

Hawridge and Cholesbury CE School



Managing Low-Level Concerns Policy

Our Vision is for every child within the Hawridge & Cholesbury family to grow, flourish 'have life and ... have it more abundantly' (John 10:10 KLV); to be fascinated, rounded, eager to make a difference, spiritual and have high aspirations through Jesus' teaching and our curriculum.

We live our vision through our natural setting and our school values:

Respect teamwork Responsibility Understanding Peace Honesty

Review Date: November 2024

Adopted by the governing body November 2023

Vision

At Hawridge and Cholesbury C of E School our Christian ethos provides a code of morals and behaviours by which to thrive. As a church school we aim to nurture the Christian values of respect, teamwork, responsibility, understanding, peace and honesty.

In order for our society to flourish everyone needs to adhere to its values and behave in an acceptable manner. This includes our staff.

Purpose

We are committed to safeguarding children. All staff working at Hawridge and Cholesbury CE School are expected to follow the statutory safeguarding framework set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sep 2023) and our Staff Code of Conduct. This policy aims to support our safeguarding procedures by ensuring that the early signs of inappropriate behaviour are reported, investigated and dealt with appropriately. We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

Thresholds and when this policy applies

This policy is based on concerns that do not meet the harm threshold in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. This applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold as specified below:

Allegations that person has

- » behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- » possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- » behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- » behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (this behaviour includes inside and outside of the workplace)

In this case, staff and volunteers should follow the procedures set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education and report the matter to the DSL immediately.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold are treated as low-level concerns.

Definition of Low-Level Concerns

The term 'low level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the adult's behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold as outlined above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school

- Pre-employment vetting checks

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 or other personal equipment
- giving children gifts or cards outside of whole school agreed policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

Sharing Low-Level concerns

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to 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
- Having clear policies and procedures
- 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

Reporting a low level concern

- Low level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the Headteacher as per the school's Child Protection procedures.
- If the concern is about the Headteacher this should be reported to the Chair of Governors.
- Low level concerns about supply staff, contractors and local authority visiting staff will also be reported to their employers.

Staff should use the school's Low-Level Concerns Reporting Form (See Appendix 1)

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 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.

- Allegations that meet the harm threshold will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that the school feel may need further guidance on will be referred to the LADO for advice.
- Low level concerns that the school feel they can deal with internally will be dealt with via the school's usual child protection investigation process.
- The school will engage with its HR provider where it is necessary to undertake further investigation and/or deal with the concern under relevant processes.

Record keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing using the form in Appendix 2. They will also be recorded on Staff Safe. 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.

Reviewing a low level concern

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

Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the Headteacher will decide on a course of action, which may include:

- Disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings

- Management Advice, including recommendations for training
- Referral to the LADO (where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold).

If the concern relates volunteers, or any other concerns arise, school can contact the LADO for further advice.

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.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Self-Disclosure Register				
Member of Staff	Parent/Pupil	Type of contact	Date	Action if required