

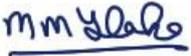


**Shires**  
Multi Academy Trust

## Shires Multi Academy Trust

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# Low Level Concerns Policy

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## “Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility”

# Low-Level Concerns Procedure

## 1. Introduction

The Trust and its schools have a range of duties in relation to safeguarding pupils and take these responsibilities very seriously through an embedded *culture of safeguarding*. The statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* provides an overview of duties with regard to the reporting of *low-level safeguarding concerns*. This Policy sets out the Trust’s approach to the reporting of low-level concerns.

## 2. Purpose of the policy

The Trust believes every child attending a Trust school should be able to learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from all forms of abuse. This is the responsibility of **everyone** involved with the Trust and its schools.

The Trust recognises that a critical step to safeguarding is to ensure that all those who work with children behave appropriately and that any concerns about an adult’s behaviour are identified early and are managed promptly and appropriately.

The purpose of the Trust’s *Low-Level Concerns Procedure* is to:

- support the Trust’s *culture of safeguarding* by enabling staff to feel confident to report/self refer any concern, no matter **how small** that concern is.
- ensure the welfare and interests of the child are kept **paramount** in all circumstances regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation and socio-economic background.
- ensure all allegations, suspicions of harm and/or abuse and related concerns, are **taken seriously** and responded to **swiftly**, fairly and appropriately.
- support everyone to **work in partnership** to promote the welfare, health, safety and development of a child.

The procedure focuses on low-level concerns regarding adults’ behaviour towards children by ensuring the Trust is compliant with KCSiE by:

- supporting and promoting a culture of openness
- supporting staff to be clear about and confident to distinguish between expected, concerning and problematic adult behaviour
- expecting staff to share any low-level concern with the school’s headteacher
- identifying concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour



- addressing unprofessional behaviour at an early stage
- providing responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns
- helping to identify weaknesses in the Trust/school's safeguarding systems

**For note:**

This policy applies to all trustees, leaders, staff, visitors and volunteers

### **3. Concerns that are NOT covered Allegations**

An *allegation* means that it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed child possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to that child
- behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

**For note:**

These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child, but could for example, include:

- an arrest for possession of a weapon
- having, as a parent or carer, become subject to public protection procedures

These such concerns, given above, should be reported in accordance with the school's/Trust's Whistleblowing policy.

#### **Safeguarding concerns**

- Clear concerns about a child's safety or welfare Concerns regarding child-on-child abuse
- Platforming behaviours

To report a concern of child child-on-child abuse, online safety or the welfare of a child refer directly to the Trust's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* and procedures. All Trust safeguarding policies and associated information can be found on the Trust website and individual school websites.

#### **Concerns that ARE covered Low-level concerns**

A low-level concern about an adult's behaviour towards a child that does not meet the allegation and safeguarding thresholds set out above, or is not otherwise serious enough to consider a further referral to LADO.

A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, and even if no more than a ***nagging doubt*** or a ***sense of unease*** that an adult may have acted in a manner which:

- is not consistent with the Trust's safeguarding policy and procedures is not consistent with the Trust's/School's values



- relates to 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

### What to do if there is a low-level concern

All low-level concerns should be referred to the relevant person as outlined below. It is important to:

- share concern with the headteacher asap and within 24 hours of becoming aware of it.
- in the absence of the headteacher contact the DSL
- if behaviour relates to the headteacher or a member of the Central Team share the concern with the CEO (Mr Lee Gray)
- if behaviour relates to the CEO share the concern with the Chair of Trustees (Mr Mike Thake)
- if behaviour relates to a trustee (including the Chair) share the concern with the company secretary, who will determine the most appropriate person to take action.

### Further information

## Clarity around Allegation vs Low-Level Concern vs Appropriate Conduct

#### Allegation

Behaviour which indicates that an adult who works with children 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;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

#### Low-Level Concern

Any concern – no matter how small, even if no more than a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a manner which:

- is not consistent with an organisation'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.

#### Appropriate Conduct

Behaviour which is entirely consistent with the organisation's Code of Conduct, and the law.

### Self referral

Occasionally a member of staff may find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others. Equally, a member of staff may, for whatever reason, have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider falls below the standard set out in the School's Staff Code of Conduct.



Self-reporting in these circumstances can be positive for a number of reasons, and staff are encouraged to self-report on the basis that:

- it is self-protective, in that 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 member of staff's own actions or how they could be perceived;
- and crucially, it is an important means of maintaining a culture where everyone aspires to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour.

The School's aim is to create an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer.

### **Trust procedure for managing a low-level concern** (see appendix 2 flow chart)

#### **Step 1 - Initial concern raised**

In the first instance, staff should report verbally to the relevant person and a written summary of concern will be completed using the Trust's *Low-Level Concerns Reporting Template* (appendix 1).

#### **For note:**

- Sound professional judgment of appropriately trained staff should be used in determining what information is necessary to record for safeguarding purposes
- The record should include brief context, concise details, and relevant incidents
- The record should be signed, timed and dated by both the person reporting the concern and the recipient.

#### **Step 2 - Response by the headteacher (or other recipient)**

- The headteacher should allow enough time to speak to the person who is raising the concern and ensure their concern is reported accurately
- The headteacher should review the information and decide whether the behaviour is:
  - entirely consistent with Trust's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure*
  - constitutes a low-level concern
  - Serious enough to consider an escalation as outlined in the Trust's/School's disciplinary and Whistleblowing policies
- serious enough to be reclassified as an allegation and referred to the Trust, LADO or any other statutory agencies having considered any other previous low-level concerns about this individual.

If the person receiving the concern is in any doubt of points above, they should seek immediate advice from their line manager. The headteacher must use the recording template to make records of:

- all internal conversations
- all external conversations
- their determination
- the rationale for their decision
- any action taken



### Step 3 – Decision making and next steps

If the information shared meets the Trust's expectations and is compliant with the Trust's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure*:

- Headteacher to inform the individual concerned what was shared about their behaviour and give them an opportunity to respond
- Headteacher to speak to the person who shared the low-level concern, providing feedback about how and why the behaviour is consistent with the Trust's Safeguarding
- Policy and Procedure and KCSiE
- Trust/school to consider if a review of the Trust's safeguarding procedures is necessary e.g. are policies and procedures clear? Has training been unsatisfactory? Is the Trust's *Code of Conduct* clear enough?
- Trust/school to consider further staff training/support for the *Code of Conduct*
- e.g. if the same individual reports similar low level concerns that are found not to breach Trust Policy

If the information shared **does not meet** the Trust's expectations and is in breach of the Trust's *Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures/Code of Conduct* regarding a low-level concern, the headteacher/Trust will:

- take immediate action to discuss with the individual concerned and give them opportunity to respond.
- recognise that a sensitive and proportionate approach is essential.
- maintain confidence that concerns will be handled promptly and effectively, whilst protecting staff from potential false or malicious allegations
- maintain that any investigation is on a *need to know* basis e.g. the concern may be dealt with by management guidance and/or training and not give rise to further action.
- ensure a positive and supportive conversation with the individual to enable them to meet future expectations noting that lasting change in behaviour is least likely to be achieved by an approach experienced as critical or threatening.
- assess whether further evidence gained raises the level of concern, if so, the headteacher should seek guidance from their SIP and/or LADO.
- ensure that if referring to LADO, the CEO is always informed.

### Previous low-level concern

If an individual has had a previous low-level concern raised against them, the headteacher must inform the CEO of this further concern. The information available will be reviewed and a decision may be made to reclassify the concern as a more serious concern or allegation.

### Step 4 – Formal Recording

All low-level concerns will be formally recorded on the agreed template (appendix 1) and placed on secure file, within a secure designated Headteacher/PA file, for future reference. A copy will be available to the individual concerned. This will be stored in accordance with the Trust's UK-GDPR and data protection policies.

## Appendix 1.

Low Level Concern Recording Template (for non-school staff and those without IT access /schools not currently using staff safe)

Name of Individual concerned:	Date concern reported:
Name of Individual completing form:	
Statement of concern: (who, when, what, where)	
Statement from individual concerned:	
Record of discussion held with individual concerned and headteacher:	
Have previous concerns been received:	Yes/No (delete as approp.)
If yes, what was decided in consultation with CEO/LADO?	
Agreed action:	
Signed: _____ (Individual concerned)	
Date: _____	
Signed: _____ (Headteacher)	
Date: _____	

## Appendix 2

