

Cockton Hill Infants' School
Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Policy



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Chair of Governors: Bob Woods

	Date	Name	Position
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Reviewed	01/09/26	Tom Cuthbertson	Head Teacher
Equality Reviewed	01/09/26	John Redman	Equality Governor
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1. Purpose and Commitment

Cockton Hill Infants' School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This policy sets out the school's detailed procedure for responding to and managing allegations or concerns about any adult who works in or on behalf of the school—including employees, volunteers, supply staff, contractors, sports coaches, and external providers—so that children are protected, allegations are handled promptly and fairly, and statutory and local requirements are met.

The policy operationalises the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) procedures on managing allegations and aligns with core national frameworks referenced within those procedures, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, data protection legislation, and DBS referral guidance as set out in the DSCP chapter. For current guidance on DBS referrals and leaflets, see the DBS website resources indicated in the DSCP procedures.

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding Policy, Low-Level Concerns Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, and Safer Recruitment Policy.

2. Scope and Application

This policy applies to all paid and unpaid adults working with or for the school, including those who manage or facilitate access to school premises where children are present (e.g., external clubs, peripatetic teachers, and activity leaders). It also applies where an allegation relates to conduct outside work that may present a transferable risk to children the person works with (for example, behaviour in personal life, being subject to child protection procedures as a parent/carer, or close association with someone who poses a risk to children).

3. What is an Allegation?

For the purposes of this policy, an allegation meets the threshold when it is claimed that a person 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (including behaviour outside work).

Harm can be sexual, physical, emotional, or neglect. Examples include inappropriate sexual behaviour (including offences under the Sexual Offences Act), grooming (including online), possession, creation, or distribution of nudes and semi-nudes of children (including AI-generated content, deepfakes, or digitally altered images), physical assault or unreasonable restraint, seclusion used other than in exceptional circumstances, serious bullying, and neglect through inadequate supervision or failure to seek medical care. Conduct such as possession of a weapon or domestic

abuse in an adult's personal life may also raise safeguarding concerns requiring assessment of transferable risk. If in doubt, staff must seek advice from the LADO.

4. Low-Level Concerns (Below the Harm Threshold)

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold—such as behaviour inconsistent with the staff code of conduct (e.g., being over friendly, having favourites, taking photographs of children on a personal device contrary to policy, or engaging one-to-one in secluded areas)—must still be addressed promptly. Our school already has a separate Low-Level Concerns Policy, which outlines how such matters should be managed. Schools should promote an open, transparent culture in which any low-level concern is shared, recorded, reviewed, and responded to appropriately in line with that policy. If there is any doubt about whether information meets the harm threshold, the Head Teacher (or senior manager) must consult the LADO.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is the school's senior manager for allegations. They ensure adherence to this policy, resolve any interagency issues, and must report relevant allegations to the LADO within one working day. They do not investigate the allegation themselves. If the Head Teacher is the subject of the allegation, the Chair of Governors assumes this role.

5.2 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Durham County Council's LADO manages and oversees cases, provides advice and guidance, liaises with police and Children's Services, and monitors progress to ensure cases are dealt with promptly, thoroughly, and fairly. The LADO does not investigate; investigations are undertaken by the employer/organisation and/or the police/Children's Services. The LADO ensures allegations are not dealt with in isolation and that safeguarding and support for children are actioned without delay.

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** Sharon Lewis / Louise Brookes — 03000 268835
- **Secure email:** CYPSSLADOSecure@durham.gov.uk
- **First Contact Service:** 03000 26 79 79

5.3 Police and Children's Services

Durham Police lead criminal investigations and liaise with the LADO; Families First Teams arrange strategy meetings, undertake assessments, and provide help/services where criteria are met under Working Together. Where police or Children's Social Care are involved, their process takes precedence over internal procedures.

5.4 Human Resources (HR)

HR advises the school on employment processes, including decisions about suspension, alternatives to suspension, disciplinary action, and staff welfare during an investigation.

5.5 Whistleblowing

All staff must be aware of the school's whistleblowing policy and feel confident to voice concerns about colleagues. If a staff member believes an allegation is not being handled appropriately by the school, they should contact the LADO directly.

6. Immediate Response When an Allegation is Received

6.1 What the Recipient of the Allegation Must Do

Treat the matter seriously; keep an open mind; do not investigate or ask leading questions; do not promise confidentiality. Make a written record (preferably in the child's or adult's own words) noting time, date, place, persons present, and what was said; sign and date the record. Report immediately to the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the Head Teacher is implicated).

6.2 Urgent Safeguarding and Reporting

If there is an immediate risk to a child, call the Police (999 emergency / 101 non-emergency) and the Emergency Duty Team (03000 267979) without delay; inform the LADO as soon as possible thereafter. In all other cases, the Head Teacher must review the information and refer to the LADO within one working day; if unclear whether the threshold is met, seek LADO advice.

7. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Sensitive information must be managed securely. Information is restricted to those who need to know to protect children, facilitate enquiries, and manage disciplinary/suitability processes. During police investigations, the police investigating officer leads decisions on what can be shared. The Education Act 2011 restricts publication of information identifying a teacher subject to a criminal offence allegation until charge; breaches may constitute an offence. Information sharing must comply with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

8. Consideration by the LADO and Allegations Meetings

8.1 Initial Consideration

The LADO assesses whether the threshold is met. If not met, the school should address conduct/behaviour concerns through normal employment practices; the LADO will record the decision. Where there is disagreement, escalate to the LADO Manager.

8.2 Multi-Agency Allegations Meeting/Discussion

Where needed, a face-to-face meeting (or structured multi-agency discussion) is convened—normally within three working days of referral. Attendees may include the LADO (chair), Durham Police lead, social work manager for the child, the school's senior manager (and HR), and any relevant regulatory bodies (e.g., Ofsted for early years). The voices of the child and parent/carer should be represented. The meeting shares information, agrees investigative strategy and timescales, sets safeguarding and support arrangements for affected children, confirms what can be shared with the employee, child, and parents, considers previous concerns, and determines whether complex abuse procedures apply. It also decides protocols for parallel disciplinary processes and any interim notifications to regulatory bodies. Detailed decisions, risk assessments, actions, and responsibilities are formally recorded.

8.3 Timescales

Investigations must proceed as a priority. Target timescales (achieved in all but exceptional cases) include: unsubstantiated/malicious allegations resolved within one week; employer-led cases (no possible criminal offence) to instigate action within three working days; disciplinary hearings (where feasible without further investigation) within 15 working days.

9. Suspension and Alternatives

The decision to suspend lies with the employer, not the LADO, Children's Services, or police. Suspension is considered only where a child (or children) at the workplace is/are at risk of harm or the case is so serious it might be grounds for dismissal. Before suspending, the Head Teacher should assess risk and consider alternatives such as redeployment (to remove direct contact), supervised contact, temporary transfer to different duties/location, or redeployment to roles without unsupervised access. Where immediate suspension is necessary, the rationale—including why alternatives were not suitable—must be recorded and shared with the LADO. Written confirmation of suspension is sent to the individual within one working day and must identify a named school contact for welfare support.

10. Notifications, Participation, and Support

10.1 Parents/Carers and the Child

The school is responsible for informing parents/carers of any allegation relating to their child and for keeping them up to date with case progress—unless police or Children's Services advise otherwise. The school must ensure arrangements for hearing and representing the child's voice, and for providing appropriate support throughout.

10.2 The Person Subject to the Allegation

Subject to LADO/police advice on what can be shared and when, the school informs the person of the allegation, maintains regular updates, and enables them to participate fully in any investigation (including opportunities to make written or oral

representations). Welfare support is offered throughout, including contact details for their named school representative.

11. Outcomes, Record-Keeping, and References

11.1 Outcomes

At the final review (multi-agency discussion/meeting), the outcome is determined as one of: No Further Action; Substantiated; False; Malicious; Unfounded; Unsubstantiated. Outcomes are recorded in detail. The school provides the person with a written summary of the allegation, how it was followed up and resolved, actions taken, whether it will be referred to in future references, how long records will be retained, and whether referrals to DBS/regulatory bodies will be made. False or malicious allegations may indicate abuse elsewhere and should prompt consideration/referral to Children's Services.

11.2 Employment Records and References

Details of malicious allegations are removed from personnel records. In all other cases, the final record is kept on the confidential personnel file to inform accurate future references and to prevent unnecessary reinvestigation if the matter resurfaces. Records are retained until the person reaches normal pension age or 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is longer. Substantiated findings are referenced in future references; cases determined as NFA, false, unsubstantiated, unfounded, or malicious are not referenced, and a history of repeated such concerns should also not be included.

12. Referrals to DBS, Ofsted, and Professional Bodies

There is a legal duty for regulated activity providers (employers or volunteer managers) and personnel suppliers to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) when an individual in regulated activity has engaged in relevant conduct that harmed or put a child at risk, satisfied the Harm Test, or was cautioned/convicted of an automatic barring offence—and the person is dismissed, removed from regulated activity, or would have been if they had not resigned/left. In accordance with statutory updates removing the supervision exemption for regular volunteer roles, all staff and regular volunteers engaging in teaching, training, instructing, or caring for children fall under regulated activity and are subject to these statutory referral protocols.

Furthermore, under statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements, staff or volunteers working within our early years provision must not commence work or volunteering duties prior to the full receipt of a clear Enhanced DBS certificate with Barred List check.

The school must also consider referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) and any relevant professional/regulatory body. Early years and childcare providers must inform Ofsted of any allegation of serious harm or abuse by anyone living/working/looking after children on the premises and invite Ofsted to relevant meetings as appropriate. Full guidance and leaflets are available via the DBS.

13. Resignations and Settlement (Compromise) Agreements

The school will seek to reach a conclusion in all cases—even if the person refuses to cooperate—providing full opportunity to respond. Settlement agreements must not be used to avoid disciplinary action or to prevent statutory referrals; doing so could constitute a criminal offence if it prevents a legally required DBS referral.

14. Escalation, Complaints, and New Information

Where professionals disagree with LADO consultation outcomes, concerns may be escalated to the LADO Strategic Manager, then to the Head of Service, and, if unresolved, to the Chair of Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership. Complaints about the conduct of investigations must be directed to the organisation responsible (police for criminal enquiries; the school or relevant employer for HR processes). Complaints about application of DSCP procedures should be made in writing to the LADO Manager. If substantial new information emerges after a case concludes, the LADO Manager will consider whether it materially affects the outcome and whether further review is appropriate, notifying the reportee in writing.

15. Learning Lessons and Governance

At each case conclusion, the school—alongside the LADO—considers learning to strengthen practice and determines whether the threshold for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review is met. The LADO monitors case progress (usually monthly depending on complexity) and records reasons for delays in the final review.

16. Training, Culture, and Review

All staff, volunteers, and governors receive induction and regular training on this policy, our staff code of conduct, safer working practices, and low-level concerns processes. In accordance with statutory guidance, all staff members, regardless of role, are required to read and understand Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education in full as part of their induction and annual safeguarding updates.

Leaders promote an open, transparent culture in which concerns and allegations are reported promptly and managed rigorously. The governing body reviews this policy annually or sooner if statutory guidance or DSCP procedures change.

17. Contact Details (Durham)

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 03000 268835 | **Secure Email:** CYPSSLADOsecure@durham.gov.uk
- **Emergency Duty Team (out of hours):** 03000 267979
- **Durham Constabulary:** 999 (Emergency) | 101 (Non-Emergency)

Appendix A: Summary Process (Narrative)

- **Receive and Record:** Any staff member who receives an allegation must record the account verbatim where possible, with time, date, place, and

witnesses, and immediately inform the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the Head Teacher is implicated). No investigation or leading questions should be undertaken at this stage.

- **Safeguard and Refer:** If a child is at immediate risk, contact the police and Emergency Duty Team. In all cases, the Head Teacher refers the allegation to the LADO within one working day and follows LADO guidance on information sharing with the child, parents/carers, and the person subject to the allegation.
- **LADO Consideration:** The LADO assesses if the threshold is met and either records a decision for employer-led management of conduct (below threshold) or convenes a multi-agency meeting/discussion within three working days to coordinate the investigation strategy.
- **Investigation and Support:** Police/Children's Services processes take precedence over internal HR. The school implements safeguarding plans for the child, considers suspension or alternatives on a risk-assessed basis, and provides welfare support for the staff member and child/family throughout.
- **Outcome and Actions:** The multi-agency final review determines the outcome category. The school records decisions, writes to the staff member with a comprehensive summary, updates parents/carers as appropriate, manages references and records lawfully, and makes required referrals to DBS/TRA/Ofsted and professional bodies.
- **Learning and Closure:** The school and LADO identify lessons, address any complaints via the appropriate organisation, and consider whether new information warrants review.