

Addendum Guidance on the Management of Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold – Low Level Concerns

Updated October 2021

Concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

As part of their whole school approach to safeguarding, we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school or college (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

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, is critical. This should encourage an open and transparent culture; enable schools and colleges 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 or college are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of our school institution.

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the thresholds outlined in the Allegations Management Policy. 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 or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the Designated Officer.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children

- having favourites
- 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.

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 are shared responsibly and with the Headteacher (Chair of Governors in case of the concern being about the Headteacher) who will advise on next steps.

Next steps will typically include completing a written 'Concern Form' and submitting to the HT/CoG who will then use all available resources for advise and support on dealing with the matter. This could include liaising with the Wiltshire Human Resources team for example.

Ensuring concerns are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of Churchfields, the Village School from potential false allegations or misunderstandings