



Name of Policy: Allegations against Staff (including Low Level Concerns)

Policy Owner:	SLT and Governors
Type of Policy:	Statutory
Regulatory Body:	Independent School Standards Regulations 2014
Relevant Legislation/Guidance:	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
Last Reviewed By/Date:	August 2026
Last Approved By/Date:	September 2026 (pending approval)
Next Review Due:	August 2027
This Version Published:	2026 (Website and Policy Folder)
Circulation:	Governors/Staff Portal
Linked Policies:	Child Protection Policy Data Protection Policy

Section 1

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold

1.1 Scope and Applicability

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer, or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- 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 School will immediately 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.

The Headteacher will oversee any investigation and will appoint an Investigating Officer. This could be a senior member of staff or an independent investigator. If the Headteacher is the subject of the allegation, the Chair of Governors will oversee the investigation. The Investigating Officer will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and professional judgement. If the School receives an allegation of an incident happening while an individual or organisation was using the school premises to run activities for children, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform our LADO.

1.2 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 a thorough assessment of risk, we will consider alternative arrangements, such as:

1. **Redeployment within the school** so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned.
2. **Providing an assistant** to be present when the individual has contact with children.
3. **Redeploying the individual to alternative work** in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children.
4. **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 ensuring that parents/carers have been fully consulted.

If in doubt, the Case Manager will seek views from the School's HR Consultant and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), as well as the police and local authority children's social care where they have been involved.

1.3 Definitions of Investigation Outcomes

- **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 that supports the allegation being made.

1.4 Step-by-Step Procedure for Managing Allegations

In the event of an allegation that meets the harm threshold criteria, the appointed Investigating Officer will take the following sequential steps:

1. **Conduct Basic Enquiries:** Perform basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts and determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with subsequent steps.
2. **Consult the LADO:** Discuss the allegation with the LADO to consider its nature, content, and context. Agree on a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or local authority children's social care services. *(Note: The Investigating Officer may involve the police before consulting the LADO if the accused is deemed an immediate risk to children or if there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. The LADO must then be notified as soon as practicably possible.)*
3. **Notify the Accused:** Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and the likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the LADO (and, where applicable, the police or social care). If these agencies are involved, only share such information as has been agreed with them.
4. **Evaluate Suspension vs. Alternatives:** Carefully consider whether suspension from contact with children is justified, or if alternative risk-mitigation measures (such as redeployment) can be implemented. Seek advice from the LADO, police, and/or social care as appropriate.
5. **Assess Community and Family Risks:** If concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the accused's family, discuss these concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Perform a risk assessment. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to local authority children's social care.
6. **Record Suspension Rationale:** If immediate suspension is deemed necessary, agree and record the rationale with the LADO, detailing the alternatives considered and why they were rejected. Provide written confirmation of suspension to the individual within 1 working day, along with the contact details of a named school representative.
7. **Formulate Next Steps (No Further Action):** If it is decided that no further action is required, record the decision and justification. Agree with the LADO what written feedback should be provided to the individual, who should write it, and what actions should follow for both the individual and those who made the allegation.
8. **Initiate Disciplinary or External Action:** If further action is required, take steps agreed with the LADO to initiate internal procedures and/or liaise with the police and local authority children's social care as appropriate.
9. **Provide Dedicated Support:** Ensure effective support is provided to the accused individual, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the case's progress.
10. **Liaise with Parents/Carers:** Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved as soon as possible (subject to agreement with social care and the police). Advise them of the statutory

requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations against teachers while investigations are ongoing. If they wish to remove confidentiality restrictions, advise them to seek legal advice.

11. **Provide Progress Updates:** Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved updated on the progress of the case, strictly sharing information only in relation to their child (no personal information regarding the staff member will be disclosed).

1.5 Legal Referrals and External Reporting

- **DBS Referrals:** The School has an absolute statutory legal duty to make a referral to the DBS where an individual facing an allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child, and they have been dismissed, resigned, or ceased to provide their services as a result.
- **DfE and ISI Notification:** We will inform the Department for Education (DfE) and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) (and, where applicable for separately registered early years provision, Ofsted) of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegation being made.
- **Interim Prohibition Orders:** If made aware that the Secretary of State has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, the School will immediately suspend that individual from teaching pending the findings of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA).
- **Consent for Police Evidence:** Where the police are involved, the School will ask them 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 internal disciplinary process, should it be required later.

1.6 Supply Teachers, Trainees, and Contracted Staff

If an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the School (e.g., supply teachers, trainees, or contracted staff), we share safeguarding responsibilities with the employment agency or business. We will:

- Not decide to cease using an individual's services due to safeguarding concerns without first finding out the facts and liaising with our LADO.
- Discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual or redeploy them while the investigation is carried out.
- Take the lead in collecting information and conducting the investigation, involving the agency fully and sharing findings with the LADO to agree on a course of action.
- Facilitate information sharing to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (e.g., during allegations management meetings).
- Inform the agency of our allegations management policy, keep them updated, and invite their HR representative to meetings as appropriate. (Note: Teacher training providers are expected to follow these same procedures.)

1.7 Targeted Timescales

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

- **Immediate Unsubstantiated or Malicious Cases:** Resolved within 1 week.
- **Cases Not Requiring Formal Disciplinary Action:** Appropriate action taken within 3 working days.
- **Disciplinary Hearings (No Investigation Required):** Held within 15 working days.

Where these target timescales cannot be met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter

1.8 Case Outcomes and Specific Actions

Action Following a Criminal Investigation or Prosecution

The Investigating Officer 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.

Case Conclusion (Substantiated Allegations)

- If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed, the School ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns/ceases to provide services, the School will make a referral to the DBS for barred list consideration.
- If the individual is a member of teaching staff, the School will consider referring the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) to consider a teaching prohibition.

Reintegration and Return to Work

If it is decided on conclusion of the case that a suspended individual can return to work, the Investigating Officer will consider how best to facilitate this. They will also consider how best to manage the individual's ongoing contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the School.

1.9 Handling Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, False, or Malicious Allegations

If an allegation or report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious:

- The Headteacher and Investigating Officer, in consultation with the LADO, will determine the appropriate next steps regarding the staff member and the investigation.
- The DSL will consider whether the child and/or the person who made the allegation is in need of help, or if the allegation may have been a "cry for help". If so, a referral to local authority children's social care may be made.
- If the report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the School will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it.

1.10 Confidentiality, Speculation, and Record-Keeping

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The School will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity. The Investigating Officer will seek advice from the LADO, police, and children's social care to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared.
- How to manage speculation, leaks, and gossip, including advising parents/carers of their confidentiality obligations.
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation.
- How to manage press interest if and when it arises.

Record-Keeping and Safeguarding Archives

The Investigating Officer will maintain clear records about any case meeting the harm threshold and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

- **Malicious or False Allegations:** The records of any allegation found to be malicious or false will be removed from the individual's active personnel file (unless the individual consents to their retention). In accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance, these records will not be destroyed; they will be transferred to a separate, highly secure, and restricted safeguarding archive to ensure a complete and accurate audit trail is maintained for regulatory and historical purposes.
- **Other Allegations (Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, Unfounded):** The following will be retained on the individual's confidential personnel file:
 - 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 final outcome.
 - A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future references.
 - The School will provide a copy of these records to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate.

All records (excluding malicious or false allegations removed to the archive) will be retained at least until the accused 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, the School will:

- Not refer to any allegation that has been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious (including repeated allegations of this nature).
- Include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is strictly factual, verifiable, and does not include subjective opinions

Learning Lessons

After any substantiated case, the Investigating Officer will review the circumstances with the LADO to determine whether any improvements can be made to the School's procedures or practice (e.g., review of suspension decisions, justification, duration, and how future cases might be handled without suspension). For all other cases, the Investigating Officer will review the facts to determine if improvements can be made.

Non-Recent Allegations

- Abuse can be reported no matter how long ago it occurred. Non-recent allegations made by a child will be reported to the LADO in line with local authority procedures.
- Where an adult makes an allegation to the School that they were abused as a child, the School will advise them to report the matter directly to the police.

Section 2

Concerns That Do Not Meet the Harm Threshold (Low-Level Concerns)

2.1 Scope and Definition

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

Such concerns may arise through:

- Suspicion or complaint.
- A safeguarding concern or allegation raised by another member of staff.
- A disclosure made by a child, parent, or other adult within or outside the School.
- Pre-employment vetting checks.

Definition of a Low-Level Concern

A "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:

1. Is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and
2. Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to warrant a referral to the LADO.

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

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

2.2 Sharing Low-Level Concerns and Reporting Culture

We recognise the vital importance of creating a culture of openness, trust, and transparency to encourage all staff to share low-level concerns so they can be addressed appropriately. We will foster this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about expected and appropriate behaviour, and are confident in distinguishing this from concerning, problematic, or inappropriate behaviour in themselves and others.
- Empowering staff to report low-level concerns in confidence using a secure, restricted digital reporting link accessible via the staff intranet, which routes submissions directly and securely to the Headteacher.
- 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 and correct any potential weaknesses in the School's safeguarding system.

2.3 Responding to and Managing Low-Level Concerns

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

- Directly to the person who raised the concern (unless raised anonymously).
- To the individual involved and any potential witnesses.

The Headteacher or the DSL 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 collaborate closely with the DSL.

2.4 Record-Keeping and Safeguarding Compliance

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

Records of low-level concerns will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely, and maintained in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, and the UK GDPR.
- Reviewed regularly to identify potential patterns of concerning, problematic, or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on an appropriate course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold, by immediately referring it to the LADO.
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the School.

Supply Teachers and Contractors

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

References

The School will not include low-level concerns in employer references unless:

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