



Balksbury Federation

Low-Level Concerns (LLC) Policy

Policy Statement

Balksbury Federation recognises our statutory and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and understands that staff play a vital role in meeting these responsibilities.

The federation works to ensure that we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the federation are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Definitions within this document

The terms 'employees' and 'staff' throughout this policy refer to all:

- Teachers
- Support staff – Learning Support Assistants, Admin and Site etc.
- Supply teachers
- Volunteers
- Local Authority visiting staff
- Contractors

Aims

- To help create a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly with the right person and are recorded and dealt with appropriately
- To enable the federation to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early
- To minimise the risk of abuse occurring
- To ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the federation are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries in accordance with the ethos and values of the federation
- To help create an environment where staff are comfortable to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards

Definition of Low-Level Concern (LLC)

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. It means that the adult's behaviour towards a child does not meet the harm threshold for an allegation.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) defines a low-level concern as: *'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'*

Examples of LLCs include, but is 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

Avoiding Low-level concerning behaviour

Behaviour defined as a 'low-level concern' can exist on a spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate but is not in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Staff education and reinforcement on avoiding circumstances which may put them in a difficult situation is key to avoiding the need for dealing with these types of concerns.

Our federation ensures that staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is through their induction and regularly reinforcement of documents such as:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and regular training
- Teachers' Standards (for teaching staff)

Reporting a Low-Level Concern

Low-level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the **Headteacher** as per the federation's Child Protection procedures. If the concern is about the Headteacher this should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

Low-level concerns about supply staff, contractors and local authority visiting staff will also be reported to their employers.

Dealing with a Low-Level Concern

Where a concern is raised about the practice or behaviour of a member of staff, this information must be recorded and passed to the **Headteacher**.

The Headteacher must then make an assessment to determine if the matter is a 'low-level concern' or an 'allegation' and then follow one of the following routes:

- Allegations that meet the harm threshold will be referred to the LADO for advice
- Low-level concerns that the federation feel may need further guidance on will be referred to the LADO for advice
- Low-level concerns that the federation feel they can deal with internally will be dealt with via the federation's usual child protection investigation process

The federation will engage with its HR provider where it is necessary to undertake further investigation and/or deal with the concern under relevant processes.

Recording a Low-Level Concern

All low-level concerns should be formally recorded by a member of staff when they are made aware of them. This record should then be passed to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if the concern is about the Headteacher).

The record should include:

- Details of the concern
- The context in which the concern arose
- The outcome of the investigation and any action taken
- The name of the individual sharing their concerns (if known) (unless the individual wishes to remain anonymous which must be respected as far as possible)

Relevant records will be retained confidentially on the personnel file. A separate record will also be kept of low-level concerns to more easily identify patterns that may involve more than one member of staff. All records must be kept in line with data protection principles.

Reviewing a Low-Level Concern

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the Headteacher will decide on a course of action, which may include:

- Disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings
- Management Advice, including recommendations for training
- Referral to the LADO (where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold)

The federation will take advice, where appropriate, from their HR provider in respect of low-level concerns.

The federation will also review appropriate policies and training, or other wider cultural issues in the federation, to see whether anything needs to be done to minimise the risk of similar behaviour happening again.

References

Low-level concerns will not be included in a reference unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference (e.g. misconduct or poor performance). Low-level concerns which relate solely to safeguarding will not be included in a reference.

A Low-level concern (or group or pattern of concerns) which has met the harm threshold and has therefore been referred to the LADO may be included in a reference depending on the circumstances.

Related guidance

The policy links to the following guidance documents:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (DfE)
- Model Code of Conduct (Manual of Personnel Practice)
- Avoiding Allegation guidance (Manual of Personnel Practice)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy

Employees of non-Hampshire County Council bodies are excluded from this policy and should refer to their own employer's policies and procedures.

Policy Review: Autumn 2025