Trust Safeguarding And Child Protection Policy

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Policy Information:

Date of last review	September 2025	Review period	Annually
Date approved	September 2025	Approved by	FET Board
Policy Owner	Director of Education/Trust DSL	Date of next review	September 2026

Updates made since the last review:

Review Date	Changes made	By whom
September 2025	P5 – The TS&AL creates an annual SG action plan P6 – TS&AL works strategically with the Trust DSL P6 – Removal of the statement 'The DSL cannot also be the Link Trustee with responsibility for child protection.' P9 – The LAC chair monitors the schools safeguarding policy, not this policy P10 – examples of harmful online material and behaviours. P11 – Securly respond information. Recording rationale behind decisions (transparency and accountability). Allocating cases to a DSL. P13 – Additional info re Children's Barred List Check. Appendix 1, Safer recruitment and DBS checks policy and procedures - removed as has been superseded by new FET Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy. Appendix 2 – Renamed to Appendix 1. Additional info re: low-level concerns training and reporting.	Director of Education/Trust DSL & Trust Safeguarding & Attendance Lead

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1. Statement of Intent

Local authorities have overarching statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone's responsibility.

Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, duties are placed on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions are discharged with regards to the safeguarding of children and young people. The statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children) does not identify a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) as a separate organisation. Schools within a MAT are not named under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 but they are captured under other legislation, for example Sections 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2002, Sections 94 (1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the Education Regulations 2011 and 2014.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' is statutory guidance for schools and colleges. This guidance contains information on what schools, including academies, should do and sets out the legal duties which they must comply with. KCSIE is updated each year, and the updated version must be read by all staff, Local Academy Council members and Directors.

In law, individual schools are deemed to be 'relevant partners' of their local authority and as such are under a duty to co-operate in that local authority's Local Safeguarding Children's Board arrangements. The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 apply a duty on proprietors of independent schools including academies to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

This legal requirement along with the values and principles that underpin Forward Education Trust, mean that it is essential for us to demonstrate compliance at the local level and take on the strategic responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding practice in all our provision is of the highest quality.

Everyone working in the Trust is wholly committed to ensuring that all children and adults are cared for in a safe and secure environment. To fulfil this commitment, comprehensive safeguarding and child protection systems are in place in line with the DfE statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education.

To maintain our approach effectively and consistently, we recognise that the Trust and its schools also play an important part in the wider local and national safeguarding system for children. For note: This system is described in full in the DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

In addition, we will ensure that GDPR requirements are met in all academies and in the Trust under the umbrella of the safeguarding imperative.

2. **Culture of Safeguarding**

The Trust believes that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is the responsibility of **everyone**. This is demonstrated through our shared culture of safeguarding. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play and all staff make sure their approach is wholly child centered. This means that at all times, they consider what is in the best interests of the child.

Our culture of safeguarding demonstrates the Trust's:

- moral and statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expectation that all staff and volunteers share this commitment.

- expectation that everyone working within Trust schools will contribute to the creation of an environment in which all children and adults have an equal right to protection regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity, or culture.

- expectation that those in governance roles and staff maintain an open mind and attitude of **"it could happen here"**, where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members always act in the best interests of the child.

- expectation that all adults within the wider Trust community are aware that they have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm at home, in the community or in school. Everyone is aware that they can make a referral and reporting procedures are established in every Trust school to ensure information is shared with key safeguarding and child protection staff as soon as possible after any concern arises.

- expectation that every school will follow the guidance provided by the Trust's three local safeguarding partners (local authority, police and clinical commissioning group) For note: Trust schools are located in Sandwell, Birmingham and Solihull and will follow local guidance.

- Commitment to nominate an executive leader as the Trust's Designated Safeguarding Lead and nomination of a trustee as having responsibility for safeguarding matters.

- Each School within the Trust has a School-specific Safeguarding Policy which is published on their individual websites and is updated yearly in line with KCSiE.

- Our pupils' welfare is our paramount concern. Our Local Academy Councils (LAC) will ensure that our schools will safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and work together with agencies to ensure that our schools have adequate arrangements to identify, assess and support those children who are suffering or where significant harm is suggested in line with the procedures within Birmingham and Sandwell Children's Services.

3. Trust Board Responsibilities

The Trust Board is committed to ensuring full compliance with its safeguarding and child protection duties under statutory legislation. As delegated by the Trust Board, The Chair of the Trust Board is currently the Trustee safeguarding lead. They maintain oversight of the safeguarding activity and actions of the Education Committee which report to the Board on all child protection and safeguarding issues.

4. Strategic planning and reporting

The Trust Board retains a monitoring focus on all aspects of safeguarding, and it is a fixed agenda item at all Education Committee meetings.

Safeguarding is integral to the Trust's Strategic Plan. The Trust Safeguarding Lead develops an annual action plan that aligns with priorities and developments at school, Trust, and national levels, ensuring a responsive and forward-looking approach to safeguarding across all settings. An Annual Trust Safeguarding Report is presented to Directors alongside updates at Board and Education Committee meetings.

5. Equality statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or health conditions
- Are young carers
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic abuse
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual or criminal exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- Are asylum seekers
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs
- Are looked after or previously looked after.
- Are missing from education
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring the well-being and safety of children, young people, their families, and each other. Below is a brief description of those core responsibilities.

All staff

All staff will:

- Read and understand part 1 of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and review this guidance at least annually
- Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents. This includes making parents aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g. sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- Take responsibility to report any concerns, no matter what their role

- Be aware of our systems which support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies, the behaviour policy, the online safety policy and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education

- Understand what to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals

- Be able to recognise the signs of different types of abuse and neglect, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)

The Multi Academy Trust

The Trust Safeguarding and Attendance Lead will work with the Trust DSL to provide strategic leadership within the Trust for all aspects of safeguarding children and young people.

The Trustees

The Trustees will approve this policy at each review and hold the headteachers / CEO to account for its implementation.
• The Trustees will appoint a Trustee to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the full Trust Board.
• If an allegation of abuse is made against the CEO, the chair of Trustees will act as the 'case manager'.
• The full responsibilities of the Trust board are set out in Part Two of KCSiE – The management of safeguarding. All Trustees should read Part Two of KCSiE in order to ensure that the Board is fully compliant with their statutory safeguarding responsibilities

The Trustee responsible for Safeguarding will:

- Liaise regularly with the Trust DSL around any emerging concerns

- Contribute to the on-going developments within Trust safeguarding procedures

- Ensure that safeguarding reports are submitted regularly to both the Education Committee and the Board of Trustees

The Trust Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL)

Our Trust DSL is Leanne Mahony, Trust Director of Education. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding across Forward Education Trust. The Trust DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns and can be contacted via email at l.mahony@fet.ac or by telephone on 07759 370 537.

The Trust DSL will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against any of the Trust's headteachers, where appropriate (Appendix 1 of this policy has information on how they are supported to fulfil their role.)

Each School has their own DSL and deputy DSLs based within their individual Schools, details of this can be found within the individual Schools Safeguarding Policies which are displayed on their individual School websites. The DSL is the person to whom staff should pass their concerns and who will ensure a practical and efficient way of dealing with those concerns.

DSLs will:

- ensure an open and efficient route for staff to bring concerns to them of any sort and to have their concerns taken seriously
- ensure they are appropriately trained to carry out the role;
- support staff in ensuring they receive appropriate training;
- promote the procedural pathway within the school, so staff are aware of the way to report concerns;
- Ensure all concerns are recorded and include discussions and decisions made, including the rationale for those decisions.
- ensure the school procedures are followed and adhered to with regard to referring a child if there are concerns about possible abuse;
- offer clear advice and support to staff bringing concerns or needing help;
- consider whether concerns referred to them need to be referred to Children's Services/Social Care;
- offer appropriate feedback as necessary as to the progress of the concern;
- maintain written records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral and keep a record system to ensure consistency;
- discuss with the Trust DSL any complex safeguarding concerns;
- ensure that all such records are kept confidentially and securely and are separate from pupil records;
- ensure that an indication of further record-keeping is marked on the pupil record;
- ensure those particular complex cases are referred without delay, and especially where it involves a child or young person subject to a child protection plan
- Refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly

- Ensure that Family Support Workers in our schools have contact with children and families have professional supervision which will provide them with support, coaching and training, promote the interests of children and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

- Ensure that the school remains responsible for the safeguarding of any pupils that are placed with an alternative provision provider.

The Trust DSL will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to:

- Provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters
- Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so
- Contribute to the assessment of children
- Provide advice to Headteachers / DSLs around referring suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police) and support staff who make such referrals directly.

The Trust Safeguarding and Attendance Lead will:

- ensure that all policies and procedures are reviewed and updated in line with national and local requirements and appropriate changes disseminated to all schools,
- ensure that there are systems in place to support the effective management of safeguarding, especially the role of DSLs,
- provide training materials, support in the delivery of training for all staff and case supervision as appropriate,
- ensure that Headteachers and DSLs can access appropriate advice and support with safeguarding concerns, especially when they are complex and/or relate to allegations against staff,
- ensure quality assurance processes are in place and oversee the information they produce to measure the progress and effectiveness of existing safeguarding frameworks; and
- produce information to the Trust Board in relation to Safeguarding in order to ensure that the Board can demonstrate that it is discharging its safeguarding obligations appropriately;
- support school headteachers with the management of allegations made against adults, staff or volunteers within the school community.

The Local Academy Councils (LAC)

- Support the whole-school approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development

- Evaluate and approve the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the school to account for its implementation

- Should be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty),
- Should be aware of the school's local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Appoint a LAC member to lead and monitor the effectiveness of the schools safeguarding policy in conjunction with the full LAC. (This role is usually fulfilled by the Chair of the LAC.)
- Ensure the DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support

- Ensure that online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-school approach to safeguarding and related policies
- Ensure that the school leadership team and staff are aware of and understand the IT filters and monitoring systems in place, manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns

- Ensure that the school has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors)

- Ensure that the School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy reflects that children with SEND, or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to any abuse or neglect
- All LAC members will read at least parts 1 and 2 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

The headteachers

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this and their School Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, including:

- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:

  o Are informed of our systems which support safeguarding as part of their induction
  o Understand and follow the procedures particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect

- Communicating their Safeguarding and Child Protection policy to parents/carers when their child joins the school and via the school website
- Ensuring that their school's DSLs have appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if a DSL is absent
- Ensuring that all staff and LAC members undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, and updating the content of the training regularly
- Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate (see appendix 1)
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with their school DSL on this or ask for advice from the Trust DSL.
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable, including for Early Years pupils.
Making sure each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assigned a key person

The CEO will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the Trust's DSL, where appropriate (Appendix 1 of this policy has information on how they are supported to fulfil their role.)

7. Online safety and the use of mobile technology

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material and behaviour such as online bullying, disinformation, misinformation, conspiracy theories and grooming, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, we:

- Have robust processes in place to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers, LAC members and Trustees.

- Protect and educate the whole school community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology (which we refer to as 'mobile phones')

- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for each school community

- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

- Ensure staff read the Trust Acceptable Use of ICT policy and the Trust assures itself that this has taken place.

The 4 key categories of risk

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

Content – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation and extremism

Contact – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purpose

Conduct – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and

Commerce – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams

We have robust filtering and monitoring systems in place, to limit children's exposure to the 4 key categories of risk (described above) from the school's IT systems. This is provided via Computeam by a system called Securly, which has three core operating levels:

Securly Filter: is a cloud-based web filter which gives visibility of online activity, blocking inappropriate sites and enables school and Trust leaders to access reports and to be alerted to inappropriate activity.

Securly Aware: identifies at-risk students via their activity online and has student wellness algorithms which enable us to be alerted real-time to activity to provide early intervention.

Securly Respond: is the component of the system that allows the DSL to search for and review incidents linked to individual pupils, monitor inappropriate activity, and assign cases to a Deputy DSL for follow-up or further action.

8. Record-keeping

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded in writing.

Records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- The rationale behind the decisions made

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child using the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS).

Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.

Safeguarding records which contain information about allegations of sexual abuse will be retained for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry.

If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the school DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main pupil file.

To allow the new school/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this should be within:

- **5 school days** for an in-year transfer, or within
- **The first 5 school days** of the start of a new term

In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the school DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

9. Professional Development and Training

A programme of regular professional development and training is provided to Trustees and staff at every level. This ensures everyone has the knowledge and skills required to carry out their role and responsibilities safely and with confidence.

Across the Trust and its schools all staff are aware of the systems, policies and procedures used to support child protection and safeguarding. These are explained as part of staff induction and reviewed with all staff at the start of each academic year.

All staff training

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including on whistle-blowing procedures and online safety, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse or neglect.

This training will be regularly updated and will:

- Be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole-school safeguarding approach and wider staff training, and curriculum planning
- Be in line with advice from the three safeguarding partners who host our schools (Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull).
- Have regard to the Teachers' Standards to support the expectation that all teachers:
  - o Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe environment
  - o Have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including on online safety, as required but at least annually (for example, through emails, e-bulletins, bite size learning and staff meetings).

Our Trust Business Managers liaises with our external contractors to ensure that all staff allocated to our schools have been recruited in line with safeguarding expectations and receive regular safeguarding training.

Volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

The school DSL and Deputy DSL Training

The school DSL and deputies will undertake DSL child protection and safeguarding training at least every two years.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training.

Trustees and Local Academy Council members receive training about safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) at induction, which is regularly updated (at least annually). This is to make sure that they:

- Have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities, such as providing strategic challenge

- Can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support the Trust and schools to deliver a robust 'whole-school' approach to safeguarding

10. Recruitment

The Trust will follow Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and pay full regard to Safer Recruitment requirements including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that at least one person on the interview panel has undertaken safer recruitment training

- Verifying candidates' identity and academic or vocational qualifications

- Obtaining professional and character references

- Checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job

- Checking that candidates have the right to work in the UK

- Obtaining a clear enhanced DBS check

- Recording all evidence of these checks on the Single Central Record

- Conducting online checks as part of the recruitment process in accordance with KCSiE

- Ensure that the Children's Barred List Check is completed before an individual starts in regulated activity

- All recruitment materials will include reference to the Trust's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of pupils.

See the FET Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by The Director of Education/Trust DSL and Trust Safeguarding Lead. At every review, it will be approved by the Trustees.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Safer Recruitment and Selection

- Staff Code of Conduct

- Complaints

- Health and safety

- Equality

- Privacy notices

- Whistleblowing

- Acceptable use of IT

This Appendix is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Appendix 1: **Allegations made against staff**

Section 1: allegations that may meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a member of the central team Trust staff, staff in schools, supply 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-*transferable risk*

An allegation may initially be reported as a low-level concern. This may be part of a pattern of low level concerns that together are considered significant enough to meet the harm threshold.

If in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, we will consult the relevant, (Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell), local authority designated officer (LADO):

- Birmingham - 0121 675 1669 or email: ladoteam@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
- Sandwell - 0121 569 4770 or email sandwell_lado@sandwellchildrenstrust.org
- Solihull – 07795 128 638 or lado@solihull.gov.uk

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 Trust DSL where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

The CEO will act as the case manager for any allegations against the Trust DSL and will complete training in how to respond to allegations.

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/carers have been consulted

- Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school or other work within the Trust.

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the Trust HR Manager and the designated officer at the local authority, 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 or concerns

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 designated officer at the local authority. 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 designated officer – 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 designated officer 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 designated officer (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 designated officer, 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, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and make a risk assessment of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to children's social care

- **If immediate suspension is considered necessary**, 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 designated officer 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 Trust Employee Assistance Programme provides support such as welfare counselling or medical advice. Support may also be provided by trade union representatives, or a colleague.

- Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice

- Keep the parents or carers 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

We will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegations being made.

If the school 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.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the school 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), to seek guidance and coordinate the appropriate response and determine a suitable outcome
- Our Trust DSL 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 Trust 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 endeavor 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 Local Authority's Designated Officer 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 'Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA)' service 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 allegations

If a report is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL and Head Teacher will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the report is in need of help, or it 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 Trust 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 or carers 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 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, the rationale behind 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 local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the Trust'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 our local authority's 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.

Section 2: concerns that do not meet the harm threshold

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of Trust 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, 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 designated officer at the local authority

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

· 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 record in writing and share any low-level concerns

· Empowering staff to self-refer

· 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

· Providing annual safeguarding training which includes the definition and examples of low-level concerns, creating the space for open discussion and reiteration of reporting and recording procedures

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Trust representative/ headteacher 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

They will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the Trust'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 Trust DSL.

Reporting and record keeping

As part of the induction process, all staff will be informed of the designated person(s) to whom low-level concerns should be reported, as well as the procedures for recording such concerns in line with the Trust's safeguarding policy.

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing to support early identification and reduce the likelihood of escalation. 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 designated officer at the local authority

- 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 designated officer at the local authority 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