of Governors)
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system

### **Responding to low-level concerns**

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Headteacher/DSL will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The headteacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the school's Staff Code of Conduct. The headteacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

### **Record keeping**

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the LADO
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school.

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

### **References**

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the LADO and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance.

## **Related policies and procedures:**

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- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Bullying & Harrassment Procedure.

**Developed by** S. Parkinson (DSL) March 2023.

**Guidance used:** KSIE 2022 & The Key Safeguarding policy template Annexe 3.

**Due for review** on or before March 2025.

This policy has been written with direct reference to Lancashire County Council guidance.

Please note the annexe 'Allegations against staff and low level concerns', which meets the expectations of the KCSIE Report 2022.



**That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither-  
whatever they do prospers.**

Psalm 1:3



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