

CHELLINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND FEDERATION



Happiness Through Wisdom

"Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel."

Proverbs 20:15

**St. Lawrence VA Primary School /
Christopher Reeves VA Primary School**

School Staff and Child Protection: Procedure for Managing Concerns and Allegations of Abuse Against Staff in Schools Including Low Level Concerns

March 2023

Review Date: March 2025

Contents	Page No
1. Introduction	1
2. Guidelines for all Schools	1
3. Definitions	1
4. Allegations dealt with by these procedures	2
5. Supply Teachers	3
6. The difference between an allegation and concern	3
7. Initial action by person receiving or identifying an allegation or concern	4
8. Initial action by the designated safeguarding lead	5
9. Suspension	6
10. Joint Evaluation Meeting (JEM)	7
11. Supporting those involved	8
12. Confidentiality	9
13. Resignations and settlement agreements	9
14. Record Keeping	9
15. References	10
16. Information Sharing	10
17. Action following a criminal investigation or a prosecution	10
18. Action on conclusion of a case	10
19. concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (Low-Level Concerns)	11
20. Definition of Low-Level Concerns	11
21. Sharing Low-Level Concerns	12
22. Responding to Low-Level Concerns	12
23. Record Keeping	12
24. References	13

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chellington Federation Church of England Federation is a Christian learning environment at the heart of its communities. We promote care and respect, and expect high standards in all aspects of Federation life.

As a Church of England Federation, the schools promote a friendly, caring, family ethos where everyone works as a team to support each other across all areas of school life thus encouraging Happiness through Wisdom - *"There is gold and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel."* Proverbs 20:15

In each school, we aim to build communities clearly based on Christian values. At Christopher Reeves, the whole community is encouraged to 'Live our Values' being strong and courageous to follow God's love and stand steadfast. *"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:9

At St Lawrence we encourage all children to 'Let Their Light Shine' through the core values of hope (Letting our light shine gives us hope for the future.), courage (We have courage to Let our Light Shine.) and perseverance (When we persevere our light can shine). *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5: 14-16

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, is based on these key principles.

- 1.1 Children can be vulnerable to harm and abuse in many settings including those where staff will occupy positions of trust in relation to children. Schools have a duty to safeguard pupils and create a safe learning environment so it is crucial that there is a robust process in place for dealing with any allegations of harm or abuse by staff members, including supply teachers and volunteers, against a pupil.
- 1.2 As employers, schools also have a duty of care to their staff and must ensure that members of staff against whom an allegation has been made are treated fairly and are provided with effective support.
- 1.3 It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a person who works with children and young people, including those who work in a voluntary capacity, is dealt with fairly, quickly, and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is subject to the allegation.

2. GUIDELINES FOR ALL SCHOOLS

- 2.1 All schools must have procedures in place to deal with any allegations made against staff. The framework for managing allegations is set out in the statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) issued by the Department for Education.
- 2.2 These procedures are written, and must be read, in conjunction with the section on [Allegations and Concerns regarding Staff, Carers and Volunteers Working with Children and Young People](#) published in the Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Boards' interagency Procedures Manual.
- 2.3 This procedure also takes account of the overview of how allegations should be handled as set out in the Department of Education's publication [Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of](#)

[children](#) .

- 2.4 Schools should also refer to the Safer Recruitment Consortiums guidance [Safer Working Practices 2019](#).

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

According to *Keeping Children Safe in Education* every school should have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will provide support to staff to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as Children's Services. The DSL (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns. It is recommended to have a trained Deputy DSL.

3.2 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is designated as the lead officer with responsibility in respect of all allegations against staff working with children and young people. They are involved in the management and oversight of individual cases, provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organizations and monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible.

4. ALLEGATIONS DEALT WITH BY THESE PROCEDURES

- 4.1 This procedure is about managing cases where an allegation has been made that might indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in regular or close contact with children. This guidance should be used where it is alleged that anyone working in a school that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including supply teachers and volunteers has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

These behaviours should be considered within the context of the four categories of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.

- 4.2 Allegations can be made in relation to physical chastisement and restraint but can also relate to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children and young people:

- having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 if in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if consensual (see sections 16 – 19 Sexual Offences Act 2003);

- 'grooming' i.e. meeting a child under 16 with intent to commit a relevant offence (see section 15 Sexual Offences Act 2003);
- other 'grooming' behavior giving rise to concerns of a broader child protection nature e.g. inappropriate text / e-mail messages or images, gifts, socialising etc;
- possession of indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of children.

4.3 In addition, these procedures should be applied when there is an allegation that any person who works with children:

- Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include arrest for possession of a weapon;
- As a parent or carer, has become subject to child protection procedures;
- Allegations are made against a 16 or 17 year old who has been put in a position of trust by a school in relation to anyone under the age of 18.

4.4 Staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime. Appropriate confidential reporting (also known as whistleblowing) procedures, which are suitably reflected in staff training and staff behavior policies, should be in place for such concerns to be raised with the school management team. (This policy can be found in Chapter 3, Section 18 of the School's Personnel Handbook)

5. SUPPLY TEACHERS

5.1 In some circumstances schools will have to consider an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, where its disciplinary procedures do not fully apply, for example, supply teachers provided by an employment agency or business (referred to in these guidelines as 'the agency').

5.2 Whilst schools are not the employer of supply teachers, they should ensure allegations are dealt with properly. In no circumstances should a school decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome. These guidelines, including when to suspend or redeploy an individual, should be followed in the same way for agency workers.

5.3 Agencies should be fully involved and co-operate in any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or Children's Services. The school will usually take the lead because agencies do not have direct access to children or other school staff, so they will not be able to collect the facts when an allegation is made, nor do they have all the relevant information required by the LADO as part of the referral process. Supply teachers, whilst not employed by the school, are under the supervision, direction and control of the Governing Body or proprietor when working in the school. Therefore the processes for agency staff should be followed in the same way for other staff and volunteers.

6. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ALLEGATION AND CONCERN

6.1 The procedures for dealing with allegations need to be applied with common sense and judgement. In an emergency, you should contact the Police or Children's Services in the first instance. However, many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above, or may do so without warranting consideration of either a police investigation or enquires

by Children's Services. In these cases, once advice has been taken from the LADO, local arrangements should be followed to resolve cases without delay.

6.2 It might not be clear whether an incident constitutes an 'allegation'. It is important to remember that in order to be an allegation the alleged incident has to be sufficiently serious as to suggest that harm has or may have been caused harm to a child/ren or that the alleged behaviour indicates the individual may pose a risk of harm to children (or otherwise meet the criteria above). Issues that do not meet this threshold may constitute conduct or disciplinary issues and should be addressed by employers using the appropriate organisational procedures.

6.3 If it is difficult to determine the level of risk associated with an incident the following should be considered:

- Was the incident a disproportionate or inappropriate response in the context of a challenging situation?
- Where the incident involved an inappropriate response to challenging behaviour, had the member of staff had training in managing this?
- Does the member of staff understand that their behaviour was inappropriate and express a wish to behave differently in the future? For example, are they willing to undergo training?
- Does the child or family want to report the incident to the police or would they prefer the matter to be dealt with by the employer?
- Have similar allegations been made against the employee – is there a pattern developing?

6.4 Incidents which fall short of the threshold, for an allegation investigation, could include an accusation that is made second or third hand and the facts are not clear, or the member of staff alleged to have done this was not there at the time; or there is confusion about the account.

6.5 All allegations need to be discussed with the LADO and the School's DSL. The LADO will determine whether the allegation falls short of the threshold. If it does fall short of this threshold, the LADO will still be able to provide advice and support to the school. Where the matter constitutes a conduct or performance issue, the school will be advised to follow the appropriate disciplinary procedures and notify the LADO of the outcome.

7. INITIAL ACTION BY PERSON RECEIVING OR IDENTIFYING AN ALLEGATION OR CONCERN

7.1 The person to whom an allegation or concern is first reported should treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind. They **should not**:

- Investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification
- Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations
- Promise confidentiality, but they can give assurance that the information will only be shared on a 'need to know basis'

7.2 They **should**:

- Make a written record of the information (where possible in the child's own words), including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said;
- Sign and date the written record and immediately report the matter to the DSL
- If there are any overt physical injuries ensure you take advice from either the LADO or the police and Children's Services who will advise you whether you will need to take a complete a body map or photographs of any overt physical injuries. In most cases this will form part of the investigation by the police or Children's services but if you are asked to gather this evidence you will need to get consent from the parents and you will need to ensure there are two other staff members present when collecting this evidence.

7.3 If staff members are unsure they should always speak to their DSL. However in exceptional circumstances, such as in an emergency or a genuine concern that appropriate action has not been taken, staff members can speak directly to Children's Services.

7.4 Keeping Children Safe in Education confirms that where staff have concerns about another staff member they must report directly to the DSL which in most cases will be the Headteacher.

- Where there are concerns about the Headteacher it must be referred to the Chair of Governors not to be shared with any other governor.

8. INITIAL ACTION BY THE DESIGNATED SAFEGAURDING LEAD

8.1 When informed of a concern or allegation, the DSL should not initially investigate the matter or interview the member of staff, child concerned or potential witnesses. They should:

- Obtain written details of the concern / allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving (not the child / adult making the allegation);
- Record any information about times, dates and location of incident/s and names of any potential witnesses;
- Record discussions about the child and/or member of staff, any decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions

8.2 The LADO should be informed within **one working day** when allegations appear to meet the criteria listed in Section 4 of this procedure and prior to any further investigation taking place. Referrals should not be delayed to gather information.

8.3 The purpose of an initial discussion is for the LADO and the DSL to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action. It also alerts the LADO about cases that may also reach them via another route for example if the parent goes straight to the police or Children's Services – allowing the LADO to have as full a picture as possible. To gain an overview the LADO may also want to know details of any previous complaints, any adult witnesses, any child witnesses, any noted injuries, any tensions between staff and parents and a clear idea of the time and location of when

issues may have occurred.

- 8.4 This initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to a decision that no further action is to be taken in regard to the individual facing the allegation or concern, in which case this decision and a justification for it should be recorded, by both the DSL and the LADO, and agreement reached as to what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom. Although the LADO may feel the threshold for a continued investigation has not been met, the school may feel they still have sufficient concerns regarding the individual facing the allegation, in which case they must decide what course of action they want to take and this may include warnings of a various nature or possible disciplinary action.
- 8.5 You should seek advice from your HR provider once the meeting between the LADO and DSL has taken place. Your HR provider will be able to provide further advice around specific actions including if you need to follow disciplinary procedures.
- 8.6 The DSL should inform the accused person about the allegation as soon as possible **after** consulting the LADO. It is extremely important that the DSL provides them with as much information as possible at that time. However, where a Joint Evaluation Meeting (JEM) is needed, or police or children's social care services need to be involved, the case manager **should not** share information about the allegation until those agencies have been consulted **unless** it has already been agreed with the LADO that certain information can be shared.
- 8.7 The LADO will advise the school whether or not informing the parent(s) of the child(ren) involved will impede the disciplinary or investigation processes. Acting on this advice, if it is agreed that the information can be fully or partially shared, the school should inform the parent(s). In some circumstances, however, the parent(s) may need to be told straight away (eg if a child is injured and requires medical treatment).
- 8.8 If an allegation has been found not to be false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the LADO will immediately refer to Children's Services and ask for a JEM to be convened.

9. SUSPENSION

- 9.1 Schools must consider carefully whether the circumstances of a case warrant a person being suspended from contact with children at the school until the allegation or concern is resolved. An individual should only be suspended if there is no reasonable alternative. Suspension should be considered only in a case where there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school are at risk of harm or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. **Suspension should not be the default option** but if used the reasons and justification should be recorded by the school and the individual notified of the reasons. The JEM may advise a school to suspend but the actual decision will rest with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors (where the allegation is against the Headteacher).
- 9.2 A suspension risk assessment and checklist, which can be found in the Disciplinary section of the Personnel Handbook at Chapter 4, Section 1, should be undertaken. The following alternatives should be considered by the Headteacher before suspending a member of staff:
- redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned;

- providing another member of staff to be present when the individual has contact with children;
- redeployment to alternative work in the school so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children;
- moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the member of staff, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted;
- Where practically possible, temporarily redeploying the member of staff to another school in a different location, for example to an alternative school or for the local authority or academy trust

10. JOINT EVALUATION MEETING (JEM)

- 10.1 This meeting will normally include the LADO or their representative, a Child Protection Adviser from Children’s Services, the Headteacher or the DSL or a senior manager from the school, the school’s HR Provider, and depending on the circumstances the police and the schools legal services. Other relevant individuals may be invited depending on the circumstances. For example where the allegation involves a supply teacher, the agency’s human resource manager or equivalent must be invited. If the allegation is about physical contact, the JEM or initial evaluation with the police should take into account that teachers and other school staff are entitled to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances, including dealing with disruptive behaviour. [The DfE has guidance on reasonable force in schools.](#)
- 10.2 Where the allegation concerns a supply teacher, the LADO should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account by the school during the investigation.
- 10.3 Where the initial consideration or JEM decides the allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence or require a Children’s Services investigation, it should be dealt with by the school. In such cases if the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be instigated within three working days. If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation the hearing should be held within 15 working days.
- 10.4 If the JEM decides a **Section 47 enquiry¹ or police investigation** is required, any unilateral action by the school will need to be suspended, unless otherwise agreed, until their investigations are complete. Protocols for sharing information with a police or Children’s Services investigation need to be agreed especially as a common outcome will be to refer the issue back to the school to consider as a disciplinary issue. The strategy meeting should also consider what support should be provided to the member of staff and others who may be affected and how they will be kept up to date with the progress of the investigation.
- 10.5 Where further investigation is required to inform consideration of disciplinary action, the school should discuss who will undertake that with the LADO. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the disciplinary investigation to be conducted by a person who is independent of the school or the person’s line manager to ensure objectivity. In any case

the investigating officer should aim to provide a report to the school within 10 working days.

10.6 The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome 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;
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded:** To reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

11. SUPPORTING THOSE INVOLVED

11.1 The school has a duty of care to their employees. They should act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations and disciplinary process. Support for the individual is key to fulfilling this duty. Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action, unless there is an objection Children's Services or the police. The staff member including agency workers or volunteers should be advised to contact their trade union representative, if they have one, or a colleague for support. When appropriate they should also be given access to welfare counseling or Occupational Health advice where this is provided by the School.

11.2 The school should appoint a named representative, **who is different to the investigating manager**, to keep the person who is the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual. Particular care needs to be taken when employees are suspended to ensure that they are kept informed of both the progress of their case and current work related issues. Social contact with colleagues and friends must not be prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

11.3 Parents or carers of a child or children involved should be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. However, where a strategy discussion is required, or police or local authority Children's Services need to be involved, the Headteacher should consult those agencies and agree what information can be disclosed to the parents. They should also be kept informed about the progress of the case, and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process. The deliberations of a disciplinary hearing, and the information taken into account in reaching a decision, cannot normally be disclosed, but the parents or carers of the child should be told the outcome in confidence.

11.4 If an allegation made by a pupil is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious, the LADO should refer the matter to the Children's Services to determine whether the child concerned is in need of services, or may have been abused by someone else. If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the

Headteacher should consider whether any support can be offered to the pupil to understand why the allegation had been made.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY

12.1 It is extremely important that when an allegation is made, the school makes every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

12.2 Schools should take advice from the LADO, police and local authority social care services to agree the following:

- Who needs to know and, importantly, exactly what information can be shared;
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip;
- What if any information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation; and
- How to manage press interest if and/or when it should arise.

12.3 From 1st October 2012 the Education Act 2011 introduced reporting restrictions ***preventing the publication of any material that may lead to the identification of a teacher who has been accused by, or on behalf of, a pupil from the same school.*** (Basically the reporting restrictions apply until the point that the accused person is charged with an offence.)

12.4 The case manager should take advice from the LADO, police and Children's Services to agree the following:

- Who needs to know and, importantly, exactly what information can be shared;
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip;
- What, if any information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation; and
- How to manage press interest if and when it should arise

13. RESIGNATIONS AND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS

13.1 The fact that a person tenders their resignation or ceases to provide their services must not prevent an allegation being followed up in accordance with these procedures. 'Settlement Agreements,' by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, should not be used in cases of refusal to cooperate or resignation before the person's notice period expires. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate. **A referral to the DBS must be made if the criteria are met (see Section 16).**

14. RECORD KEEPING

14.1 For all allegations, it is important that a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken and decisions reached, is kept on a person's confidential personnel file, and a copy provided to the person concerned. However, details of allegations that are found

to have been malicious **should not** be included in any references given for the person concerned (see section 14).

- 14.2 The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference, where appropriate. It will provide clarification in cases where future DBS Disclosures reveal information from the police about an allegation that did not result in a criminal conviction and it will help to prevent unnecessary re-investigation if, as sometimes happens, an allegation re-surfaces after a period of time. The record should be retained, in line with Data Protection legislation, at least until the person has reached normal retirement age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

15. REFERENCES

- 15.1 Cases in which an allegation was proven to be unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious must not be included in employer references. A history of repeated concerns or allegations which have all been found to be unsubstantiated, malicious etc. must also not be included in any reference.

16. INFORMATION SHARING

- 16.1 In a JEM or the initial evaluation of the case, the agencies involved should share all relevant information they have about the person who is the subject of the allegation, and about the alleged victim.
- 16.2 Where the police are involved, wherever possible the employer should ask the police to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process. This should be done as their investigation proceeds and will enable the police to share relevant information without delay at the conclusion of their investigation or any court case.
- 16.3 Children's Services should adopt a similar procedure when making enquiries to determine whether the child or children named in the allegation are in need or protection or services, so that any information obtained in the course of those enquiries which is relevant to a disciplinary case can be passed to the employer without delay.

17. ACTION FOLLOWING A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OR A PROSECUTION

- 17.1 The police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should inform the school and LADO straight away when a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete, or if it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or not to continue to prosecute the case after person has been charged. In those circumstances the LADO should discuss with the Headteacher, and chair of governors whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed.

18. ACTION ON CONCLUSION OF A CASE

- 18.1 If the allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or the school ceases to use the person's services, or the person resigns or otherwise ceases to provide his or her

services, the LADO and the school should discuss whether a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration of inclusion on the barred lists and /or (for teachers) to the Department of Education is needed.

- 18.2** There is also a legal requirement for employers to make a referral to the DBS where they think that an individual has engaged in conduct (including inappropriate sexual conduct) that harmed (or is likely to harm) a child or if a person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child. In such circumstances, the duty to refer an individual to the DBS arises where an employer has removed the individual from relevant work with children or the person has chosen to cease relevant work in circumstances where they would have been removed had they not done so. The DBS will consider whether to bar the person from working in regulated activity, which will include work in schools and other educational establishments. Local authorities, schools and other bodies all have a statutory duty to make reports, and to provide relevant information to the DBS. Referrals should be made as soon as possible after the resignation or removal of the member of staff involved and within one month of ceasing to use the person's services. More information about making referrals to the DBS can be found [here](#).
- 18.3** Schools are strongly advised, along with the advice from the LADO and HR provider, to consider whether teachers should be referred to the Teacher Regulation Agency. Further guidance can be found [here](#).

19. CONCERNS THAT DO NOT MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD (LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS)

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 in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

20. 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

21. 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. This is shared in the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns
- 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

22. 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 Executive 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 Executive Headteacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the other DSLs.

23. RECORD KEEPING

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 DPA 2018 and 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 harms threshold, 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.

24. REFERENCES

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 which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

Confirmation

This policy has been reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 9th March 2023 and will be renewed in March 2025.

If you require a hard copy of this policy, please contact the school office.