SOUTH EAST ESSEX ACADEMY TRUST

Title	PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SAFEGUARDING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF
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Owner	Director of People and Operations
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1. INTRODUCTION

This Procedure details how safeguarding concerns and allegations against any adults engaged to work in a SEEAT school will be dealt with. This includes circumstances where the allegation did not take place at the school or on school premises. "Work" includes on a voluntary basis, including as a board member or Trustee.

These procedures are in accordance with the Department for Education statutory guidance document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

The following principles apply:

- all concerns and allegations will be taken seriously;
- all concerns and allegations will be dealt with appropriately and in liaison with relevant parties, even where they relate to a person who is not an employee;
- all concerns and allegations will be dealt with quickly, and in a fair and consistent manner that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time, supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

2. SCOPE

This Procedure applies when there is a safeguarding concern or allegation in relation to employees (including the Headteacher and/or CEO), supply and agency staff, volunteers, contractors, member of a local governing body and trustees.

SEEAT expects full co-operation and participation by third-party employers/agencies in the operation of this Procedure. Each school will ensure that all third-party employers/agencies are notified of this procedure before allowing any individuals employed by them to start work at a school within SEEAT.

The procedures do not apply where allegations relate to any person who is no longer working within SEEAT. Allegations against such persons, and historical allegations will be referred to the Police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). SEEAT will co-operate fully with relevant agencies in any investigations into these matters.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard children and everyone has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, taking prompt action and fully co-operating with this Procedure. All adults should make themselves aware of their responsibilities in this regard as set out in the Code of Conduct.

If anyone has any safeguarding concerns, they must report these immediately, to the headteacher, or other senior leader or the Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") or Deputy DSL if the headteacher is unavailable, or where concerns relate to the headteacher, Chief Executive Officer or a Trustee, to the Chair of Trustees, or where concerns relate to the chair of Trustees, to the Vice Chair or where unavailable the safeguarding Trustee.

Whistleblowing

Where at any point an individual feels unable to raise an issue with the appropriate person set out above, for example due to the sensitivity of the issue, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may refer to the Whistleblowing Policy. This policy sets out the framework for how issues can be raised confidentially internally, and/or if necessary, outside the management structure of the Trust to a prescribed body. For safeguarding and child protection allegations, individuals can refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer for child protection (LADO) or the NSPCC who have a dedicated helpline 0800 028 0285. The line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

4. PROCEDURES

In some cases, a concern will have been reported to, or discovered by, Social Care, the Police or the Local Authority Designated Officer ("LADO"), who will in turn inform SEEAT, usually by contacting the Headteacher of the relevant school (and where appropriate the third-party employer) and will initially lead and direct the investigation. In such cases the school, and where appropriate the third-party employer, will follow the advice and directions of these agencies as set out in Section 6.

Where a concern or allegation is initially reported to SEEAT, the matter will be taken seriously and considered with an open mind. In rare cases, where it appears a person may be an immediate risk to children, or there is suggestion of a possible criminal offence, the matter must be reported to the Police by SEEAT. This should usually be done via the headteacher or where unavailable, another senior leader or the Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") or Deputy DSL, and advice should also be taken from the LADO. In such cases SEEAT will wait for advice from the Police/LADO before taking any further action (see Section 6.). The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Deputy CEO should be informed by the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity, who in turn will ensure the Chair of Trustees is made aware where appropriate.

Assessment

Concerns raised will vary from the serious, to relatively low-level issues. The Headteacher and CEO, along with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, will make an initial assessment to determine how the matter should be dealt with, ensuring any action is appropriate and proportionate. In many cases, this may involve providing additional direction, support or training.

However, in cases where misconduct is suspected, the following steps will be followed.

Initial investigation

The headteacher or CEO, where the allegation relates to the headteacher, will themselves, or arrange for an appropriate person, to be the case manager. The case manager will obtain advice and support as necessary; ordinarily from SEEAT's Director of People.

In certain circumstances, such as the lack of appropriate resources within SEEAT or, given the nature or complexity of the allegation, SEEAT may engage an independent investigator to be the case manager.

Third-party/Agency workers

Where a concern or allegation relates to a person employed by a third party/agency, the case manager will inform and liaise with the employer/agency. SEEAT, usually delegated to the Headteacher, will usually take the lead on the investigation but will invite the employer/agency's human resource representative or equivalent person to relevant meetings and keep them informed.

The case manager will carry out a brief initial investigation to gather enough information to establish whether the allegation has foundation and whether the information indicates that a person has met the "harm test", which is that they have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The initial investigation will be carried out immediately and will entail:

- making a detailed written, signed and dated record of the information reported;

- asking the person reporting the concern to immediately provide a written statement which should be signed and dated;
- fact checking to establish that the incident could have happened e.g. was the accused person and child in the place mentioned and making a written and dated record.

Parents will be informed immediately if the child is injured or needs medical treatment.

The case manager will not:

- investigate in great depth or ask leading questions;
- interview the accused, children or any witnesses;
- make assumptions or offer alternative explanations;
- promise confidentiality, although will give assurance that the information will only be shared on a strictly confidential 'need to know' basis.

If the case manager considers the harm test to have been met, Section 6 of these procedures will then apply.

In many cases, the harm test will not be met, and internal procedures will be followed as set out in Section 7 of these procedures.

5. SUSPENSION AND ALTERNATIVES

On the basis of the facts available at each stage of these procedures, it may be considered appropriate to remove the accused person from certain roles or contexts or from the setting entirely where:

- there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school are at risk of harm;
- the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal;
- allowing the employee to remain at work could hinder the investigatory process; or
- there is a restriction in place such as bail conditions or an interim prohibition order.

The LADO may advise on this matter, but the decision will be made by SEEAT.

Employees

The case manager, with SEEAT's Director of People, will undertake a detailed risk assessment and explore all options to avoid suspension such as redeployment or reallocation of duties will be considered. If suspension is considered necessary, the rationale and justification will be recorded in the risk assessment in addition to the alternatives to suspension that were considered and why they were considered not to be appropriate in the circumstances.

The employee will receive written confirmation of their suspension, including written reasons for the suspension, within one working day. They will also be notified of the support available.

Volunteers

The case manager will make a judgment, based on the nature of the concern or allegation and the evidence available, about whether it is appropriate to stop the volunteer from attending the school setting while the investigation is carried out.

Third Party/Agency Workers

The case manager will liaise with the third-party employer/agency to determine whether it is appropriate to redeploy or suspend the supply teacher/contractor, during the investigation. SEEAT is not obliged to

continue to engage the worker during the investigation but will not decide whether to cease to use the worker entirely until the investigation is complete and an outcome is reached.

Members of a Local Governing Body and Trustees

Where appropriate, a board member or trustee may be asked to absent themselves from some or all aspects of their functions, or in the most serious cases, and where regulations allow, may be suspended, during an investigation.

All arrangements will be discussed with the person concerned, confirmed in writing, and kept under regular review.

Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service

There is a legal requirement for SEEAT, via the HR department, to make a referral to the DBS where they remove an individual from regulated activity (or would have removed an individual had they not left), and they believe the individual has:

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or adults, and/or
- satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, and/or
- been cautioned or convicted of a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence.

6. PROCEDURES WHERE THE HARM TEST IS MET

The case manager will report the allegation to the LADO as soon as possible and always within 24 hours of the allegation being raised. Failure to report an allegation or concern in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

The LADO will liaise with other agencies such as the Police or Children's Social Care as appropriate to determine the next steps and the school will follow the directions of these agencies.

This may include:

- what, if any, information can be shared with parents and the accused person, and at what point;
- provision of further information about child/ren or adults; and
- attendance at a strategy or management planning meeting to share relevant information and plan the next steps.

The LADO will advise SEEAT when the agencies involvement is concluded and the matter is handed back to be dealt with through internal procedures.

Criminal cases

In most cases, internal procedures cannot be applied until the conclusion of police processes. The police should inform the employer and designated officer(s) immediately when a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete, if it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or not to continue to prosecute the case after the person has been charged. In those circumstances, the designated officer(s) should discuss with the case manager whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed. The information provided by the police and/or children's social care services should inform that decision. Where the police are involved, wherever possible the employer should ask the police to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the employer disciplinary process.

7. INTERNAL PROCEDURES

Internal procedures will be followed where the harm test is not met and where LADO, Social Care, and/or Police involvement is concluded and/or it is agreed that SEEAT can follow its internal procedures.

If, at any stage, new information emerges that requires a referral as set out in Section 6, the internal procedures should be held in abeyance and only resumed if agreed with the LADO, children's social care, and the Police. Consideration or a review of suspension/alternate arrangements should be also undertaken.

Employees

Where the concern or allegations relate to an employee, the Disciplinary Procedure will be applied. The outcome will be determined and communicated to the employee, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

Volunteers

Where a concern or allegation relates to a volunteer, the case manager will arrange for an investigation to be carried out. This will involve gathering relevant information and evidence, including speaking to the volunteer.

At the end of the investigation, the outcome will be determined and communicated to the volunteer, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

Having reached a determination, the case manager will decide whether it is appropriate to allow the individual to continue to volunteer, and if so whether there are any conditions or considerations, such as additional training or supervision.

Third-party workers, including agency supply teachers and other workers

In the case of workers who are not employees of SEEAT, their employer is responsible for applying their internal procedures. However, where necessary, SEEAT will lead in carrying out investigations, as agencies will not have access to children and other staff to collect facts. In any case, SEEAT will fully co-operate with and provide support as required, to the third-party employer and other agencies. Subject to the outcome of the investigation, SEEAT may decide to cease to engage the worker permanently.

Members of a Local Governing Body and Trustees

Where a concern or allegation relates to a board member or trustee, the complaints against trustees procedure will be applied. The outcome will be determined and communicated to the Trustee, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

8. CONCLUSION OF SAFEGUARDING CASES

Investigations into allegations will be completed and the outcome recorded, regardless of whether the person involved resigns or otherwise ceases their engagement with SEEAT prior to the conclusion of the investigation or criminal or internal procedures. The individual will be invited to participate in internal procedures at all stages, but they will proceed even if the person declines to cooperate.

Settlement agreements will **not be used** to resolve employee relations matters relating to safeguarding.

The following definitions will be used when determining and recording the outcome of investigations:

- Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation;
- Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive;
- False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;

- Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence;
- Unfounded: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

Records and References

Allegations that are found to be malicious or false will be removed from HR records. In all other cases, a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the concern or allegation was followed up and resolved, and a note of any actions taken and decisions reached will be recorded and retained on the HR file of the accused and a copy provided to the individual.

SEEAT must report relevant safeguarding matters in employment/volunteer references in respect of relevant employment/engagement and will do so. Allegations proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious will not be included in any references.

SEEAT must preserve records that contain information about allegations of sexual abuse for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. All other records will be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and Teacher Regulation Agency

A referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and where appropriate the Teacher Regulation Agency, will be made and/or updated on the conclusion of a case where the individual has been removed from working -paid or unpaid- in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.

Notifying parents

In line with the statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education," parents should be kept informed about the progress of the case, only in relation to their child - no information can be shared regarding the staff member.

Return to work

Where it is decided on the conclusion of a case that a person who has been suspended or placed on alternate duties, can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

Consideration will be given, in consultation with the person, about what help and support should be given. This may include a phased return or a short-term mentor for support and consideration of how the person's contact with the child or children to whom the allegation related can best be managed if they are still a pupil or student.

Reflections and further action

If an allegation is determined to be false or malicious, SEEAT will liaise with relevant agencies to determine what, if any, further interventions or action may be necessary in respect of the accuser.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, SEEAT will reflect on its practice and procedures to determine whether there are any improvements to be made.

9. SUPPORT FOR THOSE INVOLVED

SEEAT will act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process.

- Allegations will be dealt with expeditiously, fairly and thoroughly;

- Individuals will be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action, and updates on progress, unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the police;
- Employees should contact their trade union representative and have the right of representation by a trade unions representative or work colleague at any formal disciplinary meeting.
- Other individuals should seek appropriate support e.g. citizens advice, their professional body;
- Individuals will be given access to welfare counselling or medical advice where this is appropriate and available. In case of third-party workers, this will be the responsibility of their employer; and
- All individuals subject to alternate work arrangement/suspension will be given a named contact to provide relevant updates regarding events in the workplace and to act as a conduit for information/communication as appropriate. In the case of third-party workers, this will be the responsibility of their employer.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

It is essential that strict confidentiality is maintained at all time, by all parties.

It is however a statutory requirement for SEEAT and where applicable their staff, to share relevant information in relation to safeguarding matters and as such SEEAT will share information with the LADO, police, children's social care, other agencies such as the DBS and the Teaching Regulation Agency, and individuals such as parents/carers, as required and in accordance with its obligations and any regulations, including the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.

The Education Act 2002 introduced reporting restrictions preventing the publication of any material that may lead to the identification of a teacher in a school who has been accused by, or on behalf of, a pupil from the same school (where that identification would identify the teacher as the subject of the allegation). The reporting restrictions apply to everybody until the point that the accused person is charged with an offence, or until the Secretary of State publishes information about an investigation or decision in a disciplinary case arising from the allegation. The reporting restrictions are disapplied if the individual to whom the restrictions apply effectively waives their right to anonymity by going public themselves or by giving their written consent for another to do so or if a judge lifts restrictions in response to a request to do so.