

THE STAGE

ArtsEd principal temporarily steps down as school launches misconduct investigation

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ArtsEd principal Chris Hocking

ArtsEd principal Chris Hocking has temporarily stepped down, as the school announces it has opened an external investigation into allegations of serious historic misconduct.

The London drama school has not confirmed whether the allegations are related to Hocking, but said he had agreed to step away from his role temporarily so that the investigation "is as rigorous and independent as possible".

A statement said: "ArtsEd can confirm that we have been made aware of allegations of serious historic misconduct. As we understand, they relate to incidents that took place between 2012 and 2017 in the higher education institution, with students 18 or older.

"In order to ensure this investigation is as rigorous and independent as possible, our principal Chris Hocking has agreed that it is appropriate for him to temporarily stand down. We support his decision and have appointed our current deputy principal Jane Morton to take on the role of principal while the investigation is carried out."

It said the school did not yet have access to the full details of the allegations but has begun an external investigation, led by independent QC Rebecca Tuck.

The news follows soon after a [series of sexual harassment, bullying and assault accusations](#) against major drama schools including East 15, Guildford School of Acting and the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts were made public last week in an investigation by the Telegraph.

Former students claim they were pressured into removing their clothes on stage, subjected to derogatory comments, while one allegation claimed that a teacher at the now-closed Poor School "grabbed" female student's breasts.

[A report published by The Stage in 2018](#) exposed the scale of harassment and bullying in theatre, with one in five students also reporting having experienced sexual harassment.

ArtsEd has not given any indication of the nature of the misconduct claims it is investigating, but said in the statement posted today (June 7), that it has a "zero-tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination or abuse".

"We have robust policies and procedures in place to protect the welfare of our students, and as part of this process, we encourage staff and students to bring any incidents, of any kind, to our attention," it said.

The school is calling for anyone with reports of misconduct to contact a [newly created email address](#) as part of its safeguarding procedures, and that it would share any information with the relevant authorities.

Hocking will be replaced by deputy principal Morton in the short term while the investigation is carried out, and Julie Spencer, director of the school of acting, will become acting deputy principal.

Hocking took over as ArtsEd's principal in 2017, replacing Jane Harrison, having worked at the school in roles including head of musical theatre and deputy principal since 1999.