



## **Allegation Management Policy**

Review Date: August 2022

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Willow Banks Forest School aims to keep all children safe.

### **Rationale**

Willow Banks Forest School's Safeguarding Policy defines safeguarding as when:

“all agencies take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised. Where there are concerns, all agencies take action to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.”

Therefore we recognise it is essential, that any allegation of abuse made against a teacher, 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 is informed by 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018), the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) Procedures and the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP). In addition the Education Act 2002 (Section 175) and Section 11 of the Children Act (2004) place a statutory responsibility on Local Authorities (LAs) and governing bodies to ensure that schools/services have procedures in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

New guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2012 (Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other staff) also introduced a new outcome category of False Allegation.

In order to manage allegations against child care professionals, every Local Authority appoints a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child, or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk to children. (Working Together 2018)

In this context, the term "professional" includes paid employees, volunteers, casual/agency staff and self employed workers who will have contact with children as a part of their role. The LADO ensures that all allegations or concerns about professionals or adults working or volunteering with children are recorded appropriately, monitored and progressed in a timely and confidential way. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

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In the first instance, please could you report your concern/allegation against a person who works with children in Dorset, via our e-referral form which can be accessed here: [Referral – Management of Allegations against people who work with children \(Dorset\)](#) . Please complete the form according to your particular circumstance. Once completed, the form will be sent directly to the LADO, who will respond to your query as soon as possible.

If you are unsure whether the concern meets the Management of Allegations threshold for consideration, then please select the option for advice and guidance only within the form. The LADO will then contact you back via the contact details you provide in the form to discuss your query further.

If you would prefer to contact the LADO directly, or to discuss a concern that the LADO is already aware of, then please contact

01305 221122 or

[LADO@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

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In Somerset, The LADO is Anthony Goble.

To notify the LADO of an allegation, an Allegations Reporting Form (ARF) will need to be completed and forwarded to Somerset Direct:

[sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:sdinputters@somerset.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224 and request an ARF.

Or the link for the document can be accessed here: [Allegations- Reporting -Form](#)

## Criteria

In accordance with the statutory Department of Education guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' (2018) where an allegation is made against anyone who works with children at Willow Banks Forest School, that s/he

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

The following procedure will be implemented:

### Responding to allegation or complaint

The person who receives information regarding the allegation will not question the child or investigate the matter any further. They will:

- treat the matter seriously, avoid asking leading questions, communicate with the child in a manner appropriate to the child's understanding and communication style
- Make a written record of the information, where possible in the child's own words stating when the alleged incident took place, who was present and what was said to have happened.
- The record must be signed and dated
- The person receiving the information will report the matter immediately to the school's head teacher, or assistant head teacher or, where the allegation involves either of these, to the Chair of Governors.

### **The person to whom the matter is reported is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, until the allegation is resolved.**

The Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the Directors of the allegation.

### **Initial action by Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will not investigate the matter by interviewing the accused, the child making the allegation or any of the potential witnesses.

They will

- Obtain written details of the allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving the allegation or complaint
- Countersign and date the written details
- Record any other information about times, dates and location of any incident and the names of any potential witnesses

If the allegation meets any of the criteria outlined on Page One, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will report it to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day. Referral to the LADO will **not** be delayed in order to gather any further information.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead the forest school directors and staff, will cooperate with all relevant authorities involved and will share all relevant information about the person who is the subject of the allegation and the alleged victim to assist in any further investigation.

### **Informing accused person/Suspension**

The Forest School Directors will inform the accused person of the allegation as soon as possible after prior consultation with the LADO. The directors will consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant an immediate suspension of the person involved from contact with children, until the allegation is resolved. The governors will seek guidance from the LADO when considering a suspension. Any suspension will be on full pay, until decided otherwise.

### **Further action:**

### **Supporting those involved**

Parents or carers of any child involved will be told about allegations as soon as possible, after discussion with the LADO as to the most appropriate way this should be done and by whom. In cases where a child has been injured whilst in the school's care, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Directors will keep any staff member who is the subject of an allegation informed of the progress of the case and will arrange appropriate support/advise the accused to seek support from their trade union or other relevant professional association.

### **Confidentiality**

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity.

### **Record keeping**

The forest school will keep details of any allegations made and how the allegation was followed up and resolved. These records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age, or 10 years if that is longer, including for people who leave our employment. A copy will be given to the person. The purpose of the record will be to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference and to provide clarification for future DBS disclosures.

### **Outcomes**

If after initial consideration between the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the LADO it is clear that police or social care investigations are not necessary, the school will be guided by the LADO as to the most appropriate action.

The nature and circumstances of the allegation and evidence will determine the next course of action. If the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action will be instituted within 3 working days. If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without any further investigation, the hearing will be held within 15 working days. If, on conclusion of the case, it is decided that the person can return to work, the Directors will consider how best to facilitate the return and provide relevant support to the staff member and consider how to best manage the person's contact with the child who made the allegation. The parents/carers of the child will be kept fully informed of any decisions/action taken by the Directors.

### **Resignations and 'Compromise Agreement'**

If an employee resigns or ceases to work for the school, any allegation must still be followed up in accordance with these procedures.