



# **Howe Dell School**

# **Low Level Concern Policy**

**(Written in conjunction with HFL Education Low Level Concern Guidance)**

**Reviewed: Autumn Term 2025**

**To be reviewed annually**

## **Introduction**

The statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) Part 4 outlines how schools and trusts deal with low-level concerns about the behaviour of staff working with children.

The purpose of this policy is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust, and transparency in which the clear values and expected behaviour are reinforced to all staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, as set out in the staff code of conduct.

We aim to identify any concerning or inappropriate behaviour early: minimise the risk of abuse: and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of our school are clear about professional boundaries.

This policy covers low-level concerns that do not meet the harm threshold.

An allegation may meet the harm threshold where it is alleged that a person 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
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Allegations that may meet the harm threshold should be assessed accordingly and advice should be sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or HR Services.

This policy should be used in conjunction with the School & Day Care code of conduct, disciplinary, safeguarding policy, and procedures.

We acknowledge that having a comprehensive Vetting and Barring Check confirms that an individual has not been discovered to present a risk to children: it is not predictive about potential risk. We must therefore continue to have an ongoing culture of vigilance and maintain a mind-set of 'it could happen here'. All staff receive a copy of this policy.

## **Summary**

It may be possible that a member of staff acts in a way that does not cause risk to children, but their conduct is however inappropriate. A member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff, supply staff, volunteer or contractor should inform the Head Teacher about their concern using the Low - Level Record of Concern Form (Appendix A). If the Head Teacher cannot be contacted, the Chair of Governors should be contacted in their absence.

## **Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025**

The following is taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025 and identifies what may be considered behaviour relating to a low-level concern:

## What is a low-level concern?

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. 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, and
- is a cause for concern does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

*Paragraph 434.* 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.

*Paragraph 435.* Low-level 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.

*Paragraph 436.* It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly 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 and colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

## Clarity around Allegation vs Low Level Concern

1. **Concerns/ Allegations that may meet the harm** threshold (referral to statutory service/ Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO)

This is because the significant harm caused to a child and potential risk of adult meets the harm test below e.g.

- 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
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

2. **Low Level Concern that do not meet the harm** threshold

This is because these are behaviours by an adult that are inconsistent with your school's staff code of conduct, or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO – these are called Low Level Concerns and would be dealt by your school's internal safe staffing processes/ HR e.g. 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
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

### **Storing and use of Low Level Concerns and follow up information**

Low Level Concerns and follow-up information will be stored securely within the school safeguarding systems, with access only by the Head Teacher. This will be stored in accordance with the school's GDPR and data protection policies.

The staff members(s) reporting the concern must keep the information confidential and not share the concern with other members of staff apart from the Head Teacher or those aware in the Senior Leadership Team.

Where a low-level concern that has met threshold for a referral to the LADO and is found to be substantiated, it will be referred to in a reference.

Low-level concerns will be retained at least until the individual leaves Howe Dell School/Day Care.

Whenever staff leave Howe Dell School/Day Care any records of low-level concerns which are stored about them will be reviewed as to whether that information needs to be kept.

Consideration will be given to:

- Whether some or all the information contained within any record may have any likely value in terms of any potential historic employment or abuse claim to justify keeping it, in line with normal safeguarding practice: or
- If, on balance, any record is not considered to have any value, still less actionable concern, and ought to be deleted accordingly.

### **What action will be taken if it is determined that the behaviour constitutes a low-level concern?**

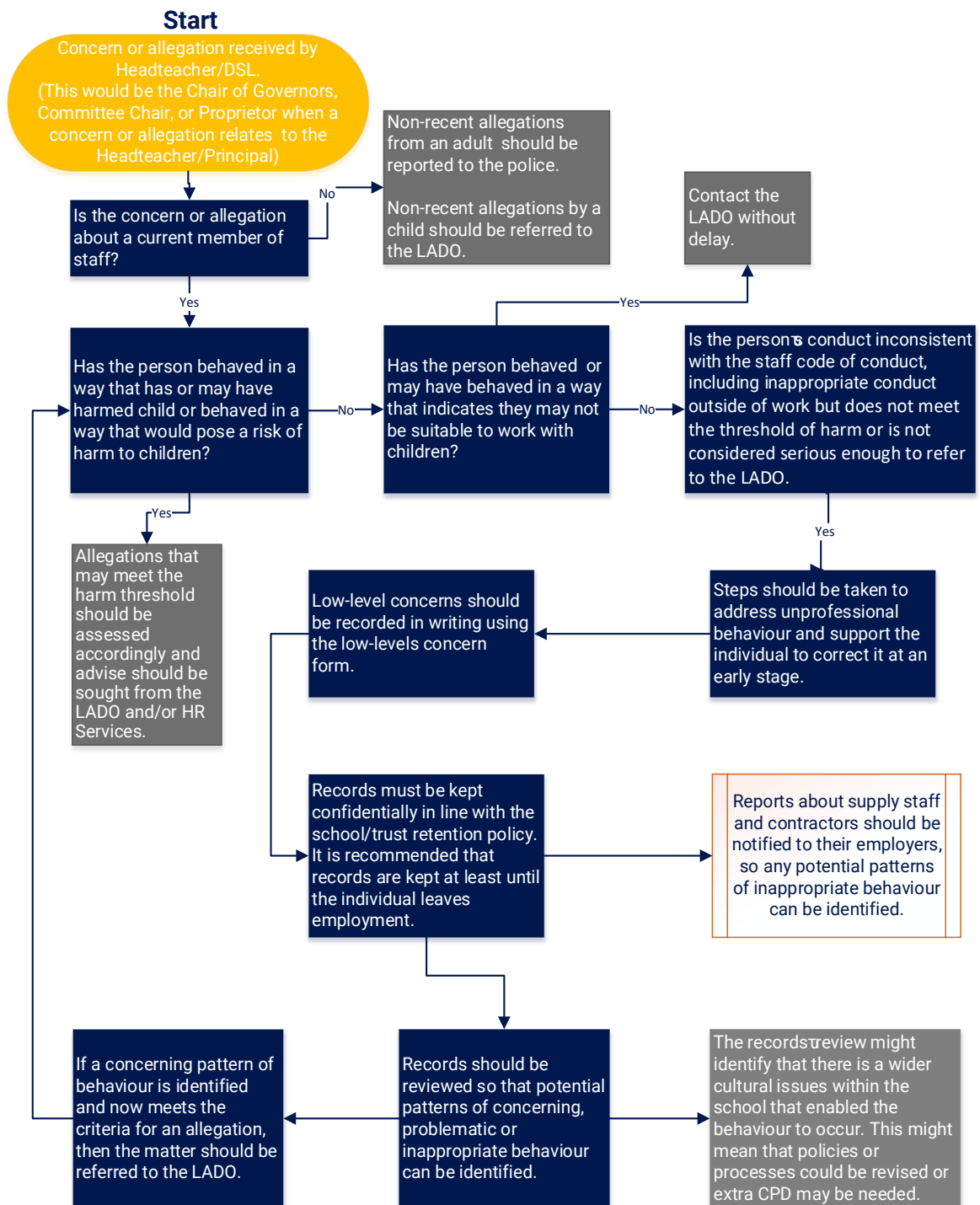
The Head Teacher will respond in a prompt, sensitive and proportionate way. Any investigation of low-level concerns will be done discreetly and, on a need to know basis. Some concerns will not require further action whilst others may be appropriately dealt with by means of management guidance and/or training.

Ongoing and transparent monitoring on the individual's behaviour may be appropriate with an action plan or risk assessment put in place agreed by the individual and Head Teacher.

Some low-level concerns may raise issues of misconduct or poor performance and may require following the school's disciplinary and/or capability procedure and taking advice from Hertfordshire HR service.

Low-level concerns reported about supply teacher/contractors will be reported to their employers.

## Process to follow when a Low-Level Concern is raised



### Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

## Appendix A - Low Level Concern Form

Please use this form to share any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ – that an adult may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with Howe Dell’s staff Code of Conduct
- Does not meet allegation threshold (page 3) or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO

You should provide a concise record – including brief context in which the low-level concern arose, and details which are chronological and as accurate as possible.

The record should be signed, timed and dated.

<p><b>1. Name of individual raising concern</b></p> <p><i>Leave blank if concern was raised anonymously or the individual wishes to remain anonymous</i></p>	
<p><b>2. Date and time the concern was raised</b></p>	
<p><b>3. Name and role of individual about whom concern has been raised</b></p>	
<p><b>4. Details of the concern (s) reported (give description and context)</b></p> <p><i>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 may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct but does not meet the allegations threshold set out in Section 1 of Part 4 of KCSiE</i></p>	
<p><b>5. Head teacher to complete – Details of steps taken.</b></p> <p><i>Steps should include speaking to the individual who raised the concern, the individual whom the concern is raised and any</i></p>	

<p><i>witnesses. You will need to review the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy to determine if there has been a breach.</i></p>		
<p>6. Set out individual's response to the concern</p>		
<p>7. Is this concern 'low level' or does it meet the harm threshold? If it meets the harm threshold it should be referred to the LADO in accordance with Section 1 of Part 4 of KCSiE.</p>		
<p>8. Have 'low level' or other concerns been raised about this individual previously?</p> <p><i>If so, please provide dates, brief details, and relevant documents referenced for the concern (s). Also consider whether previous concern(s) raised coupled with this new concern meet the threshold of harm?</i></p>		
<p>9. Details of further action required</p> <p><i>Action could range from no action or a conversation to discuss the concern, to being clear why the behaviour is concerning and formal disciplinary action</i></p>		
<p><b><u>Completed by:</u></b></p>	<p><b>Name</b></p>	
	<p><b>Position</b></p>	

<b><u>Date:</u></b>		
<b><u>Signature:</u></b>		