



Rowlands Gill Primary School

Allegations of Abuse **Against Staff Policy**





Introduction

Allegations that a member of staff has abused a pupil or pupils either inside the school premises or during a school trip or visit could be made by:

- Parents
- The abused pupil
- Other members of staff
- Other pupils
- The Police or Social Services
- A third party

An allegation of such seriousness would normally be made directly to the Headteacher; but if another member of staff is told first, he/she will ensure that the Headteacher is informed immediately.

If the Headteacher is unavailable, or is involved, the Chair of Governors should be immediately informed.

Anonymous Allegations

If we are faced with an anonymous allegation of child abuse which names both a member of staff and a child, we will handle it in exactly the same way as if we knew the identity of the person making the allegation. Where the allegation names the member of staff; but not the pupil, we will normally interview the member of staff, and ask for his or her version of events.

It could be appropriate to establish a mentoring or review programme for that individual, or to provide him or her with further training. A record would be kept on the individual's personal file.

The First Response

We will respond promptly and sensitively to the legitimate concerns of the victim and his or her family. We undertake to:

- Take any allegation of abuse, involving a member of staff, very seriously,
- Establish the facts before jumping to any conclusion,
- Inform the member of staff concerned honestly of the allegation that has been made, and advise him or her to contact their Trade Union or Professional Association for advice and support,
- Inform the child's parents in confidence, inviting them to maintain confidentiality whilst the investigation takes place, unless the allegation involves the parents, in which case we will contact the Social Services before making contact.

The Next Step

Although a formal investigation is a matter for specialists, where the facts suggest that there may be reasonable grounds for suspecting actual abuse, or grooming of a child, or other criminal behaviour, we will always:

- Invite the police to conduct the investigation,
- Involve the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB),
- Consider suspending the member of staff (or volunteer) concerned.



Support for the Pupil

Our priority is to safeguard the young people in our care. We will give all the support that we can to a pupil who has been abused. The Headteacher, as the school's Child Protection Officer (CPO), will consider how best to support and monitor the pupil concerned through any process of investigation, liaising closely with parents, guardians, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), or other agencies involved to identify the support strategies that will be appropriate.

Suspension

Suspension of a member of staff is a neutral act and does not imply that any judgement has been reached about his or her conduct. Even so, it is a serious step, and we will take legal advice beforehand, and will normally only suspend a member of staff where:

- There is a serious risk of harm (or further harm) to the child,
- The allegations are so serious as to constitute grounds for dismissal, if proven,
- The police are investigating allegations of criminal misconduct.

We recognise fully that we have a duty of care towards all of our staff, and we will always:

- Keep an open mind until a conclusion has been reached.
- Interview a member of staff before suspending him or her.
- Keep him or her informed of progress of the investigation.

Any member of staff who is invited to a meeting whose outcome is likely to result in his or her suspension, is entitled to be accompanied by a friend [or Trade Union representative].

Alternatives to Suspension

We will always consider whether an alternative to suspension might be appropriate.

Possibilities include:

- Sending the member of staff on leave,
- Giving him or her non-contact duties,
- Ensuring that a second adult is always present in the classroom when he or she teaches.

If The Member of Staff Resigns

The resignation of a member of staff or volunteer mid-way through an investigation would not lead to the investigation being abandoned. Our policy is always to complete every investigation into allegations of child abuse.

Compromise Agreements

The policy at Rowlands Gill Primary School is to follow the DfE guidance set out in "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education" on the use of compromise agreements in cases of child abuse which is:



“Compromise agreements, by which a person agrees to resign, and a school agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, must

not be used in these cases. In any case, such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate. Nor can it override the statutory duty to make a referral to List 99 [now the ISA] where circumstances require it”

Length of Investigatory Process

We recognise that everyone’s interests are served by completing any investigatory process as swiftly as possible. We will aim to spend as little time as is compatible with fair and impartial processes on the investigatory process.

Referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority

Like all schools, we have a statutory legal duty to refer an individual, where there is the risk that he or she may harm, or has caused harm to children, to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) within one month of the individual’s dismissal or resignation because he or she has been considered unsuitable to work with children. Reports concerning members of staff or volunteers are normally made by the CPO, the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is involved, the report is made by the Chairman of Governors.

The referral form can be downloaded from the ISA website on (www.isa-gov.org.uk). The school plays no part in the subsequent process of barring individuals from working with children and/or vulnerable adults. We also have a legal duty to respond to any requests for information that we receive from the ISA at any time.

Recording Allegations of Abuse

We will record all allegations of abuse, and our subsequent actions, including any disciplinary actions, on an individual’s file. A copy will be given to the individual and he or she will be told that the record will be retained until he or she reaches statutory retirement age, or for ten years, if that is longer.

Handling Unfounded or Unsubstantiated Allegations

The Child

A child who has been the centre of unfounded or unsubstantiated allegations of child abuse needs professional help in dealing with the aftermath. We will liaise closely with the LSCB to set up a professional programme that best meets his or her needs, which may involve a multi-agency approach, as well as support from the school staff. We shall be mindful of the possibility that the allegation of abuse was an act of displacement, masking abuse that is actually occurring within the child’s own family and/or community.



However much support the child may need in such circumstances; we need to be sensitive to the possibility that the aftermath of an unfounded allegation of abuse may result in the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship with the teacher. In such circumstances, we may conclude that it is

in the child's best interests to move to another school. We would do our best to help him/her to achieve as smooth a transition as possible, working closely with the parents or guardians.

Member of Staff

A member of staff could be left at the end of an unfounded or unsubstantiated allegation of child abuse with severely diminished self-esteem, feeling isolated and vulnerable, all too conscious that colleagues might shun him/her on the grounds of "no smoke without fire". If issues of professional competency are involved, and though acquitted of child abuse, disciplinary issues are raised; we recognise that he or she is likely to need both professional and emotional help. We will undertake to arrange a mentoring programme in such circumstances, together with professional counselling outside the school community. A short sabbatical or period of re-training may be appropriate.

Allegation of Abuse of a Child who is Not a Pupil at the School

If we were given information that suggested that a member of staff was abusing a child who was not a pupil at Rowlands Gill Primary School, we would immediately pass such information to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) to handle. We would then interview the member of staff and formally advise him/her of the allegations, making it clear that the school would not play any part in the investigatory process. He or she would be advised of the possibility of facing suspension, re-assignment to other duties etc in exactly the same way as if the allegation had involved a school pupil. If the allegation subsequently proved to be unfounded, he or she would be given full support by the school in resuming his/her career.

Allegations Involving the Headteacher

The Chair of Governors should be told at once by the Deputy Head of any allegation involving the Headteacher. He will obtain legal advice before proceeding to the steps outlined above. The Headteacher will normally be suspended for the duration of the investigatory process, and the Deputy Head will be made acting Head until the conclusion of the investigation and resolution of the issue.