

# Charlton House Independent School



**‘Love One Another’**

## LOW LEVEL CONCERNS POLICY

**Reviewed and approved by the full governing body September 2024**

**To be reviewed by FGB September 2025**

<b>Date</b>	September 2022	September 2023	September 2024	
<b>Reviewed by</b>	FGB	FGB	FGB	

## Low Level Concerns Policy

### 1. Introduction

At Charlton House Independent School, we take safeguarding very seriously. This includes ensuring that adults who work with children do so in a way that is in accordance with the ethos and policies set out by the school, including the Staff Code of Conduct. This policy sets out the details and processes for staff regarding allegations and low-level concerns they may have.

#### Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [DfE \(2022\) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024](#)
- [DfE \(2023\) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'](#)

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

It may be possible that a member of staff acts in a way that does not cause risk to children, but is however inappropriate. A member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff should inform the Head Teacher or a DSL about their concern, initially in person and following up by completing a Low-Level Record of Concern Form on CPOMs StaffSafe. Concerns should be reported no later than 24 hours after the incident. Staff members will be aware that concerns are still worth reporting, even if they do not seem serious. When submitting concerns, staff will take care to observe confidentiality and protect the identity of all individuals to which the concern pertains. If the low level concern relates to the head Teacher, it should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

#### **The governing board is responsible for:**

- Ensuring that the school complies with its duties under child protection and safeguarding legislation.
- Ensuring that policies, procedures and training opportunities with regard to reporting

safeguarding concerns are compliant and effective.

- Guaranteeing that there is an effective Staff Code of Conduct that outlines behavioural expectations.
- Ensuring that a suitably trained DSL has been appointed, alongside deputy DSLs where appropriate.
- Ensuring that there are robust reporting arrangements, including inter-agency collaboration.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate procedures in place to handle allegations and low-level concerns reported against members of staff.

**The DSL (head Teacher) is responsible for:**

- Being a point of contact for all staff when they have safeguarding concerns, whether serious or low-level.
- Assessing whether safeguarding concerns about staff members meet the threshold for being termed an allegation, or whether they are low-level concerns.
- Implementing this policy, and all related policies, throughout the school, and ensuring that staff adhere to it at all times.
- Following all procedures outlined in this policy for acting upon low-level concerns.
- Liaising with staff members, the governing board and all relevant agencies to act upon concerns, where necessary.
- Keeping detailed, accurate and secure records of all low-level concerns and any actions taken.
- Safeguarding pupils' wellbeing and maintaining public trust in the teaching profession.
- Ensuring that all staff have undertaken safeguarding training.
- Ensuring that all staff have an ongoing awareness of low-level concerns and reporting procedures.

**Staff are responsible for:**

- Adhering to all the relevant policies and procedures, including acting within the Staff Code of Conduct at all times
- Interacting with pupils in a way that is respectful and appropriate for their level of authority and has due regard to the power imbalance between pupils and staff members.
- Understanding the importance of reporting low-level safeguarding concerns.
- Reporting any and all safeguarding concerns they may have about pupils immediately.
- Reporting any and all safeguarding concerns they may have about the behaviour of a member of staff immediately.

## **Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold - Low level concerns**

This is based on 'Section 2: Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold' in part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

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.

### **Definition of low-level concerns**

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – 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 designated officer at the local authority

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

- Being overly 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
- Humiliating pupils

### **Sharing low-level concerns**

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 as per section 7.7 of this policy

- 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
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system
- Fortnightly cause for concern meetings allow staff to raise any concerns they may have in a professional forum.
- Staff are encouraged to log low-level concerns about themselves and others using CPOM's StaffSafe.
- The Head Teacher (Mrs Lea Pay) has an open door policy that encourages staff to share low-level concerns.

### **Responding to low-level concerns**

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Head Teacher will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The Head Teacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the school's staff handbook and code of conduct policy. The Head Teacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

The DSL and DDSL will be alerted by CPOMs StaffSafe to any logged low-level concerns.

The DSL and DDSL will also hold a monthly meeting to analyse and discuss reports generated by CPOMs StaffSafe.

### **Record keeping**

All low-level concerns will be recorded on CPOMs StaffSafe. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

## **5. Self Reporting**

On occasion, a member of staff may feel as though they have acted in a way that:

- Could be misinterpreted.
- Could appear compromising to others.
- They realise, upon reflection, falls below the standards set out in the Staff Code of Conduct

The school will ensure that an environment is maintained that encourages staff members to self-report if they feel as though they have acted inappropriately or in a way that could be construed as inappropriate upon reflection. The head Teacher will, to the best of their abilities, maintain a culture of approachability for staff members, and will be understanding and sensitive towards those who self-report. Staff members who self-report will not be treated more favourably during any resulting investigations than staff members who were reported by someone else; however, their self-awareness and intentions will be taken into consideration.

Staff can self-report using CPOMs StaffSafe.

## **References**

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

## **Appendix 1.**

### **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.