



Wakefield Grammar School Foundation

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Version	Date	Change details
V1.00	Dec 2021	Emma Gill
V1.01	August 2023	Emma Gill

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Low Level Concerns Policy

1. Context

This Policy relates to the whole of Wakefield Grammar School Foundation (hereafter known as WGSF) including the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations and law. Low-level concerns relate to the behaviour of all members of staff employed by the Foundation and is a statutory policy which needs to be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. It is a statutory policy and other relevant WGSF or individual school policies (including the Staff Code of Conduct policy and also national [Teacher Standards](#)).

2. Purpose

This policy sets out a framework whereby staff are expected to report concerns, no matter how small, about their own behaviour or that of another member of staff, volunteer, supply teacher, contractor or other person working in school. Its purpose is to help create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the clear values and expected behaviour set out in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy are lived, monitored, and reinforced.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the current statutory guidance – “Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023” [KCSIE 2023](#) and the [WGSF Whistleblowing Policy](#).

3. Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to all staff and other individuals who work or volunteer across the Foundation, whether in a school or working in other areas of WGSF.

4. Definition of a low-level concern

A low level concern, no matter how small, even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’, that a person working in or on behalf of the school, may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Foundation’s Staff Code of Conduct Policy and the Foundation’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. A low-level concern may not be school specific and could be because of information we know of other settings or personal knowledge.

The member of staff reporting should not decide whether they believe it to meet threshold or not - their role is to report concerns. The DSL / Head will make the decision about whether the allegations threshold is met and whether it is considered serious enough to make a referral to the LADO.

Examples of behaviour that *could* require reporting of a low-level concern 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
- Meeting with a child outside of school
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language
- inappropriate use of alcohol

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 (please refer to the school's Staff Code of Conduct), are shared responsibly and 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 our schools from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

4.1 Reporting low-level concerns

Where a low-level concern has been identified, this will be reported as soon as possible to the Head. However, it is never too late to share a low-level concern if this has not already happened. Where the Head is not available, the information will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), i.e. the most senior member of SLT acting in this role. Low-level concerns about the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be reported to the Head and those about the Head will be reported to the Chair of Governors.

Where the low-level concern has been reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, they will inform the Head of the details as soon as possible.

4.2 Recording concerns

A summary of the low-level concern should be written down, signed, timed, dated and shared by the person bringing the information forward. Where concerns are reported verbally to the Head, a record of the conversation will be made by the headteacher which will be signed, timed, and dated and kept in a confidential, locked cabinet within the Head's office.

4.3 Responding to low-level concerns

Where a low-level concern has been raised this will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

The Head will:

- Speak to the person reporting the concern to gather all the relevant information
- Speak to the individual about the concern raised to ascertain their response, unless advised not to do so by the LADO or police (HR advice may also need to be taken). Where necessary, further investigation will be carried out to gather all relevant information. This may involve speaking to any potential witnesses.

The information reported and gathered will then be reviewed to determine whether the behaviour is consistent with the Foundation's Staff Code of Conduct and to determine whether:

- no further action will be required
- additional training/guidance/support may be required to rectify the behaviour via normal day-to-day management processes (the member of staff should understand that failure to improve or a repeat of the behaviour may lead to further action being taken, e.g. via the Capability or Disciplinary Procedures)
- the behaviour is serious enough to consult with or refer to the LADO. In this circumstance a referral should be made to the LADO and HR advice taken. The allegations procedure within the Safeguarding Policy and Disciplinary Policy will then be followed:
 - when considered with any other low-level concerns that have previously been raised about the same individual the behaviour should be reclassified as an allegation and referred to the LADO or Police: a referral should be made to the LADO and HR advice taken. In this case the school's Staff Code of Conduct, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Disciplinary Policy will be followed.
 - When considered with any other low-level concerns that have previously been made, records will be made of: all internal conversations including any relevant witnesses, all external conversations, e.g. with the LADO, the decision and the rationale for it and any action taken.

4.4 Can the reporting person remain anonymous?

The person bringing forward the concern will be named in the written record. Where they request to remain anonymous, this will be respected as far as possible. However, there may be circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. where a fair disciplinary investigation is needed or where a later criminal investigation is required.

4.5 Should staff report concerns about themselves (i.e. self-report)?

It may be the case that a person finds themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, or might appear compromising to others; or they may have behaved in a manner which on reflection they consider falls below the standard set out in the Staff Code of Conduct. In these circumstances they should self report. This will enable a potentially difficult situation to be addressed at an early opportunity if necessary.

Where behaviour is consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, feedback will be given to both parties (ie 'reporter' and 'reported') to explain why the behaviour was consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct.

4.6 Should the low-level concerns file be reviewed?

The records will be reviewed termly by the Head and whenever a new low-level concern is added, so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and referred to the LADO if required. A record of these reviews will be retained

by each Head and kept confidentially within their computer folder (only to be shared if required by HR or LADO),

5. References

Low-level concerns will not be included in references unless a low-level concern, or group of concerns, has met the threshold for referral to the LADO and found to be substantiated.

6. What is the role of the Governors?

The Head will regularly inform the Governors about the implementation of the low-level concerns policy including any evidence of its effectiveness, e.g. with relevant data and via the termly Governor Education Committee report. The safeguarding governor will also review an anonymised sample annually to ensure that these concerns have been handled appropriately, as part of their role.