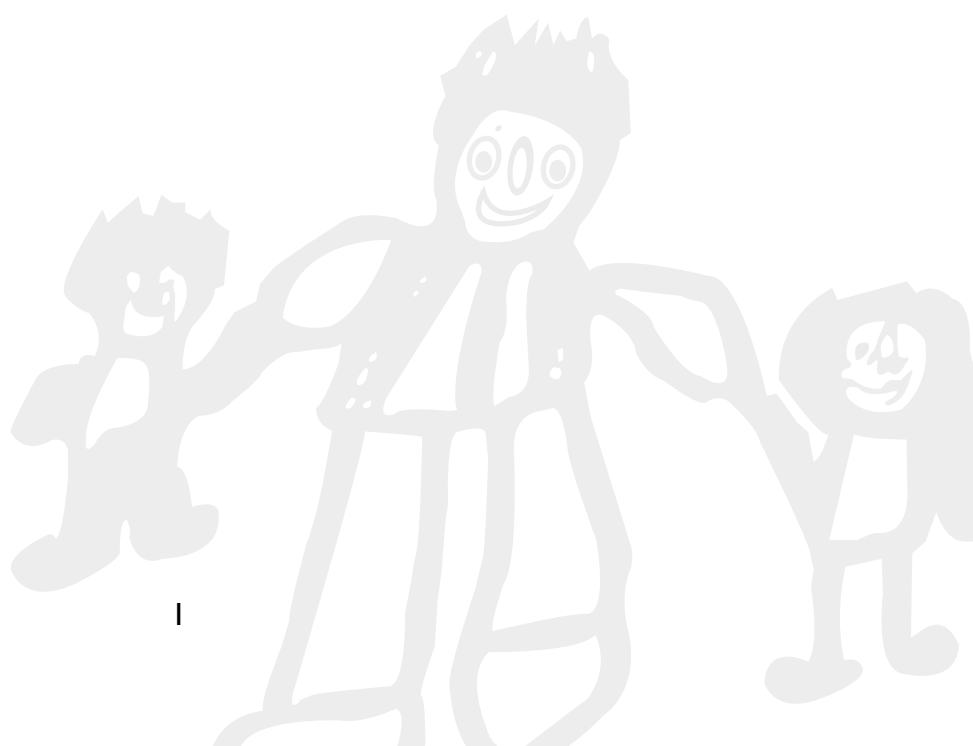


# MANAGING ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

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# 1. Introduction

Despite all efforts to recruit safely there will be occasions when allegations of abuse by staff or volunteers against children are raised.

It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a teacher or other member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers or a governor of the school) 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 drawn up taking account of the following prevailing guidance:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- The Children Act
- Education Act
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

## 2. Thresholds for Allegations

These procedures should be applied when there is an allegation that any person who works in regulated activities with children, in connection with their employment or voluntary activity, with the children's workforce has:

- 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 they may 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

Allegations can be made in relation to restrictive physical interventions and restraint but can also relate to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children or young people, for example:

- Having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 if in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if consensual (see s16-19 Sexual Offences Act 2003)
- 'Grooming' i.e. meeting a child under 16 with intent to commit a relevant offence (see s15 Sexual Offences Act 2003)
- Other 'grooming' behaviour giving rise to concerns of a broader child protection nature e.g. inappropriate text/e-mail messages or images, gifts, socialising etc.
- Possession of indecent images/pseudo-photographs of children

In addition, these procedures should be applied when there is an allegation that any person who works with children:

- Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include arrest for possession of a weapon or indecent images of children. As a parent or carer, this could include if their own child becomes subject to child protection procedures and/or they and their family become involved with social services for safeguarding reasons.
- Is closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g. partner, member of the immediate family or other household member) who may present a risk of harm to child/ren for whom the member of staff is responsible in their employment/volunteering.

Under the 2018 regulations of the Childcare Act 2006, schools are no longer required to establish whether a member of staff providing, or employed to work in childcare, is disqualified by association. Regulation 9 does not apply to staff in a relevant school setting. Disqualification by association is only relevant where childcare is provided in domestic settings (for example where childminding is provided in the home) or under registration on domestic premises, including where an assistant works on non-domestic premises up to 50% of the time under a domestic registration. Accordingly, schools are not entitled to ask their staff questions about cautions or convictions of someone living or working in their household.

This policy should be followed where allegations are made against a 16 and 17-year-old who has been put in a position of trust by an organisation in relation to anyone under the age of 18. For example, where they might be involved in coaching a sport or in other school or out of school activities or undertaking training and work placements.

The policy for dealing with allegations needs to be applied with common sense and judgement. Many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or Section 47 child protection enquiries by local authority children's social care services. In these cases, Frank Wise School would follow their safeguarding and other relevant policies to resolve cases without delay.

### **The difference between an allegation and a low-level concern**

It might not be clear whether an incident constitutes an 'allegation'. It is important to remember that in order to be an allegation the alleged incident has to be sufficiently serious as to suggest that harm has or may have been caused to a child/ren or that the alleged behaviour indicates the individual may pose a risk of harm to children. Issues that do not meet this threshold may constitute conduct, performance or disciplinary issues and should be addressed by Frank Wise School using the appropriate policies. If in doubt, Frank Wise School will consult with the LADO.

If it is difficult to determine the level of risk associated with an incident, Frank Wise School will consider:

- Was the incident a disproportionate or inappropriate response in the context of a challenging situation?
- Where the incident involved an inappropriate response to challenging behaviour, had the member of staff had training in managing this?

- Does the member of staff understand that their behaviour was inappropriate and express a wish to behave differently in the future? For example, are they willing to undergo further training?
- Does the child or family want to report the incident to the police, or would they prefer the matter to be dealt with by the employer?
- Have similar allegations previously been made against the employee – is there a pattern developing?

Incidents which fall short of the threshold could include an accusation that is made second or third hand (by someone who did not witness the alleged incident) and the facts are not clear; or the member of staff alleged to have done this was not there at the time; or there is confusion about the account.

Whether an incident constitutes an allegation and hence needs to be dealt with through these policies, may need to be discussed between the LADO and Frank Wise School. If it falls short of this threshold there may still be a role for the LADO to provide advice and support to Frank Wise School. Where the matter constitutes a conduct or performance issue, Frank Wise School would follow the appropriate disciplinary procedures and let the LADO know of the outcome.

Oxfordshire LADO have a consultation referral document that supports LADO in triaging whether the referral meets the allegation threshold or is a low-level concern. Frank Wise School will use the LADO consultation form to support our decision making.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of all Organisations**

Allegations about staff should be reported to the Head Teacher, Designated Safeguarding Lead or an available member of the SLT. Frank Wise School will:

- Seek advice from the LADO regarding incidents where it is unclear whether it is an allegation or a low-level concern
- Report all allegations of harm to the LADO within 24 working hours of when the incident occurs and or when the disclosure is made

#### **Whistleblowing**

All staff at Frank Wise School should be made aware of the organisation's whistleblowing policy and feel confident to voice concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities for Local Authorities**

Oxfordshire have a team of LADOs who:

- Assess and review any referral and decide if the allegation made against staff or a volunteer has met their threshold
- Manage and have oversight of individual cases
- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations

- Liaise with the police and other agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process
- Provide advice and guidance to employers in relation to making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, the General Medical Council (GMC), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) etc.

It is important to be aware that LADOs do not carry out investigations into allegations and need to remain impartial. The responsibility for the investigation remains with the employer (or whoever is commissioned by the employer to investigate the process) and/or the police. The LADO can provide advice and, where necessary, co-ordinate the process.

### **Supply teachers and contracted staff**

In some circumstances schools and colleges will have to consider an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, where its disciplinary procedures do not fully apply because agencies will have their own policies and procedures; for example, supply teachers or contracted staff provided by an employment agency or business.

Whilst Frank Wise School does not currently use supply or agency staff, we would comply with the KCSIE guidance in these circumstances. If this were to occur, we would ensure allegations are dealt with properly. In no circumstances would Frank Wise School decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome.

### **Roles and responsibilities for the Police**

An investigation into the allegation is normally carried out by the authority in which it sits e.g. criminal allegations will be investigated by the Police and non-criminal allegations will be investigated in the first instance by the School. This will be agreed at the initial evaluation stage. Where the School is not conducting the investigation, it will cooperate with investigative agencies. The investigation will be overseen by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will record and be reported to by all other relevant agencies involved. Internal investigations must be second to any safeguarding investigation and may need to be delayed until the external investigation is complete.

### **Police bail**

Police will make an informed decision on making an arrest based on the information known at the time. If an arrest is justified, and following the custody process, the officer in the case will consider if the threshold for bail conditions has been met and either release the suspect on bail with conditions or release under investigation (RUI) without conditions. The decision to arrest is not always an accurate reflection of the risk posed, and any decisions around management of the suspect and arrest/interview should be shared with the LADO for ongoing risk management.

## 4. Responding to an allegation or concern - the role of the employer

An allegation or concern raised about a member of staff may arise from a number of sources, for example, a report from a child, a concern raised by another adult in the organisation or a complaint by a parent. It may also arise in the context of the member of staff and their life outside work or at home.

### Initial action by person receiving or identifying an allegation or concern

The person to whom an allegation or concern is first reported should treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind. They should not:

- Investigate or ask leading questions
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations
- Promise confidentiality

They should follow Frank Wise School procedures, which include the following:

- Making a written record of the information (where possible in the child's/adult's own words), including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said
- Signing and dating the written record
- Immediately reporting the matter to the Head Teacher or the Deputy Head Teacher in their absence or where the Head Teacher is the subject of the allegation report to the Chair of Governors
- A "case manager" will lead any investigation. The case manager will be an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team or a governor
- Frank Wise School will undertake an immediate risk assessment which involves ensuring immediate safety of the child and/or children and seeking medical attention if required

### Initial action by the Headteacher / employer

When informed of a concern or allegation at Frank Wise School, the Head Teacher/DSL will not investigate the matter but will gather initial information and liaise with the LADO.

As part of the process the Head Teacher/DSL will:

- Obtain written details of the concern/allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving it (not the child / adult making the allegation or the alleged person)
- Record any information about times, dates and location of incident/s and names of any potential witnesses
- Record discussions about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions

### Notifying the LADO within one working day of an allegation

The Head Teacher/DSL at Frank Wise School will inform the LADO within one working day after an allegation is made and prior to any further investigation taking place. A failure to report an allegation

in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter as this could place a child at further risk of harm.

If it is outside of normal working hours and there is an immediate risk to a child/ren, Frank Wlse School will call the Local Authority Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Team and the Police, if necessary.

Frank Wise School will carry out a risk assessment. This will include ensuring safety, identifying a safety plan and any potential organisational risk.

### **Suspension – when it should be considered**

Frank Wise School will not suspend a member of staff without serious consideration and will not do it automatically when an allegation has been made. Depending on the nature of the case, it may be possible that alternative arrangements are made so that the individual can continue working. Frank Wlse School is responsible for the decision to suspend an employee but will listen to the views of the police, other agencies and/or LADO regarding suspension. In the case of suspension, the employee will receive written confirmation within one working day and will be informed of the reason for the suspension. Frank Wlse School will also liaise with their HR provider.

## **5. The Role of the LADO**

### **Initial consideration of an allegation by the LADO**

The LADO's role is statutory, whose responsibilities are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children. The investigation will be overseen by the LADO who will record and be reported to by all other agencies. <https://national-lado-network.co.uk/the-role-of-the-lado-local-authority-designated-officer/>

### **Position of Trust Meeting (POT)**

This is a multi-agency meeting that seeks to agree a course of action following an allegation against a staff member. The POT meeting seeks to discuss and explore if there is enough information to suggest a child may have been harmed or a criminal offence may have been committed. This is decided on a case-by-case basis.

The purpose of the meeting is to scope, gather and share information, and plan and direct the investigation which could also end up as an internal management investigation.

The POT meeting will be chaired by the LADO and all appropriate professionals would be invited. The subject of the allegation does not attend the POT meeting.

### **Timescales for completing investigations of allegations**

It is in everyone's interest to resolve cases as quickly as possible consistent with a fair and thorough investigation. Frank Wlse School will investigate allegations as a priority to avoid any delay. The time taken to investigate and resolve individual cases depends on a variety of factors including the nature, seriousness and complexity of the allegation.

## Monitoring Progress

The LADO will monitor and record the progress of each case, depending on its complexity. This could be by way of review meetings/discussions or direct liaison with the police, LA children's social care and Frank Wlse School as appropriate.

## Records of LADO Allegations Management

Information of all allegations that meets LADO Threshold will be kept on a restricted and confidential LADO database.

# 6. Outcomes Following an Investigation

## Definitions

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

### *Substantiated allegations*

There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation that a child has been harmed or there is a risk of harm.

### *Malicious*

There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive. The police should be asked to consider what action may be appropriate in these circumstances.

### *False allegations*

There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation, however, there is no evidence to suggest that there was a deliberate intention to deceive.

### *Unsubstantiated allegations*

There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

### *Unfounded*

The additional definition of 'unfounded' can be used to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.

## Outcome Letter

Frank Wlse School will put the outcome and recommendations in writing to the alleged person and send a copy of the letter to the LADO who will keep this on the LADO database.

## References

It is noted in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 that cases in which an allegation was found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious will not be included in Frank Wlse School



references. Any repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious will also not be included in any reference.

Substantiated allegations will be included in references, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions.

### **Record Keeping in Relation to the Outcome of an Investigation**

Details of allegations, following an investigation, that are found to have been malicious or false should be removed from personnel records unless the individual gives their consent for retention of the information. However, for all other allegations, it is important that the following information is kept on the file of the person accused:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- notes of any action taken, and decisions reached, and the outcome i.e substantiated, unsubstantiated etc.
- a copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by children's social care or the police
- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

Where records contain information about allegations of sexual abuse, these will be preserved for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. Frank Wise School will retain all other records at least until the individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

### **Substantiated Outcomes**

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or Frank Wise School ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, Frank Wise School will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred list is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, Frank Wise School will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

### **Notifying Ofsted**

Ofsted should be informed of any allegation or concern made against a member of staff in any day care establishment for children under 8 or against a registered child minder. They should also be invited to take part in any subsequent meeting/discussion.

Ofsted should also be informed if there is an allegation against a teacher or worker in a reception class or an early year setting. Frank Wise School has a duty to inform Ofsted and the LADO.

## 7. Disciplinary or Suitability Process and Investigation

The Designated Officer and the Head Teacher should discuss whether disciplinary action is appropriate in all cases where:

- It is clear at the outset or decided in the POT meeting that a police investigation or local authority children's social care services enquiry is not necessary or
- Frank Wise School is informed by the police or the Crown Prosecution Service that a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete, or that an investigation is to be closed without charge, or a prosecution discontinued

The discussion should consider any potential misconduct or gross misconduct on the part of the member of staff, and take into account:

- Information provided by the police and/or local authority children's social care services
- The result of any investigation or trial
- The different standard of proof in disciplinary and criminal proceedings

The investigation and any subsequent disciplinary hearing should be held in accordance with Frank Wise School's disciplinary policy and procedure. Frank Wise School will liaise with HR.

For supply staff, the process described above will be the responsibility of the supply agency and not the school.

### **Resignations and 'settlement agreements'**

Every effort should be made to reach a conclusion in all cases even if the individual refuses to cooperate, having been given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations.

'Settlement agreements', by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, will not be used where there are allegations that indicate the person is a risk or poses a risk of harm to children or deemed not suitable to work with children.

Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police and/or school or employer investigation where that is appropriate.

Frank Wise School will not cease our investigations if the person leaves, resigns or ceases to provide their services. We will ensure that every effort is made to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children, including any in which the person concerned refuses to cooperate.

### **Returning to work**

Where it is decided on the conclusion of a case that a person who has been suspended can return to work, the Head Teacher/HR will consider how best to facilitate that. Most people will benefit from some help and support to return to work after a stressful experience. The Head teacher/HR will also consider how the person's contact with the child or children who made the allegation can best be managed if they are still attending the school or college.

## 8. General responsibilities when investigating an outcome

### Support to the child and family involved

Frank Wise School, together with LA children's social care and/or police, where they are involved, will consider the impact on the child concerned and provide support as appropriate. Liaison between the agencies should take place in order to ensure that the child's needs are addressed.

### Keeping families and children informed

Frank Wise School will inform the families of the child/ren involved of the allegation and the process that is being followed unless this will impede the disciplinary or investigative processes.

The family and the child, if deemed appropriate, should be helped to understand the processes involved and be kept informed about the progress of the case and of the outcome where there is no criminal prosecution. This will include the outcome of any disciplinary process, but not the deliberations of, or the information used in, a hearing.

### Responsibilities to employees/volunteers alleged to have caused harm

#### *Support to the accused member of staff*

As soon as possible after an allegation has been received, the accused member of staff should be advised to contact their union or professional association. HR should be consulted at the earliest opportunity in order that appropriate support can be provided via the organisation's occupational health or employee welfare arrangements.

#### *Keeping the accused member of staff informed*

Subject to restrictions on the information that can be shared, Frank Wise School should, as soon as possible, inform the accused person about the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome (e.g. disciplinary action, and dismissal or referral to the DBS or regulatory body). If the matter is subject to police involvement, the police should always be consulted prior to any discussion with the accused so criminal investigations are not compromised.

The accused member of staff should:

- Be treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary or related process
- If suspended, be kept up to date about events in the workplace

### Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality while an allegation is being investigated or considered. This includes staff involved and families. Apart from keeping the child, families and accused person (where this would not place the child at further risk) up to date with progress of

the case, information should be restricted to those who have a need to know, in order to protect children, facilitate enquiries and manage related disciplinary or suitability processes.

## **9. Non-Recent Allegations (historic)**

Where an adult makes an allegation of a non-recent nature to Frank Wise School that they were abused as a child, Frank Wise School will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police, and we will report the allegation to the LADO.

## **10. Low Level Concerns**

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the LADO threshold.

### **Definition of low-level concerns**

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern, no matter how small, that an adult working in or on behalf of Frank Wise School may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Sharing personal mobile numbers with children
- Social media use

### **Sharing low-level concerns**

Frank Wise School recognises the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately. All staff are required to report low level concerns to the DSL or to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Responding to low-level concerns**

The Head Teacher / DSL / SLT will collect all available evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The information collected will then be used to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the code of conduct as outlined in the Staff Handbook.

If the concern is of a safeguarding nature, liaison with the LADO will be carried out, in line with the expectations from Oxfordshire LADO team. The LADO can be re-contacted at any time if the evidence that is gathered raises further concerns or meets the allegation thresholds.

### **Record keeping**

All low-level concerns at Frank Wise School will be recorded. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Frank Wise School records will be:

- Kept confidentially
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

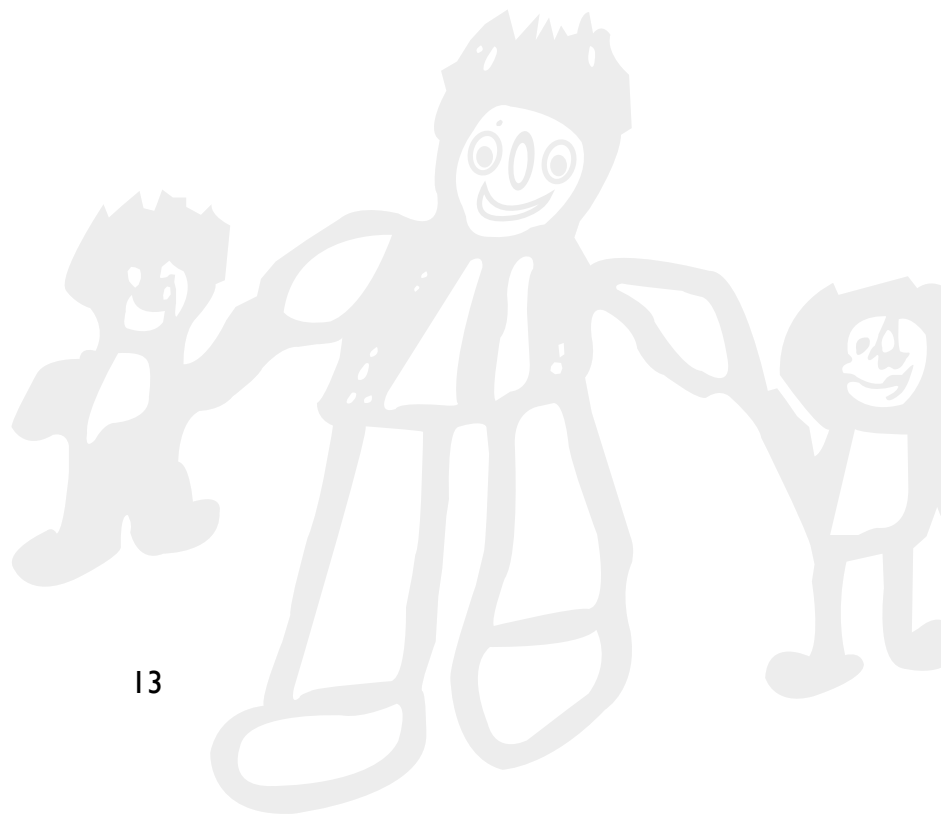
Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, Frank Wise School will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

**Reviewed by:** Lara Hughes

**Date:** August 2024

**Approved by Governors:** Shirley Gelleburn

**Date:** August 2024



# 11. Oxfordshire LADO Managing Allegations Flowchart

## Managing concerns about people who work or volunteer with children

The flowchart describes for reporting concerns and allegations about someone in a position of trust.

