



Child Protection Policy

1st Edition June 2015



Child Protection Policy 2015

Table of contents

Philosophy	page 3
Principles	page 3
Definitions	page 4
Responsibilities	page 7
Practices	page 7
Staff Training.....	page 7
Emergency.....	page 9
When a Child Discloses.....	page 9
Child Protection Referral Process	page 11
Child Protection Training.....	page 11
Keeping Records of Child Protection Cases	page 12
GESS Child Protection Officer	page 12
GESS Designated Person.....	page 12
Appendices	page 13
1. Child Protection Referral Guidelines	page 14
2. Child Protection Referral - Form 1.....	page 16
3. Child Protection Record - Form 2	page 18
4. Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff	page 20

1. Philosophy

In keeping with the United Nations charter, our children have the right to feel safe, supported and cared for. They must be able to grow and develop in an environment that is free from intimidation, distress, and hurt. At all times, the German European School Singapore (GESS) echoes this commitment by endeavouring to safeguard the well-being of its students in the wider community by taking the necessary measures to protect them from all forms of neglect and abuse that comes to the attention of its staff wherever and whenever it may occur.

GESS is committed to promoting the physical and emotional health of its pupils. We believe that it is a vitally important part of our work, whether in or out of the classroom, to educate, protect and support the children in our care so that they better understand the risks they face from abuse in all its forms.

2. Principles

Staff must follow the procedures laid down by the school's Child Protection Policy with regard to:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological and Emotional abuse

This commitment means that the interests and welfare of the child are paramount when a suspected case of abuse or neglect is identified. The procedures outlined in this policy are developed to meet the needs of this specific school but also remain in line with the *Manual on Management of Child Abuse in Singapore* (2008) produced by the Inter-Ministry Working Group comprising the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Education of Singapore. The manual is based on current legislation - principally the *Children and Young Persons Act*. The school has a professional responsibility to comply with this. A copy of these materials can be found in the school counselling office at the main campus.

However, first and foremost, GESS fully recognises that the most powerful tool for the prevention of child abuse is education to support pupils in an abuse-free school environment.

Thus there are three main elements to the school's practices regarding child protection:

- **Prevention:**
By fostering a positive school atmosphere, with well-trained teachers, counsellors and pastoral support staff.
- **Protection:**
By following a clearly established procedure that enables staff to respond rapidly and sensitively to a child protection concern.
- **Support:**
By quickly establishing confidentiality and effective communication between effected pupil(s), school staff, and the family(s) who may have been abused.

All school staff must comply with training on an annual basis to maintain awareness of the possible signs of abuse and the steps needed to report a case to the child protection team. Whether a member of staff is working in the pre-school, primary or secondary department, the procedure will remain the same.

Definitions

Child Abuse - Child abuse is a generic term used to describe a range of behaviours that occur in the lives of children and young people. Often it occurs in environments that are isolated and stressful and affects those who are most vulnerable.

It is the term used to describe four different types of maltreatment inflicted on a child or young person: non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse that includes the psychological harm of children and young people. Each of these forms of abuse can lead to a range of signs or behaviours in the abused child and require different and specialised responses.

In its most serious forms, abuse can lead to death or long-term physical or emotional harm. There are four main areas of child abuse.

It should always be recognised that all these signs may also be symptomatic of another problem. It is expected this would be determined during an initial investigation by the school's child protection team.

1. Neglect – The persistent or severe neglect of a child, which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

This can occur when parents/guardians fail to meet the basic and essential needs of their children such as food, clothing and medical care. Leaving small children alone and unsupervised is another example of neglect. Parents refusing or failing to give love and affection to their child/ren is a case of emotional neglect.

Signs or symptoms, which may possibly indicate neglect:

- Hunger
- Tiredness or listlessness
- Child dirty or unkempt
- Poor school attendance or often late for school
- Poor concentration
- Affection – demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- Stealing or scavenging compulsively
- Failure to achieve developmental milestones

2. Physical Abuse – Physical injury to a child – there is a reasonable suspicion that the injury was intentionally inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

It involves any potentially non-accidental injury where adults physically hurt a child. This can involve hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting. It also includes giving a child poisonous substances, inappropriate drugs or alcohol.

Signs or symptoms, which may indicate physical abuse:

- Bruising with an inconsistent account of how such injuries occurred
- Bald patches
- Burns or scalds
- Fear of going home or parents being contacted
- Fear of medical help
- Inexplicable fear of adults or over-compliance
- Violence or aggression towards others including bullying.

3. Sexual Abuse - When children and young persons are involved in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend and which violate the social taboos of family roles. It occurs when the older person uses his/her power over the child/young person to involve the latter in a sexual activity. It may involve:

- a) Sexual grooming
- b) Inappropriate exposure to sexual acts or materials
- c) Passive use of children and young persons as sexual stimuli for adults;
- d) The child and young person may be subjected to exhibitionist activities, voyeurism or be coerced into posing for pornographic materials
- e) Inappropriate sexual contact or acts between older individuals and the child/young person
- f) Intercourse as a result of rape, assault and coercion.

Signs or symptoms, which may indicate sexual abuse:

Note - most frequently there are no signs of this type of abuse

- Sexually explicit play or behaviour or age inappropriate behaviour
- Anal or vaginal discharge, soreness or scratching
- Persistent complaints of stomach disorders or pains
- Eating disorders
- Attention-seeking behaviour including sexual harassment or molestation
- Regressive behaviour
- Difficulty controlling bladder, soiling
- Frequent or open masturbation, touching others inappropriately
- Reluctance to undress for PE or swimming
- Bruises, scratches in genital area
- Lack of trust of a familiar or particular adult
- Unusually compliant.

4. Psychological/Emotional Abuse - persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. This occurs where constant lack of love and affection, threats, verbal attacks, taunting, shouting, can lead to a child's loss of self-esteem. It can also include harassment or indifference on the basis of race, culture, gender or disability. Aspects of psychological and emotional abuse include:

- a) Hostile rejecting/degrading (eg taunts)
- b) Terrorising (eg threats or acts that induce fear)
- c) Actively isolating (eg locking a child in a room for extended periods of time)
- d) Exploiting/corrupting (eg teaching a child to steal)
- e) Denying emotional responsiveness (eg denying affection and shows of love).

Signs or symptoms, which may indicate psychological abuse:

- Rocking, banging head, regression
- Self-mutilation, drug or solvent abuse
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Running away, compulsive stealing
- Masturbation
- Eating disorders
- Soiling, smearing faeces, difficulty controlling bladder
- Sudden speech disorders, selective mutism
- Over-reaction to mistakes, continual self-deprecation
- Delayed physical/mental/emotional development

A crisis can be the result of one incident or the progression and climax of years of torment and hiding.

Responsibilities

“School staff are particularly well-placed to observe the outward signs of abuse and the unexplained changes in behaviour or performance which may indicate abuse.”¹

Protecting the welfare of the child is the professional responsibility of all staff working at GESS and requires that we all know how to respond to suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. If a member of staff comes into contact with a suspected case, he or she must go to either the school counsellor or a child protection officer at the first available opportunity to discuss and/or document the matter.

3. Practices

Staff Training

GESS is committed to maintaining and increasing staff awareness of how to prevent, recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect.

The school will ensure that staff are updated on procedures related to child abuse and neglect by carrying out training on an annual basis across the whole school.

As part of their induction, all adults will read and familiarise themselves with the GESS Child Protection Policy and will be directed to additional resource materials. An abbreviated outline of child protection procedures (see Appendix 1) will be posted in appropriate staff only areas of the school.

If staff/volunteer suspect a child has been abused or neglected, the following procedures should be implemented:

- If approached directly by a child, a staff member should whenever possible use the **Child Protection Referral Form 1** (see Appendix 2) to record the child’s statement and add any additional information in line with the GESS guidelines (see Appendix 1).
- GESS staff will take any such reports or other concerns immediately to a school counsellor or **Child Protection Officer (CPO)**. During the meeting with the counsellor and/or CPO the member, the **Child Protection Referral Form 1** (see Appendix 2) will be reviewed or completed.
- The CPO and/or counsellor will take the **Child Protection Referral Form 1** to the school’s **Designated Person** who will be committed to carrying out a full investigation of the case in consultation with one of the school counsellors. Full, clear and accurate documentation of the course of an allegation, its investigative process, and the conclusion of a case will be recorded on the **Child Protection**

Record Form 2 (see Appendix 3) by the Designated Person.

- If there are obvious signs of harm, the student will be taken to the School Nurse immediately. If the student is in need of urgent medical attention, he/she should be brought to one of the two designated paediatric hospitals either the KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) or to the National University Hospital (NUH). If it is not possible or advisable to obtain parent consent, Child Protection Service (CPS) should be contacted for consultation.

In the event of suspected sexual abuse happening, it is a requirement that the Designated Person contact the Principal immediately. Thereafter, the school will involve CPS and/or the Singapore Police. For cases happening within the context of the family, the family should not be alerted to the allegations being made and the report will either be made to the police or CPS. For sexual abuse cases happening outside the context of the family, the family will be informed of the incident and a report needs to be made to the police. It is not the school's duty to conduct intensive investigations, in terms of talking to the child at length on the incident. This must be left to external authorities for legal reasons.

- In the event of other forms of abuse, the Designated Person will consult with the Principal. **A record of this meeting will be kept using the school's Child Protection Record Form 2** (see Appendix 3). When deemed appropriate after further investigation, and under the authority of the Principal, the Designated Person will liaise with the proper Child Protection Service, or Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. The Designated Person will continue to keep the relevant counsellor, CPO and reporting staff member(s) up to date with developments throughout the investigation.
- If it is suspected that abuse has occurred or is about to occur and the child is unsafe and in imminent risk of further harm, we are committed to reporting the matter to Child Protection Service Helpline at **1800 777 0000** (office hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am- 5pm and Saturday, 8.30am-1pm) **or the police**.
- When there is a suspicion that the abuse has been perpetrated by someone close to the family or within the family network, the Designated Person or Principal will contact the family and discuss ways in which the student might be kept safe and managed more appropriately. However, where there is concern that the child will be further harmed the family should be informed that it may be in the best interests of the child for external agencies to become involved.
- If it is suspected that an employee or voluntary worker in the school has abused a child, it must be reported immediately to a Designated Person who will record the allegation using **Child Protection Referral Form 1** before investigating the matter and reporting to the Principal. Depending on the type of abuse and its level of seriousness the school must decide upon the best interests of the child(ren) involved in line with the principles of this policy. See Appendix 4

regarding considerations given to members of staff facing an allegation.

- GESS believes that our children, staff and parents involved in an investigation of child abuse should all receive support. To this end, the Designated Person in consultation with the counselling team and the Principal will coordinate specialized support with agencies as required. Wherever possible they will coordinate care arrangements if the child is deemed to be unsafe in their current environment and provide general advice on a case- by-case basis regarding appropriate procedures to be followed.
- GESS believes in open communication within its community. However, in the case of child protection the Designated Person, relevant counsellor and Principal will be responsible for strategizing if and how an incident should be communicated to its community. In this process the primary guiding principles are our protection of the victim and any legal obligations facing the school.

Emergency

First aid is to be given as in any other kind of emergency. Follow-up care and counselling will commence as soon as is practical.

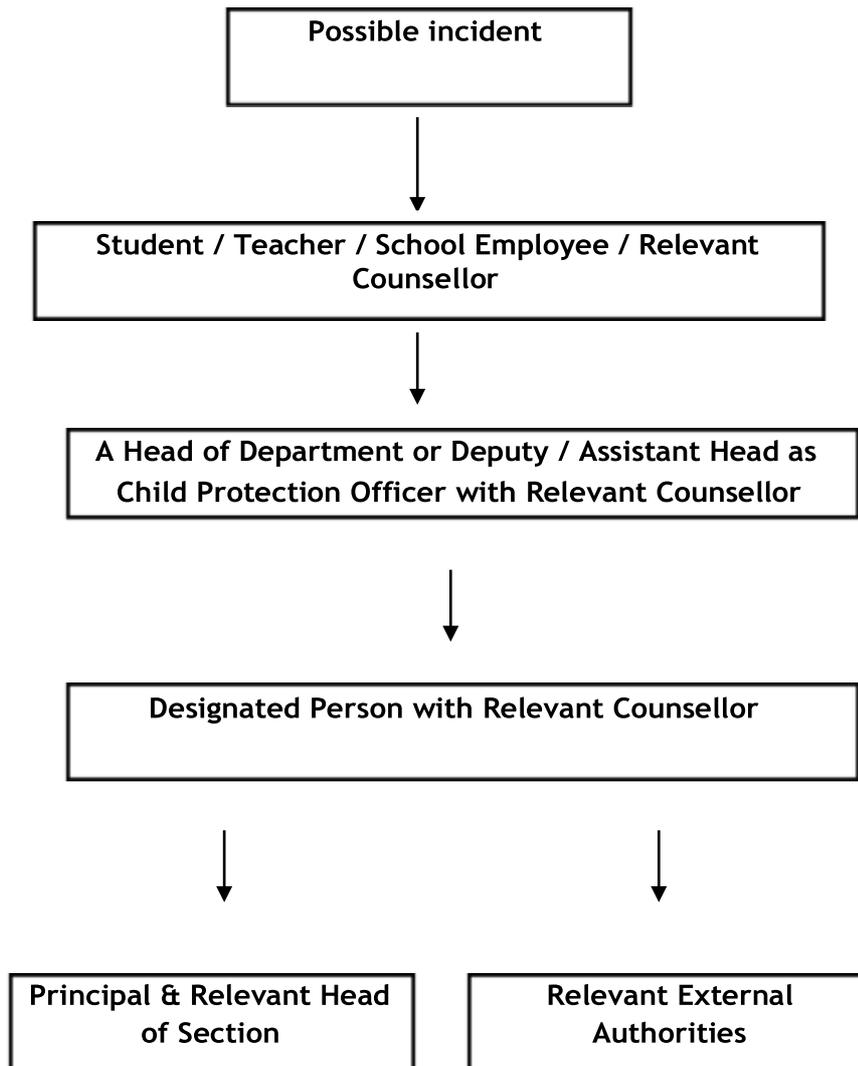
When the child discloses

- Remain calm, do not panic or express shock.
- Listen carefully - do not prompt responses.
- Reassure the child - tell him/her he/she is doing the right thing and that you are pleased he/she is confiding in an adult. Praise him/her for having the courage to talk about it with someone.
- Do not project or assume anything, let the child tell his/her story; leave your own assumptions out.
- Possible questions to ask in a non-leading manner include:
 - What happened to you?
 - Who did this to you?
 - Where did it happen?
 - When did this happen?
- Use age specific language. Ask for clarification for any meaning or words you don't understand.
- Let the child know he/she is believed.
- Let the child know that you will do your best to protect and support him/her.
- **Do not promise secrecy to the child.** Explain that in order to help him/her it may be necessary to tell certain other parties but it will be as confidential as possible. Assure him/her that the issue will not be general knowledge within the school community.

- Check that you have a full understanding of what the child has told you before the end of the discussion.
- Make the child comfortable. Ensure that the child is not left in a situation where he/she may be pressured to change his/her story.
- Report to the Child Protection Officer and/or counsellor. You will be asked to record (Referral Form 1) what the child has said or what you have observed, include dates and times. It is important that this is recorded in as much detail as possible so that the child does not have to repeat the details of abuse unnecessarily.
- In line with Singapore's MCYS guidelines, the school does not take any photographs of a child's injuries but instead records them by use of diagrams (see Referral Form 1).
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Do not discuss this with any other members of staff, children or people outside of school. It will be considered a serious breach of school protocol if you do this and may lead to disciplinary action.
- Report as per **flow diagram** (see below) at the earliest opportunity.
- If an investigation warrants further action the Designated Person is responsible for the following:
 - Determining in every investigation those who will *not* be told of an ongoing investigation and documenting why this is the case.
 - Informing the relevant Head of Section and Principal about an ongoing investigation.
 - When deemed necessary, collaborating with the relevant Head of Section, Principal and Board of Governors CP representative, to strategize how the school might inform the wider GESS community.
 - Determining if any body, external to the GESS management and/or Board of Governors, needs to be informed as a legal matter of course or to continue an investigation.

NOTE: The Designated Person will work with one of the counselling team in making these decisions.

Child protection referral process



Child Protection Training

The school is committed to on-going staff training on policy and procedures at the beginning of each academic year so that all those working with children understand their responsibilities and are familiar with expected GESS practice. It is part of the Designated Person's role to ensure that GESS fulfils this aspect of its policy commitments.

Keeping Records of Child Protection Cases

The Designated Person must store child protection case records in a 'double locked' secure place. A copy of such records should be stored by GESS until such time as the named child has reached 25 years of age. Then they will be destroyed by the Designated Person.

GESS Child Protection Officer

The role of the Child Protection Officer (CPO) is to:

- Ensure all staff knows who the Child Protection Officers (CPOs) are here at GESS.
- Ensure all staff know about, and have access to, Child Protection Referral Guidelines.
- Ensure all staff know where to locate the policy and the Referral of Concern Form 1.
- Be prepared to keep up to date with current practice by participating in training opportunities wherever possible.
- Immediately report child protection issues to the Designated Person and relevant counsellor, passing on all documentary records and evidence from the case.
- When deemed necessary to a case, communicate events to family(ies) or staff within the bounds of the policy's philosophy.

GESS Designated Person

The role of the Designated Person is to:

Referrals

- The Designated Person (DP) must be able to act as a point of support, advice and expertise within the school.
- Coordinate an initial referral and assess whether or not a form of child abuse has taken place.
- The DP will liaise closely with the relevant CPO and counsellor during a referral investigation.
- At all stages of the referral process the DP must keep the Principal informed of all on- going investigations, on-going child protection issues and the welfare of any students who are subject to a child protection plan.
- Maintain records of case conferences and other sensitive information in a secure confidential file and to disseminate information about the child only on a "need-to-know basis."
- Notify Child Protection Services (CPS) when a child with a CP file leaves the school.
- Promptly, and in consultation with the Principal, refer appropriate cases of suspected child abuse to the CPS or the police child protection team. However, if there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, the Police may be called immediately.

Raising Awareness

- Raise staff awareness and confidence in child protection procedures and ensure new staff are introduced to them. This is done via an induction workshop.
- Enable all staff to identify signs of abuse so they know when to initiate a Referral Form 1.
- Facilitate and support the on-going review of the whole-school Child Protection Policy. Review other related policies such as; anti-bullying, attendance, E safety, behavior, intimate care, physical intervention, staff code of conduct, recruitment and selection, confidentiality.
- Ensure the community has access to the policy and understands the school's processes and protection philosophy.
- Update and publish the school's child protection development plan on an annual basis.

Training

- Lead whole staff induction and refresher training workshops covering CP issues, recognising abuse and the school's referrals process.
- Enable all staff to respond to disclosure appropriately.
- Keep all staff up to date with current practices both globally and in the region by participating in training opportunities wherever possible.
- Carry out Board of Governor child protection representative training.

Appendix 1

Child Protection Referral Guidelines



What should you do if you are worried about a child's welfare?

Or

What should you do if a child tells you something that concerns you? (For example, makes a disclosure of abuse)

DO NOT KEEP YOUR CONCERNS TO YOURSELF!

Remember abuse can be:

- Neglect (for example: dirty, no lunch, inappropriately dressed for weather)
- Physical (for example: bruising, burns, sores, bites)
- Emotional (for example: withdrawn or disturbing behaviour)
- Sexual (for example: inappropriate sexualised behaviour or comments).

There are many other physical and behaviour indicators of abuse.

Any concerns should be reported to the Counsellors or one the school appointed child protection officers.

What should you do?

- Remain calm, do not panic or express shock
- Listen carefully - do not prompt responses
- Reassure the child - tell them they are doing the right thing and that you are pleased they are confiding in an adult. Praise them for having the courage to talk about it with someone
- Do not project or assume anything, let the child tell their story; leave your own assumptions out
- Use age specific language. Ask for clarification for any meaning or words you don't understand.
- Let the child know they are believed
- Let the child know that you will do your best to protect and support them.
- Do not promise secrecy to the child. Explain that it is necessary that in order to help them, you will have to tell certain other parties but it will be as confidential as possible. Assure them however that this will not be general knowledge within the school community.
- Check that you have a full understanding of what the child has told you before the end of the discussion.
- Make the child comfortable. Ensure that the child is not left in a situation where he/she may be pressured to change their story
- Report to the appropriate Designated Person at the earliest possible opportunity. You will be asked to record what the child has said or what you have observed, include dates and times. It is important that this is recorded in as much detail as possible, using accurate language, so that the child does not have to repeat the details of abuse unnecessarily.
- Maintain confidentiality. Do not discuss this with any other members of staff, children or people outside of school. It will be considered a breach of school protocol if you do this.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY AS A MEMBER OF STAFF AT THE

**GERMAN EUROPEAN SCHOOL SINGAPORE TO PASS ON ANY CHILD
PROTECTION CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD!**



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Roots
DISCOVER YOUR
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Appendix 2

CHILD PROTECTION REFERRAL - FORM 1

(To be completed by adult who has first point of contact with child)

Child's Name and Class:

Date and Time of Concern:

Your Account of the Concern:

(What was said, observed, reported and by whom)

What exactly happened?

Who was involved?

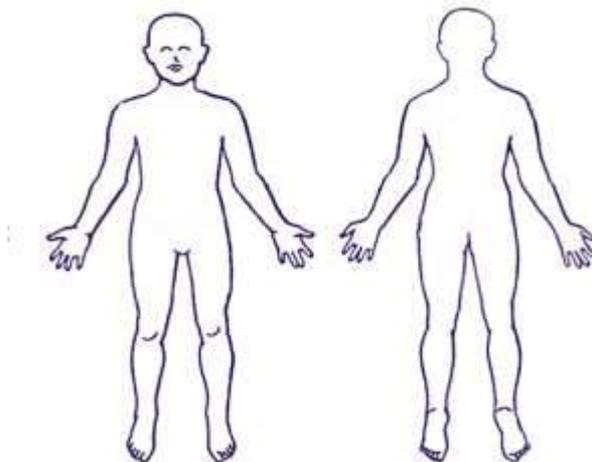
Where did it happen?

When did it happen?

Additional Information:

(Context of concern/disclosure/details of any physical signs)

Please indicate any markings on body outline:



Your Response:

(What did you do/say following the concern)

Your Name:

Your Signature:

Your Position in School:

Date and Time of this Recording: Form 1

passed to:

German Section Counsellor European Section Counsellor Head of Section

Other: _____

Date and time of meeting arranged to discuss Form 1 with

Name:Date:.....

Appendix 3

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD -
FORM 2**

(To be completed by Designated Person)

Date Form 1 was received and discussed:

Child's Name:	Date of birth:	
Class teacher:	Year group:	
Male/Female:	Disability Y/N:	Religion:
Parents:		

Record of initial discussion:	Date of referral	Reported by
Who has the information been shared with?		
Initial action points	Agreed timeline	Action by?



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Report on action taken: <i>including professional agencies known to be involved with the family, the extent to which both the child and the family are aware of the steps already taken, if parents have been informed then times and dates and a record of the meeting</i>	Date	Action by?
Further action points	Date	Action by?

This confidential document needs be kept with the Initial Record of Concern - Form1

Appendix 4

Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff (Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, 2007)

(Department of Education and Skills, www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

Introduction

It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a teacher or other member of staff or volunteer in an education setting is dealt with fairly, quickly, and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the child and, at the same time, supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

This procedure should be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a teacher or member of staff (including volunteers) in the school has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offense against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

There may be up to 3 strands in the consideration of allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services;
- Consideration by the school if disciplinary action is needed in respect to the individual

Supporting those involved

Parents or carers of a child or children - should be told of the allegations as soon as possible if they do not already know. They should also be kept informed about the progress of the case, and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process.

The deliberations of a disciplinary hearing, and the information taken into account in reaching a decision, cannot be disclosed, but the parents or carers should be told the outcome.

Child or children - in cases where there may have suffered significant harm, or there may be a criminal prosecution, children's social care, or the police as appropriate, should consider what support the child or children involved may need.

Teacher or staff member or volunteer - the person who is the subject of the allegations should be informed of the progress of the case and consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate for the individual. If the person is suspended, the school should keep the individual informed about developments at school.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The Designated Person will determine who should be made aware of an allegation. In most instances, the person, child or children involved, parents, and immediate teachers who were made aware of the situation will be notified. Once an investigation commences, information will be limited to the relevant Child Protection Officer (CPO), counsellor and Designated Person.

The school will work to manage speculation and to answer any questions in a forthright manner that maintains confidentiality.

Procedures

1. Any allegation against a teacher or staff member or volunteer should be made to the CPO.
2. The CPO will confidentially obtain the relevant information to begin an investigation process. In turn, the CPO will present this to the relevant Designated Person.
3. The Designated Person or counsellor will meet and interview the child or children involved, the teacher, staff member, or volunteer, and relevant corroborators to conduct a thorough assessment of needs. The re-telling of the story by the child or children involved should be minimized to limit distress and to contain the allegations to the appropriate individuals to maintain confidentiality.

4. Wherever possible, the staff member should be given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about it, but the process of recording the allegation and any supporting evidence, and reaching a judgment about whether it can be regarded as substantiated on the basis of all the information available, should continue even if that cannot be done or the person does not cooperate. The fact that a staff member tenders his or her resignation, or ceases to provide their services, must not prevent an allegation from being followed up.
5. It may be appropriate during the initial assessment of the allegation for the staff member to be placed on administrative leave so that information can be gathered to determine the course of action.
6. The Designated Person will maintain a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations using **Child Protection Record Form 2** (see Appendix 3):
 - Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
 - Notes on any action taken and decisions reached.

This record will be maintained and filed by the Designated Person. It should be retained at least until the staff member has reached normal retirement age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is the longer.
7. The Designated Person and the Principal will determine if the allegation(s) require immediate intervention by children's services and/or police. If deemed necessary, the Designated Person will contact local authorities and follow the Child Protection Policy's procedures in this regard.
8. The Principal will determine if the individual should be suspended until the case has been properly evaluated and resolved. Suspension should be considered in any case where there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm, or the allegation warrants investigation by the police, or is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.
 - Suspension should be considered in a case where there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school are at risk of significant harm, or the allegation warrants investigation by the police, or is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.
 - Where it has been deemed appropriate to suspend the person, written confirmation should be dispatched within **one working day**, giving the reasons for the suspension.
9. If the allegation is substantiated and after careful consideration of facts, the

Principal may deem that the person be dismissed from the school.

- In cases where it is decided that a person who has been suspended can return to work, the Principal will determine the proper course of action. The school would carefully consider how the person's contact with the children or children who made the allegation should be best managed. The person may be required to:
 - Obtain support from the school's or outside counselor to process the stressful experience
 - Have a phased return and/or the provision of a mentor to provide assistance and support in the short term.
10. If an allegation is determined to be false, the Designated Person should determine whether the child concerned is in need of services, or may have been abused by someone else. In the event that an allegation is shown to have been deliberately invented or malicious, the Principal should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the pupil who made it, or the police should be asked to consider whether any action might be appropriate against the person responsible if s/he was not a pupil.