

Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff (or Volunteer) Policy

Introduction

In keeping with our Vision, Mission and Values, Holbeach Primary School fully recognises its responsibility to have a clear and secure framework in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. All staff are advised and reminded of the need to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.

We recognise that any allegation of possible harm or abuse made by (or on behalf of) a child against an adult working or volunteering in school, is primarily a safeguarding concern and this is always the main focus. Staff wellbeing is also important and as an employer we have a duty of care to staff.

This policy should be read together with the following related policies:

- Complaints and Concerns
- Intimate Care
- Safeguarding (including Child Protection)
- Staff Discipline and Grievance
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing

Legal Framework

All schools must have procedures in place to deal with any allegations made against staff. The framework for managing allegations is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children, Keeping Children Safe in Education and the DfE statutory guidance Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and other staff.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will ensure that the school's procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse are kept relevant and in line with national guidance and brought to the attention of staff and volunteers regularly and always as part of their induction.

The person responsible for seeing that the procedures are followed will normally be the Headteacher. Where the Headteacher is the subject of the allegation of abuse this will be the Chair of Governors.

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- Consideration of whether the person against whom the allegation is made should be the subject of school disciplinary action.
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care of whether a child is in need of protection or support services;
- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;

In the interests of fairness to all parties every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and to guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated.

Allegations against adults

Aims

Any allegation of harm made against a member of staff or volunteer will be dealt with fairly and quickly, with effective protection and support for the student and with appropriate support for the member of staff or volunteer.

Any allegation of harm to a child made against anyone working or volunteering in school will be taken very seriously. This policy applies to any allegation of harm to or abuse of a person under 18 years of age by someone who works in a paid or unpaid capacity on the school premises or offsite, for example, on a school trip.

For the purposes of this policy an allegation of harm or abuse means a report that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence committed against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children.

Guidance

All children at Holbeach Primary School must be able to place their trust and confidence in any adult working in the school. They must feel sure that they can speak about any worries or concerns they may have and that they will be listened to, taken seriously and responded to appropriately. All staff must therefore know what to do if they have a concern about a child's welfare or if a child chooses to talk to them about any matter which raises child protection concerns.

All Staff must:

- Be aware of systems within school which support safeguarding;
- Record any causes of concern using the 'Pink Slip' safeguarding form (or the CPOM software once this is operational) so that the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputies are notified;
- Know what to do if a child tells them he/she (or another child) is being abused or neglected

If a child discloses information, staff will:

- Listen to what the child is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions – clarification should be sought using open-ended questions;
- Respect the child's right to privacy but not promise confidentiality;
- Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling
- Explain to the child that in order to keep him/her (and/or others) safe from harm the information that has been shared must be passed on to people who can help;
- Report what has been disclosed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school as a matter of urgency;
- Record, as soon as is practicable, what was said using the child's actual words;
- Sign and date the written record.

Any allegation of harm, or concern about possible harm to a child, should be immediately reported to the school's Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or to the or one of the Deputy DSLs if he is not available.

This should be done in person or on the phone straight away. Detailed notes should be made as soon as is practicable by the person receiving the information from the child or parent, and

these should be passed on to the DSL and logged on a 'Pink Slip', but reporting the concern to the DSL should not be delayed until notes have been written.

If the allegation or concern relates to a member of the staff then the DSL will make contact with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) immediately once any allegation has been made, to discuss the action to be taken. This is the responsibility of the DSL, or one of the deputy DSLs if the DSL is not available.

The school will act according to the advice and guidance of the LADO. If it is not clear whether the issue is an allegation or a concern, then this should always be discussed with the LADO and advice sought and recorded.

Some concerns or complaints about the behaviour of an adult may not meet the threshold of an allegation of harm or possible harm, and the advice from the LADO will be that a LADO process is not required. In these cases, the school will investigate and take appropriate action to support the child and address the matter in respect of the member of staff using the relevant policy and procedures relating to staff conduct / or complaints. Advice will be sought from HR as appropriate.

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 school should not inform parents until those agencies have been consulted and have agreed what information can be disclosed to the parents or carers. Parents or carers should also be kept informed in broad terms about the progress of any investigation. While it is important for parents to know that the school has thoroughly investigated any concerns and told in general terms of the outcome of an investigation, they are not entitled to know the full detail of any disciplinary or other action taken against staff.

The school will consider what support may be needed for the child involved and will make such arrangements as necessary to ensure the safety of the child and other children while the matter is investigated.

An investigating officer (usually a senior member of school staff, or if appropriate a Governor) will be appointed to investigate the allegation or concern. This investigation will be completed promptly and thoroughly, with the advice of the LADO and of HR.

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 Children's Services or the police.

The Headteacher (or other senior member of staff as agreed) will keep the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the investigation and is responsible for ensuring that they receive support as may be appropriate. 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.

The school will liaise with the LADO, relevant police and Children's Services staff as appropriate.

It may be necessary to consider suspending a member of staff in a situation where the allegation is serious enough to be grounds for dismissal if substantiated, or there are ongoing concerns about the safety of children in school, or where the presence of the person in school could prejudice an effective investigation or interfere with the smooth running of the school.

To meet the school's safeguarding responsibilities an investigation will not cease if an employee or volunteer resigns or ceases to work at school. So called "compromise agreements" will not be used in cases of alleged harm to a child.

Notwithstanding the commitment to confidentiality, the school will liaise with relevant police and Children's Services staff as appropriate.

Outcome and conclusion

Where it has been decided that a suspended staff member can return to work, the Headteacher will ensure that the school makes arrangements that best facilitate their return, including the provision of any support, training or monitoring that may be necessary.

Where an allegation is found to be false, unfounded or unsubstantiated, the DSL will ensure that Children's Services are asked to consider whether the child is in need of safeguarding support, and whether further investigation is needed of possible abuse by another party.

Where it can be shown that the allegation was deliberately invented or malicious, the matter may be referred to the police.

If an allegation is substantiated, the Staff Discipline Committee will consider whether a referral to the General Teaching Council or to the Government for consideration of List 99 action is appropriate.

Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The Secretary of State's powers to bar or restrict a person's employment are contained in section 142 of the Education Act 2002. The relevant regulations, setting out the procedure to be followed now sit under the Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (List 99 was replaced by the ISA Barring list which in turn has now been replaced by the Disclosure and Barring Service).

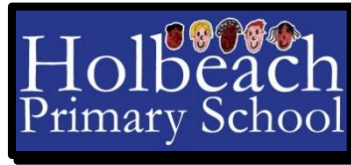
A relevant employer, or agent (e.g. a teacher supply agency), is required to provide a report to the DBS where they cease to use a person's services, or a person is dismissed or resigns before a disciplinary process is completed, because they are considered unsuitable to work with children, as a result of misconduct, or because of a medical condition that raises a possibility of risk to the safety or welfare of children. A compromise agreement does not override the statutory duty to report the matter and as such an arrangement should not be considered if the concern was of a safeguarding nature.

These reporting arrangements apply to anyone who works in a school, including volunteers, regardless of what they do. They also apply to staff convicted of a criminal offence against children outside the work setting, when notification may be through the police.

Monitoring the impact

The impact of this policy will be reviewed as part of the Full Governing Body's consideration of safeguarding at any meeting where a report has been given that the policy has been consulted in relation to an issue arising

No matter what the outcome is of an allegation of abuse against 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 to prevent similar cases in the future.



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Signed:

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Chair of Governors:

Sharon Farnley

(please print name)

Signed:

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Headteacher:

Tom Bulpitt

(please print name)

Date of Policy: September 2025

Date of Review: September 2026