



CORINIUM
EDUCATION
TRUST

Policy: Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against teachers, other staff and volunteers

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Statement of Procedures follows the DfE Statutory Guidance: 'Keeping Children Safe in Education Part four: Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff.' This is updated annually.
- 1.2. Dealing with an allegation that a professional, staff member, or volunteer has abused a child is difficult but must be taken seriously and dealt with carefully and fairly.
- 1.3. Every organisation that provides services for children, or works with children, needs to:
 - carry out checks on all new staff and volunteers as part of a safe recruitment process to ensure, as far as is possible, that they are safe to work with children and young people; and
 - have procedures in place for dealing with allegations of abuse against people who work with children.
- 1.4. It is important that all who work with children are aware of these procedures within their organisation or setting and know where to access them should the need arise.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This statement of procedures is about managing cases of allegations that might indicate that a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in regular or close contact with children in their present position, or in any capacity with children at The Corinium Education Trust and/or its schools.
- 2.2. These procedures will be used in respect of all cases where it is alleged that an employee, volunteer or a person with permission to be on the premises or carrying out any activity on behalf of The Corinium Education Trust 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 would pose a risk of harm to children;
 - behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates he or she may not be suitable to continue to work with children.
- 2.3. Additionally, these procedures may be used:
 - if there are concerns about the person's behaviour towards their own children, or
 - if there are concerns about the person's behaviour towards children unrelated to their employment or voluntary work, and there has been a recommendation from a strategy discussion that consideration should be given to the risk posed to children they work with, or
 - when an allegation is made about abuse that took place some time ago and the accused person may still be working with or having contact with children.

- 2.4. A low-level concern is defined as any concern about an adult's behaviour towards, or concerning, a child that does not meet the harms threshold (see point 2.5) or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral at the time of the reporting.
- 2.5. Low-level concerns refer to the behaviour on the part of a staff member towards pupils that is considered inappropriate in line with statutory safeguarding advice and the Code of Conduct.
- 2.6. Schools in the Trust understand that many serious safeguarding concerns often begin with low-level concerns. Schools will ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of recognising concerns before they escalate from low-level to serious.
- 2.7. This statement includes allegations involving any type of abuse or neglect, including inappropriate relationships with pupils, grooming behaviour of any kind, possession of indecent photographs or images of children and other offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- 2.8. As an employer, The Corinium Education Trust has a duty of care to all of our employees. The Trust will provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation and, where the Trust is not the employer of the individual, we recognise our responsibility to ensure all allegations are dealt with appropriately and we will liaise with relevant parties accordingly.
- 2.9. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching will be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.
- 2.10. The Corinium Education Trust's procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.
- 2.11. Any allegation of abuse will be dealt with as quickly as possible, in a fair, consistent and thorough way that provides effective protection for the child or children and at the same time deals fairly with the person who is the subject of the allegation.

3. Communicating the procedures

- 3.1. All members of The Corinium Education Trust's Leadership Group, their respective schools' leadership teams and Designated Safeguarding Leads with responsibility for child protection have a responsibility to ensure that all staff know about and understand the procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers, other staff and volunteers.
- 3.2. In accordance with the DfE Statutory Guidance, all staff should also read at least Part one of 'Keeping children safe in education' and Annex B, which contains safeguarding information for all staff, annually. Additionally, it is best practice if all staff having direct contact with children also read Part 5 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022'.
- 3.3. All members of The Corinium Education Trust's Leadership Group, their respective schools' leadership teams and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) have a responsibility to be familiar with the Statutory Guidance in its entirety and any subsequent changes or updates.

4. Prevention amongst staff

- 4.1. Schools in The Corinium Education Trust will ensure that all staff members are aware of the standards of appropriate behaviour expected towards pupils.

- 4.2 Staff will ensure that they pay due regard to the fact that:
- They are in a unique position of trust, care, responsibility, authority, and influence in relation to pupils.
 - There is a significant power imbalance in the pupil-staff dynamic.
 - There are more stringent expectations on their behaviour with regard to pupils due to their position as a public professional.
- 4.3 Staff will remain aware of the fact that all pupils under the age of 18, regardless of the phase and year group they are at within the school, are children by law – resultantly, staff will ensure that they do not assume maturity on behalf of a pupil and do not engage with pupils as they would with their own peers. Staff will be aware that where there is any doubt regarding whether the behaviour of another adult is appropriate, this should be reported to the DSL, headteacher or other nominated person immediately.
- 4.4 Inappropriate behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from inadvertent or thoughtless behaviour to behaviour which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. Examples of inappropriate behaviour that would constitute a low-level concern that should be reported to the DSL include, but are not limited to:
- Being overly friendly with children – this could include, but is not limited to, communicating with a child through personal social media or allowing inappropriate conversations or enquiries to occur with pupils, e.g. conversations that are about a staff member’s personal life or are of a sexual nature;
 - Having favourites – this could include, but is not limited to, calling pupils by pet names or terms of endearment or buying pupils gifts;
 - Taking photographs of children on their personal mobile phones or devices;
 - Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door;
 - Humiliating pupils.
- 4.5 Staff will be aware that some of the above low-level concerns may meet the harms threshold depending on certain factors, e.g. the age or needs of the child or the content of exchanged messages, and that some of the above incidents may not be concerns in context, e.g. a pre-approved, one-to-one meeting with a child behind a closed door between the child and a school counsellor who has received all appropriate safety checks.
- 4.6 Staff will also be made aware that behaviour which raises concerns may not be intentionally inappropriate, and that this does not negate the need to report the behaviour.
- 4.7 Staff members who engage in low-level inappropriate behaviour in relation to pupils inadvertently will be made aware and supported to correct this behaviour in line with The Corinium Education Trust’s Code of Conduct.
- 4.8 Headteachers will also evaluate whether additional training would be beneficial for any staff members exhibiting concerning behaviour, or the staff cohort as a whole where low-level concerning behaviour is seen more widely.

5. Reporting concerns

- 5.1. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Sharing concerns is important in creating and embedding a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the school’s values and expected behaviour are lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff.

5.2. Staff must **not**:

- Attempt to deal with the situation themselves;
- Make assumptions, offer alternative explanations or diminish or embellish the seriousness of the behaviour or alleged incidents;
- Keep the information to themselves or promise confidentiality;
- Take any action that might undermine any investigation or disciplinary procedure, such as disclosing confidential information, interviewing the alleged victim or potential witnesses, or informing the alleged perpetrator or parents/carers.

6. Low-level concerns

- 6.1. Low-level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the relevant school. If the low-level concern is about the Designated Safeguarding Lead it should be shared with the Headteacher. If the low-level concern refers to the headteacher it should be reported to the Chief Executive of the Corinium Education Trust and Chair of Governors for the relevant school. Examples of low-level concerns can be found in The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct, points 2.2 and 2.3 of this document also refer to low-level concerns.
- 6.2. Where a low-level concern relates to a person employed by a supply agency or a contractor to work in the school, concerns should be reported to the Headteacher who will in turn inform the employer of the subject of the concern.
- 6.3. Across The Corinium Education Trust all low-level concerns will be recorded on the form in Appendix A. A school may choose to set these up confidentially online such as in MS Forms. These low-level concerns will be managed internally by the relevant school, unless escalated to the Chief Executive where the concerns relates to a Headteacher.

7. Self-reporting

- 7.1. On occasion, a member of staff may feel as though they have acted in a way that:
- Could be misinterpreted.
 - Could appear compromising to others.
 - They realise, upon reflection, falls below the standards set out in The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct.
- 7.2. The school will ensure that an environment is maintained that encourages staff members to self-report if they feel as though they have acted inappropriately or in a way that could be construed as inappropriate upon reflection. The headteacher and DSL will, to the best of their abilities, maintain a culture of approachability for staff members, and will be understanding and sensitive towards those who self-report.
- 7.3. Staff members who self-report will not be treated more favourably during any resulting investigations than staff members who were reported by someone else; however, their self-awareness and intentions will be taken into consideration.

8. Reporting allegations.

- 8.1. If you have a concern that a person may have behaved inappropriately or you have received information that may constitute an allegation **you must**:
- Report the facts to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. All concerns will be listened to and managed appropriately; do not withhold information however trivial it may seem.

- In the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead you must report the matter to the most senior person available, or the school's Headteacher, who will carry out the Designated Safeguarding Lead's duties in his/her absence. If the allegation concerns the school's Headteacher, or The Corinium Education Trust's Chief Executive, then the matter must be reported to the Chair of the school's local governing body, or in the case of the Chief Executive, the Chair of The Corinium Education Trust's Board of Trustees.
- Make a signed and dated written record of your concerns, observations or the information you have received and give it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead straight away.
- Maintain strict confidentiality.

9. Dealing with concerns and allegations.

- 9.1. When a report is made to a school's Designated Safeguarding Lead it will be clear in some cases that an immediate referral must be made to social care or the police for investigation.
- 9.2. Where the headteacher is notified of a safeguarding concern, they will use their professional judgement to determine if the concern is low-level or if it must be immediately escalated, e.g. where a child is at immediate risk of harm.
- 9.3. When deciding if a concern is low-level, the headteacher will discuss the concern with the DSL and the deputy headteacher, and will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where there is any doubt about whether the concern in fact meets the harm threshold. When seeking external advice, the headteacher will ensure they adhere to the Data Protection Policy.
- 9.4. An immediate referral would be made if a child appears to have been harmed or is at risk of significant harm or a criminal act appears to have been committed.
- 9.5. To evaluate a concern, the headteacher and DSL will:
 - Speak to the individual who raised the concern to determine the facts and obtain any relevant additional information.
 - Review the information and determine whether the behaviour displayed by the individual about whom the concern was reported is consistent with The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct and the law.
 - Determine whether the concern, when considered alongside any other low-level concerns previously made about the same individual, should be reclassified as an allegation and dealt with according to those procedures.
 - Consult with, and seek advice from, external agencies when in doubt over the course of action to follow.
 - Speak to the individual about whom the concern has been raised to inform them of the concern and to give them an opportunity to respond to it.
 - Produce a report based on the actions above and ensure that accurate and detailed records are kept of all internal and external conversations regarding evaluating the concern, and any actions or decisions taken.
- 9.6. In many cases it may be difficult to judge on the basis of the information provided; it may be more about unprofessional behaviour or blurred boundaries between a staff member and a child or there may be no foundation in the allegation at all.

10. Unfounded concerns

- 10.1. If it is discovered upon evaluation that the low-level concern refers to behaviour that was not considered to be in breach of The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct, school standards or the law, the headteacher will speak to the individual about whom the concern was made to discuss their behaviour, why and how the behaviour may have been misconstrued, and what they can do to avoid such misunderstandings in the future.
- 10.2. The headteacher will also speak to the individual who shared the concern, outlining why the report is consistent with The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct, school standards and the law. The Headteacher will take care to ensure that conversations with individuals who reported concerns that transpired to be unfounded do not deter that individual from reporting concerns in the future.
- 10.3. The Headteacher will discuss the concern with the DSL (and the LADO if they have been contacted) to discern whether the behaviour, and the reporting of this behaviour, is indicative of ambiguity in the school's policies or procedures, or the training that staff receive. If there is ambiguity, the DSL and Headteacher will work together to resolve this.

11. Low-level concerns.

- 11.1. Where the headteacher determines that a concern is low-level, the school will respond to this in a sensitive and proportionate manner.
- 11.2. The specific approach to handling low-level concerns will be adapted on a case-by-case basis.
- 11.3. It is unlikely that a low-level concern will result in disciplinary procedures; however, individuals may be given warnings in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure where behaviour does not improve once it is brought to their attention.
- 11.4. Where behaviour does not improve over a longer period of time, the concerns will be escalated and dealt with in line with an allegation.
- 11.5. The DSL will hold a meeting with the individual about whom the concern was reported, during which they will:
 - Talk to the individual in a non-accusatory and sympathetic manner.
 - Inform them of how their behaviour was perceived by the individual who reported the concern (without naming them, where possible).
 - Clearly state what about their behaviour was inappropriate and problematic.
 - Discuss the reasons for the behaviour with the individual.
 - Inform the individual clearly what about their behaviour needs to change.
 - Discuss any support that the individual may require in order to achieve the proper standards of behaviour.
 - Allow the individual the opportunity to respond to the concern in their own words.
- 11.6. The DSL will ask the individual to re-read The Corinium Education Trust's Code of Conduct and/or Teachers Standards depending on the nature of the concern.
- 11.7. The DSL and the Headteacher will consider whether the individual should receive guidance, supervision or any further training.
- 11.8. Where considered appropriate in the circumstances, the headteacher will develop an action plan, with input from the individual, that outlines ongoing and transparent monitoring of the individual's behaviour and any other support measures implemented to ensure the staff member's behaviour improves.

- 11.9. Where any pupil or other individual has been made to feel uncomfortable by the individual's behaviour, they will be offered pastoral support, where appropriate.
- 11.10. The Headteacher will ensure that all details of the low-level concern, including any resultant actions taken, are recorded and securely stored. The Headteacher will ensure that these records are kept organised and up-to-date, and that it is easy to refer back to them if any other concerns are reported about the same individual.

12. Allegations.

- 12.1. There are two aspects to consider when an allegation is made:
- **Looking after the welfare of the child** – the Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that the child is not at risk and referring cases of suspected abuse to social care.
 - **Investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation** – the case manager should discuss with the LADO, the nature, content and context of the allegation, and agree a course of action.
- 12.2. All allegations will be taken seriously and objectively and dealt with in a timely manner.
- 12.3. When an allegation is made The Corinium Education Trust will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. This is in line with the reporting restrictions set out in The Education Act 2002.
- 12.4. A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Headteacher, or where the Headteacher is the subject of an allegation, the chair of Governors. If the Corinium Education Trust's Chief Executive is the subject of an allegation, then the 'case manager' will be the Chair of The Corinium Education Trust's Board of Trustees.
- 12.5. Investigations will be carried out in line with the procedures in The Corinium Education Trust's Staff Disciplinary Policy.
- 12.6. 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 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(s). The term does not imply guilt or innocence;
 - **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

13. Record Keeping

- 13.1. Records of low-level concerns will be kept in a secure format. Records of low-level concerns will not be kept in the personnel file of the individuals to whom the concerns pertain, unless there have been multiple low-level concerns made about the same individual. Where a concern is thought to be serious and is processed as an allegation, records of this will be kept in staff personnel files.
- 13.2. Where an allegation is made about an individual who has previously been subject to such allegations, or where a low-level concern is reclassified as a serious concern after meeting the harms threshold, all records of low-level concerns about that individual will be moved to the staff personnel file and kept alongside records of the allegation.

- 13.3. There is no statutory timeframe for the retention and secure disposal of low-level concern records.
- 13.4. The school will only refer to concerns about a staff member in employment references where they have amounted to a substantiated safeguarding allegation, i.e. it has met the harms threshold and has been found to have basis through investigation, or where it is not exclusively a safeguarding issue and forms part of an issue that would normally be included in a reference, e.g. misconduct or poor performance. Low-level safeguarding concerns will not be included in a reference, unless they have comprised a pattern of behaviour that has met the harms threshold.

14. Roles and responsibilities

- 14.1. Each school within The Corinium Education Trust has a member of the leadership team who is designated to deal with issues of safeguarding and child protection. Line Managers should report any concerns and, may be asked to support a colleague and/or monitor behaviours.
- 14.2. The roles and responsibilities of The Corinium Education Trust's **Designated Safeguarding Leads** in each of our schools are as described in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, Annex C.'
- 14.3. The contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Leads in each of The Corinium Education Trust's schools are published on the schools' websites and in their Safeguarding and Child Protection policies.
- 14.4. Every Local Authority has an identified **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** who has responsibility for:
- managing and overseeing individual allegations from across the children's workforce;
 - providing advice and guidance to senior managers and employers etc;
 - liaising with social care, police, Crown Prosecution Service and other relevant agencies;
 - monitoring progress of all cases to ensure they are dealt with in accordance with recommended timescales, as set out in these procedures;
 - co-ordinating and collating reports to provide information to the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive and DfE.
- 14.5. The LADO should be informed of all allegations and will provide advice and guidance in the management of these.

15. Related documents

- 15.1. This set of procedures relates to the following:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022;
 - Working together to safeguard children DfE publication 2018;
 - The Corinium Education Trust's Safeguarding Policy and individual school's Policies for safeguarding children.
 - The Corinium Education Trust's Staff Disciplinary Policy

Appendix A – Form for reporting low-level concerns (This may be adapted for use in MS Forms)



Thank you for reporting your concerns; we are grateful to you for taking the safety and welfare of our pupils seriously. Please fill in the below form, including as much detail as you can, and return it directly to the Headteacher or DSL. Please refrain from discussing this concern with anyone other than the Headteacher or DSL until the matter has been dealt with. We ask that you keep all details, including the name staff member to whom the concern pertains, confidential.

Your details	
Name (optional)	
Role	
Date and time of completing this form	
Details of individual whom the concern is about	
Name	
Role	
Relationship to the individual reporting the concern, e.g. manager, colleague	
Details of concern	
<p>Please include as much detail as possible. Think about the following: What behaviour and/or incident are you reporting? What exactly happened? Why does the behaviour and/or incident worry you? Why do you believe the behaviour and/or incident is not consistent with our Staff Code of Conduct?</p>	
Details of any children or young people involved	
Name(s)	
Do you believe there is a risk of harm to the above children or young people, either now or in the future, as a result of the individual's behaviour? Explain your answer.	

Next steps

What would you like to see happen in response to your concern?	
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Are you willing to meet with the Headteacher and DSL to discuss your concern? Please circle as appropriate.	Yes	No
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Please state any other information that you believe is relevant to the processing of this concern.	
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Signature	
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For use by the Headteacher or DSL upon receipt of concern

Date and time concern received	
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Signature of Headteacher or DSL	
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Actions to be taken (e.g. no action, investigation, reclassification as allegation meeting the harms threshold.)	
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Document History

Creation Date May 2021

Trust Lead Chief Executive

Approved by Trustees

First approval date May 2021

Review frequency Annually

Last review/approval date October 2022

Review date	Significant amendments	Made by	Next review
October 2021	Revised and updated to be in line with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021', specifically 4.1, 4.2, 4.8, 4.11 and 4.12. References to KCSIE Annex added to 3.2 and Annex C added to 5.2. The Corinium Education Trust's Staff Disciplinary Policy added to list of relevant policies (6.1)	CXH/HLC	October 2022
September 2022	Revised and updated in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022. New: 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 3.2: added in reference to Part 5 of KCSIE Section 4 – New- Prevention Amongst Staff Section 5 – divided into low-level concerns, self-reporting and allegations. Section 6 – created a new section from what was there previously. Divided into unfounded, low-level and allegations. Unfounded and low-level points are new. Section 7 – New: Record Keeping Appendix A – New: Record for reporting low-level concerns.	CXH/HLC	October 2023