****



**Focus 1st Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment!**

Working in Partnership with North London Schools & Local Authorities since 2000

Accredited Independent School Status 2014 (Registration N0. 308/6003)

**Contents**

[Focus Inception 4](#_Toc108709261)

[Focus Ethos 4](#_Toc108709262)

[Abuse / Anti - Bullying Policy and Procedure 5](#_Toc108709263)

[1. Policy Statement 5](#_Toc108709264)

[2. Definitions 5](#_Toc108709265)

[Abuse: 5](#_Toc108709266)

[General Abuse: 5](#_Toc108709267)

[Sexual/Homophobic Abuse: 6](#_Toc108709268)

[Racial or Sectarian Abuse: 6](#_Toc108709269)

[Bullying: 6](#_Toc108709270)

[Gangs and Bullying: 7](#_Toc108709271)

[Child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSE) 7](#_Toc108709272)

[Sexual Abuse: 7](#_Toc108709273)

[Neglect: 8](#_Toc108709274)

[Cyber bullying: 8](#_Toc108709275)

[Useful resources 9](#_Toc108709276)

[Getting offensive content taken down 9](#_Toc108709277)

[Domestic violence 10](#_Toc108709278)

[a) Controlling behaviour 10](#_Toc108709279)

[b) Coercive behaviour 10](#_Toc108709280)

[c) Definition of domestic violence and abuse: 10](#_Toc108709281)

[d) Forced marriage 10](#_Toc108709282)

[e) Three steps to escaping domestic violence 10](#_Toc108709283)

[Physical Abuse: 11](#_Toc108709284)

[Emotional Abuse: 11](#_Toc108709285)

[Drugs 11](#_Toc108709286)

[Discipline 12](#_Toc108709287)

[Fabricated or induced illness 12](#_Toc108709288)

[Faith abuse 12](#_Toc108709289)

[Key messages 13](#_Toc108709290)

[Female genital mutilation (FGM) 13](#_Toc108709291)

[Forced marriage 14](#_Toc108709292)

[Gangs and youth violence 14](#_Toc108709293)

[Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG) 14](#_Toc108709294)

[Mental health 14](#_Toc108709295)

[Private fostering 14](#_Toc108709296)

[Radicalisation 14](#_Toc108709297)

[Sexting 15](#_Toc108709298)

[Teenage relationship abuse 15](#_Toc108709299)

[Trafficking 15](#_Toc108709300)

[3. Responsibilities of Managers 16](#_Toc108709301)

[4. Responsibilities of all students 16](#_Toc108709302)

[5. Redress 16](#_Toc108709303)

[6. Procedure for dealing with Abuse / Bullying: 16](#_Toc108709304)

[Suspension 19](#_Toc108709305)

[Duty of care 20](#_Toc108709306)

[Record keeping 20](#_Toc108709307)

[Malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded allegations 20](#_Toc108709308)

[Communication 21](#_Toc108709309)

[Training 21](#_Toc108709310)

[Monitoring and Review 21](#_Toc108709311)

Focus Inception

*Focus 1st Academy was set up in the year 2000 using European Social Fund to provide education and training and to-date has defied all the odds and was awarded the Independent School status in August 2014. This enables us to work in partnership with schools and local authorities to provide an alternative method of education for 14 to 16 year olds. Our student referrals are some of the most vulnerable young people and it is our duty to ensure that they are equipped with the appropriate skills and qualifications to ensure full participation within the modern workplace. Our team of professionals consisting of tutors, tutor assistance, pastoral support staff and mentors to nurture the students ensuring our work-based-learning approach alongside a variety of techniques are utilised and compatible to ensure the prevention of social and economic exclusion prior to adulthood which is underpinned through the subjects delivered whilst in classroom environment as well as on an individual basis.*

Focus Ethos

*Our programme fulfils the need of students who are disengaged from academic studies and may be exhibiting behavioural problems as a result. Our hands-on approach to learning creates an inspirational motivation for students wishing to pursue a career via the vocational route. The students are taught methods on how to improve their social skills in preparation for work/apprenticeship schemes and/or further education by learning in real-life situations and participating in sports, art and drama to express emotions. We believe that all individuals have a certain quality, which is sometimes concealed due to lack of confidence, mixed sentiments or disabilities. As such, recognising and coming to terms with barriers is a small part of the conflict, we are certain that all individuals are aware of their own weaknesses; the most vital part is engaging with professionals and adhere to individual training plans set which in turn prepares our students for economic and social integration into adulthood.*

Abuse / Anti - Bullying Policy and Procedure

* + 1. Policy Statement

Focus 1st Academy recognises that all students have a right to study in an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected and which is free from abuse and bullying. We are committed to eliminating intimidation in any form.

Our policy statement was compiled by cross referencing with documents of HM Government – What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused March 2015, Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021, Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2018, Mental Health and behaviour in schools November 2018, Peer on Peer Abuse February 2017 and Preventing and tackling bullying July 2017.

This policy applies to abuse on the grounds of disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, creed, colour, race or ethnic origin as well as gang related issues.

Abuse breaches, to our Equal Opportunities Policy is classified as a serious offence, which may result in summary dismissal.

This policy applies to students and staff who are part of Focus 1st Academy.

* + 1. Definitions

Abuse:

Unwanted conduct which affects the dignity of women and men; it encompasses unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour which denigrates or ridicules or is intimidating. Abuse and neglect are

forms of maltreatment; a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to prevent harm.

General Abuse:

Abuse can take many forms and may be directed in particular against women and ethnic minorities or towards people because of their age, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability or some other characteristics. It may involve action, behaviour, comment or physical contact which is found objectionable or which causes offence; it can result in the recipient feeling threatened, humiliated or patronised and it can create and intimidatory environment.

Sexual/Homophobic Abuse:

Invited, unreciprocated and unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which is offensive to the person involved and causes that person to feel threatened, humiliated or embarrassed. Examples of sexual/homophobic abuse are:

* Requests for sexual favours, including implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats concerning present or future employment status.
* Offensive Gestures or comments
* Sexually/homophobic orientated jibes, innuendo or jokes
* Unwanted physical Contact
* The display of sexually offensive visual material such as calendars, photographs, books or videos

Sexual/Homophobic abuse may be experienced for either men or women as a result of the conduct of both. It applies equally regardless of grade or job position and may also occur when dealing with external clients and/or members of the public.

Racial or Sectarian Abuse:

It may take the form of actual or threatened physical abuse or it may involve jokes, verbal abuse, language, graffiti or literature of a racist or sectarian nature or offensive remarks about a person’s skin colour, physical characteristics or religion. It may also include repeated exclusion of a person from an ethnic or religious minority from conversations, patronising remarks, unfair allocation of work or pressure about speed and/or quality of their work in a way that differs from the treatment of other employees.

Bullying:

Is the intimidation or belittling of someone through the misuse of power or position, which leaves the recipient feeling hurt, upset, vulnerable or helpless. It is often inextricably linked to the areas of abuse described above. The following are examples of bullying:

* Unjustified criticism of an individual’s personal or professional performance, shouting at an individual, criticising an individual in front of others.
* Spreading malicious rumours or making malicious allegations (Inclusive of cyber bullying)
* Intimidation or ridicule of individuals with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
* Ignoring or excluding an individual from the team/group

Gangs and Bullying:

This will normally occur outside of school and is now known as, contextual Safeguarding factors (Wider environmental factors present in students’ life outside of school. e.g. - gang related.)

Issues are documented & monitored and reported to the Headmistress who will look to identify any potential patterns or trends, she or her Deputy will seek professional meetings with external colleagues to share information. We strive to nurture our students to behave in a socially acceptable manner as our ethos revolves around work-based-learning whereby students, work alongside adults to gain the work-experience and simultaneously learn about everyday life skills.

We have developed an approach whereby our staff proactively gathers intelligence about issues between students that may provoke conflict; this information is utilised to prevent bullying occurring in the first instance. This might involve talking to students about a problem, perhaps in lessons, on a one to one basis or call for a meeting with parents and/or professional – depending on the severity.

***In all circumstances listed below; the issues encountered must be reported to the Headmistress, Marina Savva and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Sarah Barker or Deputy Safeguarding Lead Androulla Savva.***

Child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child abuse which involves children and young people (male and female, from a range of ethnic origins and ages, in some cases as young as 10) child sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Perpetrators of child sexual exploitation are found in all parts of the country and are not restricted to a particular ethnic group.

Frontline practitioners from Focus 1st Academy should be aware of the key indicator of children being sexually exploited which can include:

* going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late;
* regularly missing school or education or not taking part in education;
* children appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
* children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends
* children who are experiencing changes in emotional well-being
* children who misuse drugs and alcohol

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is any activity with a child; many children that are being abuse do not see it as sexual abuse and can have a long-term impact on mental health. The act may involve physical contact including assault by penetration [rape or oral sex] or non-penetrating such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, touching outside of clothes. Sexual abuse could also involve non-contact activities such as looking or watching sexual images with the intent to groom a child and behaving in inappropriate ways in preparation for abuse. Both men and women commit inappropriate sexual acts of abuse. The sexual acts commit by child to another child is a safeguarding issues in education – pls see page 99 in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022.

Neglect:

Failure to meet the child’s basic physical and emotional needs. The persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive. Persistent stomach aches, feeling unwell and apparent anorexia can be associated with neglect. Key indicators,

* children that are living in a home that is dirty or unsafe
* left dirty or hungry
* inadequate clothing
* dangerous conditions such as drugs, alcohol or violence
* angry aggressive or self-harm

Cyber bullying:

We will not tolerate the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. We also combat cyber bullying through our curriculum in an informal manner as well as during the induction process.

Agreements on the responsible use of technology should include:

* Rules on the use of school equipment, software and access routes when used on or off the school premises within school hours [9am until 3pm]: for example, internet access, tablets, lap tops and mobile phones.
* Acceptable behaviour for pupils and employees, including behaviour outside school: for example, teachers’ and pupils’ use of social networking services and other sites, so as not to harm others or bring the school into disrepute.
* School staff should expect the school to react quickly to reported incidents or support the member of staff concerned to do so. It is also important that staff who are harassed in this way receive support and information enabling them to access appropriate personal support. The school should endeavour to approach internet providers or other agencies on their behalf to request that the inappropriate material is removed. The internet provider may only accept a request from the victim. However, the school may want to act if it is on a school website or email address.
* If it is necessary for the person being bullied can also contact the service providers directly, the school may provide support. This might apply, for example, in cases of identity theft, impersonation or abuse via a mobile phone service.

Useful resources

The Parent Zone has established a training programme designed to enable schools and professionals working with parents to deliver their own sessions on internet safety. They also provide innovative resources for schools to help and support parents, particularly around e-safety.

Facebook has produced Empowering Educators support sheet specifically for teachers and launched the Bullying Prevention Hub with Yale's Centre for Emotional Intelligence.

Getting offensive content taken down

If online content is offensive or inappropriate, and the person or people responsible are known, you need to ensure they understand why the material is unacceptable or offensive and request they remove it.

Most social networks have reporting mechanisms in place to report content which breaches their terms. If the person responsible has not been identified or does not respond to requests to take down the material, the staff member should use the tools on the social networking site directly to make a report.

Some service providers will not accept complaints lodged by a third party. In cases of mobile phone abuse, where the person being bullied is receiving malicious calls and messages, the account holder will need to contact the provider directly.

Before you contact a service provider, it is important to be clear about where the content is; for example, by taking a screen shot of the material that includes the web address. If you are requesting they take down material that is not illegal, be clear to point out how it breaks the site’s terms and conditions. Where the material is suspected of being illegal you should contact the police directly.

Domestic violence

*The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:* Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

* Psychological
* Physical
* Sexual
* Financial
* Emotional
1. Controlling behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

1. Coercive behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This is not a legal definition.

1. Definition of domestic violence and abuse:

To help local areas consider the consider how the extension to the definition of domestic violence and abuse may impact on their services, the Home Office, in partnership with Against Violence and Abuse (AVA) has produced [a guide for local areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/definition-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse-guide-for-local-areas).

A guide for Wales is currently being developed and will be published in due course.

1. Forced marriage

Read [information and practice guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage) for professionals protecting, advising and supporting victims of forced marriage. For further information and guidance, please ask the Head Teacher for a copy of the - Schools, Colleges & University: Guidelines on Handling Cases of Forced Marriage.

1. Three steps to escaping domestic violence

Read the leaflet the Home Office developed with Southall Black Sisters at women in black and minority ethnic communities: [Three steps to escaping domestic violence](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/three-steps-to-escaping-domestic-violence).

Physical Abuse:

Is deliberately physically hurting a child; it may take a variety of forms such as hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child. This may happen in the family home, school or community however; it is our duty as Focus 1st Academy staff members to report finding to prevent any further inflicted physical pain to a child to our Safeguarding Lead Sarah Barker who will then take immediate action in tandem with the headmistress.

Emotional Abuse:

This is the persistent emotional ill-treatment to a child, this can also be called psychological abuse and it can have a devastating impact on a child’s development which is sometimes carried through to adulthood.

Drugs

The Headteacher and staff are best placed to decide on the most appropriate response to tackling drugs within their school. This is most effective when:

* It is supported by the whole School
* Drug education is part of a well-planned programme of PE delivered in a supportive environment, where students are aware of the school rules, feel able to engage in open discussion and feel confident about asking for help if necessary;

Through PE we ensure access to and knowledge of up-to-date information on sources of help. This includes local and national help-lines (including FRANK for drugs, NHS Smoking Services for tobacco and Drink-line for alcohol), youth and community services and drug services. These sources can be used as part of, or in addition to, the school’s own drug and alcohol education.

If a student is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol on school premises, we will prioritise the safety of the young person and those around them. If necessary it should be dealt with as a medical emergency, administering First Aid and summoning appropriate support. Depending on the circumstances, parents or the police may need to be contacted. If the child is felt to be at risk the Safeguarding Policy will come into effect and social services may need to be contacted.

Discipline

Any response to drug-related incidents needs to balance the needs of the individual students concerned with the wider school. In deciding what action to take we will use our disciplinary procedures currently in place.

Exclusion should not be the automatic response to a drug incident and permanent exclusion should only be used in serious cases.

Fabricated or induced illness

The fabrication or induction of illness in children is a relatively rare form of child abuse. Where concerns exist about fabricated or induced illness, it requires professionals to work together, evaluating all the available evidence, in order to reach an understanding of the reasons for the child’s signs and symptoms of illness. The management of these cases requires a careful medical evaluation which considers a range of possible diagnoses. At all times professionals need to keep an open mind to ensure that they have not missed a vital piece of information.

By their nature these types of cases require expert input from a range of disciplines, in particular paediatricians. It is, therefore, essential that all professionals who come into contact with children whose signs and symptoms may be being induced or fabricated are aware that this form of abuse exists. This should be reported to the designated child protection officer within Focus 1st Academy as well as a statutory body such as health, social care, education, schools and the police or local authority children’s social care services.

Faith abuse

Child abuse is never acceptable wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes. Abuse linked to belief, including belief in witchcraft or possession, is a horrific crime which is condemned by people of all cultures, communities and faiths. [The Government & Focus 1st Academy applauds the work being done in communities to tackle this form of abuse and to stand up to the perpetrators].

Key messages

* **Child abuse is condemned by people of all cultures, communities and faiths, and is never acceptable under any circumstances*.*** Child abuse related to belief includes inflicting physical violence or emotional harm on a child by stigmatising or labelling them as evil or as a witch. Where this type of abuse occurs it causes great distress and suffering to the child.
* **Everyone working or in contact with children has a responsibility to recognise and know how to act on evidence, concerns and signs** that a child’s health, development and safety is being or may be threatened, especially when they suffer or are likely to suffer significant harm.
* **Standard child safeguarding procedures apply and must always be followed** in all cases where abuse or neglect is suspected including those that may be related to particular belief systems.
* **The number of cases of child abuse linked to a belief in spirits, possession and witchcraft is small,** but where it occurs the impact on the child is great, causing much distress and suffering to the child. It is likely that a proportion of this type of abuse remains unreported.

Research commissioned by the DfE in 2006 reviewed child abuse cases that had occurred between 2000 and 2005 to identify any cases where the abuse was linked to accusations of possession or witchcraft. 38 cases involving 47 children were found to be relevant and sufficiently well documented. The children came from a variety of backgrounds including African, South Asian and European.

* **Child abuse linked to faith or belief may occur where a child is treated as a scapegoat for perceived failure.** Whilst specific beliefs, practices, terms or forms of abuse may exist, the underlying reasons for the abuse are often similar to other contexts in which children become at risk. These reasons can include family stress, deprivation, domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health problems. Children who are different in some way, perhaps because they have a disability or learning difficulty, an illness or are exceptionally bright, can also be targeted in this kind of abuse.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

FGM is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls, and therefore is dealt with as part of our existing child and adult safeguarding/protection structures, policies and procedures in place.

Forced marriage

Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights, a form of violence and if it affects students from Focus, it will be reported to all professionals and dealt with as a matter of urgency. If you or someone you know is being forced into a marriage from Focus 1st Academy please contact the Headteacher, Marina Savva.

Gangs and youth violence

Focus 1st Academy has a duty and a responsibility to protect its students. It is also well established that success in learning is one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime and dealing with violence also helps attainment. We are committed to our learners achieving to maximise potential which is also used as a preventative measure against crime.

Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Domestic and sexual violence is often hidden away behind closed doors, with the victim suffering in silence. We are determined to support victims [associated with Focus] in rebuilding their lives, reporting these crimes, and to make sure perpetrators are brought to justice. If you suspect any such crimes being committed please report this to either the Headteacher or Safeguarding Officer, imminently.

Mental health

We aim to support our students with mental health issues such as ADHD, by providing [where applicable] 1-1 tuition to enable our students to reach their full potential and work in alongside external colleagues to support the process.

Private fostering

We welcome students from care homes and foster homes; we have a safeguarding officer in place to ensure all aspects of their lives are cared for so that we can pave the way to a successful career beyond Focus 1st Academy 1st Academy.

Radicalisation

Channel is about safeguarding children from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activity.  If any member of staff suspects any such movement within Focus 1st Academy this must be reported to the Headteacher and/or the police; this is about early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risk they face before illegality occurs.

Sexting

We have now incorporated the new downloadable set of lesson plans for our tutors to use with our students. The Toolkit helps you transform the [Thinkuknow website] from a reference tool into an interactive resource. With clear tutor guidance and engaging photocopiable learning materials, each activity gets students thinking and talking about key issues related to sex, relationships and the internet, delivers safety messages, and encourages them to return to the website in their own time which includes sexting, webcam, using social networks, inappropriate content and chatting with strangers online.

Teenage relationship abuse

Some of the signs below could indicate that a student is experiencing relationship abuse. This list is not exhaustive and students respond differently. These signs could also be due to other causes, but it is useful to be aware of common responses.

* Physical signs of injury / illness
* Truancy, failing grades
* Withdrawal, passivity, being compliant
* Changes in mood and personality
* Isolation from family and friends
* Frequent texts and calls from boyfriend / girlfriend
* Inappropriate sexual behaviour / language / attitudes
* Depression
* Pregnancy
* Use of drugs / alcohol (where there was no prior use)
* Self-harm
* Eating disorders or problems sleeping
* Symptoms of post-traumatic stress
* Bullying / being bullied

Please liaise with the safeguarding officer if you suspect any such occurrences.

Trafficking

Trafficking of persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of

payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. Child trafficking is a very serious issue which can have a devastating and lasting impact on its victims; please liaise with the safeguarding officer in you suspect any students is trafficking.

* + 1. Responsibilities of Managers

3.1 Our Head teacher, Marina Savva has an obligation to prevent abuse and bullying and to take immediate action once it has been identified, whether or not a complaint has been made.

3.2 Allegations of abuse or bullying received either formally or informally through the grievance procedure must be dealt with promptly and sensitively.

3.3 The Headmistress of Focus 1st Academy 1st Academy, Marina Savva must ensure that students do not pre-judge situations based on their own sexual or racial attitudes or prejudices.

* + 1. Responsibilities of all students

4.1 Every student has a personal responsibility not to harass or bully other members of staff.

4.2 A student who becomes aware of abuse or bullying occurring should bring the matter to the attention of his/her tutor.

* + 1. Redress

A student who feels that s/he has been harassed or bullied has the right to seek redress via the following procedure set out in section 6.

* + 1. Procedure for dealing with Abuse / Bullying:

6.1 Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse – treat the matter seriously. Listen with care, quietly but actively and allow silence. Reassure the child that s/he is not to blame and was right to inform you. Do not show disbelief, or appear angry or shocked.

6.2 If you can, write brief notes of what they are telling you while they are speaking and keep these original notes, however rough (it is what you wrote at the time that may be important later and not the improved version you wrote up afterwards!). If you do not have the means to write at the time, make an accurate record of what was said and what you have done as soon as possible afterwards. Sign, date and time all notes made. Contemporaneous notes and records should be made on the same working day of any disclosure.

6.3 Do not give a guarantee that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. If you are told about abuse you have a responsibility to tell the right people to get something done about it. If asked, explain that if you have been told something that needs to be sorted out, you will have to tell the people who can help, but that you will only inform people who absolutely need to know.

6.4 Do not interrogate or ask leading questions that might give your own ideas of what might have happened (e.g. “did he do X to you?”) – Just ask “What do you want to tell me?” or “Is there anything else you want to say?” The best questions to ask are TED questions: Tell, Explain, Describe.

6.5 Immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Sarah Barker - do not tell other adults or pupils. Remember that the priority is to protect the child.

6.6 Never carry out an investigation of suspected or alleged abuse – social services and police staff are the people trained to do this – you could cause more damage and spoil possible criminal proceedings.

6.7 As soon as possible (and certainly the same day – **within 24 hours**) the DSL will liaise with MASH/LSCB and action subsequent referral if required. The DSL will follow their requests regarding any necessary investigations.

6.8 Where an allegation is made against the DSL, you should immediately contact the Head or other DSL Child Protection.

6.9 Where an allegation is made against the Headteacher, you should immediately contact the other DSL who will contact the LADO without notifying the Headmistress first. Where an allegation is made against another DSL you should immediately contact the Headmistress. The Headmistress will discuss the matter with the LADO before any further action is taken.

In cases of serious harm, the police should be informed from the outset.

6.10Never think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong. Receive the child’s story if appropriate, listen but do not judge. React to what the child tells you with belief and tell the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

6.11 You may feel upset after speaking to the child. You may need support, e.g. to talk through what has happened. You may wish to seek specialist support or counselling –look after yourself too.

6.12 A student who feels that s/he is being subjected to abuse or bullying may attempt to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. In some cases, it may be possible and sufficient for him/her to explain clearly to the person(s) engaged in the unwanted activities that the behaviour is unwelcome, that it offends and/or makes him/her uncomfortable.

6.13 If at the initial informal stage, the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing to approach the harasser alone, the complainant may wish to explain to his/her tutor or the designated Safeguarding Lead, Sarah Barker about the unwanted activities and that the behaviour is unwelcome, that it offends and/or makes him/her uncomfortable.

6.14 In some cases victims of abuse or bullying may not be sufficiently confident to tell the harasser that his/her behaviour is unacceptable. Focus 1st Academy emphasises therefore that students are not required to approach the harasser in an attempt to resolve the problem informally, and are entitled to report the matter immediately if they so wish.

6.15 Where steps outlined in 6.13 are unsuccessful or inappropriate, the complainant should raise the matter informally and in confidence with the Headteacher, Marina Savva.

6.16 Marina Savva will discuss the matter with the complainant and agree a course of action. The alleged abuser will also have the right to state their version of events to the manager.

6.17 The complainer will be assured that s/he will not be discriminated against or victimised for raising the complaint. Confidentially will be observed throughout and the need for any disclosure of the details of the case will be discussed and agreed.

6.18 At any stage in the process the complainant, the members of staff dealing with the complaint or the accused may feel that they need help of a trained person before deciding on the best course of action. A senior at Focus 1st Academy will provide support as listed below,

* Advising on the nature of abuse
* Offering guidance on resolving abuse problems
* Advising on the use of company’s grievance procedure

6.19 If the situation cannot be resolved informally then the complainant has the right to pursue his/her complaint formally through grievance procedure.

6.20 Where management consider that there may be evidence of abuse, they may consider it appropriate to undertake a full investigation of the circumstances. In this case, an individual within Focus 1st Academy will be commissioned to undertake this investigation. Best practice in relation to confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation; and both the complainant and alleged abuser will have the opportunity to have their say. The investigator will also interview and take statements from any appropriate witness to the alleged abuse.

Our designated Safeguarding Lead, Sarah Barker will liaise with appropriate school and/or LA who has the ultimate responsibility towards that child. All members of staff have received training to L3 in Safeguarding underpinned by DBS checks.

Suspension

Focus 1st Academy will consider taking, and if necessary, will take, disciplinary action against any member of staff or agent of the Setting, where it believes students are at risk of abuse from that member of staff, even in cases where there is to be no criminal prosecution. Suspension (without prejudice) may be necessary to protect all concerned, including the member of staff suspended.

Suspension will always occur if there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm. Suspension itself does not constitute disciplinary action, and the member of staff will continue to receive full pay. Any disciplinary action would follow the procedures laid out in the Staff Employment Handbook.

The Setting must make its own decision on whether pupils’ welfare is at risk, whatever the outcome of a police or MASH investigation may be, and the level of evidence needed for criminal prosecution is likely to be higher than that which may trigger valid disciplinary proceedings taken by the Setting.

Disciplinary proceedings and grounds for concern over students’ welfare may therefore be based on ‘balance of probability’, rather than ‘beyond reasonable doubt’.

Where the Setting has ‘low level’ concerns that do not amount to allegations or suspicions of specific abuse, but which may indicate the possibility of abuse occurring, the Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead, Sarah Barker should discuss these with the LADO on an informal basis.

Staff who is the subject of an allegation of this nature will invariably feel threatened and isolated. It is essential to seek legal advice as soon as possible and teachers should be represented at all disciplinary hearings. Suspension in a case of this kind is a procedural step only and must be viewed as a neutral action that does not presuppose guilt or innocence.

Duty of care

Focus 1st Academy recognises that it has a duty of care towards its employees and will ensure support is in place for individuals facing an allegation. Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations and given an explanation of the likely course of action as soon as possible, unless external agencies object to this.

Record keeping

Focus 1st Academy will keep a clear and comprehensive record of any allegation made, the action taken and decisions reached. We will provide the accused person with a copy of the record following consultation with the appropriate agencies and agreement has been reached as to what information can be disclosed.

The record will be kept confidentially on their personal file.

Malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded allegations

If the allegation is found to be false, and the person has been suspended, then the Setting will support him or her as best it can, if necessary with the provision of a mentor to return to work, and will attempt to minimise contact with the student(s) involved in making the allegation if they remain at Focus 1st Academy.

Focus 1st Academy will consider whether to take serious disciplinary action in accordance with our academy’s behaviour policy where an allegation by a student is shown to be malicious or deliberately invented.

Allegations that are found to be malicious will be removed from the personnel records; and any that are unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious will not be included in references.

Communication

All students will be informed of the abuse policy and procedure. They must be reassured regarding:

* Fear that others will consider the behaviour trivial and not take complaints of abuse seriously
* Fear that no action will be taken against a person guilty of abuse
* Fear of retaliation or victimisation in registering

Training

Training will be provided for those employees who have a specific responsibility for implementing the procedure or who may be dealing with complaints that arise.

Monitoring and Review

In order to assess the effectiveness of the procedure, statistics will be maintained in respect of the complaints of abuse. Strict confidentiality will be maintained and the monitoring process will comply with the Data Protection Act.

The Headmistress, Marina Savva is responsible for reviewing the policy and procedure one year after implementation and bi-annually thereafter or when applicable.

Reviewed March 2019

Last reviewed July 2020

Last reviewed September 2021

Last reviewed June 2022