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## Low-level concerns Policy for Children and Young People

Approved by Governors:	September 2023
Review Date:	August 2026

## **Policy Statement**

The policy outlines the Lower Peover CofE Primary School's approach to managing concerns about adults which do not meet the allegation threshold of harm or are considered serious enough to consider a referral to LADO.

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'staff' will refer to any adult associated with the school i.e. whether working for or with the school engaged as a paid employee, worker or self-employed contractor, volunteer, agency staff, governor, or Trustee.

This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

## **Roles, Responsibilities, and Implementation**

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The Governing Board delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Headteacher and/or Human Resources representative.

Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success. The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all to share this.

## **Aims**

To ensure that all concerns about adults can be identified and spoken about openly with the appropriate safeguarding team.

To ensure that all concerns about adults are recorded and dealt with appropriately.

To create an open and transparent culture which enable settings to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working for or with the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within them, in accordance with the ethos and values of the Trust.

## **Definition**

A low-level concern is 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 the School's 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.

Staff do not need to be able to determine in each case whether their concern is a low-level concern, or if it is in fact serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO or meets the threshold of an allegation. Once staff share what they believe to be a low-level concern that determination should be made by the Head teacher

## **The Importance of Sharing Low-Level Concerns**

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many serious case reviews (SCRs), where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe (*Information sharing; Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and carers*). All concerns, no matter how small, must be reported.

## **Reporting a Low-Level Concern**

In line with the School's whistleblowing/Allegations of Abuse Against an Adult Policy any concerns should be raised first with the Headteacher. In the absence of the Headteacher the concern should be raised with another member of the Safeguarding Team (all SLT members). The Headteacher will inform the Safeguarding Team and their Human Resources representative.

Concerns about the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors who will inform the DSL/DDSL (if assessed to be a low-level concern and not meeting LADO threshold) and the Human Resources representative.

Concerns about a governor must be reported first with the Headteacher. In the absence of the Headteacher the concern should be raised with another member of the Safeguarding Team.

If a concern is reported to the DDSL, as opposed to the Headteacher, the DDSL must inform the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

## **Self-Reporting**

Occasionally, an individual might find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others. Equally, an individual may, for whatever reason, have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider falls below the standard set out in the Code of Conduct. In these instances, an individual may wish to self-report, and this is encouraged. This can be positive for a number of reasons:

- it enables a potentially difficult issue to be addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- it demonstrates awareness of the expected behavioural standards and self-awareness as to the individual's own actions or how they could be perceived; and
- it is an important means of maintaining a culture where everyone aspires to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour.

Any individual who wishes to self-report should speak with their Headteacher.

## **Response to a Low-Level Concern**

In the event that a low-level concern is raised, the Safeguarding Team will discuss the concern along with the Human Resources representative. The information will be reviewed to determine whether the behaviour:

- is entirely consistent with the School's Code of Conduct and the law.
- constitutes a low-level concern.
- is serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO; or
- when considered with any other low-level concerns that have previously been raised about the same individual, should be reclassified as an allegation, and referred to the LADO/other relevant external agencies.

Where necessary, the school will initially seek the advice of the SCiE team (maintaining the anonymity of the individual where possible).

Where appropriate, either the headteacher or DDSL will speak with the individual about whom the low-level concern has been raised (unless advised not to do so by the LADO/other relevant external agencies, where they have been contacted).

## **Outcomes**

The behaviour is entirely consistent with the School's Code of Conduct

The individual in question will be informed by the appropriate DSL what was shared about their behaviour so that they have an opportunity to respond. The individual in question will be informed that their behaviour is entirely consistent with the school's Code of Conduct.

The DSL will also speak to the person who shared the low-level concern to provide them with feedback about how and why the behaviour is consistent with the Code of Conduct and the law.

#### **The current concern is low-level**

The individual in question will be informed by either the Headteacher or member of the Safeguarding Team what was shared about their behaviour so that they have an opportunity to respond.

The Headteacher or DDSL, working with the Human Resources representative, will determine the most suitable response. This may include:

- A conversation with the individual about their behaviour and why it was deemed to be a low-level concern
- Training
- Mentoring from an appropriate individual, e.g. a line manager
- Any support as identified by the individual themselves

In the event that the concern becomes a disciplinary matter, the school's Staff Disciplinary Policy will be followed.

- The current concern is sufficiently serious enough to warrant a referral to the LADO or when considered with any other low-level concerns that have been shared about the same individual, should be reclassified as an allegation
- In the event that the current concern should be referred to the LADO or reclassified as an allegation, the school's whistleblowing/Allegations of Abuse Against Adults Policy will be followed.

#### **Recording**

A low-level concerns record will be kept on the staff section of CPOMS. This record will be accessible to the Safeguarding Team that includes the Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher, School Business Manager & Inclusion Manager/SENDCo. It should NOT be kept in the staff member's personnel file.

The concerns record will be kept in a chronological order as a running record. Each entry will have the time and date recorded, along with the name of the individual who has made the record and the outcome of the concern. The records will be kept confidential and will be held securely.

The records will be held centrally so that they can be easily reviewed by the Safeguarding Team, and any potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour spotted.

If a low-level concern in and of itself is deemed to be serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO, the records relating to the low-level concern will be placed on the individual's personnel file.

If a low-level concern (or group of concerns) is re-classified as an allegation, all previous records of low-level concerns relating to the same individual should be moved from the central low-level concerns file to the individual's personnel file.

If the low-level concern is raised about an individual who works with the school but is not a member of staff, e.g. Agency Staff/Contractor, then any records relating to the concern will be shared with the individual's employer. If necessary, advice will be sought from the LADO on what can be shared and with whom.

The Human Resources representative and the Safeguarding Team will be responsible for recording any concerns.