

Sands School



Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and other Staff

September 2018

These procedures outline the initial response to an allegation of abuse against a teacher or another member of staff. For more detailed guidance, particularly action following the outcome of an initial investigation reference must be made to the [DfE Guidance](#).

A member of staff who becomes aware of an allegation should:

- Take the matter seriously and keep an open mind
- Not investigate it themselves
- Not promise confidentiality to the informant
- Should make a written record as soon as possible, using the informant's words (if applicable)
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay

Introduction

The Sands School takes its responsibility of care for its students seriously. We recognise that any possibility that a member of staff (including volunteers) may have hurt a student must be investigated thoroughly, but in a way that does not prejudice either the student or the member of staff. Any investigation of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff must follow the objective, professional standards and routines described here.

Allegations of abuse against staff should not be dealt with under the school's general complaints procedure.

The allegations of abuse by staff procedures are based on the following:

[Keeping Children Safe in Education, Sept 2018 pp. 51-62](#)

and

[Working Together to Safeguard Children, July 2018 pp58-59](#)

Initial allegation made to the school

Any allegation of abuse of a student by a teacher must be reported to the designated school Safeguarding Lead, **Nathan Gribble**. Should the initial allegation first be made to any other member of staff then that member of staff must either request the person raising the allegation to report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or if that is not possible to pass details of the allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

Should the allegation be made against the Designated Safeguarding Lead then this should be brought to the attention of the Chair of Governors immediately.

Should the allegation meet any of the **following criteria** then the Designated Safeguarding Lead should report the allegation to the local authority designated officer the same day that the allegation is received that a teacher or member of staff or volunteer at the school has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child or;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates she/he would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.

What is harm? This is not defined in legislation. The DBS view harm as its common understanding or the definition you may find in a dictionary. Harm is considered in its widest context and may include:

Sexual harm, physical harm, financial harm, neglect, emotional harm, psychological harm, verbal harm.

This is not a fully comprehensive list, harm can take many different forms. A person satisfies the '**harm test**' if they may harm a child (or vulnerable adult) or put them at risk of harm. It is something a person may do to cause harm or pose a risk of harm.

Initial Consideration

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will discuss the matter with the 'local authority designated officer' ([LADO](#)) at [Devon Social Services](#) and provide any further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made.

Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) have the responsibility of managing and overseeing allegations made against those who work or volunteer with children. If the allegation relates to the person in their personal life, for example, as a parent/relative/friend, a MASH referral should be made. However, if the allegation relates to their working/volunteering role, you should instead make a LADO referral or request LADO advice directly from the LADO Service. The contact details are:

LADO helpline: **01392 384964**

secure email address: ladosecure-mailbox@devon.gcsx.gov.uk

If you consider a LADO referral is needed gather all relevant information, to include:

- the name, date of birth and home address of the ADULT connected to the allegation/incident
- the child/childrens' details, as LADO procedures cannot begin without this information.

The LADO Administrator will take the details of the incident/allegation and contact the Duty LADO to pass them the details of the incident/allegation. Alternatively please fill out the [online referral form](#).

The Duty LADO will give advice on how to proceed and/or recommend an allegations management strategy meeting for further investigation, which will include police consultation.

If you consider an incident or allegation to be an **emergency, and that a child/ children may be in danger of immediate harm**, you may wish to consider in the first instance contacting either the police on 999 or the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on 0345 155 1071 or via email mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should not investigate the allegation at this stage. The discussion will also consider whether there is evidence or information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded.

If the allegation is not patently false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority designated officer will immediately refer to children's social care and ask for a strategy discussion in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children to be convened straight away. In those circumstances the strategy discussion should include the local authority designated officer and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If there is not cause to suspect that "significant harm" is an issue, but a criminal offence might have been committed, the local authority designated officer should immediately inform the police and convene a similar discussion to decide whether a police investigation is needed. That discussion will also involve the school and any other agencies involved with the child.

Action following initial consideration

Where the initial consideration decides that the allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence it will be for the Designated Safeguarding Lead to deal with it in consultation with School Governors¹. In such cases, if the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be instituted within three working days. If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, the hearing should be held within 15 working days.

Where further investigation is required to inform consideration of disciplinary action the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the School Governors should discuss who will undertake that with the local authority designated officer.

The investigating officer should aim to provide a report within 10 working days.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

- a. **Substantiated**: there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation;
- b. **False**: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
- c. **Malicious**: there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false;
- d. **Unfounded**: there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively they may not have been aware of all the circumstances;
- e. **Unsubstantiated**: this is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

On receipt of the report of the disciplinary investigation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the School Governors should consult the local authority designated officer, and decide whether a disciplinary hearing is needed within two working days. If a hearing is needed it should be held within 15 working days.

In any case in which children's social care has undertaken enquiries to determine whether the child or children are in need of protection, the School Governors and Chair of Governors should take account of any relevant information obtained in the course of those enquiries when considering disciplinary action.

The local authority designated officer should continue to liaise with the school to monitor progress of the case and provide advice or support when required or requested.

Case subject to police investigation

If the police and/or Crown Prosecution Service decide not to charge the individual with an offence, or decide to administer a caution, or the person is acquitted by a

¹ This role is delegated by the School Governors to the designated Child Protection governor.

Court, the police should wherever possible aim to pass all information they have which may be relevant to a disciplinary case to the Principal within three working days of the decision. In those circumstances the Principal and the local authority designated officer should proceed as described above.

In any case in which children's social care has undertaken enquiries to determine whether the child or children are in need of protection, any information obtained in the course of those enquiries which is relevant to a disciplinary case should also be passed to the school and the Principal should request this information.

Supporting those involved

Employers have a duty of care to their employees. They should act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process. Support for the individual is key to fulfilling this duty. Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action, unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the police.

The person who is the subject of the allegation should be kept informed of the progress of the case and consideration should be given to what other support is appropriate for the individual. Particular care needs to be taken when employees are suspended to ensure that they are kept informed of both the progress of their case and current work-related issues. Social contact with colleagues and friends should not be prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

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 case manager 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, cannot normally be disclosed, but the parents or carers of the child should be told the outcome in confidence. Parents and carers should also be made aware of the prohibition on reporting or publishing allegations about teachers in section 141F of the Education Act 2002. If parents or carers wish to apply to the court to have reporting restrictions removed, they should be told to seek legal advice. In cases where a child may have suffered significant harm, or there may be a criminal prosecution, children's social care services, or the police as appropriate, should consider what support the child or children involved may need.

Suspension

Suspension should be considered only in a case where there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school is/are at risk of harm or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. Suspension should not be an automatic response when an allegation is reported: all options to avoid suspension should be considered prior to taking that step.

If the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the teacher's family, those concerns should be reported to the designated officer(s), children's social care or the police as required.

Resignations and 'compromise agreements'

If the accused person resigns, or ceases to provide their services, this should not prevent an allegation being followed up in accordance with this guidance. It is important that every effort is 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. Wherever possible the accused should be given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it. But the process of recording the allegation and any supporting evidence, and reaching a judgement about whether it can be substantiated on the basis of all the information available, should continue even if that cannot be done or the accused does not cooperate. It may be difficult to reach a conclusion in those circumstances, and it may not be possible to apply any disciplinary sanctions if a person's period of notice expires before the process is complete, but it is important to reach and record a conclusion wherever possible.

So-called 'compromise agreements', by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, should not be used in these cases. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate. Nor can it override the statutory duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service where circumstances require that.

Referral

There is a legal requirement for the school to make a referral to the DBS where they think that an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child; or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child. If an allegation is substantiated and the person concerned ceases to work for the school, the LADO will advise whether the school will make a referral to the DBS for inclusion in the barred list and / or to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting them from teaching.

Record keeping

Details of allegations that are found to have been malicious should be removed from personnel records. However, for all other allegations, it is important that 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, is kept on the confidential personnel file of the accused, and a copy provided to the person concerned.

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. The record should 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.

The Information Commissioner has published guidance on employment records in its Employment Practices Code and supplementary guidance, which provides some practical advice on employment retention.

References

Cases in which an allegation was proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious should not be included in employer references. A history of repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be unsubstantiated, malicious etc. should also not be included in any reference.

Policy log

Last reviewed	January 2013, 2016 and 2017 (minor amendments), 2018 (minor amendments and updated links)
Agreed by	Donald and Nathan, Staff meeting
Review frequency	Annual
Comments	
Links	Safeguarding policy and procedures