



DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Agreed: Autumn 2025

Review: Autumn 2026

Statutory

Annual

This policy and procedure have been based on the Surrey County Council template.

1. Policy statement

The Disciplinary policy and procedure aims to ensure that lawful, fair, and effective arrangements exist for dealing with matters relating to employee conduct and behaviour.

It should be read in conjunction with the Guide to Ensuring a Fair Process and Providing Employee Support and the guide to Roles and Responsibilities in Disciplinary and Grievance proceedings, which are available from the school business manager.

It should be used, from the start, as an aid to supporting the effective management of misconduct and not purely as a mechanism for imposing sanctions.

Minor concerns about standards of conduct and behaviour at work, other than in cases where there is a repetition of the minor misconduct, should be addressed during regular one-to-one meetings, feedback sessions and performance conversations. This will include dealing with very minor breaches of conduct that are not considered to merit progression under the formal stages outlined in this policy.

However, where the alleged misconduct is of a sufficiently serious nature, the formal procedure may be implemented at any stage.

2. Policy scope

This policy applies to all employees on Surrey Pay terms and conditions of employment, to centrally employed teachers and to those employment groups who choose to adopt Surrey Pay policies. It will also apply to teachers in schools where the council is the employer of staff, and in other maintained schools who choose to adopt the policy.

3. When does the disciplinary procedure apply?

Discipline is about managing and modifying poor behaviour (misconduct) in the workplace by taking informal or formal action under the guidance of this policy and procedure. This can include managing and modifying poor performance in cases where this is believed to be the result of deliberate negligence or misconduct, for example where the employee is judged capable of carrying out their role to the required standard but for some reason has chosen not to do so (can but won't) or where serious errors have been made by the employee to the detriment of the council/the school.

We may consider an employee's actions outside work (including their use of social media) to be misconduct or gross misconduct if they affect the employee's ability to carry out their job or have a negative effect on the reputation of Surrey County Council and/or the school.

In circumstances where there are concerns about an employee's performance capability, (where the employee is willing but not currently able to carry their role to the required standard) managers should use the Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure.

In circumstances where there are concerns about the capability of an employee arising due to sickness absence, this should be managed using the staff absence management policy and procedure.

4. Key principles

The following guiding principles underpin the disciplinary policy and should be observed to maximise overall benefit for the council/school and its employees:

- We treat employees in a fair and consistent manner
- We support managers to fulfil their responsibility to maintain high standards of employee conduct
- We improve employee standards of conduct wherever necessary and practicable.
- To achieve a balance between timeliness and the need to ensure a fair process, we deal with disciplinary matters as swiftly as possible, avoiding unnecessary delays and seeking to conclude a case within a reasonable timescale
- We will not take disciplinary action against an employee until the matter has been fully and impartially investigated and facts established
- Except in cases of gross misconduct, we will not dismiss an employee for a first breach of the required standards of behaviour or conduct. The employee will be given the opportunity to improve
- We protect the council, its employees (including the school), clients, the public, and recipients of council services from the consequences of misconduct.

5. Preliminary enquiries

The purpose of the preliminary enquiry is to identify if there is enough evidence to indicate that misconduct has taken place. The preliminary enquiry may indicate, without the need to talk to the employee, that the allegation is unfounded.

Unless unfounded it will usually be necessary to discuss the matter directly with the employee to see what explanation they have to offer. In cases where the allegation might result in a risk to another person or to evidence, for example in a safeguarding or fraud investigation, the employee should only be told about the allegation when the risk to a person or to evidence has been controlled or removed.

Where an initial conversation with the employee takes place, the employee does not have the right to be accompanied, as the purpose of the conversation is simply to gather evidence about whether the alleged misconduct occurred.

- Records of enquiries should be kept in writing. No audio or video recordings of any meetings are normally allowed
- The line manager should decide whether the issue can be resolved informally
- If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a risk assessment should be completed, and an investigation will be required

The nominated investigating officer should carry out a risk assessment to consider the risks presented as a result of the allegations against the employee, exploring risks to the employee, to their colleagues, 3rd parties, the workplace, the investigation, the operational activities delivered by the service and to the employee's wellbeing. The risk assessment should also capture what has been alleged, the preliminary enquiry findings, actions to mitigate or remove the risks and if there is a recommendation to adjust duties or suspend.

6. Suspension

In most cases it will be possible for the employee to remain in work whilst an investigation is carried out. However, in some cases it may be appropriate, following careful consideration and risk assessment, for an employee to be temporarily moved to alternate duties, or as a last resort to be suspended from work, whilst the disciplinary matter is investigated.

The school has the right to suspend with pay in circumstances where there are reasonable grounds for concern that evidence may be tampered with or destroyed or witnesses pressurised before the disciplinary hearing, or if there is a potential serious risk to the business of the council/school or to other employees or third parties in allowing the employee to remain working. If an employee is suspended during an investigation, this should be discussed with them and they will be sent a letter to explain

why the investigation cannot be conducted without the need for suspension, what support is available to them during the suspension period and what the next steps will be.

Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction but is intended to protect both the employee and the organisation whilst any investigation is undertaken. It in no way implies that the allegations are proven. Any period of suspension will be regularly reviewed and kept as short as possible. We will keep in regular touch with the employee during the suspension period and the employee will be kept informed of the investigation's progress.

- HR should be contacted when considering suspension.
- Any decision to suspend an employee must be made in consultation with the relevant senior manager for the school and the school's HR provider through completion and review of a risk assessment.
- Consideration should be given to alternatives to suspension, such as the employee working in a different role whilst the investigation takes place.
- Employers have a duty of care to all staff, particularly those who are suspended from duty. Someone outside of the disciplinary process should be appointed to act as their support and point of contact within the council/school and the employee should be provided with contact details for Employee Assistance and encouraged to contact their trade union representative if they have one
- Employees will normally be asked not to speak to SCC employees (other than to the person appointed to act as their support and point of contact) or to SCC clients/ customers during the suspension period. The council/school will ensure that this does not affect the employee's ability to defend themselves properly at any disciplinary hearing. Employees who do not comply with this request may be subject to disciplinary action separate from the matters for which they have been suspended.

7. Investigation

The employee should be informed that an investigation is to take place. Where preliminary enquiries have been made (see section 6), the employee will likely already be aware of the allegations of misconduct. If not, the employee should be informed of the allegations ensuring that risks to persons or to evidence have been controlled or removed.

The employee's line manager (or another appropriate manager) should provide the employee with the contact details for Employee Assistance support services from commencement of the investigation and should encourage the employee to contact their trade union representative if they have one.

7.1 Investigating Officer

The employee's line manager will normally be the investigating officer, undertaking the formal disciplinary investigation and reporting on their findings. They should carry out any necessary investigations, to establish the facts of the case. However, where allegations are complex or particularly sensitive or where there is a conflict of interest, it may be appropriate to appoint a different investigating officer.

Where allegations relate to claims of bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation, it may be appropriate to source an independent or external person to investigate the case at the discretion of the council/school. The term 'external/independent' may mean that a director or senior manager from another directorate across the council is appointed as an investigating officer, or in certain situations an investigator may be sourced from an external company.

Schools should seek advice on nominating a suitably impartial investigator. This may be another member of staff who is more senior to the employee in question; a governor (in the case of allegations involving the headteacher); or an external investigator such as a person from the diocese, local authority, or independent professional services provider.

To maintain impartiality, the investigator should not be the same person who hears any subsequent case arising out of the investigation.

7.2 Investigation purpose and confidentiality

The purpose of an investigation is to determine whether there is a case to answer, to ensure that everyone is treated fairly, to gather evidence from all sides, and to provide the information needed to enable the person who commissioned the investigation (the commissioning manager, who will normally be the person chairing any subsequent disciplinary hearing), to determine whether a formal disciplinary hearing is recommended or if the issue can be resolved informally instead (schools should seek professional advice to establish whether a governors' panel is needed.)

The nature and extent of the investigations will depend on the seriousness of the matter. The details of the investigation will, wherever possible, be kept confidential to reduce any negative impact to a party involved in the matter and to ensure that staff morale is not unnecessarily affected. All who are involved in the investigation (including witnesses) are required to maintain confidentiality. Any breach of confidentiality could be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

A disciplinary investigation will include investigatory/fact finding meetings and witness statements.

7.3 Investigatory / fact finding meetings and witness statements

All investigatory/fact finding meetings must be fair and reasonable.

7.3.1 Witnesses

Investigatory meetings should be held with relevant witnesses, except for customers and service users, to help establish the facts of the situation. These meetings can take place face to face or through a Teams call. Witnesses should be advised that this is a confidential process and that they are being interviewed to help establish the facts of the situation. As such, if the case proceeds to a hearing, they may be required to attend as a witness.

A notetaker may be present at investigatory meetings held with witnesses, or the investigator may take their own notes. A copy of the meeting notes will be provided to the witness to review and to confirm them as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

The notes will be used to inform the investigation report and if the case proceeds to a hearing, other than in exceptional circumstances (see 7.3.2 below) will be shared with the employee suspected of misconduct to enable them to prepare their responses.

Information provided by customers or service users (for example complaints received) can be used to gather facts and to prepare the investigation report. Schools should seek HR advice before seeking witness statements from children.

7.3.2 Witness statements

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for an employee witness to give a statement without having a meeting, for example:

- If they only need to give very simple information.
- If they are ill and would not be well enough to attend an investigation meeting without undue delay.

Witness statements should be signed and dated by the witness. Witnesses should be advised that the employee will be provided with a copy of the statement if it is going to be referred to in any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

In exceptional circumstances, notes of an investigatory meeting or a witness statement may be anonymised, summarised or withheld from the employee but only where there are strong reasons for doing so, for example to protect the witness.

7.3.3 Employee under investigation

An investigatory meeting will normally be held with the employee suspected of misconduct, who should be given at least 5 days' notice of a meeting so that they have time to prepare.

They will have the right to be accompanied at an investigatory meeting however if this causes any unreasonable delay e.g., more than 5 days, then the line manager/investigating officer may choose to go ahead with the meeting.

The line manager/investigating officer will either take notes of investigatory meetings held with the employee or appoint a notetaker.

7.4 Investigation outcome

The investigating officer will provide a report to the commissioning manager that recommends whether the evidence obtained supports the allegations of misconduct. If there is clearly no case to answer, the commissioning manager should deal with the matter informally, through discussions with the employee as soon as possible to support them and to resolve any issues. This outcome should be confirmed to the employee in writing. The manager may need to take some remedial action to ensure that no further allegations of misconduct arise. For example, they may need to provide the employee with further information or training, or set out clear expectations for them, or follow this up through the normal supervision process. Mediation may also be appropriate in the circumstances.

If the investigation finds that there is evidence to support the allegations, then the case will proceed to a formal disciplinary hearing at which the employee will have the statutory right to be accompanied. A formal disciplinary hearing will be arranged by the nominated chair, supported by HR. The employee should normally be given a copy of any written evidence, including witness statements, to help them to prepare.

8. Informal stage - minor misconduct

Cases of minor misconduct are usually best dealt with informally. A conversation may be all that is required to improve an employee's conduct. In some cases, coaching and advice may be what is needed. Everyday issues regarding the standards of conduct and behaviour at work will therefore be picked up during the regular communication and performance conversations/supervision between the employees and their managers. This will include dealing with very minor breaches of conduct, for example poor timekeeping (unless persistent), that are not considered to merit progression under the formal stages outlined in this policy and procedure.

- The line manager should meet the employee, in the same way they would during performance conversations/supervision and make the employee aware of the inappropriate behaviour. The line manager does not need to wait for the next scheduled performance conversation/supervision session as early intervention can help resolve matters before they escalate.
- In all but very minor cases of misconduct, the line manager should capture the discussion in writing to set out the agreed standards of conduct and support to help the employee to improve. Standards and support should be kept under review as part of regular performance conversations/supervision.
- The line manager should only keep a copy of the letter/e-mail on the employee's performance conversation/supervision file. As it is not part of the formal procedure, the line manager should not file a copy on the employee's personnel file.

- The line manager should advise the employee that if their conduct does not improve the matter will be moved to the formal stages of this procedure.

9. Formal stage - repeated minor misconduct, serious misconduct, gross misconduct

There will be situations where matters are more serious or where an informal approach has been tried but is not working. If informal action does not bring about sufficient improvement in conduct, or the misconduct is considered too serious to be classed as minor, the formal stages of the disciplinary procedure should be followed.

Formal disciplinary action is likely to be recommended where employees do not adhere to the council's values and standards of behaviour as set out in the council's code of conduct.

Gross misconduct is conduct that is so serious or has such serious consequences that it justifies dismissal without notice for a first offence (summary dismissal), although we will always consider the circumstances of any case before deciding upon the appropriate penalty.

Whilst by no means an exhaustive list, examples of Misconduct and Gross Misconduct document can be found on the SES website.

Managers should seek HR advice in advance of any formal action being taken.

10. Formal stage - manager responsibilities

Where some form of formal action is needed, what action is reasonable or justified will depend on all the circumstances of the situation. Therefore, whenever a disciplinary process is being followed it is important to deal with issues fairly. Managers should:

- Have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion discussion with their employee at the earliest opportunity. Managers should refer to the Guide to Ensuring a Fair Process and Providing Employee Support for further information which is available on the SES website.
- Inform the employee of the nature of the issue(s) of concern or the case against them
- Give the employee reasonable notice of any disciplinary meeting or hearing (at least 5 working days)
- Provide the employee, where appropriate, with supporting evidence in advance of any disciplinary meeting or hearing
- Advise the employee of their statutory right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague not acting in a legal capacity at any formal disciplinary meeting or hearing
- Inform the employee of the potential level of sanction if an allegation of misconduct is upheld following a formal disciplinary hearing

- Give the employee an opportunity to put their case and offer an explanation before any decision is made
- Raise and deal with issues promptly and should not unreasonably delay meetings, decisions, or confirmation of those decisions
- Notify the employee of the outcome any disciplinary meeting or hearing in writing within the timescales set out in the policy
- Advise the employee of their right of appeal against any formal decision made – see section 13 for further details.
- Act consistently

11. Formal stage - hearing and potential outcomes

11.1 The hearing

The disciplinary hearing will be chaired by the commissioning manager or an appropriate level manager they nominate to be chair. The investigating officer will present the evidence gathered during the investigation. The employee and their representative will be given an opportunity to respond to the management investigation and present their own case. The employee may also call on witnesses to give evidence, if they are willing and if their evidence is relevant to the issues being considered in the meeting. Alternatively, the employee may present witness statements. Any written evidence should be presented to the chair in advance of the meeting where possible.

The chair of the hearing may choose to adjourn the meeting so that further evidence can be obtained. If this happens, the meeting will be reconvened once this is done, and the employee will be given an opportunity to respond to any new evidence. Before the meeting closes, the employee (or their companion) will be given an opportunity to make any comments or representations that they think are relevant and which may explain the situation. Schools should work closely with their HR provider and where appropriate, the Clerk to the governors, when organising hearings.

11.2 The outcome

The chair of the meeting will adjourn for a period to consider the outcome. If the chair is unable to decide on the day of the hearing, the meeting can be adjourned or ended, and agreement made as to how the chair will share their final decision. This could be that the meeting is reconvened or that the chair will call the employee to share their decision. In all circumstances, the decision will also be confirmed to the employee in writing as soon as possible and usually within five working days of the meeting.

If the allegations are not upheld, discussions should be held with the employee as soon as possible to support them and to resolve any issues. This outcome should also be formally confirmed to the employee in writing. Although it may have been deemed that a disciplinary sanction is not appropriate in the circumstances, the manager may need to

take some action to ensure that no further allegations of misconduct arise. For example, they may need to provide the employee with further information or training, or set out clear expectations for them, or follow this up through the normal supervision process. Mediation may also be appropriate in the circumstances.

If the allegations are upheld to any extent, formal disciplinary action may be taken. This will usually take the form of a first written warning for a first offence, unless the offence is so serious that it warrants a final written warning, dismissal or other action short of dismissal.

Written warnings, final written warnings, and any other action short of dismissal that are live will be disclosed when an internal reference is given and will impact the receipt of pay increments (see section 14). Letters confirming disciplinary sanctions should advise that the next pay progression increment due to the employee will be paused. Where the period of the sanction is 6 months (first warning) pay progression will be paused for 6 months. Where the period of the sanction is 12 months (final warning) pay progression will be paused for 12 months.

Disciplinary sanctions can only be issued following a disciplinary hearing, as an outcome of that hearing.

12. Levels of disciplinary sanction

- **First written warning** – A first written warning is appropriate for instances of misconduct that are sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action, but where there is no current warning in place. It will remain live on the employee's file for 6 months. The warning will set out the nature of the misconduct and make it clear that any further misconduct (similar or otherwise) is likely to result in further disciplinary action.
- **Final written warning** – A final written warning is given in cases where there is a persistent failure to improve, and a live first written warning is in place. It may also be given for a first act of misconduct in cases where the misconduct is sufficiently serious to warrant only one written warning, but insufficiently serious to justify dismissal. A final written warning will remain live on the employee's file for 12 months. The warning will set out the nature of the misconduct and make it clear that any further misconduct (similar or otherwise) will be likely to result in further disciplinary action, one outcome of which might be their dismissal.
- **Action short of dismissal** - Where the offence is such that dismissal would normally be the outcome, but there is mitigation to warrant taking action short of dismissal, an alternative, with conditions, may be used. This may include:
 - Final written warning with a recommendation of a transfer to a post at a similar grade in the same or in another area where available
 - Final written warning with an offer of continuing employment conditional on the employee accepting an offer of a post at a lower grade without salary protection.

- Where these conditions cannot be met, for example following an unsuccessful redeployment attempt, then the dismissal may still proceed.
- **Dismissal with notice** – This would normally be applied where an act of misconduct is found to have been committed whilst the employee has a live final written warning in place, where conduct continues to be unsatisfactory, and the employee continues to fail to reach the prescribed standards. In exceptional circumstances (for example instances where the employee is likely to continue to commit misconduct even if subject to a warning), the employee may be dismissed even if no previous warning of dismissal has been given. Depending on the terms of the employee's contract, this may involve the employee being given pay in lieu of notice. If an employee is dismissed with notice, the council/school reserves the right to instruct the employee not to work for the duration of their notice period.
- **Dismissal without notice** – If an employee is dismissed for an act of gross misconduct, the result will normally be summary dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice. Maintained schools should take advice from their HR provider about statutory local authority or agreed diocesan advisory rights which may apply when dismissal is a potential outcome of a hearing.

13. Formal stage - other considerations

- If an employee commits a very similar offence for which a warning has already been issued, the earlier issue will be considered for the new disciplinary matter if the previous warning is still live.
- Where a serious safeguarding concern has been raised it may be that a relevant spent warning or the existence of a previous investigation should never be disregarded for disciplinary purposes. Allegations of a safeguarding nature should be dealt with according to the statutory guidance in place with additional advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where appropriate. The outcome of the disciplinary hearing will also include an outcome as defined in the guidance and should be reported to the LADO and retained on file for the timescales set out in the guidance. The employee should be informed that if they resign pending a disciplinary process, or are dismissed because of a substantiated safeguarding allegation, the council/school will follow statutory guidance on providing information in references and referral to the DBS. Please see section 21 for further information about Safeguarding.
- Other sanctions that may be imposed include financial reimbursement where there has been a financial loss e.g., fraud or theft to the council/school. In exceptional circumstances, where there is a proven case of serious fraud, embezzlement, negligence, or gross misconduct leading to a dismissal and significant financial loss to the council/school, the council/school can apply to reclaim that loss or part of that loss from the employee's pension.

14. Formal stage - appeal

Employees have the right to appeal a disciplinary sanction.

The purpose of an appeal is not to re-hear all the evidence presented at the original hearing/meeting. The letter of appeal must be based on specific grounds such as the emergence of new evidence (not known at the time of the hearing), mitigating circumstances that were not considered in determining the outcome, whether the initial decision was reasonable and consistent with other decisions made by the council/school in similar circumstances or where any part of the disciplinary procedure was wrong or unfair.

- If an employee wishes to exercise their right of appeal, they must do so by lodging a notice with the appropriate manager named in their dismissal letter, stating the grounds of the appeal and outline the outcome they are seeking from the appeals process, within 10 working days of being notified of a decision.
- The appeal will be heard by the headteacher, or other member of the senior leadership team, or a governor, who has not previously been involved in the proceedings. The school would work closely with their HR provider to nominate the appropriate panel for an appeal.
- The employee will have the right to be accompanied at a disciplinary appeal hearing. At the hearing, the employee will be given the opportunity to explain their grounds for appeal.
- A decision will normally be given verbally and confirmed in writing within five working days of the appeal hearing.

15. Pausing pay progression increments

Where a disciplinary sanction has been applied, the next pay progression increment will be paused for 6 months for a first warning and for 12 months for a final warning or action short of dismissal.

Pay progression will be reinstated effective from the first of the following month and will not be backdated.

For example, in all cases assuming an incremental review date of 1 April (this date may not apply to all employment groups covered by this policy who may have a different review date):

- if an employee is issued with a first warning on 1 February 2025, their warning would remain live until 31 July 2025. Their incremental review would be withheld on 1 April 2025 until 30 September 2025 and would be reinstated on 1 October 2025.
- if an employee is issued with a first warning on 1 June 2025, their warning would remain live until 30 November 2025. Their incremental review would be withheld

on 1 April 2026 until 30 September 2026 and would be reinstated on 1 October 2026.

- If an employee is issued with a final warning on 1 February 2025, their warning would remain live until 31 January 2026. Their incremental review would be withheld on 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026 and would be reinstated on 1 April 2026.
- If an employee is issued with a final warning on 1 June 2025 their warning would remain live until 31 May 2026. Their incremental review would be withheld on 1 April 2026 until 31 March 2027 and would be reinstated on 1 April 2027.

For further information on the procedure for pausing a pay progression increment, please see the Pay Policy.

The annual pay award will not be affected by disciplinary action.

16. Timescales and postponement of meetings / hearings

Every effort will be made to ensure that investigatory meetings and disciplinary hearings are scheduled for a time and place that is reasonable and within the employee's normal working hours. Employees are required to attend meetings if it is possible for them to do so. If an employee is too ill to attend or has some other reasonable reason why they cannot attend, we will consider re-arranging the meeting to a time when attendance is possible.

However, it is important to ensure that disciplinary procedures are completed within a reasonable timescale. We reserve the right to proceed with a meeting/hearing in an employee's absence when it has not been possible to arrange a meeting/hearing that the employee is able to attend. In that case, we will make every effort to ensure that the employee is able to make representations in writing or through a representative.

If an employee's representative or companion is not available to attend a scheduled disciplinary hearing, we will agree to postpone and seek to agree a mutually convenient time. However, any such postponement must be short, and we reserve the right to proceed with the original hearing date if no new date can be found that is within five working days of the scheduled date.

17. Remote proceedings

Meetings under this procedure will normally be held face-to-face, however where that is not possible or where reasonable workplace adjustments are needed, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that employees and their representatives have access to the necessary technology for participating. We will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

18. Recording meetings

We will take a written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure. This will be done either by the person holding the meeting or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes.

Neither the employee nor any person acting on their behalf is normally permitted to record electronically any meeting that we hold under the disciplinary procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to further disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

In certain limited circumstances, we may permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording.

Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

19. Grievances

If an employee has a concern relating directly to the instigation or application of the disciplinary process, there is opportunity within the process for the concern to be raised. It is not necessary for the employee to raise a grievance through the grievance procedure. In most cases the concern will be considered and addressed as part of the disciplinary process, and the process will not normally be paused to hear the concern separately.

Depending on the concern being raised there may be occasions when the disciplinary process is paused at the discretion of the council/school whilst that concern is heard separately through the grievance procedure. For example, in some cases of alleged discrimination in the application of the disciplinary process. If such an allegation is made the manager hearing the grievance can consider if the disciplinary process will continue.

If an employee raises a concern during the disciplinary process that is unrelated to the instigation or application of that process their concern will be addressed separately. The proceedings of the disciplinary process and the proceedings of the grievance procedure will run independently and, to ensure that the concern is dealt with fairly and promptly, may run concurrently.

In all cases a judgement should be made on the most appropriate way of handling the two issues without unreasonable delay; it is rare that it will be necessary to postpone formal disciplinary proceedings to deal with other concerns raised. HR advice should be sought if the appropriate course of action is unclear.

20. Disciplinary action against Trade Union Officials

Managers must inform HR when considering taking formal disciplinary action against an accredited trade union official and, with the agreement of the employee, must notify a full time official of the trade union concerned. The school will in most cases take no action under this procedure (except for suspension in a case of alleged gross misconduct) until it has had an opportunity (if the employee consents) to discuss the matter with a full time official of the union.

21. Partnership working

If the employee is working across organisations and/ or as part of an integrated team, it is the disciplinary policy of their employer which will apply and should be followed in managing a conduct or behaviour issue. The manager does not have to be employed by the same employer and advice can be sought from the People Consultancy team for specific cases where this situation applies. Managers from partner organisations will be expected to implement this policy and associated procedure when they are managing Surrey County Council (SCC) employees, with support from SCC management and /or HR.

If the employee is not wholly employed by one employer, advice should be sought from the relevant HR teams for both employers to identify and agree how the disciplinary should be managed across the organisations. Please note, this is only in relation to employment status and not how the post is being funded.

External partners may be informed of cases of misconduct or gross misconduct as appropriate as they may need to conduct their own internal procedures. In cases where referral to an external partner is likely to be necessary, particular care needs to be taken to ensure good records are kept of the investigation and disciplinary process. The employee should be informed when an external referral will be made.

22. Safeguarding concerns

22.1 Safeguarding procedures for employees working with children or vulnerable adults

In cases involving serious allegations against an employee who works in a position of trust with children or vulnerable adults, the relevant safeguarding team or LADO should be informed immediately by the manager and, if appropriate, a strategy meeting or Allegations against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) meeting set up. There may be a requirement to pause the disciplinary process pending enquiries by external agencies (for example, police or social services).

22.2 Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

If the organisation removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from their employment with children or vulnerable adults (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to adults and/or children, the organisation has a legal duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. It is an offence

to fail to make a referral. Referrals should be made promptly once employment has ended and should be supported by any relevant evidence and the employee should be informed in writing. The line manager or appropriate manager, in consultation with HR, is responsible for making any such referrals in good time. In cases where referral to the DBS is likely to be necessary, particular care needs to be taken to ensure good records are kept of the disciplinary investigation.

23. Professional bodies

Adherence to Professional Standards

SCC requires employees in registered professions (e.g., Social Work, Teaching), to adhere to the standards of professional practice set out by the profession and to their relevant codes of professional conduct. Contravention of professional codes, standards, practice, laws, or rules may be regarded as misconduct or deliberate negligence and may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

Referral to Professional Bodies

Where disciplinary action is taken and depending on the nature of the misconduct, SCC may be required to refer the case to the employee's professional body in line with its requirements. The requirements of different professional bodies will differ. The employee will in all cases be informed that a referral will be made and may also wish to consider referring themselves where this is appropriate.

SCC may also be required to refer the case to the employee's professional body where the employee has been suspended. Referral in cases of suspension will depend on each professional body's requirements.

In some cases, consideration will be given to whether an allegation of misconduct or deliberate negligence is so serious or raises such significant risks that it warrants an immediate referral to the professional body at the investigation stage.

Where a professional body suspends, removes, or places conditions on an employee's professional registration, and this impacts on their role, SCC may need to take further disciplinary action.

24. Criminal proceedings

An employee who has been formally charged by the police in respect of actions inside or outside of work may face formal disciplinary action following an internal investigation either before the conclusion of any court case or at the conclusion regardless of the outcome of the court case.

Advice should be sought from the People Consultancy team (school's HR provider) before any action is taken.

25. Roles and responsibilities

Line managers and school governing bodies are responsible for implementing the policy in a fair and consistent manner.

Employees are responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy and procedures.

We will consult Trade Unions regarding the content of the policy and Trade Unions will be reasonably available to support and represent their members

The People & Change (HR) team are responsible for providing advice and guidance to Line Managers to support the fair application of this policy and procedure. (We advise schools to seek professional HR advice).

We expect all parties to apply the policy fairly.

26. Relevant legislation

The law on unfair dismissal requires employers to act reasonably. What is classed as reasonable behaviour will depend on the circumstances of each case. However, the core principles are set out in the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures and its accompanying Acas guide to discipline and grievances at work which are adhered to in this Policy and Procedure.

Examples of misconduct

Depending on the circumstances, the following list provides examples of the types of conduct that will normally lead to disciplinary action other than dismissal.

- Breach of the school's Code of Conduct
- Unauthorised action on behalf of the council or service including inappropriate use of IT systems and breaches of IT security
- Public criticism of the council's decisions and/or activities connected with the employee's own work
- Failure to follow a reasonable instruction including failure to observe the operational regulations or standing orders of the service
- Failure to follow arrangements for absence reporting or unauthorised absence and persistent poor timekeeping
- Failure to manage financial budgets appropriately, including unreasonable amounts of overspend
- Abuse of public trust i.e., engaging in unauthorised employment during hours contracted to work for the council, or engaging in employment during off-duty hours, which is detrimental to the interests of the authority or brings it into disrepute

- Misconduct in relation to official documents i.e., when an employee without sufficient cause destroys or mutilates any record or document made, kept, or required for the purposes of the council, or alters, erases, or adds to any entry in such a record or document
- Breaching political restrictions and lobbying or canvassing members on their own behalf
- Improper disclosure of information, breaches of confidentiality or breach of data protection regulations
- Sleeping on duty
- Unauthorised use of the council's equipment
- Acts of bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour against a member of staff or the public on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or gender reassignment
- Not adhering to the council's values and standards of behaviour for example using inappropriate language or abusive behaviour
- Actions or omissions inside or outside work which bring the council's reputation into disrepute or seriously affects public confidence in its ability to deliver effective services including lapses in professional registration
- Failure to observe health and safety requirements or to report accidents or incidents whilst at work

Gross misconduct

The following list provides examples of the type of conduct which will normally lead to dismissal without notice.

- Dishonesty, theft, fraud, deliberate falsification of records
- Failure or being complicit in failure to follow the proper safeguarding or safer recruitment procedures designed to protect children and vulnerable adults
- Sexual misconduct at work including the downloading or displaying of pornographic images.
- Sexual offences outside work including downloading illegal pornography
- Emotional, financial, sexual, or physical abuse of children, vulnerable adults, or service users.
- Fighting, threatening behaviour or physical assault on another person.
- Incapacity through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs.
- Gross incapability, gross failure, or gross negligence, which for example causes unacceptable loss, damage, or injury.
- Persistent or significant failure to manage financial budgets appropriately, including large amounts of overspending
- Malicious damage to property
- A serious act of insubordination.
- Unauthorised entry to computer or manual records or disclosing confidential information to the media or a third party in breach of whistle blowing arrangements

- Serious bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour against a member of staff or the public on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment.
- Deliberate breach of health and safety regulations.

Further information

Please contact the School Business Manager for the following SCC documents:

- Guide to Ensuring a Fair Process and Providing Employee Support
- Roles & Responsibilities - Discipline & Grievance