



Low Level Concerns Policy

**(To be read in conjunction with the FRMAT
Safeguarding Policy)**

Abbeyfield Primary Academy
Tinsley Meadows Primary Academy

Produced February 2023
Approved by trustees: March 2023
Next review due: March 2024

This policy is based on concerns about the safeguarding of children 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 set out in Appendix 2 of the FRMAT Safeguarding Policy.

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

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

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
- 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 as per section 5 of the FRMAT Safeguarding Policy

- Empowering staff to self-refer and maintaining a register in each academy of staff self-referrals (see Appendix 2 below)
- 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 Principal as per the school's Child Protection procedures.
- If the concern is about the Principal this should be reported to the Trust CEO
- 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 (Appendix 1 below)

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Principal 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 Principal 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 (Local Authority Designated Officer) 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 to deal with the concern under relevant processes.

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

All low-level concerns and follow-up information will be recorded in writing (See Appendix 1). 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 and held securely with access only by the leadership team. They will be stored in accordance with the school's GDPR and data protection policies and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR.

The staff member(s) reporting the concern must keep the information confidential and not share the concern with others apart from the Principal 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.

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, 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 as described the 'Definition' section above, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

Whenever staff leave FRMAT, 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) not considered to have any reasonably likely value, still less actionable concern, and ought to be deleted accordingly.

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 Principal 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



Low-Level Concern Form

Please use this form to share any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than

causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ – that an adult may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the Five Rivers MAT staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**
- does not meet the allegation threshold, or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

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).

The record should be signed, timed and dated and returned to the Principal

Details of Concern

Name of staff member

Team & Role

Date

Signed

Name

Appendix 2



Self-Disclosure Register

Member of Staff	Parent / Pupil	Type of contact	Date	Action if required