

Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy

OUR SCHOOL PRAYER:

What does the Lord ask of you?

To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6vs.8

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Statement of intent



In our school, our Christian vision shapes all we do. All members of the school community are committed to upholding the St Michael's Church of England Christian vision:

- to show love, care, and kindness to all in our community
- to value what we have and to share with others
- to enable everyone to achieve their full potential.

St Michael's Church of England High School takes its responsibility of care for students seriously. We will thoroughly and swiftly investigate allegations of abuse against staff – this will be done applying common sense and judgement, in a fair way that does not prejudice either the student or the member of staff, and with effective protection for the student and support for the person subject to the allegation. This policy will apply to concerns or allegations against those working in or on behalf of the school in a paid or unpaid capacity, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors.

Any investigation of an allegation of abuse will be made in line with this policy, and we will provide both the accuser and accused with the support they require during the investigation.

Signed by:

 _____	Chair of Governors	Date: <u>03/10/2024</u>
 _____	Headteacher	Date: <u>03/10/2024</u>

Date of adoption:	1 st May 2016
Date of review:	3 rd October 2024
Review date:	October 2025

1. Legal framework

1.1 This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 2004
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024' (KCSIE)
- DfE (2023) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'

1.2 This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff ICT and Electronic Devices Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

2. Scope of this policy

NB. 'Child' refers to anyone under the age of eighteen.

2.1 This policy covers the process for dealing with allegations that meet the harms threshold, which are allegations where it is alleged that anyone working in the school, including supply teachers, volunteers, and contractors, 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
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, including transferable risk, i.e., behaviour that may have happened outside of school that might make the individual unsuitable to work with children.

2.2 Procedures for managing allegations that do not meet the harms threshold (also known as 'low-level concerns') are covered in section 6. Low-level concerns will not be viewed as insignificant, but as any concerns that do not meet the harms threshold set out above. A low-level concern is any concern that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LA designated officer (LADO)

2.3 If the school has any doubt as to whether information that has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern meets the harm threshold, the LADO's advice will be consulted.

2.4 For the purpose of this policy '**allegation**' refers to allegations that meet the harms threshold.

3. Staff covered by this policy

3.1 This policy covers allegations against those working in or on behalf of the school in a paid or unpaid capacity, including members of staff, supply teachers, volunteers, and contractors.

3.2 In some cases, the school will have to deal with an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, e.g., supply staff provided by an employment agency, where the school's disciplinary procedures do not fully apply because agencies will have their own procedures.

3.3 In these cases, the school will ensure allegations are dealt with properly and will often take the lead on dealing with the allegation as it has access to all of the necessary information. Under no circumstances will the school decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with LADO to determine a suitable outcome.

3.4 Any supply agencies used by the school will be informed of the school's process for managing allegations. The school will also take account of the agency's policies and their duty to refer to the DBS as personnel suppliers.

3.5 If an allegation is made against a governor, the school will follow their local procedure. Where an allegation is substantiated, the school will follow the procedures to consider removing the governor from office.

3.6 For the purposes of this policy '**member of staff**' refers to staff, supply staff, volunteers, and contractors.

4. Role and responsibilities

4.1 The governing board will be responsible for:

- ensuring that the school complies with its duties under the above child protection and safeguarding legislation
- guaranteeing that all policies, procedures, and training opportunities in the school are implemented effectively
- ensuring that mechanisms are in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities in regard to safeguarding children
- ensuring welfare support is put in place for staff subject to allegations
- making the final decision of whether a member of staff subject to an allegation should be suspended

4.2 The chair of governors will be responsible for acting as the case manager for allegations relating to the headteacher.

4.3 The headteacher will be responsible for acting as the case manager for allegations unless the allegation relates to them or there would be a conflict of interest if they were the case manager. The case manager will be responsible for:

- conducting a basic enquiry as soon as an allegation is reported
- leading investigations into allegations
- working with the LADO when dealing with allegations

4.4 The DSL will be responsible for:

- making referrals to Children's Social Care Services (CSCS) and/or the police where necessary
- looking after the welfare of students involved in an allegation and ensuring they are not at risk.

4.5 The LADO will provide advice and guidance to the school when considering allegations. Their role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out.

5. Reporting concerns and allegations

5.1 Staff must report allegations without delay, in line with the following reporting lines:

- allegations regarding another member of staff will be reported to the headteacher
- allegations regarding the headteacher will be reported to the chair of governors

5.2 Where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the allegation to the headteacher, staff will report the concern directly to the LADO. Information regarding the identity of the LADO can be found on the LA's website.

5.3 Where a student makes a disclosure to a member of staff about the behaviour of another member of staff, staff must follow the reporting lines above.

5.3 Once an allegation has been made, a case manager will be assigned to lead the investigation. The case manager will be the headteacher or, where the headteacher is the subject of an allegation, the chair of governors.

6. Initial response

6.1 CSCS and, as appropriate, the police will be contacted immediately if a child has been harmed, there is an immediate risk of harm to a child, or the situation is an emergency. These reports will be made in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

6.2 When responding to an allegation, the school will ensure that it considers the following aspects:

- looking after the welfare of the child
- investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation

6.3 Before contacting the LADO, the case manager will conduct a basic enquiry to establish the facts to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation. During this

basic enquiry, the case manager will ensure they collect any information that will be required by the LADO and will be careful not to jeopardise any potential future police investigation.

6.4 Once the case manager has conducted the basic enquiry, they will contact the LADO. The case manager and LADO will discuss the nature, content and context of the allegation and decide if:

- no further action is needed
- a strategy discussion should take place
- there should be involvement from the police and/or CSCS

6.5 Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the staff member's family, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and conduct a risk assessment of the situation. Where necessary, the DSL will make a referral to CSCS.

6.6 If the allegation is about physical contact, e.g., restraint, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation with the LADO will take into account that teachers and other staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour. Please refer to the Physical Intervention Policy.

No further action

6.7 Where the initial assessment leads to no further action, the case manager and LADO will:

- record the decision and justification for it
- agree on what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom

Strategy discussion

6.8 If there is cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, a strategy discussion involving the police and/or CSCS will be convened. Strategy discussions will take place in line with the ['Working Together to Safeguarding Children'](#) statutory guidance.

6.9 CSCS will convene the meeting to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. A representative of the school may be invited to the meeting.

6.10 The discussion will be used to:

- share available information
- agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation
- decide whether enquires under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 must be undertaken

Investigation

6.11 Where it is clear than an investigation by the police or CSCS is unnecessary, or the strategy discussion or initial assessment decides that this is the case, the LADO will discuss the next steps with the case manager.

6.12 Where further enquiries are required to enable a decision about how to proceed, the LADO and case manager will discuss how the investigation will be undertaken and who should conduct the investigation. In most cases, the investigation will be undertaken by a senior

member of staff at the school. Where there is a lack of appropriate resources within the school to conduct the investigation, or the nature or complexity of the allegation requires it, the allegation will be conducted by an independent investigator.

- 6.13 The case manager will monitor the progress of the investigation to ensure that it is dealt with thoroughly, fairly, and as quickly as possible. The first review will take place no later than four weeks after the initial assessment where possible. Dates of subsequent reviews will be set at the review meeting if the investigation continues and will be conducted at least at fortnightly intervals.

Informing the member of staff

- 6.14 The member of staff subject to an allegation should be informed of the allegation and given as much information as possible, unless there are good reasons not to. In cases where the allegation needs to be reported to CSCS and/or the police, the case manager will seek advice from the LADO, CSCS and police as appropriate regarding what information can be shared.

Supply staff

- 6.15 Where an allegation relates to a member of supply staff, the agency will be fully involved and cooperate with any enquiries from the school, LADO, police and/or CSCS. In these cases, the school will usually take the lead as the agency will not have direct access to the required information.

- 6.16 The allegations management meeting which is often arranged by the LADO should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency or agencies are taken into account by the school during the investigation.

Organisations or individuals using school premises

- 6.17 Where the school receives an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using the premises for the purposes of running activities for children, e.g., community groups or sports associations, the school will inform the third party vendors and ensure appropriate steps are taken to keep pupils safe and ensure that the allegation is subject to a proper investigation.

7. Confidentiality

- 7.1 The case manager and LADO will discuss what information will be shared and with whom, alongside which actions will be taken to manage any possible breaches of confidentiality or press interest.

- 7.2 Information regarding an allegation will only be shared with necessary parties. Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of all parties involved in an allegation. Confidentiality will also be maintained to ensure a fair investigation can be undertaken.

- 7.3 All parties involved in an allegation will be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity about any allegations made against teachers whilst investigations are in progress.

- 7.4 In circumstances where the school needs to make parents aware about an allegation, it will ensure parents and others are aware that there are restrictions on publishing information.

- 7.5 Breaches in confidentiality will be taken seriously and may warrant a separate investigation.

7.6 The school will not provide the media with any information regarding an allegation.

8. Suspension

8.1 Suspension will never be an automatic response when an allegation is reported – all options to avoid suspension will be considered prior to taking that decision.

8.2 The case manager will carefully consider whether the circumstances warrant suspension from contact with children at the school, or until the allegation is resolved. Suspension will be considered only in cases where there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.

8.3 The case manager will seek advice from the school's HR provider and the LADO, as well as the police and CSCS where they have been involved. The following options will be considered by the case manager before suspending a member of staff:

- redeploying the member of staff within the school so that they do 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 member of staff to alternative work in the school so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children
- moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the member of staff – this decision will only be made if it is in the best interests of the child or children involved and takes account of their views
- temporarily redeploying the member of staff to another role in a different location, e.g., to an alternative school, where available

8.4 The governing board will make the final decision on whether the member of staff should be suspended. Where a strategy discussion, or initial assessment, concludes that there should be enquiries by CSCS, and/or an investigation by the police, the LADO will seek the views of the police and CSCS regarding whether the member of staff should be suspended from contact with children. Police involvement does not make it mandatory to suspend a member of staff. The decision to suspend will be made on a case-by-case basis following a risk assessment of whether the person poses a risk of harm to children.

8.5 If immediate suspension is considered necessary, the case manager will record the rationale and justification for this decision, alongside the alternatives to suspension that were considered and why they were rejected.

8.6 Where suspension is deemed necessary, written confirmation will be given to the member of staff within one working day where possible, which will provide as much detail as appropriate for the reasons for the suspension. The member of staff will be told immediately who their named contact is within the school for the period of their suspension.

8.7 Where an allegation relates to a member of supply staff, the governing board will discuss with the supply agency or agencies where the member of staff is working across a number of schools, whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of school, whilst an investigation is carried out.

8.8 Where the school is made aware that the Secretary of State has made an interim prohibition order, in respect of an individual who works at the school, immediate action will be taken by the school to ensure the individual does not carry out work in contravention of the order, i.e. not carrying out teaching work, pending the findings of the TRA investigation.

8.9 Please refer to the Pay Policy for the pay arrangements that will be implemented while a member of staff is suspended, or an interim prohibition order is in place.

9. Supporting those involved

Students and parents

9.1 The welfare of the student(s) involved in an allegation will be paramount and the school will ensure that students involved are fully supported in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

9.2 The parents of the student(s) involved in an allegation will be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know about it, unless notifying the parents would put the student at further risk. The case manager will work with the LADO to agree who should be informed about the allegation.

9.3 Parents will be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity about any allegations made against teachers whilst investigations are in progress.

9.4 Parents will be kept informed about the progress of the allegation, including the outcome and any action taken.

Staff

9.5 The school will ensure that all staff feel equipped and supported to report any allegations or concerns.

9.6 . The school is fully aware of its duty of care to their employees and will:

- manage and minimise the stress caused by the allegation
- inform the member of staff as soon as possible about the allegation, explaining the likely course of action, guided by the LADO, and the police where necessary
- advise the member of staff to contact their trade union representative or a colleague for support
- appoint a named representative to keep the staff member informed about the progress of the case
- provide access to counselling or medical advice where appropriate
- not prevent social contact with work colleagues and friends, when staff are suspended, unless there is evidence to suggest this may prejudice the gathering of evidence

9.7 The school will ensure that any information regarding an allegation is confidential and will not ordinarily be shared with other staff or with students or parents who are not directly involved in the investigation.

10. Outcomes

10.1 The following definitions will be used when determining the outcome of an allegation:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation
- **Unfounded:** there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

10.2 The options available to the school will depend on the nature and circumstances of the allegation and the evidence and information available.

Referral to the DBS

10.3 If an allegation is found to be substantiated and the member of staff is dismissed, resigns, or otherwise ceases to provide their services to the school, or the school ceases to use the person's services, the school has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS. For members of teaching staff at the school, the case manager will consider whether to refer the matter to the TRA to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

10.4 The school will also make a referral to the DBS where it is considered an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed, or is likely to harm, a child, or if they otherwise pose a risk of harm to a child.

Criminal investigations

10.5 The school is aware that some allegations may result in a criminal investigation taking place and understands that the police will inform the school and the LADO when:

- a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial are complete
- it is decided to close an investigation without charge
- it is decided not to continue to prosecute after the person has been charged

10.6 The case manager and LADO will discuss whether any further action against the member of staff is appropriate, including disciplinary action.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious allegations

10.7 If an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the LADO and the case manager will consider whether the student and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. If this is the case, the DSL will decide whether a referral to CSCS needs to be made.

10.8 If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it, in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (for staff reporters) or Behaviour Management Policy (for student reporters).

10.9 Following an allegation concluded to be either unfounded, false, malicious, or unsubstantiated, the case manager, in liaison with the LADO if they were involved, will consider the facts, and determine whether any lessons can be learnt and if improvements can be made to the school's procedures.

11. Returning to work

- 11.1 Where a member of staff has been suspended and it is decided on conclusion of the case that they can return to work; the case manager will decide on the best course of action to facilitate the return to work and seek advice from the school's HR provider and the LADO where necessary. The case manager will also consider how the staff member's contact with the child who made the allegation can best be managed if they are still attending the school.
- 11.2 The individual's circumstances will be taken into account, and options such as a phased return and the provision of a mentor to provide assistance and support in the short term considered where appropriate.
- 11.3 The case manager will also consider how the staff member's contact with the child who made the allegation can best be managed if they are still attending the school.
- 11.4 The member of staff will be provided with support, including welfare support, during their return to work.

12. Resignations

- 12.1 If the member of staff leaves, resigns, or ceases to provide their services during an investigation, the school will not stop the investigation and it will be completed.
- 12.2 The staff member subject to the allegation will be given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it. The process of recording the allegation and supporting evidence and reaching a judgement on the allegation will continue even if the member of staff does not cooperate. The member of staff concerned will be notified of the conclusion of the allegation and sanctions that may be posed.

Settlement agreements

- 12.3 The school will not use settlement agreements (also known as compromise agreements) where there are allegations that indicate a person is a risk or poses a risk of harm to children or is deemed not suitable to work with children.
- 12.4 In limited circumstances, it may be appropriate to use settlement agreements to end the employment relationship on agreed terms. Where a settlement agreement is used, this will not prevent the school from:
- fulfilling its legal duty to refer cases to the DBS where the referral criteria are met
 - providing a fair, accurate and truthful reference that is not misleading to potential employers when requested
 - considering whether to make a referral to the TRA where the criteria are met

13. Record keeping

- 13.1 Any details of allegations that are found to be malicious or false will be removed from the staff member's personnel record unless they give their consent for the information to be retained.
- 13.2 For all other allegations, the following information will be kept on the staff member's personnel file:
- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
 - details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved

- details of any action taken, and decisions reached and the outcome
- a copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by CSCS or the police
- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

13.3 The school will retain records that contain information about allegations of sexual abuse for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the enquiry. All other records will be retained until the staff member subject to the allegation has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is longer.

13.4 All records will be managed in line with the school's Data Protection Policy.

14. References

14.1 References will be provided in line with the school's Safer Recruitment Policy.

14.2 The school will ensure that any information provided confirms whether they are satisfied with the applicant's suitability to work with children, and only provide the facts of any substantiated safeguarding concerns or allegations that meet the harm threshold within any employment references. References will not include opinions, and cases will not be included where an allegation was found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious; this applies for repeated concerns or allegations found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious.

15. Non-recent allegations

15.1 If a former student makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child by a member of staff, they will be advised to report the allegation to the police. Non-recent allegations made by a child will be reported to the LADO in line with the LA's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

15.2 All students and staff will be made aware that abuse can be reported no matter how long ago it happened.

16. Monitoring and review

16.1 Throughout the process in handling allegations and at conclusion of a case in which an allegation is substantiated, the LADO will review the circumstances of the case with the case manager to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the school's procedures to help prevent similar events in the future.

16.2 This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and governing board. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff and other relevant stakeholders, e.g., supply agencies.

16.3 The next scheduled review date for this policy is October 2025.