OneEducation
Putting children first

Dealing with Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Against People who work with Children

Guidance for Schools and Academies

September 2026

This model policy and procedure has been produced by One Education's HR and People service. The HR and People team provides management and HR support and advice to schools and academies purchasing their services under an agreed Service Agreement. For further information please contact the HR and People team via the Helpline: 0161 276 0153 or Email: hrpeople@oneeducation.co.uk Website: www.oneeducation.co.uk

This policy is recommended for adoption by all maintained schools including community, voluntary controlled, community special, maintained nursery, foundation, foundation special and voluntary aided schools. It is also recommended for adoption by academies and free schools (modified as appropriate and taking into account the particular circumstances of the relevant academy or free school). Some school or academy specific provisions are included. This policy should therefore be adapted as necessary and inappropriate provisions deleted. The HR and People team can assist in adapting this policy to fully reflect a school's status including their academy or multi academy trust (MAT) status.

References in this policy to schools include a reference to academies and free schools unless otherwise stated. References in this policy to the Headteacher include a reference to an academy or free school Principal and references to the governing body include references to governing boards and/or trust boards as applicable.

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Equality Statement: - Under the public sector equality duty (PSED), all schools/academies must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it and to foster good relations across all protected characteristics. This means schools/academies must take into account equality considerations when policies are being developed, adopted and implemented.

The One Education HR and People team regularly reviews all policies and procedures which are recommended to schools/academies to ensure compliance with education and employment legislation including the Equality Act 2010. Consultation with schools/academies is an important part of this review process. Headteachers, Principals and Governing Bodies are asked to contact the HR and People team via the HR and People Helpline if they believe there are any negative equality impacts in their school/academy in relation to the application of this policy/procedure.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This guidance is aimed at all Schools and Academies and takes into account the provisions of the Department for Education (DfE) statutory advice for schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (September 2026-Part four) and Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children March 2026.

1.2. This guidance will be used alongside the School's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Code of Conduct and the Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy.

1.3. The underlying principles of this guidance are:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Adults about whom there are concerns should be treated fairly and honestly and should be provided with appropriate support
- It is the responsibility of all adults to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This responsibility extends to a duty of care for those adults employed, commissioned, contracted or volunteering to work with children and young people.

2. SCOPE

2.1. This guidance applies to all employees, supply/agency staff, contractors, external consultants and volunteers including Governors.

2.2. This guidance sets out how the school will manage allegations and low-level concerns raised in relation to an individual that works with children. It provides guidance and information for staff, parents, carers and pupils regarding the investigation and management of allegations of abuse and low-level concerns.

2.3. This guidance applies to allegations and concerns raised within the school/setting and allegations and concerns made within an individual's private/personal life.

2.4. Allegations against a person who is no longer employed at the school, should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or the police. As a former employer there is an obligation that the school ensure allegations are dealt with appropriately and liaison and information sharing with relevant parties and agencies takes place.

2.5. We will promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

3. LEGISLATION / FRAMEWORK

3.1. This guidance takes account of the following legislation: -

- The Children Act 1989
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (local authorities, governing bodies of maintained schools and institutions in the further education sector)
- Section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010
- The Children Act 2004
- Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (other agencies)
- Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection regulation (GDPR)

4. CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS THAT MAY MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD (KCSIE Part Four, Section One)

4.1. Initial Response and Reporting

4.1.1. All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by a person working in school (including a supply teacher, trainee teacher, contractor, volunteer or governor) must be reported immediately and without delay to the Head teacher or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) following the schools reporting procedures. Complaints regarding the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

4.1.2. The person/s who has witnessed the incident or has had an allegation disclosed to them, will make an immediate record which should include as much detail as possible; for example, the time, date, place of incident and/or disclosure, persons present, what was witnessed, what was said etc. The account should be signed and dated.

4.1.3. The person subject to the allegation will not be approached at this stage unless it is necessary to address the immediate safety of children.

4.1.4. The Head Teacher or DSL may conduct basic enquiries to establish the facts and identify any key information, however formal interviews or further questioning of witnesses should not take place until LADO advice has been sought. This is important if police involvement is necessary as further questioning of witnesses may have a negative impact on the criminal case.

4.1.5. It may be necessary to contact the police immediately, and in advance of consultation with 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. Police reporting in these circumstances will not be delayed and the LADO will be notified as soon as practically possible.

4.2. Referral to the Designated Officer

4.2.1. When a concern is reported or an allegation is made that meets the criteria set out below, the Headteacher (or other relevant senior leadership team member) must make a referral to the LADO immediately and within 24 hours:

An individual 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 he or she 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.

4.2.2. The LADO has a statutory duty to ensure all allegations about safeguarding are handled properly and expeditiously. The Headteacher will seek advice from the LADO and also from the school's HR provider.

4.2.3. The LADO will liaise with the Headteacher or senior leader to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action. The LADO may require further relevant information such as employment history and whether similar or previous allegations have been made against the individual.

4.2.4. The LADO will determine whether the matter warrants immediate police involvement if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence.

4.2.5. The LADO will determine whether the matter warrants a referral to Children's Social Care if there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

4.2.6. The LADO will consider whether the information provided meets the threshold to hold a strategy/initial consideration meeting, at which the school would attend. The school's internal investigation will remain on hold pending this meeting.

4.3. Consideration of suspension from duty

4.3.1. Once the allegation or concern is known, the Headteacher will make a decision whether it is appropriate for the individual to remain in school. The Headteacher will seek advice from the LADO and their HR provider at the earliest opportunity when considering whether suspension from duty is appropriate. Any suspension will be conducted in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

4.3.2. Whilst suspension should not be the default position as a result of an allegation, the Headteacher must determine whether there is the potential risk of harm to a child/children or a risk of interference with ongoing investigations should the individual remain at the school. The Headteacher must assess whether the individual can be moved to an alternative position with a risk assessment in place as a reasonable alternative to suspension.

4.3.3. It may be appropriate to consider temporary alternative arrangements (such as working from home, paid leave of absence, a move to temporary duties, a change of work location or working in a more closely supervised environment) for a temporary period, until further information and/or advice is sought.

4.3.4. The Headteacher will seek HR advice before carrying out a suspension. Where suspension is appropriate the employee will receive written confirmation of this within one working day and will be informed of the reason for the suspension. This will be reviewed in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy.

4.3.5. The Headteacher will liaise with the school's HR Provider to agree the details of the allegations to be set out in the suspension letter taking into consideration any Local Authority or criminal investigations

4.4. Supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors and governors

4.4.1. Any allegation or concern raised against a supply member of staff, supply teacher, trainee teacher, contractor, volunteer or governor working at the school, will be dealt with in accordance with 4.1 and 4.2 above. The Headteacher will follow the same process in considering the allegation and liaison with the LADO, as well as informing other agencies as appropriate. The Headteacher will follow advice and requests from the LADO, which may include taking the lead in order to establish the facts.

4.4.2. The Headteacher will consider whether suspension of services is appropriate whilst an investigation ensues, and will liaise with the supply agency/contractor as appropriate.

4.4.3. Disciplinary procedures can only be instigated for employees of the school. Where the person is an agency worker or contractor, the school should liaise with their employer as appropriate, following advice from the LADO, HR. and police as necessary.

4.4.4. The same process will be followed when the school receive an allegation of an incident occurring while an individual or organisations was using the school premises to run activities for children.

4.5. Investigation/s

4.5.1. The LADO will invite relevant Local Authority officers, the police and the Headteacher (or a designated governor if the allegation is against the Headteacher) to the strategy meeting. The schools HR representative or other professional adviser may also attend the meeting with or on behalf of the school.

4.5.2. In the strategy meeting, the agencies involved will share all relevant information they hold about the person who is the subject of the allegation, and about the alleged victim. The LADO will agree the next steps with regards to the allegations, i.e., police investigation, Local Authority intervention or school action.

4.5.3. A full disciplinary investigation should not be started by the school until recommendations have been made by the LADO and other parties at the strategy meeting. To do so could potentially compromise investigations by the police or the Local Authority.

4.5.4. If after initial discussions with the LADO, or after an initial strategy meeting, it is decided that it is appropriate for the school to proceed with the matter under the school's disciplinary procedures, the school should take account of any recommendations from the LADO and/or strategy meeting and should liaise with the LADO as appropriate.

4.5.5. The internal school investigation should be carried out in accordance with the School's Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure.

4.6. Supporting Those Involved

The Employee

4.6.1. As the employer, the Governing Body/Board of Trustees has a duty of care to its employees and will aim to manage and minimise the stress caused by the allegation and any subsequent disciplinary process.

4.6.2. The person who is subject to investigation will be informed as soon as possible after an allegation has been made and the likely course of action, subject to guidance from the LADO and the police. If the police or children services are to be involved, they will be contacted before the employee to seek advice as to what information may be disclosed to the person under investigation.

4.6.3. A named representative will keep the employee informed of the progress of the case and any other work-related issues taking into consideration their well-being. The employee may need additional support and the school will consider what might be appropriate to best accommodate this support (e.g., access to welfare counselling or medical advice).

The Person(s) Who Makes the Allegation

4.6.4. The welfare of a child is paramount and this will be the prime concern in terms of investigating an allegation against a person in a position of trust.

4.6.5. Any child/children that makes an allegation against an adult will be offered support in school, ensuring specialist advice and guidance is obtained and acted upon where appropriate.

4.6.6. Where Children's Services and/or the police are involved, they may provide the school with advice on additional support the child may need as a result of the allegations.

4.6.7. Where an employee makes an allegation or raises a concern about an individual, they will be supported throughout the process, including the opportunity to access specialist support (e.g., access to welfare counselling or medical advice).

Parents and/or Carers

4.6.8. Parents and carers will be notified as soon as possible if their child makes or is involved in an allegation against an employee, contractor or volunteer if they are not already aware of it. However, if the police or children's services are involved in the case, advice will be sought from those agencies with regards to what information can be disclosed to the parents and carers.

4.6.9. Parents and carers will be kept informed of the progress of the case, only in relation to their child. No information can be shared in relation to the staff member. At stated in KCSIE page 112, point 469 (133) 'In deciding what information is disclosed, careful consideration should be given to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018, the law of confidence and, where relevant, the Human Rights Act 1998'.

4.6.10. Parents and carers will be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against an individual whilst investigations are ongoing.

4.7. Confidentiality

4.7.1. Every effort will be made to guard the privacy of all parties during and after any investigation into an allegation. It is in everyone's best interest to maintain this confidentiality to ensure a fair investigation with minimum impact for all parties.

4.7.2. Any breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may warrant its own investigation. It is a criminal offence to publish information that could lead to the identification of a member of staff who is subject to an allegation.

4.8. Resignations And 'Settlement Agreements'

4.8.1. If an employee resigns when/after an allegation that may meet the harm threshold has been made against them or during an investigation, the investigation will continue until an outcome has been reached, with or without the employee's cooperation. The employee will be given full opportunity to answer the allegation(s). Settlement Agreements will not be used in situations which are relevant to these procedures as set out in KCSIE page 115, point 489.

4.9. Record Keeping

4.9.1. Clear records of the allegation/s, investigations and outcomes will be kept securely in accordance with data protection regulations and school procedures for employees. The records will be kept, including for people who leave the organisation at least until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation, if that is longer.

4.9.2. If, after investigation an allegation is found to be malicious or false, it will be removed from the record of the employee concerned, unless the individual consents for the record to be retained on file.

4.9.3. Details of any allegation made by a pupil will be kept in the confidential section of their record.

4.9.4. Records must not be kept for those who are not employees. Any details relating to allegations for others must be set to their employer.

4.10. References

4.10.1. Substantiated safeguarding allegations that meet the harm threshold should be included in references, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions. The Headteacher may seek HR advice prior to the completion of any employment reference.

4.10.2. Allegations which are/were found to be unfounded, malicious, unsubstantiated or false should not be included in employer references.

4.11. Action Following a Criminal Investigation or Prosecution

4.11.1. The police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should inform the school and LADO immediately when a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete, or if it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or not to prosecute after the person has been charged.

4.11.2. In those circumstances the LADO should discuss with the Headteacher whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and if so how to proceed. The school will also seek advice from their HR provider in these circumstances.

4.11.3. In cases where criminal action is not taken (i.e. charge or prosecution), this does not prevent the school from taking disciplinary action in accordance with the disciplinary policy if deemed appropriate.

4.12. Action on Conclusion of a Case

4.12.1. Where an allegation(s) against an employee is/are substantiated, it may be necessary to make a referral to the appropriate Statutory Regulatory Authority.

4.12.2. Schools are legally required to refer cases to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in cases where an individual is removed from regulated activity (or would have been removed had they not left) and they believe the individual has:

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or adult's, and/or
- satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, and/or
- been cautioned or convicted of a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence.

4.12.3. Where an individual is dismissed in the above circumstances or would have been dismissed had he/she not resigned, retired, been made redundant or transferred to a post not involving a regulated activity, and where the circumstances of the case meet the relevant thresholds, the details of the case must be referred to the DBS, for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred list is required.

4.12.4. Where a teacher is dismissed for serious misconduct or their services are ceased, consideration must be given as to whether a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), which will consider whether a prohibition order, is appropriate. Referral also applies where a teacher would have been dismissed (on the basis of evidence gathered in the investigation) had they not resigned, retired, or otherwise left their post.

4.12.5. The school's HR provider will support the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors in the case of a Headteacher) with the above referrals.

4.13. Action in the Case of a False or Malicious Allegation

4.13.1. Where an allegation is made by a child and is proven to be false or malicious, the Headteacher will consider the appropriate next steps and may refer to Children's Services to determine whether the child requires support. The school's behaviour policy sets out the disciplinary action that may be taken against pupils who are found to have made malicious accusations against school staff. The Headteacher may consult the school governors when considering action to take.

4.13.2. Where an allegation is made by an employee and is proven to be false or malicious, the Headteacher will consider any further action that may be appropriate including training, support and/or disciplinary action.

4.13.3. Where an allegation is made by an adult and is proven to be malicious, the school will pass the information to the police who may take further action against that person.

4.13.4. Where an allegation is made against an employee and proven to be malicious, the school will provide further support to the employee as required.

4.14. Follow Up Action

4.14.1. No matter what the outcome is of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff, the school will review the case to see if there are any improvements that can be made in its practice or policy that may help it deal with cases in the future.

5. LOW LEVEL CONCERNS Part four KCSIE Section two

5.1. Recognising Low Level Concerns

5.1.1. Low level concerns are defined in KCSIE as 'any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college 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 harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO

5.2. Sharing Low Level Concerns

5.2.1. All staff must share any and all concerns they have about adults working in, or on behalf of the school.

5.2.2. It is critical that staff understand their role in recognising and reporting low level concerns to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the school's values and expected behaviour set out in the staff code of conduct are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff. 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 without delay
- 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
- Identifying and acting upon any weakness in the school's safeguarding system
- Follow up any actions necessary including training needs and review any behavior concerns.

5.2.3. All low-level concerns should be reported to the Head Teacher or DSL. Concerns about the Head Teacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors. The procedure for reporting low-level concerns is consistent with that for reporting allegations outlined in 4.1 of this policy.

5.2.4. Staff do not need to determine whether their concern meets the threshold set out in 4.2.1 or is a low-level concern. This will be determined by the Head Teacher, DSL or Chair of Governors as appropriate once the issue is reported.

5.2.5. If there is any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about an adult as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, the Head Teacher will consult with the LADO.

5.3. Responding to low level concerns

5.3.1. The Head Teacher or senior leader, will review the concern to confirm that it is not a more serious issue that should be dealt with as an allegation. An issue reported as a low-level concern would be dealt with as an allegation where it meets the threshold set out in 4.2.1 or there is a pattern of low-level concerns expressed about the individual or wider staff practices generally. If necessary, the concern will be discussed with the LADO to determine whether it meets the harm threshold and should be dealt with as an allegation.

5.3.2. The Head Teacher or senior leader, will discuss the concern with the individual who raised it and will investigate it as appropriate. If the concern has been raised via a third party, evidence will be collected by speaking directly to the person who raised the concern, the individual involved and any witnesses.

5.3.3. Most low-level concerns are likely to be minor and can be dealt with by means of management support or additional training. Where necessary, action may be taken in accordance with the Disciplinary policy.

5.3.4. Where a low-level concern is raised about a member of supply staff or a contractor, the concern will be shared with supply agency so that they can take appropriate steps in accordance with their own policies and statutory guidance.

5.4. Recording low level concerns

5.4.1. All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing and will include details of the concern, the context and action taken; to include the date the behaviour has been reviewed any further actions. The records will be kept confidential and held securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

5.4.2. Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. If patterns are identified, the Head Teacher will decide on an appropriate course of action, and will refer the matter to the LADO where the behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the threshold for an allegation set out in 4.2.1 this policy.

5.4.3. The record of the low-level concern will be kept at least until the person leaves the school.

5.5. References

5.5.1. Low-level concerns should not be included in references unless:

- they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance.
- low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

6.1. For further information please see: -

- Department of Education statutory guidance - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), September 2026 Part Four: Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors.