WHITE HOUSE SCHOOL

Allegations against staff (including low-level concerns) Policy
Prepared by: The Central Team
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Contents

INTRODUCTION
AIMS
ALLEGATIONS THAT MAY MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD
SUSPENSION OF THE ACCUSED UNTIL THE CASE IS RESOLVED
DEFINITIONS FOR OUTCOMES OF ALLEGATION INVESTIGATIONS
PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS
TIMESCALES
SPECIFIC ACTIONS
CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING
RECORD-KEEPING
REFERENCES
LEARNING LESSONS
NON-RECENT ALLEGATIONS
CONCERNS THAT DO NOT MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD
DEFINITION OF LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS
SHARING LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS
RESPONDING TO LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS
RECORD KEEPING OF LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS
REFERENCES IN RELATION TO LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS
LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES
CONTACT INFORMATION
APPROVAL & POLICY REVIEW
REVISION HISTORY

1. INTRODUCTION

The White House School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular, it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values. Everything we do is underpinned by our core values:

- **Ambition** – developing curiosity, courage and aspiration.
- **Resilience** – developing confidence, character and perseverance.
- **Community** – demonstrating kindness, integrity and respect.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in The White House School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility updated August 2023, considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part-time, and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school contracts the services of third-party organisations to ensure regulatory compliance and implement best practices for:

- HR and Employment Law
- Health & Safety Guidance
- DBS Check processing
- Mandatory Safeguarding, Health & Safety, and other relevant training
- Data protection and GDPR guidance
- Specialist insurance cover

Where this policy refers to 'employees', the term refers to any individual who is classified as an employee or a worker, working with and on behalf of the school (including volunteers and contractors).

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment.

All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at The White House School.

The policy documents of The White House School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasion, a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the republication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

2. AIMS

This policy aims to:

- Protect children from harm by ensuring that allegations or concerns about staff are identified, investigated and managed appropriately.
- Provide a fair, consistent and timely process for dealing with allegations, ensuring effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.
- Ensure appropriate reporting and multi-agency working, including consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police and children's social care where necessary.
- Promote proportionate decision-making, ensuring suspension is not automatic and that alternatives are considered wherever possible.
- Maintain confidentiality and accurate records throughout investigations, while ensuring appropriate information sharing and record retention. This includes compliance with the statutory information sharing duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 where its criteria are met.
- Encourage an open safeguarding culture by ensuring low-level concerns are reported early, handled sensitively and used to identify patterns of behaviour before they become more serious.
- Improve safeguarding practice by reviewing substantiated cases to identify lessons learned and strengthen school procedures to prevent similar incidents in the future

3. ALLEGATIONS THAT MAY MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school

If we're in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, we will consult our local authority designated officer (LADO).
We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly, fairly and consistently that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the proprietor where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement. If we receive an allegation of an incident happening while an individual or organisation was using the school premises to run activities for children, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform our LADO.

4. SUSPENSION OF THE ACCUSED UNTIL THE CASE IS RESOLVED

Suspension of the accused will not be the default position and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned
- Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children
- Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children
- Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents/carers have been consulted
- Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school or other work for the group.

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the school's personnel adviser and the designated officer at the local authority, as well as the police and local authority children's social care where they have been involved.

5. DEFINITIONS FOR OUTCOMES OF ALLEGATION 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, or to cause harm to the 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 (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where no evidence or proper basis supports the allegation being made

6. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the case manager will take the following steps:

- Conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with the steps below
- Discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or local authority children's social care services. (The case manager may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police before consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to

children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the case manager will notify the designated officer as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)

- Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or local authority children's social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or local authority children's social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies
- Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or local authority children's social care services, as appropriate
- Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the individual's family, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and make a risk assessment of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to local authority children's social care. Relevant information must be shared with another relevant person where the Section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 criteria are met; this is not dependent on the concern reaching the harm threshold or on a referral threshold being met.
- If immediate suspension is considered necessary, agree and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details
- If it is decided that no further action is to be taken in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation
- If it is decided that further action is needed, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or local authority children's social care services as appropriate
    - Provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and considering what other support is appropriate. . Individuals may wish to seek trade union support, reach out to our Employee Assistance Programme and/or or turn to a colleague for advice.
    - Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with local authority children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice
    - Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case (only in relation to their child – no information will be shared regarding the staff member)
    - Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child

If the school is made aware that the Secretary of State has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the school will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point. This consent process relates to the use of statements and evidence in disciplinary proceedings and does not displace any separate statutory safeguarding information sharing duty.

Additional considerations for supply teachers, trainee teachers, and all contracted staff

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the school, such as a supply teacher, trainee teacher, or contracted staff member provided by an agency, the school shares safeguarding responsibilities with the employment agency or business. We will take the actions below in addition to our standard procedures.

- We will not decide to stop using an individual due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with our LADO to determine a suitable outcome
- The governing board will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of the school, while the school carries out the investigation
- We will involve the agency fully, but the school will take the lead in collecting the necessary information and providing it to the LADO as required
- We will address issues such as information sharing, to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (we will do this, for example, as part of the allegations management meeting or by liaising directly with the agency where necessary)

When using an agency, we will inform them of our process for managing allegations, and keep them updated about our policies as necessary, and will invite the agency's HR manager or equivalent to meetings as appropriate. Teacher training providers are expected to follow the same procedures as supply agencies.

7. TIMESCALES

We will deal with all allegations as quickly and effectively as possible and will endeavour to comply with the following timescales, where reasonably practicable:

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious should be resolved within 1 week
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be taken within 3 working days
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, this should be held within 15 working days

However, these are objectives only, and where they are not met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter.

8. SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution

The case manager will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or local authority children's social care services.

Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the school will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.
If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the school will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

Individuals returning to work after suspension

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The case manager will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the school.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports
If a report is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious allegations
If an allegation is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and case manager will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered. Confidentiality must not prevent or delay information sharing required by section 16LA of the Children Act 2004. Where the statutory criteria are met, relevant information must be shared where it may facilitate another relevant person's safeguarding or welfare functions, subject to the limited exception where disclosure would be more detrimental to the child than not disclosing.

The case manager will take advice from the LADO, police and local authority children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared. This assessment must take account of section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, including the duty to share relevant information proactively and in response to a request where the statutory criteria are met. Consent is not required for sharing under that duty, although children and families should be kept informed where safe and practicable.
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

10. RECORD-KEEPING

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case. Records should also capture any decision to share or not share safeguarding information under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 and the rationale, including relevance, how sharing may facilitate safeguarding or welfare functions, and any detriment assessment and mitigation considered.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- Notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

In these cases, the school will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with local authority children's social care or the police as appropriate.
We will retain all records at least until the accused individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

11. REFERENCES

When providing employer references, we will:

- Not refer to any allegation that is false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious, or any repeated allegations that have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious
- Include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions

12. LEARNING LESSONS

After any cases where the allegations are substantiated, the case manager will review the circumstances of the case with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual

For all other cases, the case manager will consider the facts and determine whether any improvements can be made.

13. NON-RECENT ALLEGATIONS

Abuse can be reported, no matter how long ago it happened.

We will report any non-recent allegations made by a child to the LADO in line with our local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child, we will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police

14. CONCERNS THAT DO NOT MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school
- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns promptly to safeguard the welfare of children.

15. 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 the 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 designated officer at the local authority

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
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating pupils

16. SHARING LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns as per section 7.7 of this policy
- Empowering staff to self-refer
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system

The Headteacher and DSL will actively promote a culture in which **professional curiosity, respectful challenge and speaking up are expected and valued**. Safeguarding is understood to be everyone's responsibility, and staff are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity, however small or uncertain they may appear.

To support this culture:

- The **Staff Code of Conduct, safeguarding expectations and professional boundaries** are reinforced through induction, regular safeguarding training, briefings, supervision and ongoing professional development.
- Staff are reminded that sharing a low-level concern is a **protective and responsible action** and does not automatically imply wrongdoing by the individual concerned.
- Staff are encouraged to **self-refer** where they recognise that their own behaviour may have fallen below expected professional standards.
- Staff can confidentially raise a low-level concern with the **Headteacher** in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy. Where the concern relates to the Headteacher, it will be reported to the appropriate senior leader/proprietor in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The **Headteacher and DSL will work closely together**, as appropriate, to ensure safeguarding information is considered in context and that concerns are responded to promptly, sensitively and proportionately.
- Low-level concerns will be **recorded securely and reviewed appropriately**, enabling leaders to identify patterns, repeated concerns or wider safeguarding and cultural issues.
- Leaders will use appropriate opportunities for **supervision, reflective discussion and professional challenge** to address behaviours at an early stage and support consistently high professional standards.
- Staff will never be discouraged from raising a concern because they are **unsure whether it meets a particular threshold**. Where there is doubt, staff should share the information and seek advice.

17. RESPONDING TO LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

If the concern is raised via a third party, the headteacher will collect 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 headteacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the school's staff code of conduct. The headteacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

When a low-level concern is raised, the Headteacher will respond in a **timely, proportionate and confidential manner**, ensuring that the welfare of children remains the paramount consideration while treating all individuals fairly.

The Headteacher will:

- Ensure the concern is **recorded in writing**, including the details of the concern, the context in which it arose and any action taken.
- Gather sufficient information to establish the circumstances, speaking with the person raising the concern, the individual concerned and any relevant witnesses where appropriate.
- Consider whether the behaviour is consistent with the **Staff Code of Conduct and expected professional boundaries**.
- Consider whether the concern may form part of a **pattern of behaviour**, including reviewing any previous low-level concerns relating to the individual.
- Determine whether the concern remains a low-level concern or whether it meets, or may meet, the **harm threshold**, in which case the school's procedures for managing allegations against staff will be followed and advice sought from the LADO where appropriate.
- Where the behaviour does not meet the harm threshold but falls below expected professional standards, take appropriate and proportionate action. This may include a

professional conversation, additional guidance, training, supervision, support or management action.
- Consider whether the concern highlights a wider issue relating to the school's **culture, safeguarding practice, policies, training or systems**, and take action to address this where necessary.
- Ensure records of low-level concerns are held **securely and confidentially**, in accordance with the school's safeguarding and data protection arrangements.
- Where appropriate, provide feedback to the person who raised the concern, while respecting the confidentiality of those involved.

The Headteacher will retain oversight of low-level concerns and, alongside the DSL where appropriate, will periodically review records to identify **patterns, trends or emerging safeguarding concerns**.
Where there is any uncertainty about whether information constitutes a low-level concern or meets the harm threshold, the school will **seek appropriate safeguarding advice rather than making assumptions about the level of concern**.

18. RECORD KEEPING OF LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. 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.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, and the UK GDPR
- 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 harm threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where information about a low-level concern is relevant to safeguarding or promoting a child's welfare, the school will also consider and comply with any applicable section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 information sharing duty; the fact that a concern is below the harm threshold does not of itself prevent required sharing.

19. REFERENCES IN RELATION TO LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues that would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

20. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked to our:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Record Keeping Policy

21. CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions or concerns regarding this policy, please contact the School Administration Team at reception@thewhitehouseschool.org

22. APPROVAL & POLICY REVIEW

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by:

Policy Approver(s)	Cavendish Education Board of Directors/Senior Leadership Team of the school
Storage Location	Website, online, hard copy in the school
Effective Date	September 2026
Next Review Date	August 2027

23. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Change	Author	Date of Change
1	First published	Cavendish Central Team	September 2026
1.1	Updated to align with the Information Sharing Duty September 2026	Cavendish Central Team	2nd October 2026