



Low Level Concerns Policy

In God's hands, we love, learn, grow and inspire

“What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like the mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on the earth. Yet, when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

Mark 4: 30-32

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1. Introduction

At HMFA, we aim to create an open and transparent culture where all concerns about all adults involved with our school are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

We aim to identify any concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of our school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with our school ethos.

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding and Child Protection, Managing Allegations Against Staff and Staff Code of Conduct Policies.

2. Summary

It may be possible that a member of staff acts in a way that does not cause risk to children but is however inappropriate. A member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff, volunteer, contractor or who, on reflection, recognises that their actions could have been viewed as a risk should inform the Executive Headteacher, Head of School or Designated Safeguarding Lead by speaking directly to them.

3. Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022

The following is taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021 and identifies what may be considered behaviour relating to low level concern:

What is a low level concern (LLC)?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out at paragraph 338 (and on page three of this policy in the red box).

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college 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 LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over 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; or,
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

It is crucial that any such concerns, including those which do not meet the harm threshold are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

4. Clarity around Allegation vs Low-Level Concern vs Appropriate Conduct

Allegation:

Any adult linked to our school who has:

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

Low Level Concern:

Any adult linked to our school who has behaved 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 LADO.

Appropriate:

- Behaviour which is entirely consistent with our school's Code of Conduct, and the Law.

See flowchart at the end of this policy.

5. Storing and use of Low-Level Concerns and follow-up information

Records of LLCs (see appendix 1) and follow-up information will be stored securely within the schools safeguarding systems, with access only by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School and Safeguarding Director. This will be stored in accordance with the school's GDPR and data protection policies.

The staff member(s) reporting the concern must keep the information confidential and not share the concern with others apart from the Headteacher or those aware in the senior leadership team.

Low-Level Concerns will not be referred to in references unless they have been formalised into more significant concerns resulting in disciplinary or misconduct procedures.

Whenever staff leave Pencombe CofE Primary School, any record of low-level concerns which are stored about them will be reviewed as to whether or not that information needs to be kept.

Consideration will be given to: (a) whether some or all of the information contained within any record may have any reasonably likely value in terms of any potential historic employment or abuse claim so as to justify keeping it, in line with normal safeguarding records practice; or (b) if, on balance, any record is not considered to have any reasonably likely value, still less actionable concern, and ought to be deleted accordingly.

Concern of allegation received by DSL / Headteacher

Is the concern or allegation about a current teacher, other staff, volunteer or a contractor?

No

Non-recent allegations from adults should go to the police.
Non-recent allegations by a child should go to the LADO

Contact the Local Authority's Designated Officer WITHOUT DELAY
Also see flowchart for managing allegations

Yes
Has the person behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child?

No

Has the person possibly committed a criminal offence?

No

Has the person behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they would pose a risk of harm to children?

No

Has the person behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children?

Yes
Contact the Local Authority's Designated Officer WITHOUT DELAY
Also see flowchart for managing allegations

Yes
Contact the police WITHOUT DELAY
Inform the Local Authority Designated Officer
Also see flowchart for managing allegations

Yes
Contact the Local Authority's Designated Officer WITHOUT DELAY
Also see flowchart for managing allegations

No
Is the person's conduct inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; or is it otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO?

Records must be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. Schools and colleges should decide how long they retain such information, but it is recommended that it is kept at least until the individual leaves their employment.

Low-level concerns should be recorded in writing, including:

- name* of individual sharing their concerns
- details of the concern
- context in which the concern arose
- action taken

(* if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonable possible)

Yes
Steps should be taken to address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage.

Reports about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Reports should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

The records' review might identify that there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled the behaviour to occur. This might mean that policies or processes could be revised or extra CPD may be needed.

If a concerning pattern of behaviour is identified and now meets the criteria for an allegation, then the matter should be referred to the LADO.

Low Level Concern form

Please use this form to share any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a manner which:

- is not consistent with Pencombe's/HMFA Code of Conduct, and/or;
- relates to their conduct outside of work which, even if not linked to a particular act or omission, has caused a sense of unease about that adult's suitability to work with children

Where possible please speak with the Executive Headteacher/Head of School or Safeguarding Director as soon as possible. It is also helpful to document your concerns, which can be done using this form and then passed to the Executive Headteacher/Head of School or Safeguarding Director.

If the concern is about the Executive Head Teacher, please pass it on to the Chair of Governors

Remember, a low-level concern is different to an allegation (which uses a different form). See the table below for a definition:

Allegation:

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Continued on next page.

Name of adult completing form _____

Name of adult whom concern is regarding _____

Date _____

Concerns:

You should provide a concise record – including brief context in which the low-level concern arose, and details which are chronological, and as precise and accurate as possible – of any such concern and relevant incident(s) (and please use a separate sheet if necessary). Consider any contextual information that may be appropriate to know.

Signature: _____