



St Winefride's Catholic Primary School

Allegations against School Staff, Volunteers, Another Pupil or the Head Teacher Policy

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Another Pupil or the Head Teacher Policy

CONTENTS

Mission Statement and Introduction	3
1. Keeping Children Safe	4
2. Initial Allegation Made To The School	4
3. Initial Consideration	4
4. Action Following Initial Consideration	5
5. Case Subject to Police Investigation	6
6. Supporting Those Involved	6
7. Resignations and 'Compromise Agreements'	7
8. Record Keeping	7
9. Peer on Peer Abuse	8
10. References	8
11. Monitoring and Review	9
Appendix 1 – Categories of Abuse	10

Mission Statement

St Winefride's is a Catholic Primary School where our mission statement underpins every aspect of school life.

We celebrate God's love for everyone. We enjoy learning and growing together in our caring and welcoming family.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."

Matthew 19:14

Introduction

St Winefride's takes very seriously its duty towards all its pupils who have been entrusted to its care and seeks to provide a school environment where all children are safe, secure, valued, respected, and listened to.

St Winefride's understand that our work in safeguarding and protecting children must always have regard for the national guidance issued by the Secretary of State and should be in line with local guidance and procedures.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2016)
- Working together to safeguard children (DfE)
- Policies relating to Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour for Learning Policy

Our procedures will be followed by all adults, including volunteers, working with or on behalf of the school.

This policy is available to all parents either in hard copy or from our website:
http://www.st-winefrides.newham.sch.uk/sch_policies.html

1. Keeping Children Safe

- 1.1 We recognise that any possibility that a member of staff may have hurt a student must be investigated thoroughly, but should be done so in a way that does not prejudice either the student or the member of staff.
- 1.2 Any investigation of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff must follow the objective, professional standards and routines described here.
- 1.3 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:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-saferrecruitment-in-education/safeguarding-children-and-safer-recruitment-in-education>
- 1.4 The framework for managing cases of allegations of abuse against people who work with children is set out in:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachmentdata/file/419595/WorkingTogethertoSafeguardchildren.pdf>

2. Initial Allegation Made to the School

- 2.1. Any allegation of abuse of a pupil by a teacher, member of school staff or volunteer must be reported to the Headteacher.
- 2.2. 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 Headteacher or, if that is not possible, to pass details of the allegation to the Headteacher immediately.
- 2.3. Should the allegation be made against the Headteacher then this should be brought to the attention of the Chair of Governors immediately.
- 2.4. Should the allegation meet any of the following criteria then the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) 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:
 - 2.4.1 Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed the child or;
 - 2.4.2 Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or;
 - 2.4.3 Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.

3. Initial Consideration

- 3.1 The DSL will discuss the matter with the "local authority designated officer" (LADO) and provide any further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made.
- 3.2 The contact details are:

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – 020 3373 3803, Nick Pratt
- 3.3 The DSL should not investigate the allegation at this stage.
- 3.4 The discussion will also consider whether there is evidence or information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded.
- 3.5 **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 the children's social care and ask for a strategy discussion in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children to be convened straight away.
- 3.6 In those circumstances the strategy discussion should include the local authority designated officer and the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, depending on the allegation.
- 3.7 **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.

4. Action Following Initial Consideration

Where the initial consideration decides that the allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence it will be for the Headteacher to deal with it in consultation with School Governors (usually the Governors with responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection).

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 Headteacher and the School Governors should discuss who will undertake this with the local authority designated officer.

The investigating officer should aim to provide a report to the employer within 10 working days or what is reasonable in the circumstances. 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 Headteacher 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.

5. 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 Court, the police should wherever possible aim to pass all information they have which may be relevant to a disciplinary case to the Headteacher within three working days of the decision. In those circumstances the Headteacher 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 Headteacher should request this information.

6. 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.

7. 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 it.

8. 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.

9. Peer on peer abuse

Peer on peer abuse is when a child might have been abused by another child.

There is no clear boundary between incidents that should be regarded as abusive and incidents that are more properly dealt with as bullying, sexual experimentation etc. This is a matter of professional judgement.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. However, any concern must be referred to the DSL particularly if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

What to do if you are concerned.

If a child makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against another child or young person, it is important that you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else.
- Do not promise to keep what they have told you a secret.
- Inform your Senior Designated Person as soon as possible
- Make a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident which you must sign, date and record your position.

10. 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.

11. Monitoring and Review

Our Policy was adopted on 6th February 2017 and is reviewed biannually by the Governors of our school, the Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It will be reviewed on 6th February 2019.

Signed:



Tony Fernandes
Chair of Governors



Paul Underwood
Headteacher



Sheila Britton
DSL

Date: 6th February 2017

Review date: 6th February 2019

Appendix 1

Categories of abuse.

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.