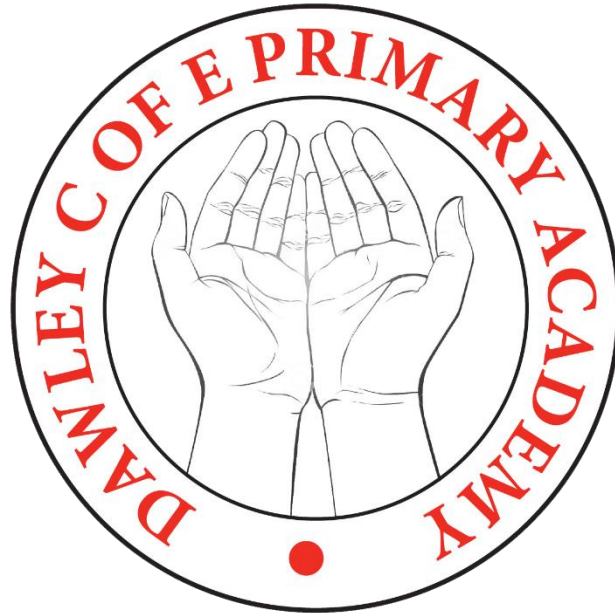


# Dawley C of E Primary Academy



*'Enriching Learning, Enriching Life'*

John 10:10 '...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

## **Low-level concerns including concerns that do not meet the harm threshold Policy and Procedure**

**Date Created: 17.03.2022**

**Approved by Local Academy Committee: 22.05.2023**

**Review Date: May 2024**

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## 1. Aims

At Dawley C of E Primary Academy, we aim to promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately. The aim of this policy is to clarify what is deemed as a 'low level' concern and how they should be responded to by all involved. This guidance ensures compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

## 2. Purpose

At Dawley C of E Primary Academy, we understand that it is critical to create and embed a culture in which all concerns about adults (including allegations that do not meet the harms threshold) are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately. We aim to encourage an open, transparent and trustworthy culture which allows us to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with our ethos and values. Staff should not act in ways which compromise the Academies values of Love, Peace, Hope and Trust, or in ways that breach the staff code of conduct. As a community, we take joint responsibility to ensure that our values, policies and procedures are put into practice, monitored and reinforced on a daily basis as part of our duty to respond to concerns in a timely manner and safeguard children effectively.

## 3. What is a low-level concern?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the harms threshold which states:

'It is alleged that anyone working in the school or a college that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors 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.'

If any part of the harms threshold is believed to be met, the school will refer the case to the Local Authority Designated Officer. For more information about this procedure, please refer to the Managing and dealing with allegations against staff policy.

### Definition of a low level concern

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 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 (see above), 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 from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

#### **4. Relevant policies, procedures and codes**

In order to achieve the aims of this policy, staff must also understand and effectively implement the following policies, procedures and codes:

- The Staff Code of Conduct
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Teaching Standards (if a teacher)

These policies outline the conduct and behaviour expected from adults that work within this establishment. This policy will outline behaviour that is or may be considered as concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviours so that staff are able to identify this within themselves, or others, and are empowered to take appropriate action and share concerns.

We understand that the sharing of low-level concerns is essential as it allows us to:

- create and embed open, transparent and trustworthy culture which allows us to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early and minimise the risk of abuse
- address unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage;
- provide a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised; and,
- help identify any weakness in the academy's safeguarding system.

#### **5. Sharing low-level concerns**

Low-level concerns about a member of staff, supply staff, volunteer or contractor should be reported as detailed in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy which states that:

'If staff have safeguarding concerns or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors) posing a risk of harm to children, then:

- this should be referred to the Principal;
- where there are concerns/allegations about the Principal, this should be referred to the chair of the Local Academy Committee; and
- in the event of concerns/allegations about the Chair of the Local Academy Committee or a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the Principal and/or chair of The Local Academy Committee, this should be reported directly to the local authority designated officer(s) (LADOs). HR of the Trust should also be informed.

The LADO for Telford and Wrekin is Glen Ashbrooke and he can be contact by calling Family Connect on 01952 385385.

Any reports made about supply staff and contractors will be notified to their employers, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified. A record of this will be kept at the Academy (Appendix I).

Not only does this apply to sharing concerns about others, but we want staff to have the confidence to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards, code of conduct or school policies. This level of openness and transparency allows us to appropriately safeguard both children and adults in our Academy, and put in support plans and/or supervision for an individual's professional development.

## **6. Recording low-level concerns and record keeping**

At Dawley C of E Primary Academy, all low-level concerns should be recorded in writing using the 'low-level concerns about staff, visitors or contractors' form in appendix I. Staff should take care to fill out all parts of the form, in a timely manner, and share it with the relevant people as stated above.

The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and the action taken by both the person completing the form and the person responding to the concern shared.

The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted. We will respect the wishes of individuals who wish to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible. However action will be taken to addresses the concerns raised.

Records kept are confidential and will be held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Records will be reviewed half termly by the Safeguarding link of Local Academy Committee. Need to know Information will then be shared with other members of the Local Academy Committee so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the headteacher, and governors where appropriate, will decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO.

The Principal and Local Academy Committee will consider whether there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The recorded information will be retained at least until the individual leaves their employment.

## **7. References**

We will only provide substantiated safeguarding allegations in references. Low level concerns will not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference. However, where a low-level concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold - 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 - for referral to the LADO and found to be substantiated, it should be referred to in a reference.

## 8. Responding to low-level concerns

The procedure for responding to reports of low-level concerns is as follows:

1. A staff member identifies a low-level concern (as described in part 3) in relation to their own or the conduct of another member of staff, a visitor or contractor
2. They complete the 'low-level concerns about staff, visitors or contractors' form in appendix I and share it with the relevant person (as stated in part 5), which in most cases will be the Principal unless it is relating to the Principal.
3. If the concern has been raised via a third party, the Principal will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:
  - directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously;
  - to the individual involved and any witnesses.
4. The information collected and records will help the Principal to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken.
5. The outcome will be recorded along with the rationale for their decisions and action taken on the individuals file.

## 9. Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in our safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by our senior leadership team. This includes concerns that are considered at 'low-level'.

Where staff feel that they cannot report a concern through the above channels general guidance can be found at [Advice on whistleblowing](#). The [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](#) is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). You may also refer to our Whistleblowing policy. A copy of this policy is available on the website and is located in the staff room.



Please state what action you have taken to raise the concern e.g. reported to Principal, raised with colleague etc.

This section should be completed by Principal (or Vice Principal in their absence) or the Local Academy Committee

Your name:

Date:

Record details of your conversations with the person reporting the concern below:

Record details of your conversations with any witnesses below:

Record details of your conversations with person the concern is about below:

Outline the conclusion you have come to following your discussion with relevant parties and record what action you will be taking to address the concerns raised:

Please ensure all parts of this form are completed accurately. When completed, this form should be shared with the relevant person as shown below:

If you have a low-level concern about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors) then:



- this should be referred to the Principal;
- where there are concerns/allegations about the Principal, this should be referred to the chair of the Local Academy Committee; and
- in the event of concerns/allegations about the Principal or a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the Principal, this should be reported directly to the local authority designated officer(s) (LADOs) and St. Chads Academy TRUST.

The LADO for Telford and Wrekin is Glen Ashbrooke and he can be contact by calling Family Connect on 01952 385385.

**Ensure this form is saved onto the individuals file until they are no longer in employment at the school.**

**Ensure that individuals know that records kept are confidential and will be held securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).**