



Sharps Copse Primary School
Prospect Lane
HAVANT
Hants
PO9 5PE

Low Level Concern Policy

2021-2022

Date:	17 th May 2022
Review Date:	September 2022
Responsibility:	Governing Body
Statutory, recommended or additional:	Additional
Checked against Equalities Policy:	Yes

Linked Documents: Safeguarding, Child Protection, Whistle Blowing (Protected Disclosures) Policies, Code of Conduct, Working Together to Safeguard Children, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021(KCSiE) and Staff Handbook

Chair of Governors: Jane Towers	Date: 17 th May 2022
Headteacher: Mike Elsen	Date: 17 th May 2022

Sharps Copse Primary School is fully committed to the safeguarding and welfare of children, young people, vulnerable adults and vulnerable groups, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Aims

The overarching aim of our low-level concern policy is to facilitate a culture in which the clear values and expected behaviours which are set out in our Code of Conduct are lived, constantly monitored, and reinforced by all staff. This is consistent with Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.

In particular, the intention of this policy is to:

- maintain a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which staff are confident and clear about expected behaviours of themselves and their colleagues, the delineation of boundaries and reporting lines;
- ensure staff feel empowered to raise any low-level concern, whether about their own or a colleague's behaviour, where that behaviour might be construed as falling short of the standards set out in our Code of Conduct;
- provide for responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised, to maintain on the one hand confidence that concerns, when raised will be handled promptly and effectively whilst on the other hand protecting staff from false allegations or misunderstandings.

What is a low-level concern?

A low-level concern, for this purpose, 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 inconsistent with the school's Code of Conduct or simply, even if not linked to a particular act or omission, a sense of unease as to the adult's behaviour particularly towards or around children. From time to time an individual may find themselves in a situation which might appear compromising to others or which could be misconstrued. Equally, an individual may for whatever reason have behaved in a manner which on reflection he or she considers falls below the standard set out in the Code of Conduct.

Self-reporting in these circumstances is encouraged as it demonstrates both awareness of the expected behavioural standards and self-awareness as to the individual's own actions or how they could be perceived. As such, the school sees self-reporting of low-level concerns as an important means of maintaining a culture where everyone aspires to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour.

Further examples of Low Level Concerns are given in the Child Protection Policy Appendix 5, available to staff on the teachers' network in the policies folder, or by visiting our website at www.sharpscopse.hants.sch.uk. Hard copies of all our policies are available on request from the school office free of charge.

What should I do if I have one?

Where a low-level concern exists it should be reported to the Designated Safeguard Lead (DSL) as soon as reasonably possible and in any event within 24 hours of becoming aware of it (where the concern relates to a particular incident).

The DSL at Sharps Copse Primary School is the Headteacher; in addition, there are also 4 deputy DSLs who are the Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, SENCo and Children & Families Support Worker, all of who will act in the Headteacher's absence.

If the low level of concern is in regard to the Headteacher, this must be immediately reported to the Chair of Governors available by telephoning **023 92484545**, where a message will be promptly forwarded, for the Chair to take action.

How will my low-level concern be handled?

The DSL will, in the first instance, satisfy themselves that it is a low-level concern and should not be reclassified as an allegation and dealt with under the appropriate procedure below. The circumstances in which a low-level concern might be reclassified are where:

- (a) the threshold is met for an allegation
- (b) there is a pattern of low-level concerns which collectively amount to an allegation or
- (c) there is other information which when taken into account leads to an allegation.

Where the DSL is in any doubt whatsoever, advice will be sought from the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), if necessary on a no-names basis. Having established that the concern is low-level, the DSL will discuss it with the individual who has raised it and will take any other steps to investigate it as necessary. Most low-level concerns by their very nature are likely to be minor and will be dealt with by means of management guidance, a helpful letter, training etc.

What records will be kept?

Where a low-level concern has been communicated, a confidential record will be kept in a central file which logs all low-level concerns. This is necessary to enable any patterns to be identified. However, no record will be made of the concern on the individual's personnel file (and no mention made in job references) unless either:

- (a) the concern (or group of concerns) has been reclassified as an allegation as above; or
- (b) the concern (or group of concerns) is sufficiently serious to result in formal action under the school's disciplinary procedure.

All records will be kept in line with Hampshire County Councils (HCCs) retention schedule.

Summary Table to help identify differences between low level concerns and Allegations.

Please note it is anybody's responsibility to report but the DSL's role to determine how to deal with the report

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.