

### Pupil allegations against staff

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Although this is a sensitive and difficult area to address, any allegation made against a member of school staff must be immediately referred by the school to the local authority designated officer (LADO). It's not the role of the school to investigate allegations unless initially advised to do so by the LADO.

Regardless of whether the allegation is considered malicious or vexatious, local authority safeguarding procedures must be followed in the first instance in all circumstances.

#### **Physical contact with pupils**

It's inevitable, and in some cases necessary, for physical contact with pupils, particularly in circumstances where pupils need reassurance. You should, however, follow your school's code of conduct and adopted protocols and procedures.

#### **Supporting children at risk**

Children may manifest behavioural problems when they are the subject of abuse, and those children placed on the child protection register will undoubtedly require additional support and monitoring.

It's therefore important to identify issues and provide those children with coping skills that can help avoid situations arising. This might include pastoral support programmes, nurture groups, pastoral care, behaviour support or support through the curriculum (during health and safety discussions and sex education).

#### **Alleged incidents**

If you're aware that an incident has occurred, or that an issue or an area of conflict is developing between you and a pupil, brief notes should be made at the time. This action will help you to reflect on a situation if, or when, an investigation commences following a child protection allegation. This process will also help you to accurately complete the school's required recording procedures at a later date.

You should note the date and time of any incident, the place and the context. For

example, if you had to restrain a child to prevent injury to yourself, the pupil or others within the school, you should record not just physical action but also what was going through your mind.

It's important to record what was going through your mind and the process you followed, eg the action taken to prevent a situation escalating and reducing the potential for increased risk. A good school will have, and use, an incident book, or a virtual equivalent, to record all uses of restraint, details and accounts of relevant staff and pupils, including how they felt at the time.

However, in the event of the need to use physical restraint, it's important that this is only used as a last resort and in circumstances where (preferably) you have been trained to do so.

### **The inter-agency process**

The school designated lead officer, head teacher or governor, may be called upon to participate in a strategy meeting. In circumstances where a serious allegation has been made by a pupil, parent or member of staff, a strategy meeting will normally be arranged by the LADO involving a representative of the school and relevant agencies (police, education welfare, social care, etc).

A child protection allegation will involve a strategy discussion based on a thorough investigation of the allegation made and any evidence that might support the allegation.

At the strategy meeting, consideration will be given to the foundation, if any, of the allegation; whether suspension is recommended while further investigation continues; or whether other alternative arrangements should be made by the school to protect the pupil and/or other pupils, or to protect the member of staff from a situation that could subject them to a stressful work-environment.

In circumstances where suspension is recommended, the school should appoint a school liaison contact, so that those subject to an allegation are not isolated from the school community while the investigation takes its course.

If matters escalate and you consider that your professional role is at risk, further advice should be sought.