

HORIZONS EDUCATION TRUST

Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy;
Including low-level concerns

March 2025

POLICY ISSUE CONTROL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The word 'parent' is used throughout to refer to, 'parent, carer or guardian'.

- 1.1 This document sets out Horizons Education Trust (HEdT) procedure for managing allegations of abuse made against any member of staff, supply staff or volunteers. It should be followed wherever an allegation of abuse is made, and it should be noted that that a member of staff could be subject to an allegation even if they have not harmed a child or intended to harm a child. It is sufficient that the staff member's conduct could pose a risk to the child.
- 1.2 We are committed to ensuring that HEdT is a place where the best people actively join and stay working with us. Part of our commitment involves supporting our people in a range of ways. We recognise that sometimes allegations are made against staff and that these can cause concern and anxiety. This policy is intended to support people when these circumstances arise, through handling issues both sensitively and in a timely way to minimise this anxiety.
- 1.3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. This policy is part of a suite of policies aimed at protecting children from harm.
- 1.4 This procedure applies to all adults working in or for HEdT, and volunteers, including governors and trustees.

2.0 AIMS

- 2.1 To set out the procedure for managing allegations of abuse in compliance with statutory requirements and to set out the support available to staff and volunteers who may be the subject of an allegation of abuse.

3.0 PURPOSES

- 3.1 The framework for managing cases of allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff is set out in the statutory guidance [‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ \(September 2024 KCSIE\)](#).
- 3.2 This procedure should be read alongside the statutory guidance KCSIE September 2024 Part 4 and the [HEdT Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy](#). This guidance should be followed where it is alleged that anyone working in the academy that provides education including supply teachers and volunteers has:
- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
 - Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or to a particular child.
 - Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
- 3.3 This guidance relates to members of academy staff, supply staff and volunteers who are currently working at the academy, regardless of whether the academy site is where the alleged abuse took place.
- 3.4 Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police.
- 3.5 An allegation may arise from a number of sources:
- A report from a child victim
 - A concern raised by another child/adult in the academy/organisation/agency
 - A concern raised by a parent
 - A member of the public
- 3.6 It is essential that any safeguarding issue, concern or allegation is dealt with very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time support the person who is the subject of the concern or allegation.

3.7 Supply Staff Allegations

- 3.7.1 You may have to consider an allegation when the individual is not directly employed by the academy and the disciplinary procedures do not fully apply. The academy must ensure the allegations are dealt with properly and in no circumstances should an academy decide to cease the use of a supply staff member due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the local authority designated officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome.
- 3.7.2 The supply agency must be informed immediately of any concerns.

3.7.3 As part of a service level agreement HEdT and/or the academy, will inform any agency of its process for managing allegations and keep them up to date with information about the relevant policies and procedures.

4.0 MANAGING AN ALLEGATION

4.1 In the first instance, whenever an allegation is made against a member of staff, supply staff or volunteer that meets any of the above criteria, the headteacher must be informed immediately. The headteacher will decide who the case manager will be.

4.2 Initial consideration of the allegation by the case manager

4.2.1 The procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and professional judgement ensuring effective protection for the child whilst supporting the person who is the subject of the allegation.

4.2.2 The case manager will keep the matter as confidential as possible but will consult with the designated safeguarding lead to ensure they have all the potentially relevant information about the child and that appropriate records of the case are kept both on the child and the staff member's file.

4.2.3 The case manager will refer to previous staff conduct records to establish any potential patterns of behaviour, prior to discussions with the designated officer (see below).

4.2.4 The case manager should **not** investigate the allegation at this stage but should conduct an initial fact find exercise. This should be done as quickly as possible after receiving the allegation, preferably on the same day.

4.3 Once the initial fact find has been completed, the case manager should inform and consult with the headteacher and/or Trust Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and Director of Operations to consider whether the harm threshold has been met. Advice from the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance should be sought prior to seeking advice from LADO.

4.4 Confidentiality must be maintained, and only a limited amount of people informed as appropriate.

4.5 If, after the initial fact find and consultation, the allegation is deemed to have met the harm threshold, the Headteacher, in agreeance with The Director of Safeguarding and Attendance will make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Advice may also be sought from social care and the police as required.

4.6 The Director of Operations should be informed as part of the process, so that they can provide HR advice if an allegation:

- Could result in suspension, a discussion about the alternatives must take place with HR before suspending any employee.
- Could result in, or has resulted in, a strategic case meeting being called by a Designated Officer.
- Relates to a member of staff and, without prejudice to the case, the headteacher judges that it may result in disciplinary action being taken.

- 4.7 Where a safeguarding concern or allegation triggers another procedure such as a grievance or disciplinary, the school should refer to the appropriate policy and contact the Director of Operations who will provide HR advice.
- 4.8 If an allegation requires immediate attention, but is received outside of normal office hours, the headteacher should consult Children's Social Care emergency duty team or the Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) via local police. The headteacher should also inform relevant people within the Trust as soon as possible following this action.
- 4.9 Please refer to the following flowchart on the next page which sets out a summary of the overall procedure to be followed.

Allegation Procedure Flowchart

Headteacher is informed of the allegation.

If the allegation relates to the Headteacher, the CEO is informed by the person raising the concern.

- Headteacher to complete initial fact find.
- Do not investigate further.
- Consider if the allegation meets harms threshold, below.
- Inform and seek advice/support from Director of Safeguarding and Attendance

Headteacher with the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance to assess - has the person

- 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 or to a particular child and or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Any judgement must be made in the best interests of the child and compliant with KCSIE 2024.

Yes/undecided

Headteacher/ Director of Safeguarding and Attendance to further discuss with LADO, then inform and share advice received with Director of Operations, Director of Education and/or CEO as appropriate.

Headteacher to complete 'LADO referral form.

Recording

Allegation against staff other than Headteacher: Headteacher to record allegation, actions taken and reasons for actions- Information to be kept in individual staff file.

Allegation against headteacher: Director of Safeguarding and Attendance to record actions taken and reasons for actions-. Information to be kept in headteacher's staff file by Trust HR.

Further actions as required

No

Staff member informed

Headteacher/ to determine if any further action or support is needed, including parental contact.

Recording

Allegation against staff other than Headteacher: Headteacher to record allegation, actions taken and reasons for actions. Information to be kept in individual staff file.

Allegation against Headteacher:

Director of Safeguarding to record allegation, actions taken and reasons for actions Information to be kept in headteacher's staff file by Trust HR

4.10 Conducting a fact-finding exercise.

4.10.1 After a discussion with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the case manager may be advised to undertake further and more detailed fact-finding and:

- Obtain written details of the concern/allegation
- Countersign and date the written details
- Record any information about times, dates and location of alleged incident(s) and names of any potential witnesses.
- Make a record of any discussion about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions.
- If more information is required than the initial disclosure, the headteacher may obtain any additional information which may be relevant such as previous history, risk assessments, whether the child or their family have made similar allegations and the individual's current contact with children.

4.11 Possible outcomes of the fact-finding investigation

4.11.1 Following the fact-finding exercise, one or more of the outcomes may be applicable.

- The child is alleged to have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm - **this requires an immediate referral to social care.**
- A criminal offence is alleged - **this requires referral to the police.**
- The allegation relates to poor or inappropriate behaviour and requires an investigation to be completed. The Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and Director of Operations should be notified. In addition, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed to ensure staff/child support/external referral (as necessary).
 - The allegation is clearly and demonstrably without foundation and no further action is required.
- Where it is clear that an investigation by the police or Local Authority children's social care is unnecessary, or the strategy discussion or initial evaluation decides that is the case, in those circumstances the options open to the academy are dependent on the nature and circumstances of the allegation and the evidence and information available. The academy should refer to the Trust Disciplinary Policy as appropriate.
- At all stages keep the Director of Safeguarding and where appropriate, the LADO informed.

4.11.2 Where a child is alleged to have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm or a criminal offence is alleged, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will arrange a strategy meeting

4.12 If a crime has been committed

4.12.1 If a crime has been committed, and there is no reason to suspect significant harm, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will immediately inform the police and organise a strategy discussion to decide if a police investigation is needed.

4.12.2 If the member of staff is not charged, the headteacher and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will decide how to handle the case. If a charge is necessary, the police will inform the member of staff. The Director of Safeguarding and Attendance will be kept informed at all stages, and will update the CEO.

4.13 Police Involvement

4.13.1 If the case manager deems that the accused is an **immediate risk to children** or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence, they may consider it necessary to involve the police before consulting the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance or Local Authority Designated officer (LADO). In such cases, the case manager will notify the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance or CEO and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police.

4.13.2 Where there is no evidence of immediate risk or a criminal offence the case manager should discuss the allegations with the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance. A fact find will take place to determine if it is necessary to make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in order to help determine whether police involvement is necessary.

4.13.3 All allegations of historical abuse, or allegations about a teacher who is no longer teaching must be referred to the police and Local Authority Designated Officer if appropriate. Discussion with Director of Safeguarding and Attendance should take place prior to a referral.

4.13.4 Wherever possible when the police are involved, the case manager 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.

4.14 Strategy discussions/meetings

4.14.1 The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will convene the meeting with any other relevant people, such as the headteacher, social care, police, the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and the Director of Operations. The staff member against whom the allegations is made against should not attend. The general purpose of the meeting is to consider evidence and discuss next steps. It will be convened within one working day of the referral being made and chaired by the Designated Officer (LADO)

4.14.2 The CEO should be invited if matter relates to a headteacher.

4.14.3 The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will send out a letter inviting attendees to the meeting, detailing what will be discussed. At the end of the strategy meeting, it will be agreed how and who will inform the staff member of the outcome.

4.14.4 Subsequent strategy meetings will be held fortnightly, or at a minimum, monthly, to review progress. Each strategy discussion outcome will depend on the facts of the matter and the particular agencies which may be involved.

4.14.5 Important note: where there is an allegation of harm or a crime has been committed, please also refer to sections 8 and 9 below.

4.14.6 The strategy meeting will be conducted in accordance with local Safeguarding Children Partnership protocols.

4.14.7 The purpose of the strategy meeting is to:

4.14.8 Consider the risk to the child and other children.

4.14.9 Share all relevant information about the person who is the subject of the allegation and about the alleged victim.

4.14.10 Determine the need for investigation and by whom.

4.14.11 Plan the investigation/enquiries and set timescales for tasks to be undertaken.

4.14.12 Consider whether any other children are affected by the allegations e.g., the person's own children, grandchildren, or other children in the agency setting such as children placed with foster carers, childminders, or youth clubs.

4.14.13 Ensure that the person who is the subject of the allegation is kept informed and supported.

4.14.14 Decide how regular information and support will be provided to the child and family and by whom.

4.14.15 Plan all interviews and agree who should undertake them so that there is no confusion between a criminal investigation and disciplinary processes.

4.14.16 Consider the need to inform relevant parties.

4.14.17 Jointly consider how to manage any media interest.

4.14.18 Consider whether the circumstances require the person who is subject to the allegation to be suspended from contact with children; this may change as the investigation progresses and should be reviewed regularly.

4.14.19 Consider the appropriate course of action if the allegation is against a governor, a temporary member of staff or a supply teacher.

4.14.20 The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome 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.
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

4.14.21 If at the strategy meeting it is decided that the allegation relates to poor or inappropriate behaviour the matter will be referred back to the academy to manage under the relevant employment policies.

4.15 Investigation Stage

4.15.1 The direct line manager or headteacher should liaise with the Director Safeguarding and Attendance and Director of Operations in an HR capacity to ensure procedures are followed and the staff member against whom the allegation is made is fully supported.

4.15.2 Guidance on considerations of allegations and advice regarding investigation procedures must be requested from the Director of Operations in an HR capacity, who will liaise with HEDT's external HR partner.

4.16 Suspension during an investigation

4.16.1 The headteacher must discuss any potential suspension with the Director of Operations and Director of Safeguarding and Attendance prior to acting. See Appendix 2 for more information on suspension and the risk assessment.

4.16.2 If the allegation is regarding a headteacher or a member of the executive team, the CEO must be informed immediately.

4.16.3 If the allegation is regarding the CEO, the Chair of Trustees should be informed immediately.

4.16.4 At the conclusion of the investigation the possible outcomes are as follows:

- No further action
- Management Advice
- Disciplinary hearing where an outcomes can include
 - Staged warnings
 - Dismissal

4.17 False, unfounded or malicious allegations

4.17.1 If an allegation, made by a child is proved to be false and/or malicious, action should be taken to determine whether the person who made the allegation is in need of services or may have been abused by someone else.

4.17.2 In the case of a deliberate invention or a malicious allegation, the case manager should consider talking appropriate action in consultation with the Executive Team.

4.17.3 If it is clear to the case manager, The Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) that the allegation is demonstrably false or unfounded the member of staff should be informed orally and in writing of the allegation, that it is without foundation and that no further action will be taken.

4.17.4 Where appropriate, and if requested, support should be offered to the member of staff, which could include occupational health and counselling services.

- 4.17.5 If an allegation made by a member of staff is proved to be false and/or malicious, an investigation should take place in accordance with the trust's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. The police may also consider taking action against the individual making the allegation.
- 4.17.6 If an allegation made by a member of the public is shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the case manager will consider whether the police should be asked to consider if action against those who made the allegation might be appropriate.
- 4.17.7 If it is clear an allegation is false and/or unfounded, the accused staff member will be informed orally and in writing that no further action will be taken. Details of allegations that are found to have been malicious should be removed from personnel records.

5.0 INFORMING THE INDIVIDUAL & OTHERS

- 5.1 The headteacher should inform the member of staff against whom the allegation has been made against, about the allegation as soon as possible after consulting the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- 5.2 The headteacher and Director of Safeguarding and Attendance will discuss with the Designated Officer (LADO) at the initial consideration stage, as to how to inform parents of the allegation.
- 5.3 If the case does not progress to a criminal prosecution and is dealt with through an internal process/policy the parents will be notified of this, but due to confidentiality will not be given any information with regard to the outcome of any internal investigation.

6.0 A REFERRAL TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IS REQUIRED

6.1 A referral is required:

- If a child has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant or serious harm.
- A child alleges a criminal offence has been committed.
- Where there is an allegation of a sexual nature

6.2 These referrals are managed in accordance with referral processes and thresholds established by the local safeguarding partners.

6.3 The headteacher will liaise with the DSL when a referral to social care and or external body is required.

7.0 RECORD KEEPING AND INFORMATION SHARING

7.1 Records

- 7.1.1 The headteacher will record details of all allegations and low-level concerns
- 7.1.2 The headteacher must ensure that there is a secure system for record keeping of all allegations and concerns which includes both individual case records and an overview of cases over time in order to determine trends/patterns of behaviours.
- 7.1.3 Access to individual records of cases should be kept to a minimum i.e., Headteacher, school HR.
- 7.1.4 A copy of an individual's case record should be kept in that individual member of staff's HR file in a separate, confidential area within the file. (i.e., a sealed envelope)
- 7.1.5 Records should be completed as soon as possible after the allegation or concern is raised and be comprehensive.
- 7.1.6 This includes:
- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
 - Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
 - A note of any action taken
 - Decisions reached and rationale for those decisions
 - Outcome (i.e., substantiated/malicious/false/unsubstantiated/unfounded)
 - Any sanctions
 - Any other relevant paperwork pertaining to the case
- 7.1.7 Even if no police or disciplinary action is taken, a record will be kept of any allegation.
- 7.1.8 Any information or referral forms submitted to the Local Authority Designated Officer or investigation agencies should be kept on file.
- 7.1.9 A copy should be provided to the person concerned, where agreed by children's social care or the police and a declaration as to whether the information will be referred to in any future reference.
- 7.1.10 Cases in which an allegation was found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious will not be included in employer references. Any repeated concerns which are found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious should also not be included in employer references.

7.2 Malicious or false allegations

- 7.2.1 If an allegation is found to be malicious or false all records must be removed from personnel files, unless the individual gives their consent for retention of the information.

7.3 Information sharing: need to know basis

7.3.1 Other staff will only be informed on a 'need to know' basis. Notification may be delayed if the police believe it could prejudice an investigation. Those who will be told are likely to include:

- Staff member
- Child concerned and their parent(s)
- Designated safeguarding lead (if appropriate)
- Individual making the allegation (that the concern is being dealt with)
- Headteacher
- Director of Safeguarding and Attendance
- Director of Operations (HR)
- CEO
- Local Authority Designated Officer and investigating agencies where applicable

8.0 SUPPORTING THOSE INVOLVED

- 8.1 The trust and the academies each have a duty of care to their staff, supply staff and volunteers. Failure by any staff member to keep the matter confidential would be considered under the disciplinary policy.
- 8.2 The academy will support the individual, and other members of staff, if necessary, throughout the allegation process and will do all it can to manage and minimise stress.
- 8.3 If the individual is external to the academy, contact will be made with the relevant agency or service provider.
- 8.4 Information will be provided to the individual as soon as possible in line with the guidance set out in this procedure and throughout the allegation process. A named representative, not the Investigating Officer, will be appointed to keep the individual informed of the progress of the allegation.
- 8.5 The member of staff or supply staff may wish to contact their Trade Union Representative, if they have one, or a colleague for support. Staff should be provided with the contact details for the free Employee Assistance Programme, Medigold.
- 8.6 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. The staff member should, however, be advised not to discuss the case with any staff members.

9.0 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

9.1 The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year and is accessible by phone. The service offers assistance with any work, personal or family issue and includes professional consultation, access to face-to-face counselling (up to six sessions), information, resources and referrals to local services. EAP can be accessed, in the following way:

9.2 EAP HELPLINES

Free and confidential advice when you need it the most.

For professional advice on legal, tax and health and medical issues, call our dedicated helpline on 08000 856 148.

For our confidential counselling service, covering concerns including stress, depression, health, relationships and bereavement, call 08000 856 148

Should medical advice and guidance be required, this can be arranged through the Horizons Education Trust Director of Operations.

10.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

10.1 It is extremely important that when an allegation is made, the academy makes every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. The academy should take advice from the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and Director of Operations if needed and must consider:

- Who needs to know and, importantly, exactly what information can be shared?
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip.
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation; and
- How to manage press interest, if and when it should arise.

11.0 REQUIREMENT TO REFER DBS/TRA

- 11.1 If an allegation is founded, the latest iteration of Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance should be consulted in conjunction with the Horizons Education Trust Disciplinary policy.

12.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 12.1 If there is a substantiated allegation against a member of staff, the headteacher, Directors and academy DSL will work with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to identify any changes, lessons learnt and improvements which could be made to help prevent similar events in the future.

APPENDIX 1

Useful contact details

Director of Safeguarding & Attendance	Stephanie Morley SMorley@horizons.org.uk
Director of Operations	Jon James Panther JPanther@horizons.org.uk

External Contact Details

Designated Officer (LADO)	LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: 01223 727967
Children's Social Care Daytime Out of hours	During office hours (9.00am – 5.00pm) contact Cambridgeshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) details and information can be found here: Safeguarding children and child protection Cambridgeshire County Council Out of office hours (evenings, weekends and bank holidays) call the Duty Team on: 01733 234724
DBS	DBS - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Making barring referrals to the DBS - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - Intro page Making barring referrals to the DBS - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - Form
TRA	Teacher misconduct - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Teacher misconduct: referral form - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
NSPCC	NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk) Whistle Blowing www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting- abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/
Mental health support	For mental health crisis, contact the First Response Service by dialling 111 and choosing option 2

APPENDIX 2

Suspension guidance

The possible risk of harm to children posed by an accused person should be evaluated and managed in respect of the child involved in the allegations.

The case manager should consider the potential permanent professional reputational damage to employees that can result from suspension where an allegation is later found to be unsubstantiated or maliciously intended.

Suspension will not be an automatic response. All options to avoid suspension will be considered.

If immediate suspension is considered necessary, the rationale and justification should be agreed and recorded by the case manager. A suspension risk assessment should be completed. This should include what alternatives to suspension were considered and why they were rejected.

Please refer to Trust Disciplinary Policy

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 meet the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment, and parents have been consulted.

Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative academy.

Written confirmation of the suspension, a named contact and their contact details will be provided to the individual facing suspension, Director of Operations will provide the template letter for the school.

Local authority children's social care services or the police cannot require the school to suspend a member of staff or a volunteer, although the school should give appropriate weight to their advice.

The power to suspend is vested in the headteacher or the Trust who are the employers of staff at the school. However, where a strategy discussion or initial evaluation concludes that there should be enquiries by the local authority children's social care services and/or an investigation by the police, the designated officer should canvass police and the local authority children's social care services for views about whether the accused member of staff needs to be suspended from contact with children to inform the academy consideration of suspension.

A risk assessment should be carried out for each individual case to determine whether the member of staff should be suspended. The assessment should take into account the context of the allegation, background information in relation to the member of staff, and any outcome following the strategy meeting. It should also take into account whether a temporary transfer or period of paid leave is appropriate as an alternative to suspension. The assessment must be recorded, and a copy kept on file and be available to take to any strategy meeting.

Suspension Assessment

Name of Employee	Job Title	Date
School name	Headteacher name	

Part 1: Suspension should only be considered if one or more of the following apply:

Question	Yes	No	Notes/Considerations
If there is a strong likelihood that if the allegations are substantiated, then the matter will amount to gross misconduct?			
Is there a threat or risk of harm to employees?			
Is it possible to fully investigate the allegation if the employee remains at work (e.g., is the employee likely to destroy evidence or attempt to influence/intimidate witnesses?)			
Have relationships at work broken down?			
Is there likely to be a detrimental effect on the employer/school if the employee remains in work or continues to interact with children, parents, or employees?			
Is there a risk of harm to a child or, is the allegation related to safeguarding?			If the answer is yes – please refer to Part 2 of the assessment below, which provides a table for completion with additional considerations in respect of allegations of abuse.
If the answer is yes to any of the above questions, please complete Part 3			

Part 2: Safeguarding

Additional considerations for allegations of abuse made against an employee

Please refer to the latest iteration of DfE Statutory Guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education Part Four.

Information About the Allegation	Notes/Considerations
Nature of the allegation Duration and frequency of allegation Extent of pre-meditation Degree and nature of alleged harm or risk to children	
Information About the Employee	
Previous concerns Previous allegations Disciplinary record Length of service Contact with child (s) concerned	
Health and Safety	
Potential risks to the person's health and safety should they remain in the school (impact of threats from parents/carers/potential press interest etc.)	

Part 3: Alternatives to suspension and a record of the decision

Alternatives to suspension:
Explore and assess any alternatives, e.g., redeployment, supervision, working from home, etc.
Views of those Concerned:
(e.g., Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Designated Officer/HR Adviser etc.)

Decision to suspend:
Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> No: <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
If the decision is to suspend, record your grounds for suspension:
The employee will need to be notified of the reason(s) for suspension in writing.

Name and job title of person responsible for the decision:	
Name and job title of person completing assessment:	
(If applicable) Name of person responsible for communicating decision to suspend the employee: This should be communicated in writing as soon as practicable. Please refer to the template suspension letter available from HR	
Name and job title of person nominated to keep suspension under review:	

APPENDIX 3

LADO Notification

Allegation against a member of staff other than a headteacher.

Headteacher - please complete when a referral to LADO is made
 This record will be held centrally by HR

Date	Academy
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LADO Notification

Allegation against a Headteacher

CEO - please complete when a referral to LADO is made
 This record will be held centrally by Trust HR

Date	Academy
CEO	

APPENDIX 4

THS LADO Outcome Form

The purpose of this form is to ensure the school has an overview of referrals to LADO and the outcomes of any investigations.

This form will be kept in a centrally held secure area.

Only the CEO, headteacher, Director of Safeguarding and Attendance, and Director of Operations will have access to this information.

Any data reported to the trustees or executive will not identify individuals

Please complete this form once the case is concluded

Name of the referrer

Date of referral

Name and role of person referred

Horizons Education Trust employee/ agency staff Y/N

Outcome of investigation (please see latest iteration of KCSIE)

Substantiated

Malicious

False

Unsubstantiated

Unfounded

PART 2: Low-Level Concerns

Low Level Concerns

This section of the Allegations Against Staff policy is based upon the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', the expectations within 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Those Working with Children and Young People in Education Settings Feb 2022'.

These documents are referenced throughout.

Creating a culture in which *all* concerns about adults (including allegations that **do not** meet the harm threshold) are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately, is crucial.

If implemented well, this should encourage an open and transparent culture; enabling our academies to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of a trust academy are clear about professional boundaries and act within them, in accordance with the ethos and values of HEdT.

Behaviour which is not consistent with the standards and values of an academy, and which does not meet the academy's expectations encapsulated in the trust staff code of conduct, needs to be addressed.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum – from the inadvertent or thoughtless, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. Where a concern about an individual's behaviour meets the threshold of an allegation, clear guidance exists to respond to these concerns.

It is important to recognise that, in practice, the words 'allegation' and 'concern' can be and are used interchangeably by different people. Sometimes individuals may shy away from the word 'allegation' and express it as a 'concern' instead. The crucial point is that whatever the language used, the behaviour referred to may, on the one hand, be capable of meeting the harm threshold (and hence be referable), or, on the other, it does not meet the harm threshold (in which case it should be treated as a low-level concern). So, the focus should not be on the language used by the person reporting it; the focus should, instead, be on the behaviour being described.

Purpose of a Low-Level Concerns

This policy enables all staff to share any concerns – no matter how small – about their own or another member of staff's behaviour with the headteacher.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.

The purpose of the policy is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the clear values and expected behaviour set out in the staff code of conduct, are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff.

To achieve this purpose, academies will:

- Ensure that 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, and the delineation of professional boundaries and reporting lines;
- Empower staff to share any low-level concerns with the headteacher (with the Director of Safeguarding and Attendance and/or CEO, if the concern is about the headteacher) and to help all staff to interpret the sharing of such concerns as a neutral act;
 - Address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage;
 - Identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour – including any patterns – that may need to be consulted upon with, or referred to, the LADO;
 - Provide for responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised; and
 - Help identify any weaknesses in the academy’s safeguarding policy, systems or procedures.

Concern that does not meet the harm threshold: Low-level concern

KCSIE states that, as part of their whole school approach to safeguarding, academies should ensure that they 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.

The term ‘low-level’ concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the adult’s behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out above. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ – that an adult may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with an organisation’s staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- does not meet the allegation threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO – but may merit consulting with and seeking advice from the LADO.

Staff do not need to be able to determine in each case whether their concern is a low-level concern, or if it is not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO, or whether it meets the threshold of an allegation. Once staff have shared what they believe to be a low-level concern, that determination should be made by the headteacher and responded to in line with this policy.

A culture of vigilance and staff training on low level concerns

HEdT ensures that a culture of openness and trust is fostered within the organisation in which staff can share any concerns about the conduct of colleagues and be assured that these will be received in a sensitive manner.

If we educate adults to be informed about, and to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, rather than think they can recognise dangerous people, they can be prepared to act when they observe behaviour which violates the trust’s staff code of conduct.

Retaining Low Level Concerns

Low-level concerns will be retained in a central low-level concerns file by the headteacher (securely and applying appropriate access restrictions) unless and until further guidance provides otherwise.

When a staff member leaves and/or takes up new employment, that creates a natural point at which the content of the file may be reviewed to ensure it still has value (either as a safeguarding measure or because of its possible relevance to future claims) and is therefore necessary to keep. Otherwise, the file should be disposed of by the headteacher in line with the trust processes.

This is subject to the rights of individuals to object to or seek to erase or correct records about them under data protection law.

Low Level Concerns and References

KCSIE prohibits schools from referring to unsubstantiated, malicious or false allegations in references. Only safeguarding allegations that have been substantiated should be included in references. KCSIE states that: "where a low-level concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the LADO and found to be substantiated, it should be referred to in a reference.

Low level concerns (or a group of concerns) which have not met the threshold for referral to the LADO which relate only to safeguarding 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.

Lessons learned

The headteacher in consultation with the DSL, will review low level concerns termly to identify any patterns of behaviours, or if any training, advice or guidance, or changes to procedures or policy is required.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Spectrum of Behaviour

Allegation

Behaviour which indicates that an adult who works with children 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.

Low-Level Concern

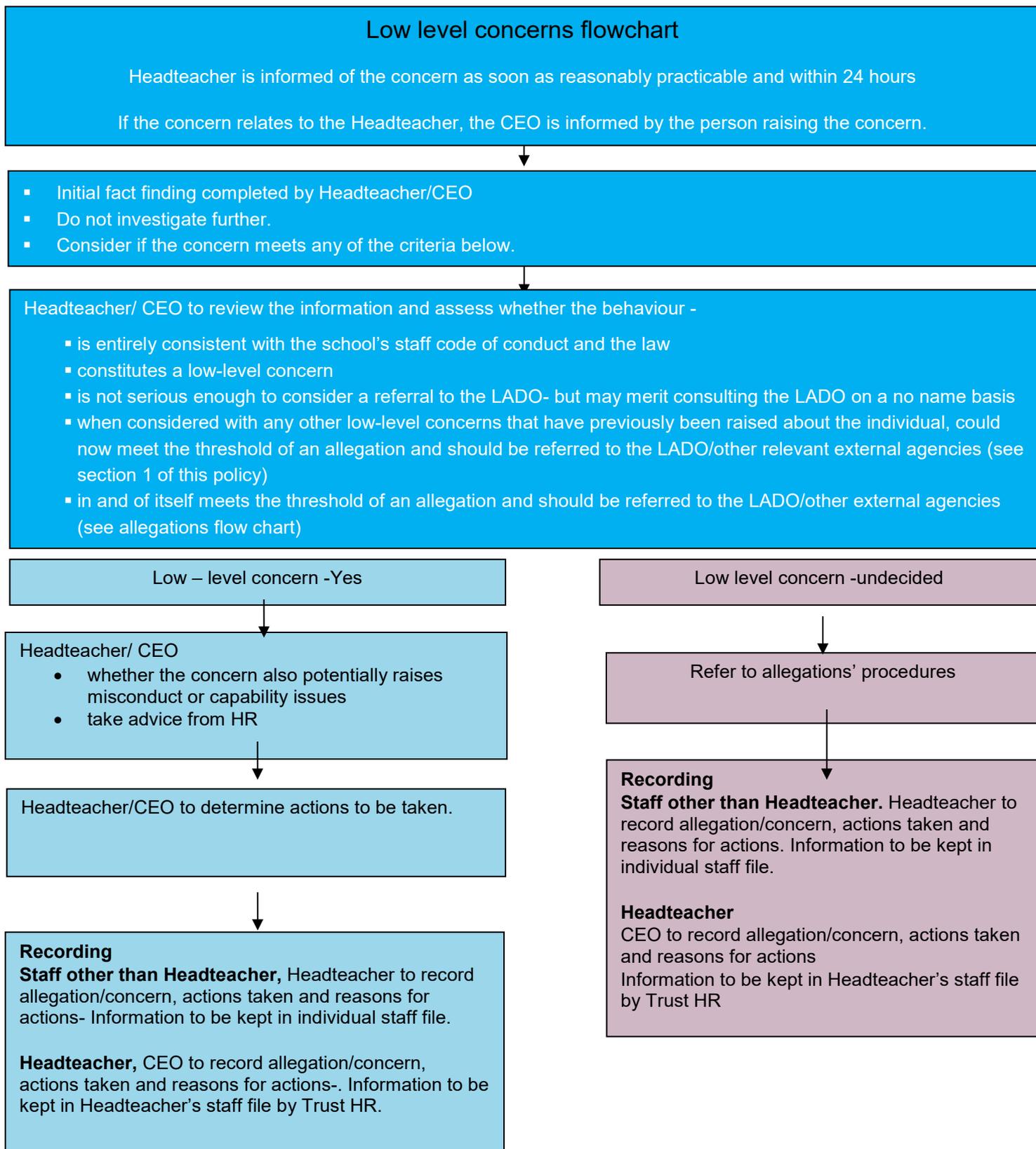
Does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the adult's behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out above. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with an organisation's staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- does not meet the allegation threshold, or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO - but may merit consulting with and seeking advice from the LADO, and on a no-names basis if necessary.

Appropriate Conduct

Behaviour which is entirely consistent with the organisation's staff code of conduct, and the law.

Appendix B - Responding to a low-level concern flowchart



Appendix C - Example of Low Level Concerns Form

Name of academy:	Academy address:
Today's date (dd/mm/yy):	Time:
Name of the adult who is the subject of the allegation or concern	
Name and role of the person completing the log	
Name of the person sharing the concerns (unless anonymous)	
Date and time of the incident / concern	
The context in which the concern arose (e.g. where/ when, what was happening at the time?)	
Description of the incident/ concern:*	
<p>(*Note- if the concern has been raised via a third party, the Headteacher should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously)</p>	
Signature of the person completing the log:	
Actions taken:	Yes/ No
Refer to flowchart – dealing with allegations or concerns about a member of staff	
Has this met the Harms threshold?	
Details of any actions taken:	