

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

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WeST Vision, Mission and Values

[Westcountry Schools Trust - Our Vision, Mission and Values](#)

Providing Accessible Formats

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Policy quick read

Purpose: This policy outlines the disciplinary process for all WeST employees (excluding agency staff, contractors, and volunteers) to ensure fair, consistent, and lawful handling of misconduct.

Key Principles: This policy applies to all staff regardless of role or contract. It aligns with safeguarding, equality, and professional standards. Behaviour outside work may be subject to disciplinary action if it affects suitability or reputation.

Expected Standards: Employees must maintain professional conduct in and outside work; follow instructions, safeguarding rules, and confidentiality; use electronic systems appropriately; treat others with dignity and respect. **Managers must** role-model and enforce standards; address concerns early and fairly.

Types of Misconduct: examples of, but not limited to:

- **Minor Misconduct:** e.g., timekeeping issues – usually addressed informally.
- **Misconduct:** e.g., breach of confidentiality, misuse of equipment.
- **Gross Misconduct:** e.g., abuse, fraud, serious negligence – may lead to dismissal.

Disciplinary Process:

1. **Fact-Finding:** Initial review by Responsible Officer. Consideration given to Suspension.
2. **Investigation:** Investigating Officer appointed and report written.
3. **Disciplinary Hearing:** If applicable. Responsible Officer considers recommendations and determines outcome.
4. **Outcomes** could include: No action; Informal guidance; Verbal/written/final warning; Dismissal (with/without notice); Dismissal for “Some Other Substantial Reason” (SOSR)

Appeals: Employees may appeal formal sanctions (except verbal warnings) within 5 days, citing specific grounds.

Safeguarding and reporting: Allegations involving children/vulnerable adults follow safeguarding protocols. Referrals may be made to the **LADO, DBS, or professional bodies.**

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1. Delegation of Authority

The Trust is committed to ensuring a consistent, fair, and equitable approach in all staffing matters, and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee’s gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In order to achieve this aim, there needs to be a clear delegation of authority throughout the structure of the Trust and for this purpose the term “Responsible Officer” shall apply as per the levels below:

Delegation Key	
Line Manager	Person with formal line management responsibility as defined within the job description.
Level One	<p>If the employee is based within a school, the person with authority to act will be a Trust Headteacher, or an appropriate senior member of staff from the Trust Executive Leadership Team</p> <p>If the employee is based within the Core Services Team, the person with authority to act will be a member of the Executive Leadership Team</p> <p>If the employee is a Headteacher and dismissal is a potential outcome the person with authority to act will be the CEO, otherwise, the person with authority to act will be a Director of Education or the Deputy CEO</p> <p>If the employee is a member of Executive Leadership Team, the person with authority to act will be the CEO, unless they have acted as the Line Manager, in which case the person with authority to act will be the Chair of the Trust</p> <p>If the Employee is the Chief Executive Officer, the person with authority to act will be the Chair of the Trust</p>
Level Two	<p>Where Level One was the Headteacher the person with authority to act will be the Director of Education or Deputy CEO</p> <p>Where Level One was a member of the Executive Leadership Team the person with authority to act will be the CEO</p>

	Where Level One was the CEO or the Chair of the Trust, the matter will be referred to a Trustee Appeal Panel
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The Trust reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to vary the composition of the delegated authority / panel in order to ensure that meetings proceed without undue delay. In these circumstances the Trust will ensure that the responsible officer maintains appropriate standards of separation and confidentiality.

2. Introduction and Purpose

This policy sets out the disciplinary procedure relating to employees who do not meet the standards expected of them as laid out in this policy, the Code of Conduct, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy.

This policy applies to all employees within the Trust, regardless of terms and conditions of employment (e.g. both Teacher and Support Staff). It does not apply to agency workers, contractors or volunteers.

The intention is that this policy does not erode contractual terms protected under TUPE.

2.1 Expected Standards

The standards expected of employees include but are not limited to:

- maintaining standards of behaviour in keeping with the interests and standing of Westcountry Schools Trust. This includes behaviour outside of working hours and in any form that is visible to the public, including social networking or any other electronic medium;
- devoting full attention while at work to the duties of their position and in doing so acting with responsibility, good judgement and in good faith;
- carrying out any reasonable instructions given by those with authority to do so;
- not divulging to any unauthorised person or making personal use of confidential information connected with the Trust either intentionally or through negligent behaviour;
- observing the rules, regulations and instructions adopted by the Trust;
- following appropriate safeguarding procedures;
- participating fully in any investigation into alleged incidents and/or allegations including attending meetings as directed;
- using electronic communications appropriately;
- ensuring that information brought to light as a result of any investigation is treated with discretion;
- carrying out their role consistently with any standards set by their appropriate professional body;
- taking steps to address any unacceptable behaviour; and

- treating colleagues and third parties with dignity and respect.

In addition to the above, the expectations of those employed in management roles are to:

- ensure the standards expected from employees are role-modelled, monitored and managed effectively;
- effectively manage all applicable statutory and non-statutory obligations; and
- appropriately manage all alleged incidents and/or allegations.

2.2. Behaviour Outside of Work

Unacceptable behaviour and/or criminal offences that have occurred outside of work may be dealt with under this policy if the employee's behaviour or activities:

- may make them unsuitable for the job they are employed to do, e.g. failure to protect their own children;
- has the potential to cause damage to the reputation of Westcountry Schools Trust. This includes written and verbal communications and covers all types of media including newspapers, internet, and social media;
- identifies them as a perpetrator of domestic violence;
- identifies them as behaving in a way that leads to a breakdown in working relationships;
- are inconsistent with the professional standards of public behaviour expected of the role e.g., lewd behaviour, being intoxicated in public, association with illegal drugs; and
- identifies them as having engaged in inappropriate contact with a child, student or vulnerable adult.

The above list is not exhaustive. The Trust may view other behaviour as suitable for being considered under this policy.

3. Timescales

The timescales detailed in the policy are in accordance with the statutory requirements and best practice. They must therefore must be adhered to unless both parties have agreed to an extension of time.

There may be a number of reasons why the time limits specified are too short and an extension may be required. Where an extension to the time limits is agreed, a written record of this decision should be made.

The policy refers to a number of 'days' within which certain actions/events are to occur. A 'day' is defined as any Monday to Friday excluding public holidays as defined by ACAS.

If a concern is raised during a period of School closure, the timeframes indicated in the policy will commence from the first day of the School being open. Where a concern is raised immediately prior to a period of School closure, the availability of any person(s) who may need to be interviewed as part of any investigation will be taken into consideration by both parties when mutually agreeing any required extension to the timeframes.

4. Being Accompanied

Legislation determines that an employee has a statutory right to request to be accompanied at formal meetings. To invoke that right an employee must make a reasonable request to the employer to be accompanied by:

- a paid official from a recognised trade union/professional association,
- a trade union representative,
- an appropriate work colleague.

Friends/family members are not permitted unless they fall under the above criteria and it is agreed as appropriate. It would not normally be reasonable for an employee to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative whose presence would prejudice the hearing and/or was from a remote geographical location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

The employee is responsible for notifying their chosen representative of the meeting arrangement details. If the chosen representative is not available on the day proposed for the meeting, the employee must contact the line manager leading on the meeting to propose an alternative date within the following five days of the original date proposed.

5. Non-Attendance

If an employee fails to attend a meeting or hearing under this policy through circumstances beyond their control, such as certified illness, an alternative time and date may be offered. Alternatively, they may submit a written statement or nominate a representative to attend on their behalf.

Where an employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend the meeting/hearing without good cause, it will proceed in their absence and a decision based on the evidence available will be made.

A failure to not attend a pre-arranged meeting or hearing may also lead to action under the disciplinary policy arrangements.

6. Minor Misconduct

For minor breaches and incidents, for example, occasional time keeping issues, consideration should always be given to using informal action such as professional guidance and/or additional training, as this may be sufficient to address the concerns. Any such action should be confirmed in writing and monitored to ensure the required improvements are made and sustained. This does not form part of the formal disciplinary procedure.

Alternatively, it may be appropriate for the matter to be dealt with either through an a restorative conversation facilitated by the line manager, or another suitable person employed within WeST or formal mediation, depending on the nature of the matter. This involves the appointment of an accredited mediator, who will facilitate discussion of the issues raised. Mediation will be used only where all parties involved agree to engage in the process and the Trust considers it to be beneficial in order to resolve the situation.

7. Categories / Types of Allegations

Some allegations will require involvement of other Trust policies, or external party involvement. This may be used in conjunction with the procedure outlined in this policy.

7.1. Allegations Involving Children, Students or Vulnerable Adults

All employees working at Westcountry Schools Trust must understand that the nature of their work and the responsibilities related to it, place them in a position of trust. The full expected behaviours are set out in the WeST Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and any abuse of these expectations may initially be managed under the WeST Low Level Concerns policy.

If any allegation involves safeguarding concerns against a member of staff, especially in relation to suspected harm or abuse, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted before any further action can be taken. This could be before the matter is discussed with the employee (see Appendix 2).

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on schools to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children in their care. This includes the need to ensure that all adults who work with or on behalf of children are competent, confident and safe to do so.

7.2. Allegations in the public interest (whistleblowing)

There may be occasions when the allegations are made by an employee about something that is in the public interest and could be constituted as a 'protected disclosure' under the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy. Such allegations may include matters where there may have been:

- an unlawful or a criminal offence;
- a breach of a legal obligation (but not a personal contractual breach unless such breach involves a matter of public interest);
- a miscarriage of justice;
- mistreatment or abuse of a student/member of staff or a member of the public for whom the Trust has a responsibility;
- in disregard of legislation governing health and safety at work;
- actions which have led to or could lead to damage to the environment; or
- deliberately covers up information tending to show any of the above.

In these circumstances it may be appropriate to invoke the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy prior to, or at the same time as, the Disciplinary Policy. Where it appears that allegations may constitute a protected disclosure, those allegations will be referred for consideration under the Whistleblowing Policy.

7.3. Allegations Involving Employees with a Professional Registration

If there are any allegations about the practice of an employee who is required to have a professional registration, a Professional Lead may be nominated and their advice sought. It be appropriate for the Professional Lead to provide expert witness testimony in any subsequent investigation process and/or disciplinary hearing.

7.4. Criminal Offences/Police Involvement

A decision must be made whether to apply this policy as a result of any charge or conviction resulting from a criminal offence. This includes police cautions and/or warnings. This may apply in circumstances where the alleged offence may have an effect on employment or where this could bring Westcountry Schools Trust into disrepute. In most cases, it is important that the internal investigation under this policy is not delayed. However, where the investigation may hamper a police investigation or has the potential to prejudice any future court proceedings, it is essential to liaise with the police to determine the most appropriate course of action.

7.5. Allegations of Financial Irregularity

Where incidents of financial irregularity are suspected an audit may be undertaken either by the Trust or via the use of an external organisation. Where financial irregularity is suspected, the employee's computer or mobile phone will not be accessed until the audit has been undertaken. This should be done before any action is taken under this policy.

7.6. Allegations involving Information Security Incidents

Allegations involving a breach or potential breach of data security will be managed under this policy, with reference to the Trust's Data Protection policy.

8. Procedure

8.1. Fact Finding

When an incident occurs or an initial allegation is made, the details should be provided to the Responsible Officer. The Responsible Officer should ensure they are in possession of sufficient information to form a judgment on whether the matter can be resolved informally, or whether a formal investigation should be commissioned. Before making a decision, additional relevant

factual information may be sought via a preliminary informal 'fact find' process with the advice and support of Human Resources. If the allegation(s) are of a safeguarding nature, the Responsible Officer should follow the process outlined in Appendix 2. If the allegation(s) are not of a safeguarding nature, the Responsible Officer should ensure that:

- where it is appropriate and will not have an impact on any further investigations, that the employee is notified of the allegation(s) verbally and in writing as soon as possible
- a decision is made whether the employee can remain at work, should be temporarily transferred to suitable alternative duties, is asked to remain away from work or be suspended.
- An investigator(s) is appointed, if required, and an investigation commissioned. The investigator(s) should not have had any previous involvement in the circumstances of the incident/allegation, no close relationship with any party involved nor any vested interest

i. Remain Away from Work / Sending Home

An employee may be instructed by a senior manager (in the absence of the Responsible Officer) and having taken advice from the Human Resources, to remain away from the workplace or leave the workplace immediately and remain away on normal pay until further notice. This will only be done in circumstances when there appears to be an issue which may place the employee or others at risk, or where there may be a detrimental impact if the employee remains in the workplace.

The manager will consider if it is necessary to ask for work equipment (keys, phones, premises access 'smartcards' etc.) to be returned or access to ICT systems etc. restricted. When sending home, the manager will ensure that the employee can get home safely.

The decision and reasons for sending home should be confirmed to the employee in writing as soon as possible.

Following a review of the information available, a decision about whether to formally suspend the employee should then be made by those with appropriate authority as soon as possible and confirmed to the employee in writing.

ii. Suspension

Suspension is not a disciplinary penalty and should be regarded as a neutral act. Action to suspend an employee can only be taken by the Responsible Officer having sought advice from Human Recourses.

Most disciplinary procedures will not require suspension. An employee will usually be able to continue doing their normal role while the matter is investigated.

Suspension should usually only be considered if there is a serious allegation of misconduct and:

- working relationships have severely broken down
- the employee could tamper with evidence, influence witnesses and/or sway the investigation into the allegation
- there is a risk to other children, employees or property
- the employee is the subject of criminal proceedings which may affect whether they can do their job.

The reasons for suspension must be stated clearly to the employee and confirmed in writing as soon as possible and the suspension must be kept under review. Suspension can only be lifted by the Responsible Officer.

Alternative duties, should, wherever possible be considered. These may include:

- being moved to a different area of the workplace
- working from home
- changing their working hours
- being placed on restricted duties
- working under supervision
- being transferred to a different role within the organisation (the role should be of a similar status to their normal role, and with the same terms and conditions of employment).

8.2. Investigation

Any investigation carried out under this policy will be thorough, unbiased and reasonable in the circumstances.

The nature and extent of the investigation will depend on the seriousness of the matter and should be proportionate to the allegation that has been made.

Where it is necessary to interview witnesses during an investigation, the interviews and discussions undertaken should follow a standard format and any interview or witness statements produced should be signed and agreed by the witness.

If evidence of further instances or further allegations arise during the investigation process, these will need to be referred back to the Responsible Officer, as the original allegations under investigation may need reviewing. New allegations can be added to the initial investigation and will be considered at the same time as the original allegations.

The findings of any investigation, together with any relevant evidence, including witness statements etc..., should be provided to the Responsible Officer in a report together with written recommendation as to the next steps.

The Investigating Officer(s) will seek to determine if the allegations are:

- **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 or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation
- **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, or
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

This will provide the basis on which the Investigating Officer(s) will recommend next steps, which will be either:

- no action is necessary
- informal action such as additional training and/or a letter of management advice
- the matter should be dealt with outside this policy
- the matter should be referred to a disciplinary hearing.

The Investigating Officer(s) may wish to include wider organisational learning for the Responsible Officer to consider as part of their report.

i. Interviewing Children/Students/Vulnerable Adults

If children are to be interviewed as part of an investigation, their parents/carers should be advised and consent obtained in advance. Interviews should not take place with children unless they are accompanied by a suitable person or parental consent has been given to them being interviewed unaccompanied. Vulnerable adults should be accompanied by a suitable person.

Consideration should be given when deciding whether to interview students as part of an employee investigation process as to what is in the best interest of the child. Advice should be sought from Safeguarding or SEND teams if there are any concerns around interviewing particular students, while ensuring confidentiality of the staff member under investigation.

The employee's trade union/professional association representative may be present during any student interview if this does not jeopardise the integrity of the investigation. If appropriate the investigating officer will determine if union presence would be best in-person, or via MS Teams based on an assessment of the case and the students best interests. This will preclude the child/vulnerable adult being interviewed more than once and negate the requirement for them to attend a disciplinary hearing. If the matter does proceed to a hearing, the employee will be provided with notes of the meeting as part of the investigation report with all student names redacted.

ii. Electronic Devices / Systems Access

If there is reason to believe that evidence of inappropriate material and/or communications may be found on the employee's work computer and/or mobile phone, an external organisation may be notified and asked to undertake an audit on the employee's school equipment. An employee's computer or phone will not be accessed until the audit company has been contacted.

The Trust recognises its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 to protect employees' right to a private life. However, it is an expectation of our Code of Conduct that where conduct prejudicial to the safety of a child is being investigated, staff are informed of and sign to acknowledge that their business email and network account may be interrogated.

All Senior Managers/Principals/Headteachers should be aware that a criminal act may have been committed, e.g. inappropriate communication with a student or vulnerable adult and therefore the evidence must be preserved.

Consideration should be given to restricting the employee's access to ICT accounts, and/or it may be appropriate for access to be blocked until appropriate action has been taken to secure data.

iii. CCTV

Where there are allegations of a safeguarding nature against staff, or when there is a suspicion of criminal activity, CCTV may be used as evidence to support the investigation process. Access to CCTV systems should be carried out in-line with the WeST CCTV policy and any evidence used to inform the investigation outcome must be included in the investigation report.

8.3. Disciplinary Hearing

Disciplinary hearings must be conducted and chaired by those that have 'level one' delegated authority to dismiss, as outlined in section one of this policy.

Where it is determined that an employee is required to attend a hearing, the employee must be notified in writing with at least clear working 5 days' notice, stating the details of the disciplinary hearing, the possible outcomes of the hearing, the employee's right to request to be accompanied and that the hearing may take place in the employee's absence if they fail to attend without providing a satisfactory explanation. A copy of the investigation report and a copy of this policy must be included with the letter.

At the hearing, the employee will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation(s), question any witnesses and present their case to the Responsible Officer.

Following consideration of all the evidence, the Responsible Officer will adjourn the hearing to make a decision. A view will be reached regarding the validity or otherwise of the allegation(s) and a decision taken as to what action should be taken.

The Responsible Officer will act in good faith. In disciplinary cases the standard of proof required is the balance of probability, i.e. a judgment of whether it is more probable than not that misconduct (or gross misconduct) took place, or, that there is some other substantial

reason that exists that justifies dismissal. Account will be taken of any mitigating circumstances given by the employee.

The courses of action available are as follows:

i. Non-Formal Action

- take no action
- Offer professional guidance as to the required standard of behaviour and inform the employee of the consequences of not achieving the required standard. Professional Guidance is not a formal disciplinary sanction

ii. Formal Action

- issue a verbal warning
- issue a formal written warning if there has been either a repeated minor breach of conduct, or a first but more serious breach of conduct.
- issue a final written warning if there has been an insufficient response to previous warnings and conduct is still unsatisfactory or in the case of a first but sufficiently serious breach of conduct.
- issue the employee with notice of dismissal if, following a final written warning, conduct remains unsatisfactory and the employee still fails to reach or maintain the prescribed standard; or in the case of a first but sufficiently serious breach of conduct or if the circumstances of the matter justify dismissal for some other substantial reason.
- dismiss the employee because a statutory bar results in the employment being unable to continue
- dismiss the employee summarily without notice and without there having been any previous disciplinary warnings when there has been gross misconduct.

iii. Formal Action (Some Other Substantial Reason)

There may be occasions, following a fair procedure, where a dismissal for some other substantial reason (SOSR) is considered. In these circumstances the Responsible Officer will ensure that they act reasonably in dismissing the employee taking into account all of the circumstances.

There is no set definition of what a SOSR reason is, however, common examples can include (but are not limited to):

- A breakdown in trust and confidence
- Personality clashes
- Conflict(s) of interest / Protection from competition
- Reputational risk
- Where there are concerns relating to the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, but where the Trust does not have grounds for a misconduct dismissal.

iv. Delivering the Outcome

The Responsible Officer will reconvene the hearing and confirm their decision verbally, unless valid reasons exist not to do so, and will write to the employee within five days to confirm their decision.

Where action results in the issue of a warning of any type, there should normally be a specified period that the warning remains current, e.g. 6 months for a verbal warning, 12 months for a written/final written warning. It should be made clear to the employee that further unsatisfactory conduct may result in further disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

After the specified period the warning will be considered spent for disciplinary purposes.

However, if the warning relates to safeguarding children this sanction may be referred to in employment or other references that the Trust are required to provide - if the role involves responsibility or contact with children. This may be the case even where the warning is spent, as the Trust's safeguarding responsibilities would take precedence, although discretion will be applied to determine if this is appropriate.

Where a warning/final written warning or dismissal is the outcome, the employee must be informed of their right of appeal and where to send the appeal.

8.4. Appeal

An employee has the right to appeal against the decision made at the above hearing, if that decision is to issue the employee with any sanction other than a verbal warning. If an employee

wishes to appeal against the decision, they must do so in writing, stating the grounds for their appeal, within five days of receiving the written outcome.

An appeal is not a re-hearing of all of the facts but to determine if the original decision was reasonable given the circumstances

An employee may appeal on the following grounds:

- the sanction given was too harsh given the circumstances
- the procedure was not fairly or correctly applied
- new information has come to light that would directly affect the decision made at the hearing.

The appeal should be sent to HR@westst.org.uk for all Trust employees. The Responsible Officer identified to deal with the appeal will make appropriate arrangements for it to take place. The appeal should be heard without unreasonable delay. A minimum of five days' notice will be given to allow for preparation.

The outcome of an appeal hearing may be to:

- adjourn and refer the matter back to the original Responsible Officer if significant new information/evidence is provided, which was not available previously, and may change the original decision
- conclude a procedural irregularity occurred and determine whether this had an impact on the decision-making process and outcome. If so, determine an appropriate sanction and make a recommendation to rectify the situation
- uphold the appeal and determine an alternative sanction/appropriate course of action
- reject the appeal and confirm that the original decision stands.

The decision will be given verbally to all parties at the end of the appeal hearing unless valid reasons exist not to do so. The decision will be confirmed in writing to the employee within five days.

9. HR Advice and Support

The HR Team will provide advice and support to the Responsible Officer and any other manager/Governor/Trustee involved in the application of this policy at any stage. As part of which they may be in attendance at any meetings / hearings under this policy.

10. Reporting Obligations

10.1. Professional Bodies

Where there are cases which could potentially call into question an employee's professional registration, Westcountry Schools Trust will ensure that it follows the appropriate procedure for reporting concerns to the relevant Registered Body.

In addition, employees are responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the individual reporting requirements of their professional body, where they are subject to formal disciplinary procedures.

Cases of unacceptable professional conduct by a teacher should be reported to the Teaching Regulation Agency. 'Unacceptable professional conduct' is defined as 'conduct which falls short of the standard expected of a registered teacher...and is behaviour which involves a breach of the standards of propriety expected of the profession.'

10.2. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The primary role of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is to help employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (SVGA) 2006 places a duty on employers of people working with children or vulnerable adults to make a referral to the DBS where an employer has dismissed or removed a person from working with children or vulnerable adults (or would or may have if the person had not left or resigned etc.) because the person has:

- been cautioned or convicted for a relevant offence; or

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, i.e. an action or inaction (neglect) that has harmed a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm; or
- satisfied the Harm Test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults i.e. there has been no relevant conduct (i.e. no action or inaction) but a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult still exists.

The referral will be made as soon as possible after an employee has been dismissed or removed from working with children or vulnerable adults (or would have been if they had not resigned).

11. Management Responsibilities

Managers are required to ensure that each employee is aware of this policy and understands both the professional conduct that is required of them and the consequences of not meeting the required standards of behaviour. Action should be taken consistently to identify concerns and reinforce standards of behaviour before it becomes necessary to take formal action. Managers are required to manage the process effectively, fairly and reasonably if it is necessary to use this policy.

12. Employee Responsibilities

Employees are required to conduct themselves appropriately and to observe the rules, regulations and instructions adopted by their employer and carry out their role consistently with any standards set by their appropriate professional body. Employees have a responsibility, where necessary, to take any steps required to address their behaviour.

13. Professional Standards

In this policy where there is reference to “relevant professional standards” this refers to any standards applicable to the post(s) and the career stage of the post holder (e.g. the Teachers Standards 2012 are applicable to all teachers including the Headteacher).

14. Disciplinary Action against Trade Union / Professional Association Representatives

Although the usual standards of conduct expected must apply to trade union/professional association representatives, no formal action within this policy will be taken against an employee who is an accredited representative, nor will suspension normally be applied, until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with a paid official nominated for such purposes by the trade union/professional association concerned.

15. Raising a Grievance during the Application of this Policy

If an employee is currently being managed under this policy and has a complaint related to either the person applying it and/or its application, the employee will raise a complaint under this policy which will be investigated. It may be necessary to suspend the application of the policy while the complaint is being looked into. Any delay to the application of this policy to deal with an employee's complaint should not exceed 10 days.

If an employee raises an unrelated complaint, then the employee should use the Grievance Policy. As the matter is unrelated, there will be no need to put any process currently being applied on hold as the complaint can be dealt with in parallel.

16. Confidentiality

Any parties affected by or involved in the application of this policy will be expected to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously, especially if they hinder the application of the policy. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in action being taken under this policy.

Disclosure of information may also be a breach under the Data Protection Act (2018) and may lead to action being taken under the provisions of that Act, in addition to action being taken under this policy.

17. Recording of Information

A written record must be made of all requests and meetings held during the application of this policy. Those involved in each meeting will be provided with a copy of any records made.

The Investigating Officer or their delegate will ensure there is a full and comprehensive file of the process which should include all statements, records and evidence referred to in the rationalising of the decision outcome. At the end of the process the file should be passed to HR who will ensure that it is stored confidentially, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018) on the personnel file.

18. Support for Employees

Employees are encouraged to seek support from their trade union/professional association in the first instance.

Procedural guidance relating to this policy is available from HR. Where a referral to Occupational Health or the counselling service is necessary, this should be made by the employee's line manager.

19. Consultation

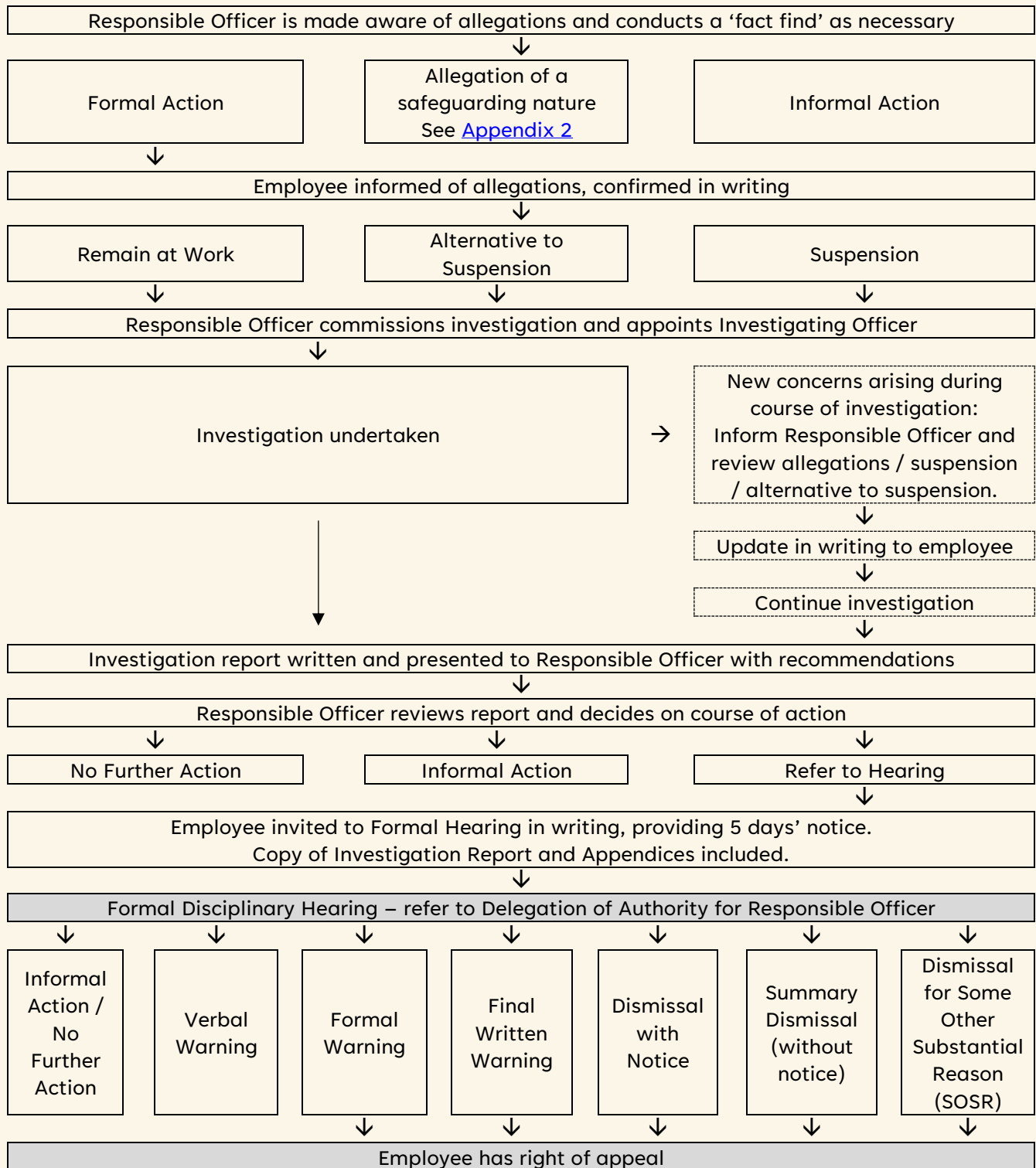
This policy is provided following consultation with trade unions/professional associations and will apply to all employees.

This policy supersedes all previous disciplinary policies including any previous conduct policies for schools.

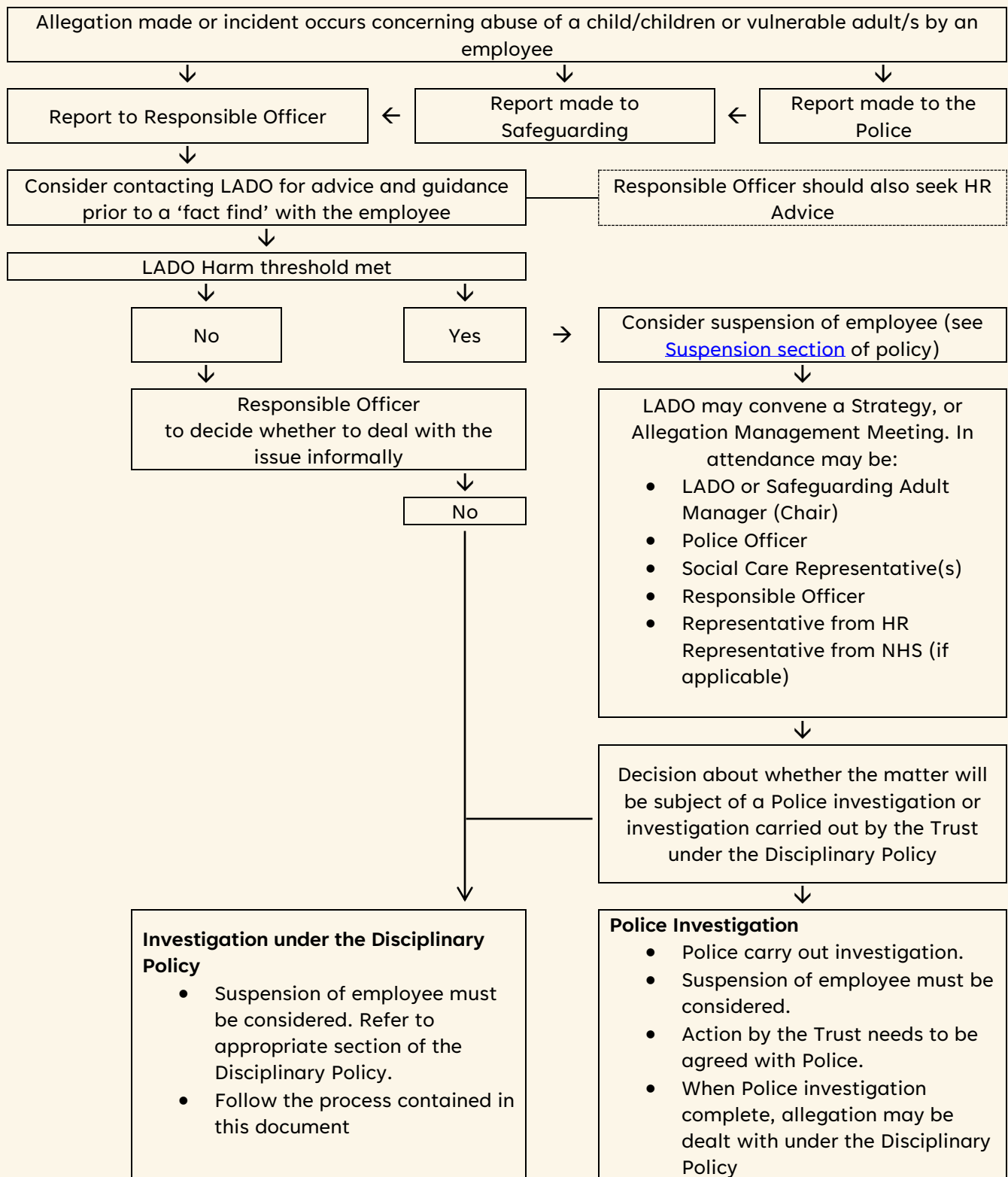
20. Issuing / Retracting Notice of Dismissal

Where an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the notice issued to the employee will be retracted and the employee will be reinstated.

Appendix 1 – Flowchart



Appendix 2 – Allegations Relating to Children or Vulnerable Adults



Appendix 3 – Examples of what might constitute Misconduct or Gross Misconduct

Misconduct

The following list is not exhaustive but gives examples of behaviour that may be dealt with under this policy. It should be noted that depending on the seriousness of the circumstances, any of these actions may be treated as gross misconduct:

- refusal to comply with reasonable and lawful instructions
- timekeeping, including failure to remain at work during contracted hours and being absent without permission
- negligent actions or behaviour
- failure to disclose relationships which may compromise the integrity of the school/Trust
- failure to disclose a personal relationship with a colleague/service user which impacts on professional duties
- inappropriate use of work equipment/property
- breach of confidentiality
- failure to comply with Health and Safety requirements
- actions that may bring the school or MAT into disrepute
- undertaking unnecessary personal activities during working hours
- failure to report any concerns regarding the health, safety and welfare of children / student / vulnerable adults
- misuse of social media.

Gross Misconduct

The following list is not exhaustive but gives examples of behaviour that could be regarded as gross misconduct:

- any of the listed items from the above 'misconduct' list
- physical, sexual, emotional, financial or verbal abuse of children, vulnerable adults, colleagues, parents, customers or volunteers
- a criminal offence applicable to the work performed

- inappropriate conduct and/or contact with a child and/or pupil aged 17 years or under
- inappropriate contact with a child/vulnerable adult, either physical or non-physical e.g. via a social network
- grooming - actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, in order to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for abuse or exploitation, by a person who is in a position of trust in relation to a person under 18 who is receiving education in an education institution. Grooming is illegal.
- abuse of position of trust
- perpetrator of domestic violence
- taking or distributing indecent photographs or publications, possession of such documents where children/vulnerable adults present
- breach of security, financial procedures or confidentiality
- inappropriate use of computer, laptop and/or communications systems, including but not limited to inappropriate communications using technology i.e. texts, social networking websites
- making of vexatious and/or malicious allegations
- discrimination, including harassment and victimisation on the grounds of gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- dishonesty, theft, bribery, fraud (including corruption), misuse of School/Trust property or resources, or deliberate falsification of records.
- bullying and/or harassment, including cyber bullying.
- providing false information in relation to applications for employment, qualifications, etc.
- fighting with, or assault or any violent behaviour towards children, vulnerable adults, colleagues, parents, customers, volunteers, contractors or members of the public
- deliberate damage to property or equipment.
- sleeping or carrying out inappropriate activity e.g. using Facebook, during working hours.
- a criminal conviction inconsistent with the standards expected for the role.

- failure to disclose any conviction, caution, reprimand, bind over, warning, pending criminal proceedings for which an arrest or a formal charge is made.
- being under the influence of alcohol, illegal substances or drugs at work.
- being in possession of illegal substances or drugs.
- serious negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury.
- refusal to follow a reasonable formal management instruction.
- engaging in unauthorised employment during hours contracted to work for the School/Trust or during periods of specially designated leave e.g. sick leave, special leave etc.
- abuse of the sick pay scheme.
- failure to uphold the professional standards of the role the employee is employed to perform.
- misconduct and/or displays of lack of professionalism which leads to the employee deliberately absenting him/herself from work
- breach of the Data Protection Act (2018) or Westcountry Schools Trust Data Protection Policy.

Additionally, in the case of Principals & Headteachers or Senior Managers in schools:

- deliberate failure to meet reporting responsibilities to the Trustees
- failure to uphold the professional standards expected
- negligent conduct which leads to poor provision of education to children
- undermining governance arrangements, CEO/ELT or Trustees
- failure to comply with Safeguarding of Children requirements
- failure to maintain appropriately checked records of employees e.g. DBS, Eligibility to Work in the UK etc.

Some examples of behaviour at work may also constitute a criminal matter, e.g. bribery may fall under the Bribery Act 2010. The above lists are not exhaustive and there may be several other breaches of conduct that may be deemed to be misconduct or gross misconduct.

Policy History

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact / Responsibility for Policy	Version/ Implementation Date	Review Date
27 November 2013	New Policy. Date of consultation with recognised Trade Unions – November 2012 and September 2013	HR ONE	27 November 2013	
February 2017	Revised policy specifically for academy schools based on LA policy (Nov 2016) previously consulted upon with trade unions.	HR ONE	February 2017	
April 2017	Policy Review incorporating the new delegation of authority within the MAT and the new MAT name	HR– WeST	TBC	
September 2017	Policy review incorporating amended delegation	HR WeST	September 2017	Annually or at change in Statutory guidance
February 2019	Policy reviewed to incorporate revised ACAS guidance on suspensions and introduction of DPA 2018	HR WeST	February 2019	Annually or at change in Statutory guidance

March 2019	Approved by Trust Board subject to local consultation	HR WeST	March 2019	Biannually or at change in Statutory guidance
April 2019	Implementation following local consultation	HR WeST	April 2019	Biannually or at change in Statutory guidance
June 2023	Template update and review of terminology	HR WeST	September 2023	September 2025
February 2025	MINOR amendment to align with Trust SoDA – delegation key now reflects that only the CEO has authority to dismiss a headteacher	HR WeST	February 2025 – file name September 2023 v2	September 2025
September 2025	Update policy format to dyslexia friendly. . Inclusion of quick read at the beginning of the document Updates to investigation section and outcomes. Amended ‘Informal Action’ to ‘Minor Misconduct’	WeST HR		Biannually or at change in Statutory guidance