

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S SCHOOL

Allegations Management Policy Allegations of Abuse Against Staff

Reviewed by the Governors' Education Committee, Autumn 2024

Approved by the Full Governing Body, Autumn 2024

To be reviewed Autumn 2025

1. Purpose

The strong Safeguarding structure within St Bart's is rooted in an organisational culture within the school that has the highest expectations for the behaviour of all adults who work with our students. The school recognise that key to effective Safeguarding is a positive culture where:

- it is recognised that abuse could happen here and so vigilance is essential
- adults who work within the school are clear about professional boundaries (as set out in the school Code of Conduct) and work within these in promotion of the ethos of the school
- behaviour which is not consistent with the values of the school need to be addressed
- concerns of any level can be identified and spoken about openly
- the importance of early identification of inappropriate behaviour and prompt and appropriate management of concerns in order to minimise the risk of abuse is understood
- there is transparency in the procedures for managing concerns, of any level, and appropriate record keeping and oversight of these processes

2. Key Terminology

Concern / Allegation

Within this policy, it is recognised that 'concern' and 'allegation' can and are used interchangeably by different people. It is also recognised that some may shy away from using the term 'allegation', preferring to refer to behaviour they are reporting as a 'concern'. It is our aim that the language used should not be a barrier to reporting or hinder openness in the subsequent discussion of concerns raised. The focus of any response will be on the behaviour being described by the person reporting it, not on the language used to describe it.

3. The Spectrum of Behaviour

Behaviour which is not consistent with the school ethos, and which does not meet the expectations of the staff code of conduct, needs to be addressed. However, it is recognised by the school that such behaviours can exist on a wide spectrum – from the inadvertent or thoughtless, to that which is ultimately intended to cause harm. In responding to concerns, there are two broad categories that concerns can be placed within: those which may meet the threshold for harm and those which are 'low-level'. This 'spectrum' is further detailed below.

Concern or allegation that may meet harm threshold

Behaviour which indicates that an adult who works with student has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; and/or
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; and/or
- behaved towards a student or students in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to students; and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with students.

Low-level concern

Does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ – that an adult working with students may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with an organisation’s staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and
- does not meet the harm threshold, or is otherwise not serious enough to merit a referral to the LADO.

Appropriate Conduct

Behaviour which is completely consistent with the school’s Code of Conduct, and the Law

4. Establishing if a concern meets the thresholds for harm or is a ‘low-level’ concern.

It is essential to note that individuals reporting concerns do not need to be able to determine in each case whether the behaviour in question constitutes a low-level concern, or if it may meet the harm threshold. Once individuals have shared what they believe to be a concern – of any level - that determination will be made by the Headteacher in consultation with the DSL. Where there is any doubt as to if the concern may meet the threshold for harm, advice will be sought from the LADO.

5. Reporting Concerns

If staff have a concern about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers or contractors) these should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jon Bastable (or in his absence a Deputy Safeguarding Lead within the Senior Leadership Team). The DSL / DDSL receiving the concern will alert the Headteacher, David Fitter, to the concern raised the same working day and a decision will be made, and recorded, as to if the concern may meet the harm threshold or if it is a low-level concern.

If staff have concerns about the DSL, they should report these directly to the Headteacher. Where there is a concern about the Headteacher, this should be referred to the Chair of Governors, Gary Norman.

Where staff do not feel they can raise concerns within the school structure, they should report their concerns directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO@westberks.gov.uk)

6. Confidentiality when reporting concerns regarding another member of staff

Where a member of staff wishes to remain anonymous when raising a concern about a colleague, the school will work to respect their wishes as far as possible. However, there may be circumstances where naming the source of the information may be unavoidable, or the nature of the information

shared means that they can be identified as the source by the member of staff subject to the allegation. For that reasons, anonymity cannot be promised to staff who share concerns.

The school is committed to ensuring there is a culture for safeguarding in which staff are aware of the importance of sharing concerns and feel confident in so doing.

7. Self – Reported Concerns

The school recognise that occasionally staff may find themselves in situations which could be misinterpreted, or might appear compromising to others. Staff should, wherever possible, proactively self-report if they know they are going to be in a situation that could be considered a breach of the staff code of conduct (for example, where they play in an external sports team with current students and they may be on a WhatsApp group with them).

Where a member of staff may have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider falls below the standard set out in the staff code of conduct the school encourages self-reporting. Self-reporting in such circumstances is self-protective as it enables potentially difficult issues to be addressed promptly and transparently and demonstrates an understanding of the expected professional conduct.

The school is committed to ensuring it creates an environment where staff are encouraged to self-refer and feel confident in so doing as it recognised the role self-referral plays in maintaining a culture where everyone aspires to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour : a culture within which those who may wish to cause harm cannot act unnoticed.

8. How the school will respond to concerns

When responding to concerns, the school will aim to ensure that:

- common sense and judgement are applied
- allegations are dealt with quickly, fairly and consistently
- there is open communication with, and transparency of process for, the person subject to any allegation (excepting where to share details of allegations may jeopardise any criminal investigation or put a young person at risk – in such instances the school will be guided by other agencies on the appropriate channels and content of communication)

There are two aspects to be considered in responding to any concern raised:

- **Looking after the welfare of the student/students involved**
The DSL is responsible for ensuring that the child is not at risk and will work with the safeguarding team to ensure appropriate support (and wider agency referrals) are in place as needed.
- **Investigating and supporting the person subject to any allegation**
A case manager will be appointed by the Headteacher to oversee the investigation into the concern raised. The nature of the investigation, and the nature of support provided and its source will be determined by which category the concern falls into.

9. Concerns or allegations which may meet the threshold for harm

In cases where a concern or allegation is judged as having the potential to meet the threshold for harm, the school will follow the procedures set out within Part Four Section One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

This means that the Headteacher or DSL (as delegated to by the Headteacher), will report the concern to the LADO and the police if necessary within one working day. The school will be guided by the LADO on subsequent actions.

Transferrable Risk

Keeping Children Safe in Education clearly states that indications that a person may pose a risk of harm to a student/students includes behaviour that may have happened outside of school. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include:

- An arrest for possession of a weapon
- As a parent or carer, have become subject to child protection procedures
- Being closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g. partner, member of the family or household) who may present a risk of harm to students.

KCSIE advises that, where appropriate, an assessment of transferable risk to students with whom the person works should be undertaken with advice sought from the LADO in such cases as needed. In such cases, a Transferable Risk Assessment (Appendix B) will be completed to document any information discussed and rationale for any decisions reached.

10. Concerns or allegations that do not meet the threshold for referral to the LADO / other agencies

Concerns which do not meet the harm thresholds outlined above, are referred to as a 'Low-Level' concern. **The term 'Low-Level' does not mean that it is insignificant.**

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working with student may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the school's staff code of conduct or the Guidance for Safer Working Practices for Adults Working with Children (February 2022), including inappropriate conduct outside of work.

Due the wide spectrum of concerns and allegations which fall within the category, the Headteacher will allocate a senior member of staff as a case manager who will oversee any investigation and / or support needed for the member of staff involved.

In cases where the threshold for disciplinary procedures is met, the procedures as set out in in the Disciplinary Policy will be followed. In cases which do not meet the threshold for disciplinary procedures, internal follow up will be managed by the allocated member of senior staff.

11. Record Keeping

In all cases where a concern or allegation is received, robust and timely records will be kept during all investigations.

In cases which meet the threshold for LADO involvement or where the threshold for disciplinary procedures had been met and the concern or allegation was found to be malicious or false, records will not be kept unless consent has been given by the member of staff for it to be so. In all other cases where the threshold of harm has been met, records will be kept in line with the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, Part Four, Section One.

In cases of 'Low-Level' Concerns where the threshold for disciplinary procedures has not been met, A 'Low-Level Concern Record' (Appendix A) will be kept – this will include a record of the rationale for any action taken in response to the concern. These records will be kept in line with the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, Part Four, Section Two

In the case of concerns raised about supply staff or contractors, these will be shared with their employers so that any potential patterns of behaviour can be identified.

The school will follow the statutory guidance in relation to the retention of records and what information should, and should not, be included within employment references as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

The school recognises the importance of ensuring that any potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour are identified. For that reason, an overview record of concerns raised is securely held by the DSL. This includes those concerns that meet the threshold of LADO involvement, and those which are low-level concerns.

This central record of all concerns raised allows for oversight into any arising patterns either in the behaviour of individuals or across the school. Such oversight allows for vigilance in monitoring and identification of training needs. This document is regularly reviewed with the Headteacher.

In cases where students have been provided with safeguarding support following a concern raised regarding a member of staff, their student safeguarding record in My Concern will reference that there has been an allegation regarding a member of staff. Their safeguarding record in My Concern may indicate actions taken following the concern / allegation (i.e. Student X spoken to by a social worker within school re. staff allegation), but no further details of the allegation or details which could identify the member of staff will be held within the My Concern record. A case number will be recorded and any further details will be securely held by the DSL. No information regarding an allegation involving a member of staff will be held in student files within house offices.

12. Data Protection and Rights of Access

The primary concern of record keeping will always be the accuracy and safeguarding value of the record. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 highlights the exemption to the right of access where there is a risk of serious harm but the school understands that there is no stand-alone 'safeguarding' exemption that over-rides the subject access right.

The school is aware of the principles of employment law (in terms of process and decision-making) and data protection law (in terms of principles of transparency, fairness, accountability and accuracy) and supports the view that staff should understand information held about them and, if appropriate, be able to correct or feed into that information.

The school will ensure that records kept in relation to allegations and concerns are fair, accurate and neutral and staff for whom concerns have been raised will have rights of access to those records provided that this would not also unreasonably disclose information of students. If any specific child

may be identifiable from the concerns record – even if their name is omitted or redacted – then it is likely to be inappropriate to share this record with the adult in question following a subject access request.

Staff will be notified of this policy, partly for its proper implementation but also under the data protection principles of fairness and transparency. As a general rule, if the policy is being applied correctly, staff should not be in the dark about either the existence or the nature of concern about them.

13. Evaluation

The implementation of this Policy will be monitored by the Education Committee through termly updates from the Leadership Team.

Agreed by the Full Governing Body at their meeting on 10th December 2024.



Allegations Against Staff Policy Appendix A Low Level Concern Record Form

This form is to be used to record any concern raised about a member of staff that does not meet the threshold for potential to cause harm.

That includes concerns that a member of staff may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with St Bart's Code of Conduct, or the DfE Guidance on Safer Working Practices for Adults Working with Children, including inappropriate conduct outside of work.
- Does not meet the harm threshold, or is otherwise not serious enough to merit a referral to the LADO
- could be misinterpreted, or might appear compromising to others.

This form can also be used to record pro-active self-reporting in cases where staff should know they are going to be in a situation that could be considered a breach of the staff code of conduct

Name of staff member concern is regarding	
Department and role within school	
Name of staff member reporting the concern	

Details of Concern

Include as much detail as possible including a brief context in which the concern took place, if known and concise details (which are chronological where possible) of any such concern and relevant incident(s).

The names of any students known to have been involved or witness to the concern should be included here.

Concern reported to / received by		Date and time of report	/ /
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Action Taken

Include as much detail as possible, including:

- a summary of internal conversations – including with the person who initially shared the low-level concern, the adult about whom the concern has been shared, and any relevant witnesses;
- a summary of external conversations – for example, with the LADO/other external agencies
- the determination reached by the headteacher / DSL
- the rationale for their decision and any further action taken.

Name of the member of staff completing this form		Role with school	
Signature		Date	/ /

Appendix B

This form applies to staff and volunteers, including Governors.

Transferable Risk Assessment / Management Plan

CONFIDENTIAL ONCE COMPLETED – PLEASE ENSURE THAT ANY INFORMATION DETAILED BELOW IS APPROPRIATE TO BE SHARED WITH THE INDIVIDUAL

Name of individual this form concerns		Role within school:	
		Role relating to allegation:	
		Other Role(s):	
Risk Assessment			
Start Date of the Assessment:			
What are we worried about? Details of current allegation/ concern/ what's happened?			
What is the possible transferable risk into this role? Consider: What is the potential risk identified? (Physical, sexual, inappropriate behaviour, reputational harm, strategic impact etc.) Were there any triggers or circumstances that brought on the behaviour that could either increase or decrease the transferability of the risk into this workplace? Have any code of conducts or professional expectations been breached?			
Is there involvement from Children's Services? Yes / No	Yes / No Details:		
Is there an ongoing police investigation? Yes / No	Yes / No Details:		
Have there been any previous allegations / concerns about the member of staff / volunteer at work? (What were they and what was the outcome)	Yes / No Details:		

<p>Strengths and protective factors (Positive aspects of the individual's practice or conduct)</p>	
<p>What is the view of the individual in relation to the allegation / transferable risk? (Consider: does their account change any of the potential transferable risks?)</p> <p>Does their insight and understanding of the risks identified indicate a willingness or capacity to change the risk?</p> <p>Any mitigating factors to be considered?</p>	
<p>Complicating factors – Are there any barriers to managing the situation safely? Is there anything else impacting on the individual's ability to safely work with students?</p>	
<p>Is there any other information or facts that need to be established to inform decision making?</p>	

Risk Assessment – Recommendations

<p>Should a suspension be put in place?</p> <p>Is the individual suitable to remain in role working with students currently?</p> <p>Do the risks outweigh the protective factors? Is there anything that can be arranged to manage the risks?</p>	<p>Yes / No</p> <p>Details:</p>	<p><i>Notes:</i></p> <p><i>If you consider that the behaviour makes the individual unsuitable to continue in role, employment law still needs to be followed and advice should be sought from an HR. The requirement to safeguard students should be the primary consideration and advice should be sought from the LADO.</i></p>
<p>Can any plans be put in place to manage the risks?</p> <p><i>For example, training, safety plans, adjustments to the subject's role (home working, non-student facing duties, redeployment within the setting), managerial guidance etc.</i></p>	<p><i>Actions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 	

	4.
The plan will be reviewed at regular intervals.	Every..... Month(s) for a period of Months
	Reviewed by:

Signatures		
Date	Name	Signed

Review Record		
Review Date	Any comments or adjustments	Signed

Closure Record		
Closure Date	Any comments	Signed

