

Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust



Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

April 2020

Reviewed: March 2025

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope of Procedure	3
3. Core Principles.....	3
4. Management of Staff.....	4
5. Allegations of a Serious Nature	5
6. Misconduct and Gross Misconduct	5
7. Suspension.....	7
8. Stages of the Disciplinary Procedure.....	7
9. Disciplinary Hearing.....	9
10. Appeals Against Disciplinary Action	11
11. Records of Warnings.....	12
Appendix 1: The Investigating Officer	14
Appendix 2: Suspension	15
Appendix 3: Conduct of Disciplinary Hearings	17
Appendix 4: Staff Facing an Allegation of Professional Abuse – Guidelines on Practice and Procedure	21
Appendix 5: General Guidance Notes	28

About Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust (OMAT)

OMAT is committed to the development of inclusive schools, sharing a common purpose to provide excellent education and improve outcomes for pupils.

OMAT strives to provide high-quality education for all children within our local communities by inspiring innovation, creativity and aspiration through an enriched curriculum.

OMAT is committed to the principles of co-operation, collaboration and sharing best practice with a strong focus on staff development.

OMAT is also committed to the preservation of the unique identity of all schools within the trust: each school will have a Local Governing Board (LGB) which is involved in decision making at school level, with autonomy to make decisions for its own school – in line with the scheme of delegation.

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure for School Based Staff

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Disciplinary policy and procedure apply to all school-based staff appointed by the Local Governing Board (LGB) or the Board of Trustees (except staff employed by Direct Service Organisations e.g., catering and cleaning).

2. Scope of Procedure

- 2.1. The Disciplinary Rules and Disciplinary Procedures have been drawn up to comply with ACAS Code of Practice 1 Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures April 2009. It is intended to provide a system which can deal speedily with disciplinary matters whilst ensuring that the principles of natural justice are preserved.
- 2.2. The Procedure also complies with CLEA's (Council of Local Education Authorities) Staff Facing an Allegations of Abuse Guidelines on Practice and Procedure (see Appendix B) and has been agreed with the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

2.3. Trade Union Officials

Normal disciplinary standards apply to union officials as employees. Where it is proposed to take disciplinary action against a Trade Union official, the HR Schools Advisor will consult with or notify a senior Trade Union representative or full time official immediately.

3. Core Principles

- Wherever possible, matters of misconduct should be dealt with informally to encourage the employee to learn from their mistakes and improve their conduct. Employees should be supported to meet the standards and expectations of the School/Trust and the procedure should be used primarily to help and encourage employees to improve rather than as a way of imposing punishment;

- It is a fundamental principle that disciplinary matters are dealt with at the lowest possible level and no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been investigated;
- Issues should be dealt with as thoroughly and promptly as possible;
- The employee should be informed of any complaint/allegation against him/her; and be provided with as much information as deemed appropriate without compromising the investigation;
- The employee should be provided with an opportunity to state his/her case before decisions are reached;
- Employees have the right to be accompanied at investigatory meeting(s)/hearing/appeal by their trade union representative or a work colleague. It is the employee's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements for representation. This right does not extend to family/friends or professionals such as solicitors and barristers;
- Any action taken should be reasonable in the circumstances of the case;
- An employee should not be dismissed for a first disciplinary offence, unless it is a case of gross misconduct, in which case dismissal may be the outcome;
- An employee should be told what the required standards of behaviour and conduct are;
- Where an employee has been warned before about their conduct or behaviour, it should be made clear at the time, that if there is a further instance of misconduct, formal disciplinary action could be taken;
- The employee should be given the right to appeal against any form of disciplinary action;
- The employee should have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague at any stage during the Procedure (including the investigatory interview);
- The Hearing Officer (Headteacher or panel of governors/ trustees) should not have had any prior involvement with the investigation. Those conducting an appeal should not have had any prior involvement with the investigation or the disciplinary hearing.

4. Management of Staff

4.1. **All Staff (except the Headteacher)**

The day-to-day supervision of staff is part of the normal managerial process. In most cases the supervisor is the Headteacher. It is important therefore that the immediate supervisor clarifies with employees the duties to be performed and the standards expected.

On receipt of a complaint, the Headteacher should first assess if the possible disciplinary matter can be dealt with informally. If this is done there is likely to be less recourse to the formal procedures.

4.2. If an immediate superior has a concern about an employee's standards of conduct, it should be brought to the attention of the employee at the earliest possible opportunity. Where such a meeting takes place, the supervisor/nominated person should explain at the meeting to the employee the area(s) of concern and give the employee the opportunity to respond.

4.3. It is important that the supervisor/nominated person tried to establish if there are any mitigating circumstance that may have contributed to the employee's conduct. The supervisor/nominated person should deal sympathetically with the employee but at the same time ensure that the employee is in no doubt as to the conduct required. This may take the form of a management instruction. If staff fail to adhere to the issued management instruction, it may progress to a formal

disciplinary hearing. A record of the issued management instruction will be retained in the member of staff's personnel file for a period of 6 months.

4.4. A management instruction is considered as being outside the formal disciplinary procedures but can be considered as an approach before invoking formal procedures.

4.5. The Headteacher will initiate the disciplinary policy:

- a) Where the Headteacher/nominated person has assessed that the matter cannot be dealt with informally;
- b) Where the member of staff has been given a previous management warning for behaviour of a similar nature;
- c) Where the allegation is of a 'child protection' nature, following consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);

The Headteacher should consult with the HR advisor before appointing an Investigating Officer to investigate the allegations using the formal disciplinary procedure.

4.6. **Concerns about the Conduct of the Headteacher**

Where a matter of concern involves the Headteacher, it is for the Trust to determine who would be the most appropriate person to be appointed as the Investigating Officer to deal with the matter. This could be:

- An executive leader from Owlcotes Trust;
- A trustee or a member of the LGB (such as the Chair or Vice-Chair) However, it should be noted that this **would** prevent that Governor from taking part in any subsequent disciplinary hearing;
- An HR officer;
- An external investigating officer.

The person would be deemed to be the Nominated Person/Investigating Officer (See Appendix 1 of guidance).

5. Allegations of a Serious Nature

5.1. In some cases, it may be appropriate to involve the police, particularly in cases involving alleged child abuse. It may also be appropriate where an alleged criminal act has taken place. Advice on these matters should be sought from the HR provider. **Where the allegations are of a child protection nature these MUST be reported to the LADO and a member of the HR Team immediately.**

Where an allegation of this nature has been received against a member of staff, refer to the guidelines and procedure outlined in **Appendix 4 of guidance: Staff Facing an allegation of physical/sexual abuse. Please also refer to the School's Child Protection Policy.**

6. Misconduct and Gross Misconduct

6.1. **Misconduct**

This is a breach of discipline which on its own is not sufficiently serious to warrant dismissal, but will warrant action being taken under this procedure. In cases where misconduct takes place and live warnings for this or another type of misconduct are still in force, then unless mitigating circumstances are proven, the employee may be dismissed without notice.

Examples of misconduct are listed below. This list is not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive and there may be other incidents of misconduct of a similar gravity:

- Poor timekeeping including unauthorised absence from work;
- Failure to comply with a reasonable request;
- Failure in Duty of Care towards pupils and staff at the school;
- Failure in protecting the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of pupils and staff at the school;
- Minor instances of neglect of duties and responsibilities;
- Wilful failure to work in harmony with employees of the school;
- Deliberate breaches of the school's policies and procedures;
- Breach of the ICT acceptable use/e-safety policies;
- Breach of data protection/confidentiality policy and procedure.

6.2. **Gross Misconduct**

This is a grave breach of discipline which may be serious enough to destroy the employment contract between the school and the employee making any further working relationship and trust impossible.

Gross misconduct would normally lead to dismissal or a final written warning, even first incidents of gross misconduct. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be other incidents of gross misconduct of a similar gravity which could result in dismissal:

- Theft, fraud or Falsification;
- Misappropriation of the Trust finances;
- Serious breaches of the Trust/school's Code of Conduct and other professional Codes of Conduct;
- Unauthorised covert recording;
- Serious insubordination (e.g., Deliberate; inexcusable; rebellious; refusal; wilfully disobeying);
- Continued and repeated offenses of misconduct;
- Causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence;
- Failure in Duty of Care to protect pupils or young adults at the school by placing them at significant risk;
- Failure to disclose a medical condition either on appointment or upon diagnosis which may affect ability to undertake duties of the post resulting in a serious incident;
- Failure to adhere to Keeping Children Safe in Education requirement;
- Physical violence or bullying;
- Serious verbal abuse;
- Unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- Serious and deliberate damage to property;
- Serious incapability at work brought on by alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse of prescription drugs;
- Serious abuse of the school's Internet Policy (e.g., in relation to accessing pornographic internet sites or sending and receiving offensive or obscene material);
- Serious misuse of school's facilities (e.g., telephone and the internet including social networking sites);
- Conduct outside the workplace, including but not limited to criminal charges, cautions or convictions;
- Bringing the Trust/School into disrepute.

7. Suspension

See guidance notes in Appendix 2 of guidance for further information.

- 7.1. In certain cases, a period of suspension from work on full pay may be considered whilst the case is being investigated or before a Disciplinary Hearing is held.

Suspension should not be undertaken without good reason, circumstances in which suspension properly occurs include:

- Where there are sound reasons to believe that pupils/staff/property are at risk;
- Where it is believed that the continued presence of the employee might prejudice enquiries or influence witnesses;
- Where the allegation is so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct is possible.

Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. Headteachers may consider a temporary redeployment as an alternative to suspension.

Suspensions will be on full pay without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation.

When a Headteacher is considering a suspension advice must be sought from the School's HR Adviser and the CEO.

Where the matter of concern is regarding the conduct of the Headteacher, the CEO or her representative should consult with the HR Team prior to considering a suspension.

Where the concern is related to a member of the central team, the CEO or her representative should consult with the HR Team prior to considering a suspension.

Where the concern is related to the CEO, the Chair of Trustees should be informed and should consult with the HR team prior to considering a suspension.

The employee should be notified in person of the decision to suspend and should have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague. The employee should normally be sent confirmation of the suspension in writing within 1 working day. Any restrictions relating to an employee's suspension should be included in the letter.

8. Stages of the Disciplinary Procedure

- 8.1. The Headteacher should frame the allegations, with advice from HR, or in the case of allegations against the Headteacher, the CEO or her representative should seek advice from HR before framing the allegations.

The Headteacher or nominated person should verbally advise the employee of the allegation(s) made against them and advise them that an Investigative Officer has been appointed to investigate the allegation(s). This should be confirmed to the employee in writing.

Where the matter of concern involves the Headteacher it is for the CEO to determine who would be the most appropriate person to be appointed as the Investigating Officer to deal with the matter, in accordance with paragraph 4.6 of this procedure.

If the matter involves the CEO, then the Chair of Trustees would determine the most appropriate person to be appointed as investigating officer.

- 8.2. The Investigating Officer (See Appendix 1 of guidance) should be a person with no involvement whatsoever in the matter under investigation. This person should, wherever possible, be a senior staff member. The Headteacher should not be the Investigating Officer, unless there are exceptional circumstances as explained in Appendix 1 of guidance, paragraph 3.

If the matter under investigation involves an allegation(s) of physical/sexual abuse and the Police or child protection agencies are involved then the school's investigation may have to be held in abeyance until the external investigation has been completed. See Appendix 4 of the Guidance.

- 8.3. The Investigating Officer's brief will be to establish the facts of the case. All investigations will be undertaken in the strict confidence.
- 8.4. As part of the investigation a meeting should be arranged with the employee as soon as possible, giving a minimum of 5 working days' notice, or less if all parties are in agreement, in writing to the employee, who will have been advised beforehand that he/she may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a colleague of his/her choice (not acting in a legal capacity).
- 8.5. At the meeting, the Investigating Officer should present the allegation(s) to the employee who should be invited to respond in full and to any other information submitted by the Investigating Officer.
- 8.6. At any point during the meeting the employee may request a short adjournment to consult his/her representative.
- 8.7. If new allegations emerge during the course of the investigation, it will be necessary to re-interview the employee or witness in seeking to establish the facts.
- 8.8. The investigation should be conducted as soon as possible. Where reasonable the investigation should be completed within 20 working days. However, if the investigation is not completed within 20 working days, then the employee will be informed of this and given regular information as to how the investigation is progressing.
- 8.9. As part of the investigation the Investigating Officer will determine the appropriate action and a written report should be prepared on the facts of the case which will include a list of every individual who has been interviewed, together with records of interviews, and any other evidence. These will be made available to all parties should a disciplinary hearing ensue.
- 8.10. The Investigating Officer in consultation with the HR Adviser, should decide and advise the employee accordingly that he/she intends to:
- a) Take no further action under the disciplinary policy and procedure;
 - b) Convene a disciplinary hearing before the Headteacher in cases of alleged misconduct;
 - c) Convene a disciplinary hearing before a panel of Governors/Trustees in the following cases:
 - Cases of alleged misconduct where the Headteacher cannot hear the case because he/she has prior knowledge of the case, or has acted as Investigating Officer, or is required as a witness (see Appendix 1 of guidance: Nomination of Investigating Officer);

- Cases of alleged gross misconduct;
- Cases of cumulative misconduct;
- Where the subject of the investigation is the Head teacher whether the case is misconduct, cumulative misconduct or gross misconduct.

Examples of misconduct and gross misconduct can be found in paragraph 6.

- 8.11. After the investigative process has been completed and the Investigating Officer has consulted with the appropriate HR Adviser, the member of staff must be informed immediately in writing of the decision taken by the Investigating Officer.
- 8.12. Where the outcome is not to refer the matter to a disciplinary hearing, there should be a meeting with the employee to advise them of this decision. The employee may be accompanied or represented by a trade union representative or a colleague of his/her choice.
- 8.13. If the employee has been suspended and it is not intended to proceed with any form of disciplinary action, the suspension should be lifted immediately. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors / Chair of Trustees should meet the member of staff to discuss the member of staff's return to work.
- 8.14. No record of the investigation will be kept on the member of staff's personal file. Where a formal sanction has been issued, a record should be kept on the employee's personal file until such time as the warning has expired. However, records of a 'child protection' nature MUST be retained at least until the person has reached normal retirement age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation(s) if that is longer (see Appendix 4, 17.1 'Records' within the Guidance document).
- 8.15. Other than in the event of dismissal, the head teacher/nominated person should ensure the opportunity for informal counselling. This could be used to give appropriate guidance, support and reassurance and to help rebuild, where necessary a member of staff's confidence. There may also be a need for specific guidance and sympathetic consideration may need to be given to other employment options.
- 8.16. If disciplinary action is to be taken, the Investigating Officer's report will be made available to all parties in the bundle of papers, prior to the disciplinary hearing.

The Investigating Officer should ensure the potential outcome of gross misconduct and possible dismissal is communicated throughout the process, in all formal letters to the member of staff.

9. Disciplinary Hearing

9.1. Notification of a Disciplinary Hearing

The Investigating Officer will be responsible for the administrative arrangements for the hearing. He/she will advise the employee verbally of the decision to conduct a disciplinary hearing, and confirm this in writing within three working days. The employee will be given at least seven clear working days' notice, in writing, of the arrangements for the hearing.

The investigating officer will arrange a date for the hearing, and agree with the HR adviser who is to present the case, whether it be the investigating officer or in exceptional circumstances another

senior member of the Owlcotes staff or a HR Adviser. Where the hearing date is postponed at the request of the employee or his/her representative, only 1 further hearing date will be arranged. In the event that the employee is unable to attend the second date arranged Headteacher/panel may go ahead with the hearing in the employee's absence, based on the evidence available.

Upon confirmation of the hearing date, a letter inviting the employee to the hearing will be sent and must state the nature of the allegations and include documents that will be used in evidence, these should be dispatched to the employee alongside the letter of confirmation. A copy of the investigating officer's report must also be made available to all parties. The employee must be advised that if she/he wishes to produce any document in evidence or references/ testimonials, then these should be forwarded to the investigating officer at least three working days in advance of the hearing. If witnesses are to be called by either party, their names and status must be made available at the same time as any documentary evidence.

The employee must be advised that she/he has the right to be represented by a trade union official or other person (not acting in a legal capacity).

9.2. **Disciplinary Hearing Before the Headteacher**

The disciplinary hearing should be conducted by the Headteacher in the manner described in Appendix 3.

9.2.1. Disciplinary action available to the Headteacher

(See Appendix 5 Guidance Notes, Paragraph 2, which indicates the factors that should be taken into account when deciding what action is appropriate)

Following a disciplinary hearing the Headteacher may:

- Take no action;
- Issue a verbal warning;
- Issue a formal written warning to the employee;
- Issue a final written warning to the employee.

9.2.2. Implementing the action

The Headteacher wherever possible should advise the employee verbally and confirm his/her decision in writing not later than three working days after the hearing. The written notification should:

- State the precise nature of the misconduct;
- Specify the disciplinary action being taken;
- State, if appropriate, the period of time given for improvement which is expected;
- Indicate the likely consequences of further misconduct;
- Inform the employee of his/her right to appeal within ten working days of receiving the written decision of the Headteacher;
- State to whom the appeal should be made.

Where a decision has been taken to recommend dismissal of an employee, and the Headteacher is satisfied that dismissal is justified, the Headteacher may consider, in consultation with the employee, whether a transfer to an alternative post or job, at the same or lower grade within the school, could properly be offered as an alternative to dismissal.

In the event of no further actions being taken then all record of the disciplinary hearing shall be removed from the member of staff's file.

9.3. **Disciplinary Hearing Before a panel**

The HR Adviser to the trust will arrange a hearing before a panel of Trustees/Governors (these may be Governors from another school in the Trust) and will be responsible for all the necessary administration. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined in Appendix 3, Paragraph 2.0.

9.3.1. Disciplinary action available

(See Appendix 5 Guidance Notes, Paragraph 2 which indicates the factors that should be taken into account when deciding what action is appropriate).

Following the disciplinary hearing, the panel may:

- Take no action;
- Issue a verbal warning;
- Issue a formal written warning to the employee;
- Issue a final written warning to the employee;
- Dismissal – with advice from HR and CEO/Trustees. HR must be informed of their determination that an employee should cease to work at the school (in cases where a HR Advisor is not present).

The employee shall be given such notice as required under their contract to terminate that contract, except in cases of gross misconduct where the contract may be terminated without notice.

9.3.2. Implementing the action

Wherever possible the panel of Governors will convey their decision verbally and the HR Adviser to the panel will advise the employee in writing of the panel's decision, not later than three working days after the hearing. The written notification should:

- State the precise nature of the misconduct;
- Specify the disciplinary action being taken;
- State, if appropriate, the period of time given for improvement which is expected;
- Indicate the likely consequences of further misconduct;
- Inform the employee of his/her right to appeal within ten working days of receiving the written decision of the Governing Body;
- State to whom the appeal should be made.

Where a decision has been taken to dismiss an employee The Trust Board may consider whether a transfer to an alternative post at the same or lower grade within the trust could properly be offered as an alternative to dismissal. This could not be offered if the dismissal is in relation to harm or risk of harm to pupils or staff.

In the event of no further actions being taken then all record of the disciplinary hearing will be removed from the member of staff's file.

10. Appeals Against Disciplinary Action

See Appendix 3 for further guidance.

- 10.1. Employees have the right of appeal against disciplinary action. The appellant must set out the specific grounds for the appeal by completing a disciplinary appeals form. The appellant and

his/her representative can, in conjunction with the person presenting the school's case, seek to agree the information needed for the appeal. This will enable the Appeals Panel to conduct the appeal on the particular grounds that the appeal has been made or by the way of a complete rehearing. (See Appendix 3). In cases where there were multiple allegations at the Disciplinary Hearing, and some were dismissed and some found proven, the Appeals Panel will rehear only those allegations that were found proven.

- 10.2. The appeal should be made in writing to the HR Adviser to the hearing within ten working days of receipt of the written decision.
- 10.3. A panel composed of three members drawn from the Board of Trustees/ LGB/ the LGB of another school in the trust will hear an appeal against disciplinary action. The number of panel members must be the same as that on the original hearing panel but made up of different members.
- 10.4. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the date of the hearing is suitable for all parties. If the employee and his/her representative is unable to attend on the date set, the panel will endeavour to reschedule the hearing. If following reasonable attempts to arrange a suitable date for all to attend and the employee/their representative is still unavailable, the appeal panel may determine that the appeal should go ahead based on the written evidence provided.
- 10.5. A representative of the original Panel, as appropriate may be invited by either side to attend the appeal hearing as a witness.
- 10.6. Where it is impractical or unacceptable for witnesses to attend, the appeal panel will determine the appeal based on the evidence provided.
- 10.7. The notes of the previous disciplinary hearing should be transcribed and made available to all parties together with any other new evidence and/or new witnesses, within 5 working days of the appeal hearing.
- 10.8. In addition to the above the appeals panel will receive copies of all the documents submitted at the disciplinary hearing.
- 10.9. **Action Available to an Appeals Body**
The Appeals Body may decide to:
 - Confirm the original decision, or;
 - Uphold the appeal, or;
 - Substitute a lesser penalty.
- 10.10. **Notification of Decisions Made by Appeals Body**
Wherever possible the Appeals Body will convey their decision verbally and the HR Advisor to the panel will be responsible for conveying their decision in writing to the employee. These decisions will be conveyed in writing within three working days.

11. Records of Warnings

- 11.1 Warnings will be held on the personal file of the employee concerned for:
 - Verbal warning – 3 months;

- Written warning – 6 months;
- Final written warning – 12 months.

11.1. Warnings will cease to be 'live' following the specified period of satisfactory conduct and will not be referred to for future disciplinary purposes.

11.2. In cases of gross misconduct where a final warning has been issued, and in the opinion of the Headteacher or Disciplinary Panel, the misconduct is so serious that it cannot be disregarded for future disciplinary or managerial purposes, then the final warning shall remain live for a longer period, and the employee shall be so advised. This facility shall only apply where the welfare, safety of a pupil, member of the public or fellow member of staff might be placed at risk. In such cases the employee may appeal to the Appeals Panel against the warning and/or against the decision for the warning to remain live.

11.4 Where an employee in a teaching role has been dismissed (or where the dismissal would have been the likely outcome had they not resigned before the disciplinary process was completed) they should be referred to the Teacher Regulation Agency (TRA). The TRA will consider the case and any appropriate action.

11.5 With regard to disciplinary action in relation to safeguarding, issues involving the risk of harm or actual harm to a child, employees (whether teachers or support employees) must be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and additionally, in the case of teachers and appropriate support staff, to the TRA.

Appendix 1: The Investigating Officer

Nominating the Investigating Officer (IO)

School staff

When the Headteacher becomes aware of a potential disciplinary matter he/she should take advice from the CEO/Executive Team at Owlcotes MAT before nominating an investigating officer bearing in mind the following points:

- He/she should be a person with no involvement whatsoever in the matter under investigation;
- The person nominated could be a senior member of the school's staff. This should normally not be the Headteacher;
- In certain exceptional cases the Headteacher may choose to act as Investigating Officer. It is recommended that the Headteacher fulfils the role only in those cases where:
 - Other senior members of staff may be called as a witness;
 - Where there is no other senior member of staff available who does not have detailed prior knowledge of the case;
- In exceptional cases the Headteacher may ask the CEO or the HR service to provide an Investigating Officer.

Concerns about the conduct of the Headteacher

The CEO/Chair of Trustees should determine who should act as Investigating Officer.

Concerns about the conduct of a central team employee

The CEO/Chair of Trustees should determine who should act as Investigating Officer.

Concerns about the conduct of the CEO

The Chair of Trustees should determine who should act as Investigating Officer.

Role of the Investigating Officer

The role of the IO is to establish the facts of the case by gathering information. Before commencing an investigation, advice and guidance should be sought from HR on how to conduct an investigation.

The Investigating Officer will inform the employee in writing that they are under investigation indicating that a meeting will be arranged after information has been gathered at which the employee will be given the opportunity to respond.

If the matter under investigation involves an allegation(s) of physical/sexual abuse and the Police or child protection agencies are involved then the school's investigation may have to be held in abeyance until the external investigation has been completed. Advice on whether to proceed should be sought from HR.

The evidence to be collected may be in the form of:

- Receiving written accounts from witnesses which are signed and dated or by conducting interviews with anyone who may have knowledge of the case which is recorded in the form of Question and Answer but is not necessarily verbatim and should be verified by the person who has been interviewed;
- Obtaining any other relevant documents e.g., guidelines and procedures, conditions of service.

The whole process of the investigation should be undertaken in the strictest confidence.

Appendix 2: Suspension

1. It may be appropriate, in some cases, to suspend the employee to enable investigations to take place (see Section 7 of Policy). Where the subject of the investigation is the Headteacher the Chair of governors with advice from the CEO and HR will decide whether it is appropriate to suspend to enable investigations to take place. Where the subject of the investigation it is a central team employee or CEO, The Chair of Trustees will decide whether it is appropriate to suspend the employee, with advice from HR.
2. In all cases where suspension is being considered, the Headteacher/nominated person should advise the member of staff to seek assistance from his/her Trade Union.
3. Suspension is a very serious matter and the decision to suspend should not be taken lightly. In some cases, it may be appropriate to grant paid leave of absence to a member of staff in order that preliminary investigations can take place to establish whether formal suspension is appropriate. Leave of absence should not normally exceed three working days.
4. Where the suspension of a member of staff is being considered an interview should take place as soon as possible. In cases of alleged child abuse, the Headteacher/ Owlcotes representative must consult with the nominated Leeds City Council Designated Officer for Child Protection as described in **Appendix 4** (Where the member of staff, including the Headteacher, is a trade union or safety representative, refer to **Appendix 5** From the outset it should be established that the action being taken is not an attack on the functions of a trade union.
5. HR must be consulted in all cases before a decision to suspend or leave of absence is granted.
6. Where the Police are involved in a criminal investigation, it may be appropriate to consult with the police officer in charge of the case, prior to arranging a meeting to consider suspension.
7. A member of staff called to a meeting to consider suspension should be advised by the to seek the advice and support of his or her trade union/professional organisation. Another person of his/her choice may support a member of staff who is not a member of a trade union/professional organisation.
8. The member of staff should be informed at the outset of the meeting that an allegation has been made and that, at the conclusion of the meeting, suspension might occur. It should be made clear, however, that the interview is not a formal disciplinary hearing but is for the purpose of putting forward a serious matter which may lead to suspension and further investigation.
9. The member of staff should be given as much information, including reasons for any proposed suspension, as is consistent with not interfering with an investigation about the allegation. The member of staff should be given an opportunity to make representations concerning the suspension. A brief adjournment should be offered to the member of staff prior to response.
10. Where a decision to suspend has been taken, the employee will be advised of this verbally by the Headteacher/ nominated person and will receive written confirmation and reasons for the suspension, which will be despatched within one working day. The Headteacher will also notify the CEO / Chair of the LGB and appropriate HR Adviser. Where a decision to suspend the Headteacher has been taken, he/she will be advised of this verbally by the CEO/Chair of Governors after discussion with the CEO and will receive written confirmation which will be despatched within one working day. The Chair should report the matter to the LGB and board of trustees but provide no more than the minimum information necessary, as more than this would prejudice governors' impartiality in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings. The Chair will also notify the HR Advisor.
11. Where the decision has been not to suspend, the Headteacher/Chair of governors should explain to the member of staff the circumstances that led to consideration of suspension and further explain any follow-up action that it is proposed to take which may include an investigation under the schools' disciplinary procedures.

12. In the case of an allegation of a child protection nature the pupil or parent making the allegation should be confidentially informed of the suspension. Where the pupil making the allegation is under 18, his or her parents should normally be informed in confidence in so far as to do so is consistent with wider child protection considerations.
13. Senior staff should be informed of the reasons for the suspension so far as is necessary in the circumstances. The Headteacher should consider the extent to which it is necessary to make a statement to parents of children in the school, having considered the need to avoid unwelcome publicity. In the case of the suspension of a Headteacher, the Chair of governors should make these considerations following discussion with the CEO. There may be a need for information to continue to be provided during the course of an investigation to parents, children and other colleagues.
14. In a situation where a matter becomes common knowledge or the subject of general gossip, it may be desirable to provide an accurate statement for public information. It is recommended that guidance should be sought from the HR before any information is released into the public domain.

Support For the Member of Staff During the Period of Suspension

The suspended member of staff should be given the name of an HR Adviser as an information contact. The main role of the contact person is to provide clarity on the disciplinary procedure and information as to the progress of the investigation. Social contact with the member of staff's colleagues at the school should not be precluded except where it is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

A member of staff should be designated to ensure contact is maintained with the member of staff to receive information about developments at the school in general, according to the needs and wishes of the member of staff to be kept informed. In the case of a member of staff being suspended this could be another staff member or in the case of Headteacher, a member of the Trust's Executive Leadership Team.

In cases involving a police investigation every effort should be made to contact the member of staff termly to inform them of any developments or otherwise.

In all cases, the member of staff would be provided with information and contact details of the Employee Assistance Service/counselling service.

Where No Action is Taken to Suspend

According to the circumstances of the case, appropriate help or advice may be offered to the member of staff. The Headteacher/nominated staff member should seek to establish what support, if any, is required.

Appendix 3: Conduct of Disciplinary Hearings

1. Disciplinary Hearing Before a Headteacher

- 1.1. The employee will be invited to a hearing at which the Headteacher will examine the facts of the alleged misconduct. The employee will be given at least 7 clear working days' notice in writing of the arrangements, but not more than 20 working days. The letter inviting the employee to the hearing will contain a statement of the alleged misconduct, will give the names and status of any witnesses to be called and will be accompanied by copies of any document(s) which will be produced at the hearing.
- 1.2. The employee will be informed of his/her rights to be accompanied by trade union or other representative not acting in a legal capacity. He/she will also be informed that they may produce documents in his/her own support and/or call witnesses. He/she should provide copies of any documents he/she intends to produce at least 3 days in advance of the hearing. Should this prove impossible, full consideration will be given to accepting any late documentation produced at the hearing. He/She should provide the names and status of any witnesses to be called at the hearing in writing, including whether they themselves intend to be called as a witness.
- 1.3. At the outset, the Headteacher should satisfy himself/herself that the disciplinary procedures have been correctly followed in the stages leading up to the hearing. The Headteacher should have regard for the nature of the case and, with the agreement of all parties, should decide the degree of formality that is required for the hearing.
- 1.4. Where the evidence is accepted, the parties can propose to the Headteacher that the case be heard in a less formal way. This should be agreed between both parties once the letter inviting the employee to the hearing has been sent out. In some cases, the hearing should take the form of an interview by the Headteacher during which both the Headteacher and the employee concerned will be able to examine and question all the information submitted.
- 1.5. In most cases the school's case will be presented by an officer nominated by the Investigating Officer and the same order for conducting the hearing as set out at para. 2.4 below will be followed. The Headteacher should have regard for the nature of the case and, with the agreement of all parties, should decide the degree of formality that is required for the hearing.
- 1.6. Following the hearing the Headteacher wherever possible will convey his/her decision verbally and confirm the decision in writing to the employee not later than three working days after the hearing. This letter should advise the employee of his/her right to appeal against the decision to a panel of Governors and indicate the procedure to be followed.

2. Disciplinary Hearing Before a Panel of Governors

- 2.1. Three members of the Governing Board/Trustees will form the panel of the disciplinary hearing.
- 2.2. The HR Adviser to the Panel will notify the employee in writing of the arrangements for the hearing, giving at least 7 clear working days in advance of the hearing, but not more than 20 working days. The employee will be provided with a written statement of the alleged misconduct, together with the names and status of any witnesses to be called and copies of any document(s) to be produced at the hearing.

- 2.3. The employee will be informed of his/her rights to be accompanied by trade union or other representative not acting in a legal capacity. He/she should provide copies of any documents he/she intends to produce at least three days in advance of the hearing. Should this prove impossible, full consideration will be given by the Panel to accepting late documents produced at the hearing. He/She should provide the names and status of any witnesses to be called at the hearing in writing, including whether they themselves intend to be called as a witness.
- 2.4. At the outset, only the panel members and the HR Adviser to the panel will be in the room. The panel may also arrange for someone to take notes at the hearing, or alternatively arrangements may be made for the hearing to be digitally recorded.
- 2.4.1. At the outset, the Chair of the panel should satisfy himself/herself that the disciplinary procedures have been correctly followed in the stages leading up to the hearing. The Chair will invite the parties representing the employee and the school to enter the room where the hearing is being conducted and all witnesses will remain outside the room until they are called. Each person will be introduced by name and the employee informed of the purpose of the hearing. The procedure intended to be followed will be outlined. The Chair will also ask whether there is any additional written evidence or documentation to be submitted to the hearing or any new witnesses to be called and where this is so, will, at the request of either party, adjourn the hearing for this to be considered. When the hearing is resumed, either party may request a longer adjournment or a rearranged date for the hearing. In cases where an employee is facing an allegation of racial or sexual harassment or discrimination, the order of proceedings will be augmented at appropriate stages by the provisions set out at paragraph 4.
- 2.4.2. Where there is more than one representative attending for the employee and/or the school only one can take part in the hearing, as the principal representative.
- 2.4.3. At this stage any witnesses who are present to give evidence should wait outside until called. The Chair should ensure that everyone is introduced by name and should explain the procedure that is to be followed.
- 2.4.4. The Chair will invite the school's representative to present the school's case, during which the school's representative may produce documents, and put questions to the school's witnesses. At the conclusion of each witness's statement, the employee or his/her representative may question the witness, but not both. The school's representative may then re-examine the witness but only on matters arising out of the questions put. If the Investigating Officer presents the school's case, he/she may be questioned, but only on points of procedure. The Panel of Governors may then put questions to the witness.
- 2.4.5. In the interests of a fair hearing the Panel may ask questions of the school's Investigative Officer, the employee or his/her representative and witnesses at any time during the case presentations.
- 2.4.6. The HR Adviser to the panel may, through the Chair, only seek to clarify points made in evidence.
- 2.4.7. At the conclusion of the school's case, the Chair will invite the employee or representative to present his/her case. The same procedure will be followed as for the school's case.

- 2.4.8. At the conclusion of the employee's case the Chair will offer both sides a short adjournment before the concluding statements.
- 2.4.9. The Chair will invite the school's representative to make a concluding statement and will invite the employee or his/her representative to make a concluding statement. No new evidence should be introduced at this stage.
- 2.4.10. After hearing the case for both sides, the panel will ask the parties to leave, the only person remaining being the HR Adviser to the panel and note taker, if such a person has been present.
- 2.4.11. The panel should seek the guidance of the HR Adviser attending to advise on matters of law and procedure but not on matters of fact. The panel may recall the parties on points of clarification. However, on these occasions, care should be taken to ensure that both parties are recalled even though the panel may only wish to raise points with one side.
- 2.5. Wherever possible the decision of the panel will be conveyed verbally and confirmed in writing to the employee not later than three working days after the hearing, and will advise the employee of his/her right of appeal to the Appeals Panel of the Governing Body.

3. Appeal Hearing Before Panel

- 3.1. The employee will need to advise the HR Adviser to the disciplinary panel in writing of his/her intention to appeal within ten working days of receiving the written decision of the Headteacher/ disciplinary panel.
- 3.2. The appellant and his/her representative shall, in conjunction with the person presenting the school's case, seek to agree any documentation to be submitted at the appeal hearing, taking particular care to ensure that the notes of the previous hearing are an accurate record. The notes of the hearing should be agreed and signed by both parties prior to the Appeal Hearing and any areas of disagreement should be noted. Where agreement cannot be reached, both versions should be provided. A schedule, together with copies of all relevant documents, should be provided at least five working days in advance of the appeal hearing. Both parties should provide names and status of any witnesses to be called at the same time. In circumstances where the original allegations are not to be heard in their entirety, the Appeals Panel shall have before them the complete written findings of the Disciplinary Hearing and those documents presented to the original hearing that both the appellant and the school agree are relevant to the matters under appeal. In the event that there is failure to agree, relevance shall be determined by the Panel at the start of the Appeal Hearing.
- 3.3. The appellant will be invited to an appeal hearing to be held not later than twenty working days from the receipt of the notice of appeal, but giving at least 5 working days' notice.
- 3.4. The Appeals Panel will consist of three Governors / Trustees - none of whom shall have taken part in the initial disciplinary hearing, or have had any previous involvement in the case.
- 3.5. The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in paragraphs 2.3 – 2.5 above.

4. Cases Involving Harassment or Discrimination

Definition - Harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome term, comment or behaviour such as looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact that is abusive, offensive, insulting or undermining to the recipient or as a result of which an intimidating environment is created.

Discrimination is any act that has the effect of treating a person less favourably on the grounds of race, creed, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.

Support for witnesses - It is recommended that support for witnesses be provided as detailed below:

Representation - Witnesses shall be briefed by a trust board representative on their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Official or by an outside representative and/or be provided with a support person (see below)

Support Person - A support person shall be provided from HR unless the offer is declined, in which case, the witness may select a support person of his/her own choice.

The role of this support person shall be to provide for the witnesses:

- An explanation of the procedure of the hearing beforehand;
- Encouragement and reassurance to help them provide evidence during the hearing;
- Request(s) during the hearing for a break or adjournment if necessary to relieve their distress;
- Counselling on a regular basis before/during/after the case as necessary.

This role shall be explained to all present at the hearing by the HR Officer if such an officer is present, or if not, by the HR Adviser to the panel.

5. Practical Protection at the Hearing for all Witnesses

5.1. In all cases the seating of the room shall be arranged to allow witnesses to give evidence as fully as possible and in a manner which minimises the risk of intimidation, e.g., witnesses and defendant not facing each other.

5.2. All reasonable requests for breaks or adjournment should be allowed, e.g., toilet breaks, severe distress.

Appendix 4: Staff Facing an Allegation of Professional Abuse – Guidelines on Practice and Procedure

1. Guidelines

These guidelines are based on ones agreed nationally by representatives of the local education authorities and the six teacher organisations in England and Wales. They have been amended locally by agreement between Leeds City Council and the trade unions recognised by the Owlcotes Multi-Academy Trust. In order to comply with the national guidelines these have been agreed in accordance with the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) (previously known as the Area Child Protection Committee).

These procedures are strongly recommended for use in controlled maintained and aided schools, and this advice accords with the advice at national level.

2. Definitions

Designated Person / Designated Staff

A senior member of the staff of a school with specific responsibility for co-ordinating Child Protection / safeguarding action with the school and for liaising with Children's Social Care and other agencies over suspected child abuse. It may be appropriate for another senior teacher to be named as the alternative to the Headteacher if he/she is one of the Designated Staff.

Nominated governor

This person will be responsible for liaising with the Headteacher / senior Designated Person at the school over matters regarding child protection and safeguarding issues in line with Leeds LSCB procedures. Ideally this role would involve:

- a) ensuring, in liaison with the Headteacher / senior Designated Staff, that the school has Safeguarding policies and procedures in place; which are consistent with Leeds LSCB procedures;
- b) ensuring that an annual item is placed on the governors' agenda to report on changes to child protection policy/procedures, training undertaken by the senior designated teacher, other staff and governors, the number of incidents/cases (without details or names) and the place of child protection issues in the school curriculum;
- c) liaison (with due regard to issues of confidentiality) with the Headteacher / Designated Staff re allegations of child abuse;
- d) attendance at training for nominated governors.

NB. Unless the Nominated Governor is also the Chair of Governors, s/he will **not** have responsibility in the event of an allegation being made against the Headteacher. The Chair of Governors will be responsible for the implementation of procedures relating to liaison with the education department, Children's Social Care and the police in relation to any allegations of child abuse against a Headteacher, including possible attendance at strategy group meetings.

The Chair of Governors and the Nominated Governor will have no part in the actual investigation of a complaint against the Headteacher, nor will they be involved in any allegations of professional abuse made against any other member of staff or volunteer. He/she will be a liaison person ensuring good communication between all parties).

3. Introduction

Members of staff within schools are well placed, as responsible adults outside pupils' family homes, to be able to detect signs of child abuse. Members of staff within schools have a positive role in child protection,

being able to observe outward signs of abuse, changes of behaviour or failure to develop members of staff within schools have a particular responsibility to further the personal and social development of children. Where professionals have such interaction, the opportunity to abuse children exists and it is regrettably the case that, in rare instances, some members of the school staff have been found to have harmed a child or children. To that extent and because of their daily contact with children in a variety of situations, including the wider caring role, school-based staff are vulnerable to accusations of abuse. Their relationships with the pupils may lead to allegations against them being made by pupils or parent (i.e., the person who has parental responsibility) or by others including colleagues, visiting professionals or the statutory services.

Those allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, and may be either deliberate or innocent of such intent. The allegation may also be true. Schools need policies and procedures on the management of situations where there are allegations of abuse.

‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ the inter-agency guide to arrangements for protecting children from abuse, advises investigating agencies that the difficulties of assessing the risk of harm to a child should not be underestimated. Further, it is imperative that everyone who deals with allegations of abuse maintains an open and enquiring mind. Agencies are also warned that, although there is obvious need to act with speed and decisiveness in cases where there is reasonable cause for suspicion that a child may be in acute physical danger, the potential for damage to the long-term future of the child by precipitate action must always be considered. There must be confidence that all the agencies concerned will act in a careful, measured way when suspicions are brought to their attention.

In the same way, an over-hasty or ill-judged decision immediately to suspend a member of staff (there may be other options) when an allegation is made, can have a substantial detrimental effect upon that member of staff's career. It can, at the very least, prove to be a traumatic experience for the member of staff concerned, for children at the school, their parents, and for other staff. A member of staff facing an allegation of abuse needs to have confidence that agencies will act in a careful measured way when allegations are brought to their attention.

4. Listening to Children

Children who report to a teacher (or other member of staff) that a member of staff has abused them must be listened to and heard, whatever form their attempts to communicate their worries take. Listened to means just that - on no account must suggestions be made to children as to alternative explanations for their worries. A written dated record must be made of the allegations as soon as practicable (and certainly within 24 hours).

Members of staff cannot promise confidentiality to pupils who make allegations. However, a member of staff hearing an allegation against another member of staff should aim to involve the child in any decision to take the allegation further, which could result in following formal procedures based on these guidelines. Where a child says he or she does not wish to take the matter further, consideration should be given to the age and understanding of the child and whether the child or others may be at risk of significant harm. The principles and issues implicit in the foregoing sentence should always be discussed at the local level with the HR partner and LADO. While acknowledging the need to create an environment conducive to speaking freely staff should make it clear to pupils who approach them asking for complete confidentiality that in some circumstances staff would be bound to pass on what they were told. Staff should take any further steps as may be necessary to ensure child protection under the local procedures agreed by Leeds LSCB. When a decision is made to take no further action, a written record should be made including the reason for the decision (see also section 15).

5. Action by a Member of Staff Who Hears an Allegation from a Child

All Staff (except the Headteacher)

A member of staff receiving an allegation of abuse against another member of staff should, following the consideration of section 4 above report this immediately to the Headteacher, unless the Headteacher is the person against whom the allegation is made.

Headteacher

A member of staff receiving an allegation of abuse against a Headteacher should, following the consideration of 4 above, report this immediately to the Senior Designated Person who should inform the Chair of Governors and the school's HR partner. However, if the allegation is against the Headteacher and the Senior Designated Person is also the Headteacher, the allegation must be passed to the next alternative Designated Person (see section 2) and to the Chair of Governors.

Immediately an allegation is made, whoever actually receives it, as well as consulting that school's HR partner, the Headteacher or nominated governor should:

- a) Obtain details of the allegation in writing, signed and dated by the person who receives the allegation (not from the child who is the subject of allegation)
- b) Record any information about times, dates, locations and names of potential witnesses.

6. Urgent Initial Consideration of Whether There is Substance in an Allegation

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff other than the Headteacher there should be an urgent initial consideration by the Headteacher and the HR partner of whether or not there is sufficient substance in an allegation to warrant an investigation. Where an allegation is made against a Headteacher consideration should be given by the Chair of Governors and the HR partner.

The Headteacher / Chair of governors must have previously established contact —usually via the HR adviser - with the LADO and must consult that officer(s) as part of the initial consideration.

NB: In both cases the substantive decision on whether to investigate under local child protection procedures rests with the statutory agencies. There will be one of four possible outcome of that consideration:

- a) an immediate referral under the local child protection procedure
- b) there is reason to suppose abuse could have occurred and that referral under the local child protection procedure or under internal disciplinary procedures may be necessary
- c) that the allegation is apparently without foundation
- d) that the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour to be considered under the school's agreed disciplinary procedures (see paragraph 8.1 b) and there is no evidence of child abuse.

7. Allegations Which Call for Immediate Referral to Child Protection Agencies

The immediate priority must be to determine whether a child or children are at risk of significant harm and in need of protection. If this appears to be the case there should be an urgent referral to Children's Social Care in accordance with the agreed procedures. In the case of all staff other than the Headteacher the responsibility lies with the Headteacher. In the case of an allegation against the Headteacher then the responsibility lies with the senior Designated Person in consultation with the Chair of Governors and the LADO. Where the Designated Person is the Headteacher then the Chair of Governors must report the matter to the appropriate agencies.

Where allegations of abuse are referred to Children's Social Care, or the police, subsequent action will be in accordance with the local child protection procedures. Early action to establish the nature of the allegation and consideration of whether it should be investigated should be undertaken in such a way that it does not prejudice any such subsequent action. There must be no interference with evidence.

8. Allegations Which May or May Not Call for Urgent Referral to Child Protection Agencies

It is important for the Headteacher or, where appropriate, the Designated Staff or Chair of Governors to act quickly. It is also important to recognise that establishing whether an allegation warrants further investigation is not to form a view on whether the allegation itself is to be believed. The Headteacher / other relevant person should not investigate the allegation itself, or interview pupils, or discuss the allegation with the member of staff, but should consider, in consultation with the persons referred to in paragraph 6 above, whether the allegation requires further investigation and if so, by whom. Only if the allegation was trivial or demonstrably false, would a further investigation not be warranted.

In all cases, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, or HR partner will report the allegation or concern to the LADO, in line with national requirements. The LADO will advise whether inter-agency procedures are to be invoked.

Where it does not appear that the child or children is / are at risk of SIGNIFICANT harm, the LADO may advise the Headteacher to consider whether there is a need for disciplinary action.

9. Investigations

There will be two possible types of investigation:

- Under Leeds LSCB procedures (by the police and / or Children's Social Care);
- Under the school's agreed disciplinary procedures.

Any disciplinary process should be clearly separate from child protection investigations. Whilst the disciplinary process may be informed by child protection investigations and in some circumstances the statutory agencies might decide to make a recommendation about suspension or other protective action as a result of the strategy discussion, the child protection process has different objectives from the disciplinary procedure and the two should not be confused. Decisions as to suspensions and/or disciplinary action are for the Headteacher / governing body.

Any investigation by the police or Children's Social Care will take priority over an internal investigation by the school. An internal investigation running alongside a police or child protection agency enquiry is not likely to be good practice and should be held in abeyance pending the completion of the external investigation.

Guidance on investigative procedures are contained in Appendix 1. If further evidence comes to light during the course of these investigations, then a re-referral to the LADO must be considered.

10. Action Subsequent to Referral to the LADO

When an allegation has been referred through the LSCB procedures to the LADO the investigation will be informed by the guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Managing Allegations of Abuse'. Under these procedures the LADO is required to consider whether a strategy meeting is required and determine who should attend. It is desirable that representatives of Schools' HR, school, (Headteacher or in the event of an allegation against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors) be involved as appropriate and contribute to such strategy meetings in cases of allegations against the member of staff. These meetings may be chaired by the LADO.

The strategy meeting should also consider whether any other children are likely to have been at risk in the light of the allegation and whether it may be necessary to review any previous allegations made against the member of staff to consider interviewing any other children including ex-pupils of the school or any other schools.

The Headteacher, governors and HR partner should balance the welfare of the accused member of staff and the interests of the investigation taking account of the need to minimise the stress to anyone who may be wrongly accused.

All members of staff should be advised to contact their professional organisation if allegations are made against them.

Support may be needed for the child or the children making the allegations and their parents. Consideration should be given to the form such support should take. Consideration should also be given to what support may be needed for others at the school, both staff and pupils, according to the circumstances of the alleged abuse. In some cases, therapeutic counselling from expert sources may be necessary. This should be discussed at the strategy meeting or advice may be sought from the LADO or Senior Allegations Manager at a later date.

11. Police Involvement

In some cases the police might wish to interview the member of staff against whom the allegation is made before the Headteacher, or Senior Designated Person make any approach. The police may act independently of the school particularly where the alleged offence is unconnected with the member of staff's professional life. Police officers should be given every assistance with their enquiries but confidentiality about the enquiries should be maintained in the member of staff's interests.

When the police are involved it would not normally be expected that police interviews would be undertaken on school premises and it would be expected that appointments are made for interviews to occur at reasonable times wherever possible.

12. Notification of Interested Persons

The police or LADO may decide that the investigation would be hindered by notification to parties at an early stage. The Headteacher in consultation with the HR partner, must ensure there is no objection by the police before contacting any parties. Subject to there being no objection the Headteacher should:

- a) inform the child, children or parent making the allegation and explain the likely course of action;
- b) ensure that the parents of the child or children who are the subject of the allegation are informed of the likely course of action;
- c) inform the member of staff against whom the allegation is made and explain the likely course of action advising them to contact their trade union representative or other person of their choice;
- d) inform the chair of governors of the school, in the case of an allegation made against the Headteacher.

A written record of those factual matters should be made.

Where, in especially serious cases, the police or the strategy meeting decides that the investigation would be hindered by an approach to the member of staff before the police have had an opportunity to undertake an initial investigation or to interview the member of staff, then the Headteacher should be informed accordingly and arrangements made to enable him or her to contact the officer in charge of the case to be kept informed of progress.

13. Where Following the Initial Consideration, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors) Believes that the Allegation is Without Foundation, the Headteacher Should

- a) consider whether the child might have been abused by someone else and whether a referral should be made to the police or Children's Social Care under Leeds LSCB procedures;
- b) inform the member of staff of the allegation and the fact that no further action is to be taken under disciplinary or child protection procedures. The member of staff may be accompanied by a trade union/professional organisation or another person of their choice;
- c) consider whether counselling and/or informal professional advice to the member of staff is appropriate and the form that either might take;
- d) inform the parents of the child or children of the allegation and the outcome;
- e) consider appropriate counselling and support for the child or children who made the allegation(s) - if applicable - and, where appropriate their parents; in particular, taking into account a child's additional needs where a false or malicious allegation seems to have been made; and
- f) consider whether it is appropriate to instigate a disciplinary investigation against the employee(s) who it is alleged made the false or malicious allegation(s);
- g) prepare a report embodying a) to e) above and giving reasons for the conclusion that the allegation is without foundation.

14. Considering Whether Suspension is Appropriate

A member of staff against whom an allegation is made should not be automatically suspended. In the case of an immediate referral to the statutory agencies immediate suspension is likely. In the case where immediate referral is not envisaged suspension may or may not be appropriate. In the case of unfounded allegations suspension is unlikely. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should consult with the HR partner and consider any recommendations which may be made by the LADO or police as a result of the strategy meeting before a decision to suspend is taken. Suspension may be considered at any stage of an investigation.

For further advice in relation to suspension refer to Appendix 2.

15. Outcome of Disciplinary Investigation

If a member of staff has been suspended and it is not intended to proceed with any form of disciplinary action, the suspension should be lifted immediately by the Headteacher / Governing Body. The Headteacher / Chair of Governors should meet the member of staff to discuss the member of staff's return to work.

On the conclusion of any investigation and any related disciplinary proceedings, the child or children who made the allegations and their parents should be informed of the outcome of the proceedings. This should be prior to a member of staff's return to school if he or she has been suspended. In some circumstances, consideration should be given to the broader disclosure of details of the outcome, together with reasons, for example, where the issues are of general importance and have become common knowledge or have been the subject of general gossip and there is a need to provide accurate details for public information.

Appropriate counselling and support should be offered to the child or children who made the allegations (where relevant) and, where appropriate, their parents, by the time the member of staff returns to school. In particular, this should take into account a child's additional needs and where a false or malicious allegation has been made.

16. Records

Documents relating to an investigation must be retained together with written record of the outcome of the investigation and where disciplinary action has been taken, retained on a member of staff's personal and confidential file in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures. These records must be kept until the member of staff reaches retirement age or for ten years, whichever is the longer.

Where a pupil has made an allegation, a note of this should be made in the child's Child Protection file together with a written record of the outcome of the investigation and / or any actions taken to support the child such as referral to Children's Social Care. If there are criminal or civil proceedings, records may be subject to disclosure; and therefore, no assurances can be given of confidentiality.

Appendix 5: General Guidance Notes

CONFIDENTIALITY

All investigations will be strictly confidential and the employee and any other interviewees will be advised to treat the investigation as such.

All staff (except the Headteacher)

The Headteacher should not discuss a case with anyone other than the HR representative, CEO especially with members of the Governing Board. Headteachers are strongly advised not to involve Governors in the early stages of any possible disciplinary action. If Governors have prior knowledge of a case, that could prejudice their judgement and therefore render them ineligible to participate in a disciplinary hearing or appeal.

Chairs of Governors should ensure that no discussion of any case which could result in disciplinary action takes place at meetings of the Governing Board or elsewhere. Any issue of this kind, which causes concern, should be referred to an investigating officer.

Concerns about the Headteacher

The Chair of Governors should not discuss a case with anyone other than an appropriate officers of the Trust, especially at meetings of the governing body. Any issue of this kind, which causes concern, should be referred to an Investigating Officer.

Governors should not be involved in the early stages of any possible disciplinary action unless a governor has been nominated to deal with the matter. If governors have prior knowledge of a case, that could prejudice their judgement and therefore render them ineligible to participate in a disciplinary hearing or appeal.

2. FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING THE ACTION

The Headteacher, Governors' Disciplinary Panel or Appeals Panel should take into consideration the points listed below before deciding what form of disciplinary action is appropriate. Only factors to which reference has been made during the disciplinary hearing may be taken into account.

- the employee's disciplinary record and whether he/she is aware of the standards required;
- the employee's age, nature of employment, length of service and general performance;
- any circumstances, for example, domestic problems, which make it more appropriate to lessen the severity of the action. Whether the action taken is similar to cases in the past whether the proposed action is reasonable in all the circumstances any factors in mitigation advanced on the employee's behalf.

3. ACTION IN PARTICULAR CASES

Special consideration should be given to the way in which disciplinary procedures are to operate in particular cases. For example:

3.1 Employees to whom the full procedure is not immediately available

Special provision may have to be made for the handling of disciplinary matters among nightshift workers, weekend or Sunday workers, workers in isolated locations or depots or others e.g. staff away on residential visits who may pose particular problems for example because no-one is present with the necessary authority to take disciplinary action or no trade union official is immediately available. If the Headteacher

or deputy Headteacher is not present, then advice should be sought from the appropriate HR Adviser, regarding the short-term arrangements.

3.2 Trade Union Officials

Disciplinary action against a trade union official can lead to a serious dispute if it is seen as an attack on the union's function. Normal disciplinary standards should apply to officials' conduct as employees but no disciplinary action or decision to suspend should be taken until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with a senior trade union representative or full-time official. A trade union official includes any employee elected or selected under trade union rules to represent other members.

3.3 Misuse of Alcohol and Drugs by Employees

Care should be taken to distinguish between misconduct and illness when dealing with these matters. If it can be clearly demonstrated that an employee is suffering from alcoholism or drug addiction, and the employee acknowledges that fact and seeks medical help, he/she should be treated in a positive and supportive way and given every assistance to overcome the problem and return to his/her employment. Employees who do not acknowledge or accept that they are suffering from an alcohol or drug related condition and refuse support and/or medical assistance will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. However, instances of gross misconduct will be subject to the school's disciplinary policy and procedures.

3.4 Criminal Offences

3.4.1 Where the case requires prompt attention, the employer need not await the outcome of the police investigation or the prosecution before taking fair and reasonable action, in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

3.4.2 The ACAS Code of Practice 1 – Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures 2009, gives the following advice on how management should deal with employees where criminal offences are involved:

“If an employee is charged with, or convicted of a criminal offence this is not normally in itself reason for disciplinary action. Consideration needs to be given to what effect the charge or conviction has on the employee's suitability to do the job and their relationship with their employer, work colleagues and customers.”

4. TAKING NOTES AT HEARINGS

It is essential that an accurate record is kept of the evidence given at a hearing and an appeal, and a digital recorder may be used for that purpose. In the cases where a digital recorder has been used a copy of the transcript will be made available to both parties. Where there are differences of opinion a disc of the recording will be made available. In the event of the case going to the Appeals Panel these notes should be made available to the appellant when statements are exchanged by the two parties, before the hearing. Both parties should attempt to produce an agreed set of signed minutes prior to them being sent out for a hearing and any areas of disagreement should be noted. Where agreement cannot be reached both versions should be provided.

5. WORKING DAYS

A working day shall exclude Saturday, Sunday, Public and Statutory Holidays and any extra Statutory Holidays or additional days granted by the Council. The agreed school calendar shall be the basis for determining working days.

6. REPRESENTATION

An employee may be represented by only one principal representative who will speak on his/her behalf, either a trade union representative or a work colleague (not acting in a legal capacity).

An employee may also be accompanied by one other person in a support capacity if required. The person presenting the case on behalf of the school may also be accompanied by one other person to provide support. These support persons must take no part in the proceedings.

7. CUMULATIVE MISCONDUCT

Where a member of staff has been given a final written warning and subsequently, while the warning is still 'live', is guilty of further misconduct, the cumulative nature of the offence(s) will be taken into consideration before a decision is reached on what action should be taken. Depending upon the circumstances of the case it may be appropriate to issue a further written warning rather than to proceed directly to dismissal.

8. WRITTEN WARNINGS

The written warning should specify:

- a) an indication of whether misconduct or gross misconduct has been proven;
- b) a full and detailed reason for issuing the warning;
- c) any period of time given for improvement and the improvement expected and give some indication that where appropriate, counselling may be available with a nominated person;
- d) any other recommendations made by the Headteacher or panel of Governors;
- e) the disciplinary penalty and how long it will remain on file;
- f) the likely consequence of further misconduct which must include, in the case of final warning, that this warning is a serious reprimand and indicate that further misconduct could lead to dismissal;
- g) timescale and procedure for lodging an appeal.

9. FINAL WARNING

A 'final' warning will be interpreted as a very serious reprimand and will indicate that further misconduct could lead to dismissal. Second and subsequent warnings need not be final warnings.

10. DEMOTION OR TRANSFER

In some cases it may be appropriate to consider demotion or transfer to another post or job, but if this course of action is contemplated, it should only be implemented with the consent of the employee and where there are no risks or potential risks of harm to children or staff. Demotion or transfer is included in the disciplinary procedure as an alternative to dismissal and if the employee refuses the offer a decision to dismiss has to be reached. The decision-maker must be satisfied that the case for dismissal has been clearly proven.

11. CAPABILITY

Where an employee's performance capability is in question the Capability Policy and Procedure should be followed.

12. WITNESSES

There will be cases when witnesses from both sides are present to give evidence. In such circumstances it is advisable that witnesses are placed in separate rooms, in order to prevent any comments or intimidation which may take place. The member of staff and his/her representative should also be allowed a room in which he/she can wait and discuss the case in private.

Occasionally, it may not be possible to confirm in advance the names of witnesses who will appear. To ensure that the full facts of the case are presented, either side may call witnesses up to the start of the hearing, or in exceptional circumstances during the course of the hearing. Should witnesses be called when prior notice has not been given, either side has the right to request and be granted a short adjournment. On the resumption of the hearing, either party may request a longer adjournment or a re-arrangement of the hearing.

13. ROLE OF CHAIR

The Chair at any disciplinary hearing is responsible for ensuring that the basic principles of the disciplinary procedures are followed.

Although guidance is available from the HR Adviser to the panel, the Chair will decide whether late witnesses may be heard, the length of any adjournment, or whether a hearing should be rearranged within any specific hearing, the decision of the Chair relating to procedural matters, is final.

14. REMEDY OF EARLIER PROCEDURAL DEFECTS ON APPEAL

A fair appeal hearing can act as a remedy for earlier procedural defects that might otherwise render a dismissal unfair. The appeal hearing will be held as outlined in Appendix 3.

Any fresh evidence may be considered at an appeal hearing.

15. ATTENDANCE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AT DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

The Chief Executive (except where he or she is the person involved) is entitled to attend and give advice at all proceedings where the removal of an employee from the school is considered.

However, at the start of the Hearing the employee or their representative can request that the Chief Executive Officer Headteacher waives his/ her right to attend the Hearing.

**This Disciplinary Policy was adopted by Owlcotes Multi Academy Trust on
03/04/2020**

Chair of Trustees: Mrs Judith Norfolk		
Signature:		Judith Norfolk
Frequency of review:	2 years	
To be reviewed and approved by:	OMAT Full Board	
Date of next review:	March 2027	

REVIEW RECORD

Date of review	Reason for review	Date of next review
10/03/2022	Addition to section 4.3.	March 2024

Name:		Signature:	
on behalf of OMAT Full Board			

Date of review	Reason for review	Date of next review
21/03/2024	Agreed review schedule.	March 2026

Name:			
on behalf of OMAT Full Board			

Date of review	Reason for review	Date of next review
20/03/2025	Amendments to sections 3, 4, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 9.3, 10, 11, and Appendix 1.	March 2027

Name:		Signature:	
on behalf of OMAT Full Board			