

Greenwood School

Low Level Concerns Policy



Date of Policy Issue/Review	September 2024	Review Date: Sept 2025
Name of Responsible Manager	Stuart Curtis	
Signature of Responsible Manager		

1. Policy statement

Greenwood School recognises its statutory and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and understands that staff play a vital role in meeting these responsibilities. Greenwood School works to ensure that we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

2. Scope

All employees employed at this school including:

- Teachers
- Support staff
- Supply teachers
- Volunteers
- Local Authority visiting staff
- Contractors

The term 'staff' throughout this policy refers to all of the above.

3. Policy aims

- To help create a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person and are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
- To enable schools to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early.
- To minimise the risk of abuse occurring.
- To 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 the ethos and values of the school.

To help create an environment where staff are comfortable 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.

4. Definition

- 4.1 The term 'low level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. It means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold for an allegation.

‘Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024’ defines a low-level concern as:

“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 or college 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, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- humiliating children.

5. Avoiding low level concerning behaviour

Behaviour defined as a ‘low level concern’ can exist on a spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate but is not in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. Staff education and reinforcement on avoiding circumstances which may put them in a difficult situation is key to avoiding the need for dealing with these types of concerns.

Our school ensures that staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is through their induction and regularly reinforcement of documents such as:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- ‘Avoiding Allegations’ guidance
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and regular training
- Teachers’ Standards (for teaching staff)

6. Reporting a low-level concern

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

Concerns may arise through, for example:

Suspicion
Complaint
Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
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. We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially 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
- 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

7. Dealing with a low-level concern

- Where a concern is raised about the practice or behaviour of a member of staff, this information must be recorded and passed to the Executive Headteacher.
- The Executive Headteacher must then make an assessment to determine if the matter is a 'low level concern' or an 'allegation' and follow one of the following routes.
- 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.

8. Recording a low-level concern

- All low-level concerns should be formally recorded by a member of staff when they are made aware of them. This record should then be passed to the Executive Headteacher (or Chair of the Management Committee if the concern is about the Executive Headteacher).

The record should include:

- Details of the concern,
- The context in which the concern arose,
- The outcome of the investigation and any action taken, and
- The name of the individual sharing their concerns (if known) (unless the individual wishes to remain anonymous which must be respected as far as possible).

Relevant records will be retained confidentially on the personnel file. A separate record will also be kept of low-level concerns to more easily identify patterns that may involve more than one member of staff. All records must be kept in line with data protection principles.

9. 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 Executive 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).
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- The school will take advice, where appropriate, from their HR provider in respect of low-level concerns.
 - The school will also review appropriate policies and training, or other wider cultural issues in the school, to see whether anything needs to be done to minimise the risk of similar behaviour happening again.
 - Relevant records will be retained confidentially on the personnel file. A separate record will also be kept of low-level concerns to more easily identify patterns that may involve more than one member of staff. All records must be kept in line with data protection principles.
 - Low level concerns will not be included in a reference unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference (e.g. misconduct or poor performance). Low level concerns which relate solely to safeguarding will not be included in a reference, subject to the level of concern.
 - A low-level concern (or group or pattern of concerns) which has met the harm threshold and has therefore been referred to the LADO may be included in a reference depending on the circumstances.

10. Related guidance

The policy links to the following guidance documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE)
- Model Code of Conduct (Manual of Personnel Practice)
- Avoiding Allegation guidance (Manual of Personnel Practice)
- Safeguarding Policy (Greenwood School)
- Child Protection Policy (Greenwood School)

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Signed:

Management Committee Chair.....

Executive Headteacher.....