



Introduction

Biddulph High School is committed to providing the highest level of care for both its students and its staff. It is extremely important that any allegations of abuse against a teacher, any other member of staff, or volunteer in our school is dealt with thoroughly and efficiently, maintaining the highest level of protection for the child whilst also giving support to the person who is the subject of the allegation. Our policy is in line with statutory guidance from the Department for Education.

This policy is designed to ensure that all staff, students and parents or carers are aware of the procedure for the investigation of allegations of abuse in order that all complaints are dealt with consistently and as efficiently as possible.

We hope that having a clear policy outlined will help students to feel comfortable that they can voice concerns about any member of staff. Allegations will be reported to the Headteacher immediately or to the chair of the Local Academy Governing Board where the Headteacher is the subject of an allegation. All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated immediately.

Purpose

The procedure for dealing with allegations against staff depends on the situation and circumstances surrounding the allegation. This policy must be followed when dealing with allegations but may be adapted to each case. This policy will be used alongside the Academy's **Complaints Policy** and **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

This policy will be used in any case where it is suspected or alleged that a member of staff or a volunteer at the school has:

- behaved in such a way that may have harmed a child or may have intended to harm a child. Our **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy** outlines what it means to harm a child
- acted outside of the law in relation to dealings with a child
- behaved in any way that suggests they may be unsuitable to work with children.

Timescale

It is imperative that allegations against staff are dealt with as quickly as possible to:

- minimise the risk to the child
- minimise the impact on the child's academic progress
- minimise stress to the employee concerned
- ensure a fair and thorough investigation for all parties.

To enable this to happen, all staff, parents, and students should be aware of the procedures set out in this policy.

Procedure

Reporting an allegation

All allegations made against staff should be reported immediately to the Headteacher. Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the chair of the Local Academy Governing Board who will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a student are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount and must report their concerns immediately.

The LADO will be contacted by the Headteacher or the Chair of the Local Academy Governing Board, and a discussion will take place to decide whether:

- more information is required; or
- no further actions are needed; or
- a strategy discussion should take place; or
- there should be immediate involvement of the police or social care.

The Academy will share available information with the designated officer about the allegation, the child, and the person against whom the allegation has been made and consider whether a police investigation or a strategy discussion is needed. Representatives from other agencies may be invited to the discussion and could include representatives from health, social care and police.

Investigation

An investigation into the allegation is normally carried out by children's social services or by the Academy. This will be agreed at the initial evaluation stage. Where the Academy is not conducting the investigation it will cooperate with investigative agencies.

Internal investigations must be second to any safeguarding investigation and may need to be delayed until the external investigation is complete.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of the investigation:

- **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.
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Supporting those involved

The person(s) who makes the allegation and their parents/carers

Parents and carers will be notified if their child makes or is involved in an allegation against staff if they do not already know. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted first and will advise as to what information may or may not be disclosed to the parents. A member of staff will be designated to liaise with the parents and child about the case and to ensure that they are fully informed as soon as possible. Parents and carers will be made aware of any progress in the investigation, and where

there is no criminal prosecution, the outcome will be explained to them. This may be a disciplinary outcome. During a disciplinary hearing the deliberations and information used for making a decision are usually confidential, but parents will be told the outcome.

Social services and the police may be involved and will provide the Academy with advice on what type of additional support the child may need.

The Academy's **Whistleblowing Policy** enables staff to raise concerns or allegations against their colleagues in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

The employee

Biddulph High School has a duty of care to its employees and will do everything to minimise the stress of any allegation and the disciplinary process.

The person who is the subject of the investigation will be informed as soon as possible and usually after the initial discussion with the designated officer. The employee will then be advised on what the next course of action will be. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted before the employee, and will advise as to what information may be disclosed to the person under investigation.

The Chair of the Local Academy Governing Board, or a named representative, will keep the employee informed of the progress of the case and any other work-related issues.

The employee may need additional support and the Academy will consider what might be appropriate to best accommodate this. If it is a criminal investigation and the police are involved, they may provide this additional support.

Confidentiality

The Academy will make every effort to guard the privacy of all parties during and after an investigation into an allegation. It is in everyone's best interest to maintain this confidentiality to ensure a fair investigation with minimum impact for all parties.

A breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may warrant its own investigation.

Suspensions

The Academy will not suspend a member of staff without serious consideration, and will not do it automatically once an allegation has been made. Depending on the nature of the case, it may be possible that alternative arrangements are made so that the individual can continue working.

The employer (Chair of the Local Academy Governing Board) holds the power to suspend an employee but will listen to the views of the police and or social care regarding suspension.

In the case of suspension, the employee will receive written confirmation within one working day and will be informed of the reason for the suspension.

Resignations

If an employee resigns when the allegation is made against them or during an investigation, the investigation will continue until an outcome has been reached, with or without the employee's cooperation. They will be given full opportunity to answer the allegation.

Settlement agreements will not be used in situations which are relevant to these procedures.

Record keeping

Where an allegation is found to be malicious, it will be removed from the record of the employee concerned.

For all other allegations, records of investigations and outcomes will be kept in the employee's personal file and they will be given a copy. The record will be kept, including for people who leave the organisation, at least until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that will be longer, from the date of the allegation.

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

Action on conclusion of the case

If it is decided that the employee may return to Academy after a suspension, then provisions will be put in place by the Academy to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. This may involve a phased return for a trial period or the use of another member of staff as a support system in the short term. If the child who made the allegation is still at the Academy, the Academy will consider what needs to be done to manage the contact between employee and child.

Action in the case of false or malicious allegations

Where an allegation is proved to be false, the Headteacher and Chair of the Local Academy Governing Board may refer to social services to determine whether the child is in need of support or has been abused by someone else.

The Academy's **Behaviour Policy** sets out the disciplinary action that may be taken against students who are found to have made malicious accusations against Academy staff. The Headteacher may consult the Local Academy Governing Board when considering what action to take.

If the claim has been made by a person who is not a student, the Academy may pass the information to the police who may take further action against that person.

After the case

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

Further details on any aspect of this policy and its implementation can be obtained from the academy.

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