Wolverdene Special School
Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy 2026

Approved for School: Headteacher: N Akhmatova Date: 24th June 2026	Signature: 
Approved by Governing Body: Chair/Deputy Chair: Date: 24th June 2026	Signature: 
This policy will be reviewed June 2027 The next review date is June 2027	

Status
Statutory

Purpose
This policy is part of the School's overall strategy to safeguard and promote the welfare of our pupils. Their welfare is paramount. Investigations will be done in a fair way that does not prejudice either the pupil or staff. Any investigation will provide both the accuser and the accused with the support they require during any investigation.

Who/what was consulted?
DfE guidance on safeguarding children and handling allegations of abuse informed this policy. Due regard to legislation and statutory guidance including but not limited to:
The Children Act 1989,2004;
The Education Act 2002;
The Data Protection Act & GDPR regulations 2018;
KCSIE 2025.

The stipulations within this policy apply to all staff and volunteers currently working in school, irrespective of whether the school is the location of the abuse. Allegations against a member of staff who is no longer employed will be referred to the police, along with any historical allegations.

Relationship to other policies
This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies
RPI (Restrictive Physical Interventions),
Safeguarding,
Child protection,
Staff Induction
Whistleblowing
Staff Code of Conduct
Capability

Terms of Reference

Terms of reference for allegations, complaints and concerns for this policy are as detailed below:

Allegations: A staff member or volunteer in the school, or another adult who works with children 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 he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Complaints: There has been or believed to have been an incident of the following (this list is not comprehensive/ exhaustive and therefore not limited to):

1. Staff or organisational breeches within the school's Code of Conduct
2. Failure to comply with relevant local authority / school policy's, procedure or guidance
3. Any breach of data protection or confidentiality
4. Poor behavior management
5. Staff / volunteers or children inappropriately using social media
6. Misadministration of medication

Concerns: There has been or believed to have been an incident of the following (this list is not comprehensive/ exhaustive and therefore not limited to):

1. Staff / school volunteer or another adult working within the school using inappropriate language, shouting or swearing
2. Discussing personal or sexual relationships with or in the presence of pupils
3. Making (or encouraging others to make) inappropriate / unprofessional comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate children, or might be interpreted as such.

Roles and responsibilities of Headteacher, other staff and Governors

The Headteacher will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare (including through induction and ongoing training);
- maintain a code of conduct for staff based on Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults Who Work with Children and Young People in Education Settings;
- ensure that parents and carers are aware of relevant aspects of the code of conduct for staff – for example, not giving children their personal mobile numbers, not giving children gifts, lifts home, etc.;
- ensure that parents and carers know who to go to if they have concerns;
- ensure that children know who to go to if they have any concerns about their personal safety and well-being and that they understand the importance of not making unfounded allegations;
- agree with the Governing Body what behaviours to address through the School's complaints or disciplinary procedures and in what circumstances they should contact the

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and review the decisions at least annually;

- always contact the LADO when there is reason to believe that an adult has behaved in a way that has harmed, 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 she or he is unsuitable to work with children;
- contact the LADO when an employee's behaviour is a matter of concern because it compromises or may be seen to compromise the reputation and ability of the School to safeguard children and young people;
- only use suspension when there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, the allegation warrants investigation by the police and have recommended suspension as a means to support their investigation, or the allegation is so serious it might be grounds for dismissal;
- safeguard the confidentiality of all concerned as far as possible;
- keep a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how they were followed up and resolved and of any action taken and decisions reached. The Headteacher will keep these records in the individual's confidential personnel file and give a copy to the individual and retain them until the person reaches normal retirement age, or for ten years, whichever is longer. If the allegation is subsequently found to be malicious, it will be removed from their personnel file;
- facilitate the re-integration of staff following suspension or the conclusion of a case, by counselling, guidance, support, reassurance and confidence building;
- contact the Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns him or herself and may if deemed appropriate, on the advice of the LADO, be suspended pending further investigation of the alleged event, on terms to be agreed between the LADO and the Chair of Governors.

The Governing Body will:

- ensure that the School's values explicitly promote the safeguarding and well-being of children;
- espouse the basic human right of being innocent until proven guilty;
- identify a Governor to lead on child protection and Safeguarding. In the event of an allegation of abuse being made against the Headteacher the Chair of Governors will take responsibility for liaising with the LADO and act as 'Case Manager' throughout the investigation. The same governor will decide with the Headteacher how to secure an independent, objective investigation when necessary;
- agree with the Headteacher what behaviours to address through the School's complaints or disciplinary procedures and in what circumstances they should contact the LADO;
- ensure that at least one Governor undertakes the Safer Recruitment training programme;
- ensure that any members who could be called to sit on disciplinary hearings are appropriately trained;
- ensure that at least once each year the Governing Body receives a full report on the School's arrangements for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare;
- schedule into its meeting agendas annually a full report on safeguarding and child protection arrangements in the School. This will be compiled by the Headteacher, senior designated teacher and the Governor with responsibility for child protection;
- seek evidence that the induction of staff and ongoing training include familiarisation with

the staff code of conduct, including through exit interviews;
- learn lessons from reflection and review of process at the conclusion of a case. This may lead to improved practice, either to school procedures or to help prevent similar events in the future.

Staff will:
- put the welfare and well-being of children first;
- make every effort not to expose themselves to risk of a false allegation being made;
- follow the guidelines set out in the staff code of conduct;
- report in writing, signed and dated, any incident that they suspect indicates an adult has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child; has possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that she or he is unsuitable to work with children;
- ensure that they access available training, guidance, support and supervision to fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard children.

Investigation process
- All allegations will be investigated without delay and will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Throughout the investigation process the LADO will liaise with the school to monitor progress of the case and provide advice and assistance when required or requested.
- Every effort is made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity. Clear guidance from LADO is provided on
    - Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared;
    - How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip;
    - What information can be reasonably shared to the wider community to reduce speculation.

<u>Initial Allegation</u>
- The appointed 'Case Manager' (Head Teacher or Chair of Governors if an allegation against the Head Teacher has been made) will inform the LADO. Jointly they will be responsible for deciding the course of action for each allegation. (Should the initial allegation first be made to any other member of staff, then that member of staff will firstly request the person raising the allegation to report it to the case manager directly or, if that is not possible, pass details of the allegation to the LADO / Case Manager).
- Where the allegation indicates extreme seriousness (where the child may be in immediate danger), the LADO / Case Manager will refer the case for immediate intervention by the police and Children's Services.

<u>Initial consideration</u>
- The Case Manager and LADO will consider the allegation and circumstances in which it was made. They will also consider whether there is evidence or information that establishes whether the allegation is false or unfounded. They will take into account the right of staff to use reasonable force when dealing with instances of physical contact, such as challenging behaviour. Initial considerations will determine the next course of actions – detailed within **Appendix 1** of this policy.

<u>Considerations given to suspending staff</u>

- The school will not consider suspension as a default position. The Case Manager and LADO will attempt to find alternative outcomes for the accused before they are suspended. Outcomes may include:
    - Redeploying the accused within the school to avoid direct contact with the child;
    - Providing an assistant to be present when the accused has contact with children;
    - Redeploying the accused to alternative work, so they do not have unsupervised contact with children;
    - Moving the child to an alternative classroom, whilst making it clear that this is not a punishment;
    - Temporarily redeploying the accused to an alternative role in a different location.
- In some cases the school may consider suspension until the case is resolved. This will be after the possible risk to harm to children posed by the accused has been effectively evaluated and managed.
- The school will take advice from other services when considering whether there are grounds for suspension. Children's Services or the police cannot require the school to suspend a member of staff. Careful consideration will be given to the following:
    - Risk of harm to children;
    - Whether the results achieved by suspension could also be achieved by an alternative response;
    - Potential for permanent professional reputational damage to the member of staff accused;
    - Recommendations from the LADO, Children's Services and the police;
    - A comprehensive risk assessment process.
- Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation will be dispatched within one working day, giving the reasons for the suspension. The accused will be informed who their named point of contact is within the school and will be provided with their contact details.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

- The Case Manager and the LADO will regularly monitor the progress of cases, either by reviewing strategy meetings or by liaising with Children's Services and the police, as appropriate.
- Reviews will be conducted at fortnightly or monthly intervals, depending on the complexity of the case.
- A committee of the Governing Body will review each decision to suspend a member of staff once proceedings have run their course, including judging whether the procedure, and the length of it, was justified. It will also review the handling of each allegation to assess whether it was handled expeditiously and whether the accused received appropriate support.

False and unsubstantiated allegations

- If an allegation made by a child is proved to be false, unsubstantiated and/or malicious, support will be given to the child to determine whether additional support services are required or whether the child has been abused by someone else.
- In cases of children deliberately inventing or making malicious allegations, consideration of action will be in accordance with the Relationships and Positive Behaviour Policy. Records of false allegations made by the child should be kept on the child's personal file and sensitively written into the PBS plan.

- If it is clear to the Case Manager and LADO that the allegation is demonstrably false or unfounded, the accused will be informed orally and in writing of the allegation, that it is without foundation and that no further action will be taken. Where appropriate, support to the staff member will be offered, which may include occupational health or counselling services.
- If an allegation made by a member of staff is proved to be false and/or malicious, an investigation will take place in accordance with the School's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. The police may also consider taking action against the individual making the allegation.
- Allegations that are proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious will not be included in any references.

Resignations and 'compromise or settlement agreements'

- The fact that a person tenders their resignation, or ceases to provide their services, will not prevent an allegation being followed up in accordance with these procedures.
- Every effort is made to reach a conclusion in all cases, including where the person concerned refuses to co-operate with the process.
- Wherever possible the accused will be given full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it.
- 'Compromise' or 'settlement agreements' will not be used in cases where the accused refuses to co-operate or resigns before their notice period expires – this will not prevent a police investigation if necessary.

Supporting the accused

- The school has a duty of care to its employees and will act to manage and minimise stress. Support for the accused is vital to fulfil this duty.
- Whilst adhering to guidance from the LADO, individuals will be informed as soon as is possible and given explanation of the likely course of action.
- Accused members of staff will be advised to contact their union representative. They will also be given access to welfare counselling and/or medical advice.
- The school will appoint a named representative to keep the accused informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual.
- Social contact with colleagues and friends is not prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

Review

This policy forms part of the DfE's Statutory Policies for School dated September 2014 (referred to by the DFE as 'Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff'). The relevant statutory guidance is 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' dated September 2025. The DFE states that the Governing Body is free to determine how frequently to review this document.

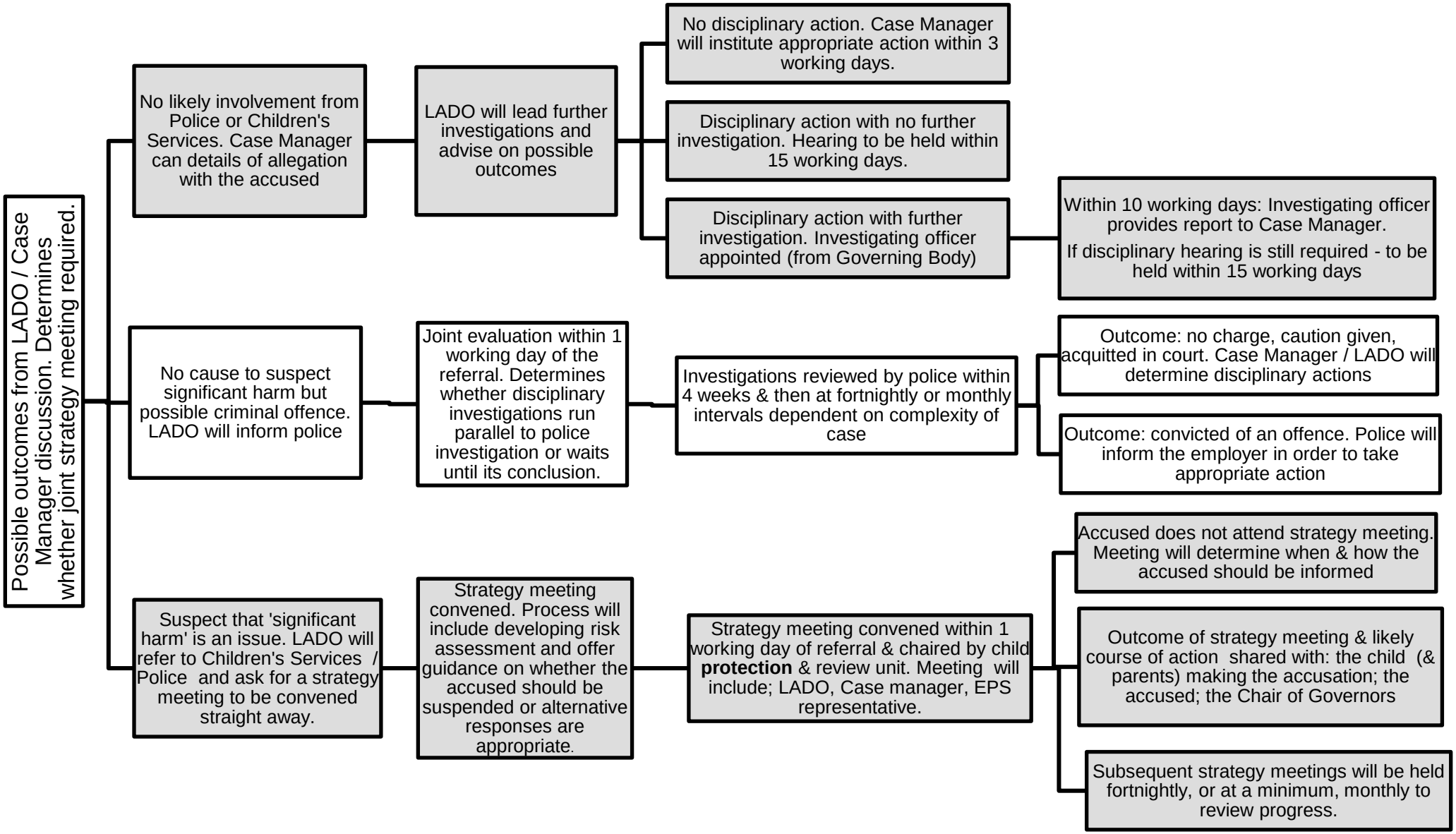
EQUALITIES, SAFEGUARDING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

Wolverdene, in all policies and procedures, will promote equality of opportunity for students and staff from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds and ensure freedom from discrimination on the basis of membership of any group including gender, sexual orientation, family circumstance, ethnic or national origin, disability (physical or mental) religious or political beliefs.
As part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), Wolverdene school aims to:

- Provide opportunity to all
- Foster good relations, and create effective partnership with all sections of the community
- Only take actions which do not discriminate unlawfully in service delivery, commissioning and employment
- Provide an environment free from fear and discrimination, where diversity, respect and dignity are valued
- Demonstrate zero tolerance to any form of bullying, harassment or abuse.

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Appendix 1 – Investigation Process


Possible outcomes from LADO / Case Manager discussion. Determines whether joint strategy meeting required.
No likely involvement from Police or Children's Services. Case Manager can details of allegation with the accused
LADO will lead further investigations and advise on possible outcomes
No disciplinary action. Case Manager will institute appropriate action within 3 working days.
Disciplinary action with no further investigation. Hearing to be held within 15 working days.
Disciplinary action with further investigation. Investigating officer appointed (from Governing Body)
Within 10 working days: Investigating officer provides report to Case Manager.
If disciplinary hearing is still required - to be held within 15 working days
No cause to suspect significant harm but possible criminal offence. LADO will inform police
Joint evaluation within 1 working day of the referral. Determines whether disciplinary investigations run parallel to police investigation or waits until its conclusion.
Investigations reviewed by police within 4 weeks & then at fortnightly or monthly intervals dependent on complexity of case
Outcome: no charge, caution given, acquitted in court. Case Manager / LADO will determine disciplinary actions
Outcome: convicted of an offence. Police will inform the employer in order to take appropriate action
Suspect that 'significant harm' is an issue. LADO will refer to Children's Services / Police and ask for a strategy meeting to be convened straight away.
Strategy meeting convened. Process will include developing risk assessment and offer guidance on whether the accused should be suspended or alternative responses are appropriate.
Strategy meeting convened within 1 working day of referral & chaired by child **protection** & review unit. Meeting will include; LADO, Case manager, EPS representative.
Accused does not attend strategy meeting. Meeting will determine when & how the accused should be informed
Outcome of strategy meeting & likely course of action shared with: the child (& parents) making the accusation; the accused; the Chair of Governors
Subsequent strategy meetings will be held fortnightly, or at a minimum, monthly to review progress.

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Appendix 2

Strategy Meeting

A strategy meeting, chaired by the Child Protection Unit will convene within one working day of the referral from LADO being made.

The purpose of the strategy meeting is to:

- Consider the risk to the child directly involved & to other children.
- Share all relevant information about the person who is the subject of the allegation and about the alleged victim.
- Determine the need for investigation and who is responsible for carrying this out.
- Plan the investigation / enquiries and set timescales for tasks to be undertaken.
- Consider whether any other children are affected by the allegation, e.g. the accused own children / grandchildren or other children in agency settings, such as placed with foster carers, childminders or youth clubs.
- Ensure that the person who is the subject of the allegation is kept informed and supported.
- Decide how regular information and support will be provided to the child and family and by whom.
- Plan all interviews and agree who should undertake them so that there is no confusion between a criminal investigation (Section 47 enquiry) and disciplinary processes.
- Consider the need to inform relevant parties.
- Jointly consider how to manage any media interest.
- Consider whether the accused is to be suspended from contact with pupils; this may change as the investigation progresses and should be reviewed regularly.
- Consider the appropriate course of action if the allegation is against a governor, a temporary member of staff or a supply teacher.

Referral to DBS

If, on conclusion of the case, the school ceases to use the person's services against who the allegation was made, or the person ceases to provide their services, a joint consultation with LADO will decide whether a referral to DBS is required. If a referral is appropriate, the report will be made within one month.
The school will make a referral to DBS where there is reason to believe that an individual has engaged in conduct that has harmed, or is likely to harm, a child, or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child. This duty applies to all individuals, irrelevant of whether they are working in regulated activity or not.

Terms of reference

The following definitions will 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.

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Appendix 3 – Information Guide for Employees Facing Allegations

The aim of this information guide is to explain the processes involved, and the support and guidance available, if it is alleged that that an employee has:

- Harmed a pupil or put a pupil at risk of harm.
- Committed a criminal act towards a pupil.
- Behaved in a way that raises concern about the risk you may pose to children or young people.

1. Initial action

As soon as possible after the allegation is made, the case manager will consult the LADO to discuss the next action points, taking advice from children's social care services and the police as needed. The police may advise that the employee is not told about the allegation immediately. The case manager's decision will be one, or a combination of, the following:

a. The pupil is alleged to have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm which requires immediate referral to children's social care services.
b. A criminal offence is alleged – this requires referral to children's social care services and the police.

(A strategy discussion will take place involving police, children's social care services, the case manager, the LADO and the EPS. The employee should not be present. The discussion will focus on the needs of the pupil(s) who may be at risk. It will determine what action should be taken regarding further investigation, but it is not part of any disciplinary procedures).

c. The allegation represents poor or inappropriate behaviour – this should be considered under the school's disciplinary and/or capability procedures.

(An investigation will be initiated under the school's disciplinary and/or capability procedures).

d. The allegation is clearly and demonstrably without foundation and no further action will be taken.

(The employee should be told orally and in writing that the allegation is without foundation and that no further action will be taken).

2. Types of possible investigation

The types of investigation that may be undertaken are:

- Child protection inquiries by children's social care services.
- Criminal investigation by the police.
- Disciplinary/capability investigation.

A disciplinary investigation will usually be held in abeyance until external agency investigations are complete, unless prior agreement is reached. Whilst these investigations should be conducted as speedily as possible, they should also be balanced against the need

to be thorough and fair, in line with natural justice. Statements taken in external investigations could be used in subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

3. Suspension

Suspension is a neutral act and should not be automatic. Where possible, the decision to suspend should be informed by the strategy discussion, and should only occur when the known facts relating to the allegation indicate:

- A pupil may be at risk.
- The allegation is so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct is possible.
- Suspension is necessary to allow the conduct of the investigation to proceed unimpeded.

Alternatives to suspension will be considered including, leave of absence, transfer of duties or additional supervision.
Where suspension is being considered, an interview with the employee will normally be arranged. They have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a colleague. They are advised to seek the assistance of their union representative. If they are suspended, one of the union representative's roles will be to promote the employee's interests and raise issues that may be of concern to them.
The interview is not an examination of the evidence, but an opportunity for the employee to make representations concerning possible suspension.
Other people, including other staff, should only be told about the allegation on a 'need-to-know basis'. Notification may be delayed if the police think this could prejudice an investigation.
Those who will be told of the allegation and likely course of action include the employee, the pupil concerned, their parents, the person making the allegation, the employee's manager, the case manager, EPS, the LADO and the investigating agencies as above.
If the employee is suspended, those persons likely to be on a disciplinary panel, if convened, will be given limited information so any future disciplinary process is not prejudiced. If the matter becomes common knowledge, it may be necessary to issue a brief statement, agreed by the agencies concerned, to parents, pupils and/or the public.

4. Support

The employee should expect to be:

- Advised to contact their union representative.
- Given a support contact within the school who should keep them up-to-date with the progress of their case.
- Given a team contact, if they are suspended, who will update them about normal school activities. Social contact with colleagues will not be precluded unless it is deemed detrimental to the investigation. The type of information and frequency of contact will be agreed, but colleagues should not comment on or discuss the investigation.
- Offered access to staff counselling service and/or occupational health support.

This may be a stressful time, so in addition to contacting their union representative, they are advised to see their GP if they think their health may be affected.