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Goldsborough Sicklinghall Federation

# Low-Level Concerns Policy

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### 1. Introduction

At the **Goldsborough Sicklinghall Federation**, 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 detail and processes for staff regarding low-level concerns they may have.

### 2. Summary

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 about their concern using a Low-Level Record of Concern Form. If the Head Teacher cannot be contacted, the Chair of Governors should be contacted instead.

### 3. Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023

The following is taken from KCSiE 2023

#### **Low-level concerns**

424. Governing bodies and proprietors should have policies and processes to deal with any concerns or allegations which do not meet the harm threshold, referred to in this guidance as 'low-level' concerns. It is important that schools and colleges have appropriate policies and processes in place to manage and record any such concerns and take appropriate action to safeguard children.

#### **Low-level concerns**

425. As part of their whole school or college approach to safeguarding, schools and colleges should ensure that they 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.

426. Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:

- enable schools and colleges to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning 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 the institution.

### What is a low-level concern?

427. 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
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not 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, or
- humiliating children.

428. 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.

429. 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.

430. 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.

## 4. 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.

## 5. Storing and use of Low-Level Concerns and follow-up information

LLC forms and follow-up information will be stored securely within the schools safeguarding systems, with access only by the leadership team.

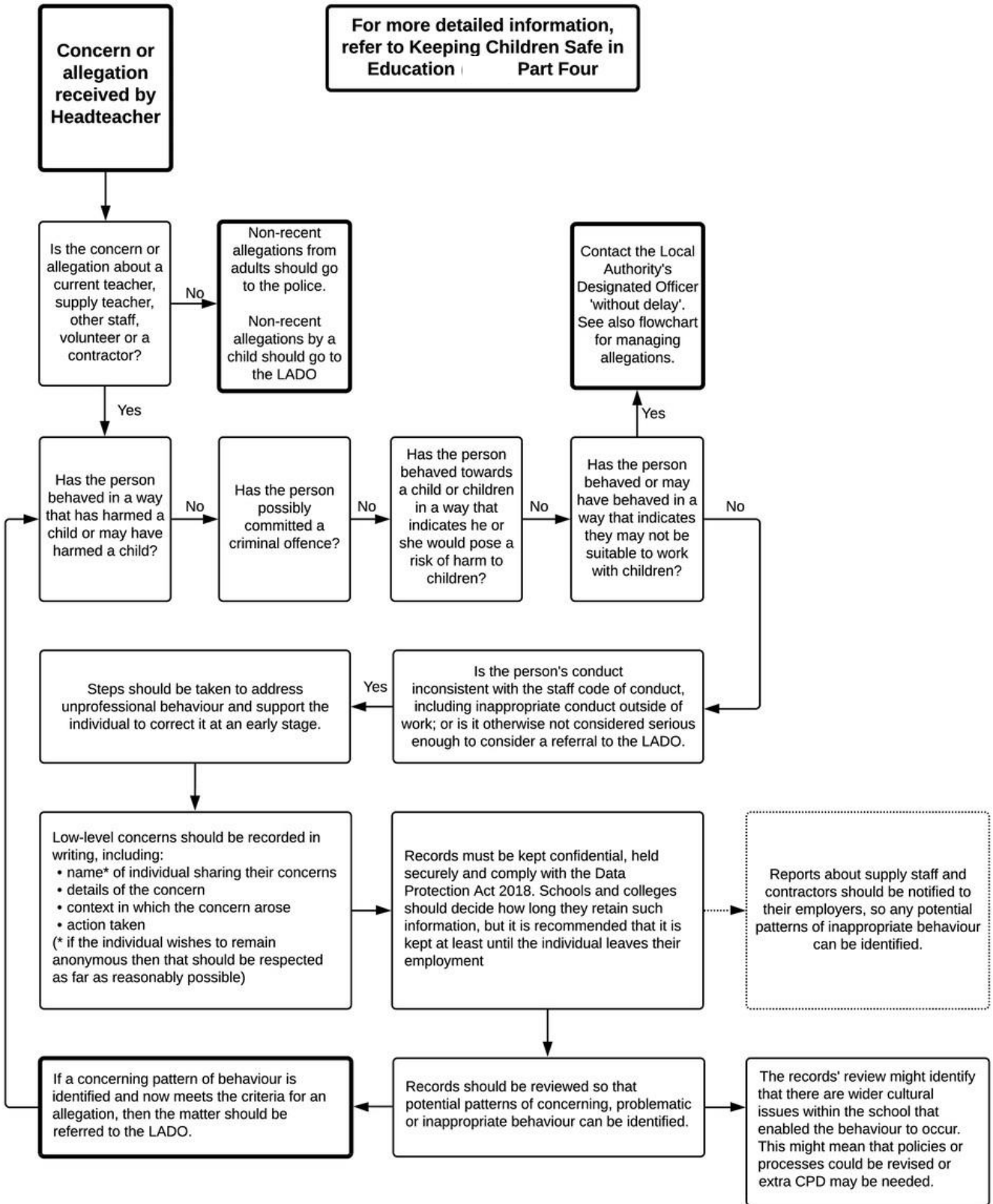
This will be stored in accordance with the school's GDPR and data protection policies. The staff member(s) reporting the concern must keep the information confidential and not share the concern with others apart from the Head Teacher or those aware in the senior leadership team.

Low-Level Concerns will not be referred to in references unless they have been formalised into more significant concerns resulting in disciplinary or misconduct procedures.

Whenever staff leave the **Goldsborough Sicklinghall Federation**, any record of low-level concerns which are stored about them will be reviewed as to whether or not that information needs to be kept. Consideration will be given to:

- a) whether some or all of the information contained within any record may have any reasonably likely value in terms of any potential historic employment or abuse claim so as to justify keeping it, in line with normal safeguarding records practice; or
- b) if, on balance, any record is not considered to have any reasonably likely value, still less actionable concern, and ought to be deleted accordingly.

The following flow-chart explains the process followed when a low-level concern is reported to the Headteacher:



**What is a low level concern?**

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold set out at KCSIE paragraph 338. 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
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

## 7. Key Reference Document

More detailed guidance and case studies on low-level concerns can be found in: Developing and implementing a low-level concerns policy: a guide for organisations which work with children (farrer.co.uk): [developing-and-implementing-a-low-level-concerns-policy.pdf](http://developing-and-implementing-a-low-level-concerns-policy.pdf) (farrer.co.uk)

## 8. Low Level Concern Form



### **Low Level Record of Concern Regarding a Staff Member**

Please use this form to share any concern, no matter how small, and even if no more than a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a way which is:

- Not consistent with the Goldsborough Sicklinghall Federation's Staff Code of Conduct
- Relates to their code of conduct outside of work, which even if it is not linked to a particular act or omission, has caused a sense of unease about the adult's suitability to work with children.

Where possible, please speak to the Headteacher. It is also helpful to document your concerns by using this form and handing it to the Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, please share your concerns with the Chair of Governors at the earliest possible convenience.

Date: .....

Member of staff reporting the concern: .....

Name of adult who is of concern: .....

Concern: .....

This form will be available to staff via:

- ✓ The Office
- ✓ DSLs
- ✓ The Senior Leadership Team