Southwark Diocesan
Board of Education
Multi-Academy Trust

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Part of the 2025/2026 Trust Operating Manual

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

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DISCIPLINARY POLICY

1. SCOPE OF DISCIPLINARY POLICY

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to give a structure to improve conduct to the standards expected and to facilitate the fair dismissal of those who have not improved or whose conduct is so unacceptable as to warrant dismissal without notice. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all employees.

1.2 There may be some occasions where your behaviour could be described as incapability. This policy and our Capability policy may be used concurrently whilst we determine whether the behaviour is misconduct or incapability. We anticipate that this will be a very rare situation.

1.3 There may be occasions where your conduct could relate to your health. This Disciplinary policy may be used concurrently with our Sickness Absence policy to ensure that appropriate support is in place. If you go off sick following the use of this Disciplinary policy we may use our Sickness Absence policy.

1.4 There may be occasions when you attempt to use our Grievance Resolution policy in connection with actions taken under this Disciplinary policy. This shall not ordinarily lead to any delay or pause in the conduct of any matters under this Disciplinary policy unless the appropriate manager considers it appropriate to pause this policy or to deal with matters concurrently.

1.5 For those support staff on their probationary period, some issues raised may be dealt with by the probation policy.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 Informal action will be considered, where appropriate, to resolve disciplinary problems.

2.2 No disciplinary action will be taken against you until the case has been fully investigated.

2.3 For formal action you will be advised of the nature of the complaint against you and will be given the opportunity to state your case before any decision is made.

2.4 At all formal meetings you may bring a Trade Union Representative of workplace colleague.

2.5 You will not be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty may be dismissal without notice and without payment in lieu of notice.

2.6 You will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary sanction. There is no appeal against a suspension.

2.7 This policy may be implemented at any stage, if your alleged misconduct warrants this.

3. INFORMAL GUIDANCE

3.1 Discipline is maintained effectively by example, training, informal advice or guidance and through observance by staff of recognised standards of conduct and the Conditions of Employment. Where minor misconduct first occurs, it should be the usual practice for the Head Teacher or other Line Manager to deal with the matter by counselling or, informal guidance about the need for improved conduct. Such guidance will not be formally recorded, but managers should keep a record of all informal guidance. The above process will usually have preceded formal disciplinary action in respect of minor misdemeanours. If the minor misconduct continues or is repeated then the case should be dealt with under the formal stage of the procedure.

3.2 The formal procedure should not normally be invoked unless:

(a) Previous advice and guidance has been ineffective: or

(b) The complaint is of a serious nature

4. INVESTIGATING, DISCIPLINARY AND APPEAL MANAGERS

The table below sets out the normal level of delegation for dealing with formal disciplinary action. A panel will consist of no less than two members.

Your Level (or level of highest co-accused)	Investigating Manager	Disciplinary Panel	Appeal Panel
School's Headteacher	Chair of School's Governors or another Governor nominated by Chair or our Executive Team's nominee	A Panel of our Executive Team or their nominee	A panel of Trustees or nominee
Other Leadership Spine and School Business Manager	School's Headteacher	Panel of the Governing Body	A Panel of our Executive Team or their nominee
Other School Staff (for sanctions other than dismissal)	School's Headteacher or a member of School's Leadership Team appointed by the Headteacher	School's Headteacher Chair of School's Governors or another non-staff Governor nominated by Chair, if the Headteacher is the Investigating Manager	Panel of the Governing Body
Other School Staff (where dismissal is a potential sanction)	School's Headteacher or a member of School's Leadership Team appointed by the Headteacher	Panel of the Governing Body	Panel of the Governing Body
Non-School Trust staff	A member of our Executive Team or their nominee or Trust Chair's nominee	A panel of Trustees	Panel of Trustees or their nominee

5. SUSPENSION

5.1 In appropriate cases you may be suspended whilst investigations are carried out.

5.2 Suspension may be undertaken in person but may be undertaken in writing. If it is undertaken in person it will be confirmed in writing.

5.3 ACAS suggests that suspension whilst investigations are carried out might be appropriate where:

(a) relationships have broken down;

(b) gross misconduct is alleged;

(c) there are reasonable concerns that evidence or witnesses could be interfered with; or

(d) there are responsibilities to other parties.

5.4 Suspension is a neutral act and is not a disciplinary sanction and is not an assumption of guilt. You will receive contractual pay and benefits during a period of suspension.

5.5 During a period of suspension we may require you not:

(a) to attend your place of work at any time (except with the prior agreement of your line manager);

(b) to communicate in any way with any parents, pupils or governors except:

(i) with the prior agreement of the person who suspended you or their nominee; or

(ii) where following the investigation you are called to a formal disciplinary meeting, when you may then approach governors, parents or pupils as potential witnesses but this must be done via the Investigating Manager to avoid any breach of the Data Protection Act or confidentiality;

(c) to communicate in any way with staff other than to discuss the fact of your suspension or the fact of or nature of the allegations against you in the following circumstances:

(i) with the prior agreement of the person who suspended you or their nominee;

(ii) for communication with your union representative;

(iii) where you are called to an interview with the Investigating Manager or a disciplinary meeting when you may approach work colleagues for the purposes of identifying a willing work companion; or

(iv) where you are called to a formal disciplinary meeting you may only approach work colleagues as potential witnesses in support of your case by making contact via the Investigating Manager.

5.6 During a period of suspension we may suspend your access to your email account and to other IT and communication services and may take such steps as necessary to cover your lessons or other commitments.

6. FORMAL PROCESS

6.1 Step 1 - Investigation

(a) The Investigating Manager will conduct an investigation into your alleged misconduct, with a view to obtaining evidence of innocence as well as guilt and to obtaining any evidence in mitigation.

(b) The Investigating Manager may appoint any other person to assist in the investigation.

(c) The investigation may include a face to face interview with you but this is not mandatory. You may if you wish provide a written statement or response to the Investigating Manager.

(d) Prior to an investigative meeting, you will be provided in writing with the details of the allegations, who the investigating officer is and a copy of this Disciplinary Policy.

(e) You are required to co-operate fully with the Investigating Manager to ensure that the investigation can be completed as swiftly and as thoroughly as possible.

(f) If pupils are to be interviewed as part of the investigation a second individual should witness the interview so that they can be called upon to give evidence if there is any subsequent concerns regarding the impartiality of the interviewer. They may not ask questions. The Investigating Manager may invite the pupil's parents to attend. This provision does not require an observer at any meeting where a disciplinary allegation is initially made by a pupil. More details on interviewing pupils can be found in Appendix 1.

(g) The Investigating Manager will produce an Investigation Report setting out;

(i) the allegations

(ii) evidence gathered

(iii) a decision that either:

(A) there should not be a formal disciplinary meeting to consider imposing a formal disciplinary sanction

(B) there should be a formal disciplinary meeting to consider the matter

(iv) if a disciplinary meeting is decided upon:

(A) the specific allegations to be considered at the meeting, and

(B) a statement whether dismissal may or may not be within the range of sanctions at the end of the disciplinary meeting, subject to mitigation.

(v) The Investigation Report and its supporting documentation are confidential documents.

(vi) If the decision is that there is a formal disciplinary meeting you will be sent the Investigation Report and all supporting documentation and witness statements.

(vii) If the decision is that there shall not be a formal disciplinary meeting the Investigation Report and supporting documentation and witness statements shall not be disclosed to you. However you will be notified in writing that there is no case to answer.

6.2 Step 2 – Disciplinary meeting

(a) If the Investigation Report contains a decision that there shall be a disciplinary meeting you shall be required to attend a formal disciplinary meeting with the Disciplinary Manager/Panel.

(b) The disciplinary meeting shall take place at least 5 working days after the Investigation Report was sent to you.

(c) Only relevant sections of the Investigation Report and supporting paperwork may be shared in advance of the disciplinary meeting with any persons who have been identified as attending the meeting to give evidence in person. This is to allow witnesses to be aware in advance where their evidence is disputed by another person. We may redact certain parts of such documentation to protect the general confidentiality of the proceedings.

(d) The Disciplinary Manager/Panel shall consider all the evidence presented and you shall have an opportunity to present evidence in your defence (including calling relevant witnesses) and in mitigation.

(e) The Disciplinary Manager/Panel may adjourn the disciplinary meeting to allow further investigations in the light of your evidence and will reconvene to give you an opportunity to comment on any further evidence produced by further investigations.

(f) The Disciplinary Manager/Panel is not required to hear oral evidence from the Investigatory Manager's witnesses and may rely on written evidence.

(g) If the Disciplinary Manager/Panel does decide to hear oral evidence from any witnesses called by the Investigation Manager, you will be given an opportunity to comment on it either by attending the meeting or by reviewing the notes of that oral evidence after the meeting (if you were not present at the disciplinary meeting).

6.3 Step 3 - Appeal

(a) If the Disciplinary Manager/Panel decides to impose a formal disciplinary sanction you will have the right of appeal to the Appeal Panel provided that you do so in writing to the Disciplinary Manager within 5 working days of the written notification of the Disciplinary Manager's decision being sent to you.

(b) Your appeal must set out the grounds of appeal in detail. This will enable the Appeal Panel to determine if the appeal is to be by way of a rehearing of the case (which would be appropriate if factual matters are disputed) or by way of a review of the case (which would be appropriate if only the sanction is disputed).

(c) The appeal meeting will normally take place within 20 working days of your notice of appeal being received by the Disciplinary Manager.

(d) The Appeal Panel may not impose a more severe sanction than that imposed by the Disciplinary Manager/Panel.

(e) The Appeal Manager may consider any new evidence produced by you not available to the Disciplinary Manager/Panel.

(f) The Appeal Panel may only consider new evidence produced by the Investigating Manager if it touches upon your credibility in relation to evidence you have already given or if it rebuts any new evidence produced by you or any assertions made by you in your grounds of appeal.

(g) If the Appeal Panel considers that any new evidence (from whatever source) would warrant a more severe sanction the Appeal Panel shall refer the matter to the original Disciplinary Manager/Panel for consideration and the Disciplinary Manager/Panel may impose a more severe sanction following a further disciplinary meeting at which you may be accompanied by a companion. If there was an appeal against such an increased sanction, it would be heard (where possible) by a different Appeal Panel.

(h) The Appeal Panel is not required to hear oral evidence from any witness called by the Investigation Manager and may rely on written evidence.

(i) If the Appeal Panel does decide to hear oral evidence from any witness called by the Investigation Manager, you will be given an opportunity to comment on it either by attending the meeting or by reviewing the notes of that oral evidence after the meeting (if you were not present at the disciplinary meeting).

7. FORMAL SANCTIONS

The Disciplinary Manager may impose the following sanctions:

7.1 A First Written Warning

(a) A First Written Warning will remain live for a period of 12 months from the date on which the Disciplinary Manager's written decision was sent to you.

(b) For a first disciplinary offence (ignoring any informal action), a First Written Warning would be the normal response.

7.2 A Final Written Warning

(a) A Final Written Warning will remain live for a period of up to 24 months from the date on which the Disciplinary Manager's written decision was sent to you.

(b) A Final Written Warning would normally be given for a second disciplinary offence committed or discovered during the period of a live First Written Warning (even if that First Written Warning related to a different type of misconduct and even if at the time of the Final Written Warning the 12 months period had lapsed).

(c) A Final Written Warning could be given for serious misconduct regardless of previous disciplinary history if the conduct is sufficiently serious.

7.3 Dismissal on notice

(a) Dismissal on contractual notice would be given for a disciplinary offence (other than an act of gross misconduct) committed or discovered during the period of a live Final Written Warning (even if the Final Written Warning related to a different type of misconduct and even if at the time of the dismissal the 24 months period had lapsed).

(b) For the avoidance of doubt the notice of dismissal commences immediately and does not await the outcome of any appeal.

(c) If your contract contains a payment in lieu of notice clause we may exercise that clause to bring your contract to an end with immediate effect.

7.4 Dismissal without notice or compensation

(a) Dismissal without notice or compensation (also known as Summary Dismissal) would be the normal sanction if you have committed an act of gross misconduct (subject to mitigation).

(b) For the avoidance of doubt the dismissal takes effect immediately and does not await the outcome of any appeal.

(c) The following is a non-exhaustive list of matters which we consider may amount to gross misconduct:

(i) conduct that is likely to bring us into disrepute;

(ii) conduct giving rise to any safeguarding or child protection issue;

(iii) a serious breach of any our Code of Conduct or any other relevant code of conduct or professional standards;

(iv) theft of any property;

(v) malicious or wilful damage to any property;

(vi) falsifying any documents whether for personal gain or not;

(vii) ordering any goods or services on our behalf from a supplier in which you or a relative have a personal interest (whether financial or not) without declaring that interest and without our permission;

(viii) dishonesty;

(ix) violence to any person;

(x) unlawfully restraining a pupil;

(xi) abusive threatening or offensive language or behaviour to any person;

(xii) unlawful discrimination or harassment;

(xiii) bullying;

(xiv) deliberate refusal to carry out a lawful and safe instruction;

(xv) absence from work without leave or reasonable explanation;

(xvi) disclosing the contents of any live examination paper or assessment in advance to any pupil or parent ;

(xvii) concealing any actual or attempted cheating or malpractice by any pupil or colleague;

(xviii) attending work or undertaking duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or unlawful drugs;

(xix) bringing alcohol or unlawful drugs onto our premises (save where alcohol is brought onto site for authorised refreshments);

(xx) misuse of our ICT (including internet and email access) to view or distribute obscene, pornographic, defamatory or otherwise unacceptable material;

(xxi) making an audio or video recording of a conversation or meeting without the prior express consent of all those participating;

(xxii) supplying your personal contact details to a pupil without express authorisation from your Headteacher;

(xxiii) interacting with a pupil online out of school hours other than through the Managed Learning Environment;

(xxiv) making any sexual or romantic contact with any pupil whatever the age of the pupil;

(xxv) breaching the confidentiality or data protection obligations surrounding a pupil, parent or colleague;

(xxvi) serious breach of health and safety procedures;

(xxvii) serious negligence (whether or not leading to any actual loss);

(xxviii) criminal activity during the course of employment;

(xxix) making a false malicious or vexatious allegation against us, a parent, pupil, colleague or governor;

(xxx) unlawfully subjecting a person who has raised a matter under of Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) policy to any detriment;

(xxxi) making a public criticism of us or your colleagues, outside of our Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) policy; or

(xxxii) any conduct incompatible with the precepts of or undermining the tenets of the Church of England.

7.5 Voluntary demotion as an alternative to higher formal sanction

(a) There may be a situation where the Disciplinary Manager (after determining the facts at a disciplinary meeting) considers that a recent promotion or job change has been a contributory factor in your misconduct.

(b) The Disciplinary Manager may offer you the option of taking a voluntary demotion as an alternative to a higher formal sanction.

8. PERMITTED COMPANION

8.1 You may bring a Permitted Companion, which may be a willing workplace colleague or union representative, to any disciplinary interview by the Investigation Manager or a meeting with the Disciplinary Manager or Appeal Panel.

9. GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS ON THE CONDUCT OF DISCIPLINARY MEETINGS

The ACAS Guide to Discipline and Grievance at Work says:

"The Disciplinary Manager should:

(a) ensure that all the relevant facts are available, such as disciplinary records and any other relevant documents (for instance absence or sickness records) and, where appropriate, written statements from witnesses

(b) check if there are any special circumstances to be taken into account. For example, are there personal or other outside issues affecting performance or conduct?

(c) be careful when dealing with evidence from a person who wishes to remain anonymous. Take written statements, seek corroborative evidence and check that the person's motives are genuine

(d) consider what explanations may be offered by the employee, and if possible check them out beforehand

(e) allow the employee time to prepare his or her case. Copies of any relevant papers and witness statements should be made available to the employee in advance

(f) arrange a time for the meeting, which should be held as privately as possible, in a suitable room, and where there will be no interruptions

(g) try and get a written statement from any witness from outside the organisation who is not prepared to or is unable to attend the meeting

(h) allow the employee to call witnesses or submit witness statements

(i) consider the provision of an interpreter or facilitator if there are understanding or language difficulties (perhaps a friend of the employee, or a co-employee). This person may need to attend in addition to the companion though ideally one person should carry out both roles

(j) make provision for any reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of a person with disabilities

(k) think about the structure of the meeting and make a list of points you will wish to cover

(l) any rules the organisation has for dealing with failure to attend disciplinary meetings

How should the disciplinary meeting be conducted?

Remember that the point of the meeting is to establish the facts, not catch people out.

The meetings may not proceed in neat, orderly stages but it is good practice to:

- *introduce those present to the employee and explain why they are there*
- *introduce and explain the role of the accompanying person if present*
- *explain that the purpose of the meeting is to consider whether disciplinary action should be taken in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary procedure*
- *explain how the meeting will be conducted.*

Statement of the complaint

State precisely what the complaint is and outline the case briefly by going through the evidence that has been gathered. Ensure that the employee and his or her representative or accompanying person are allowed to see any statements made by witnesses and question them.

Employee's reply

Give the employee the opportunity to state their case and answer any allegations that have been made. They should be able to ask questions, present evidence and call witnesses. The accompanying person may also ask questions and should be able to confer privately with the employee. Listen carefully and be prepared to wait in silence for an answer as this can be a constructive way of encouraging the employee to be more forthcoming.

Establish whether the employee is prepared to accept that they may have done something wrong or are not performing to the required standard. Then agree the steps which should be taken to remedy the situation.

If it is not practical for witnesses to attend, consider proceeding if it is clear that their verbal evidence will not affect the substance of the complaint. Alternatively, consider an adjournment to allow questions to be put to a witness who cannot attend in person but who has submitted a witness statement.

General questioning and discussion

You should:

- *use this stage to establish all the facts*
- *ask the employee if they have any explanation for the alleged misconduct or unsatisfactory performance, or if there are any special circumstances to be taken into account*
- *if it becomes clear during this stage that the employee has provided an adequate explanation or there is no real evidence to support the allegation, bring the proceedings to a close*
- *keep the approach formal and polite and encourage the employee to speak freely with a view to establishing the facts. A properly conducted disciplinary meeting should be a two-way process. Use questions to clarify the issues and to check that what has been said is understood. Ask open-ended questions, for example, 'what happened then?' to get the broad picture. Ask precise, closed questions requiring a yes/no answer only when specific information is needed*
- *do not get involved in arguments and do not make personal or humiliating remarks. Avoid physical contact or gestures which could be misinterpreted or misconstrued as judgemental.*

If new facts emerge, it may be necessary to adjourn the meeting to investigate them and reconvene the meeting when this has been done.

Summing up

Summarise the main points of the discussion after questioning is completed. This allows all parties to be reminded of the nature of the offence, the arguments and evidence put forward and to ensure nothing is missed. Ask the employee if they have anything further to say. This should help to demonstrate to the employee that they have been treated reasonably.

Adjournment before decision

Adjourn before a decision is taken about whether a disciplinary penalty is appropriate. This allows time for reflection and proper consideration. It also allows for any further checking of any matters raised, particularly if there is any dispute over facts".

10. ILL HEALTH

10.1 A disciplinary process can still be completed even if you are signed off as unfit to work. Fitness to work is not necessarily the same as fitness to participate in a disciplinary process. We will seek appropriate occupational health advice.

10.2 You may be sent written questions and given 7 calendar days to respond.

10.3 If you are unable to attend a disciplinary or appeal meeting the meeting may proceed provided you have had an opportunity to:

(a) put a written statement to the meeting;

(b) have a companion attend the meeting in your place; and

(c) review the notes of oral evidence and to submit written questions upon it.

10.4 We shall have regard to the following extracts from the Health and Work Handbook www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/hw.pdf ¬

issued by the Royal College of General Practitioners Faculty of Occupational Medicine and Society of Occupational Medicine:

"Disciplinary proceedings and management investigations

Occupational health and primary care teams may become involved in cases in which the employer is in dispute with the employee, and a disciplinary process is pending. This may result in dismissal of the employee, or a formal warning.

In these circumstances the doctor or nurse is sometimes asked to give an opinion as to whether the employee is fit to attend an investigation or disciplinary hearing. The employee may be suffering from stress related or depressive symptoms and may have requested sick certification. In these circumstances it is likely that the effects of an unresolved dispute on the employee's mental health may be greater if the proceedings are postponed. An employee may be unfit for work but fit to engage with the management process. The doctor or nurse will have to assess whether attendance is likely to cause serious deterioration in the employee's mental or physical health, for example if there is a significant risk of suicide.

Management investigations or disciplinary meetings do not have to be held in the workplace; they could be held away from work, at a 'neutral' location such as a hotel. This may be a helpful suggestion if the employee is anxious about going back into the workplace at this stage

The following questions may be used to determine fitness to attend a disciplinary meeting, or engage with the management process leading to such a meeting:

Does the employee have the ability to understand the allegations made against them?

Does the employee have the ability to distinguish right from wrong?

Is the employee able to instruct a friend or representative to represent their interests?

Does the employee have the ability to understand and follow the proceedings, if necessary with extra time and a written explanation?"

11. TRADE UNION OFFICERS

11.1 We note and adopt the ACAS Code of Practice's statement: "*Where disciplinary action is being considered against an employee who is a trade union representative the normal disciplinary [policy] should be followed. Depending on the circumstances, however, it is advisable to discuss the matter at an early stage with an official employed by the union, after obtaining the employee's agreement*."

12. REFERRALS

12.1 Where a teacher is dismissed for serious misconduct (or may have been dismissed for serious misconduct if the teacher had not resigned), we must consider whether to refer the circumstances to the National College for Teaching and Leadership under section 141D of the Education Act 2002 which came into force on 1 April 2012.

12.2 The National College for Teaching and Leadership website link is: www.gov.uk/government/collections/teacher-misconduct

12.3 Where a person working for us (whether a teacher or not) is dismissed or would have been dismissed if they had not resigned because that person committed conduct:

(a) which endangered a child or was likely to endanger a child;

(b) which if repeated against or in relation to a child, would endanger that child or would be likely to endanger him;

(c) involving sexual material relating to children (including possession of such material);

(d) involving sexually explicit images depicting violence against human beings (including possession of such images); or

(e) of a sexual nature involving a child.

we must refer that person to the Disclosure and Barring Service under section 35 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

12.4 The online guidance is here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referrals-form-and-guidance.

APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

1 Interviews with children should be conducted sensitively with a view to establishing clear statements of fact. It will also be helpful to establish, if anyone else was present without implying to the child that they may be used as witnesses.

2 In interviewing children whether as complainant or potential witnesses, care should be taken not to ask 'leading' questions. Open questions should be used e.g. "Did anything unusual happen in class this morning?" Follow up questions may then be used to clarify specific details e.g. Who? What? Where? How? When?

3 Care should also be taken to avoid any potential opportunities for collusion. Pupils should normally, therefore, be questioned individually although in some limited and exceptional circumstances more general and informal techniques may be appropriate.

4 Statements should then be made in writing and signed. Alternatively, the teacher conducting the investigation may summarise in writing the child's verbal account and ask them to sign it as a true account of their statement.

5 A child reporting to a member of staff that they have been abused by another member of school staff must be listened to. It is often difficult for an employee to believe that a colleague may have behaved in the manner alleged. They must therefore keep an open mind regarding the circumstances of the allegation. However, it is essential that the following guidance is taken into account when dealing with such an allegation, particularly if made directly by a child:

5.1 The child should be listened to but not interviewed or asked to repeat their account

5.2 Avoid asking direct questions, particularly leading questions wherever possible.

5.3 The child should not be interrupted when recalling significant events.

5.4 All information should be noted carefully. As far as possible details such as timing, setting, who was present and what was said should be recorded in the child's own words and be as near verbatim as possible.

5.5 The listener must take care not to make assumptions about what the child is saying or to make interpretations.

5.6 The adult must, on no account, offer suggestions or alternative explanations for the child's concerns.

5.7 A written record of the allegations should be signed and dated by the person who received them as soon as possible.

5.8 All subsequent actions must be recorded in writing.

6 No promises of confidentiality should be made to pupils who make allegations. Instead, the child should be encouraged to agree that the matter must be taken further in the knowledge of what this may involve. Whilst acknowledging the need to create an environment conducive to speaking freely, it should be made clear to the child by the member of staff that in all cases they have a duty to pass on what the child has told them to ensure the protection of child(ren). The child should be assured that the matter will only be disclosed to those people who need to know about it. Support may need to be offered by the school, LA or the appropriate agency. Consideration must be given at this point as to whether the allegation may be malicious. If it is obvious that the incident could not have taken place or it is reasonable to suspect that the allegation is malicious then further advice should be sought before making any decisions.

For further guidance please see our policy on Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff.