



Island Learning Centre

Low Level Concerns Policy

2023-2025

To be read in conjunction with **Staff Code of Conduct - Social Media Policy – Acceptable IT staff use policy**, and **Protected Disclosures Whistleblowing Policy**.

The above policies are designed to ensure staff who work with children behave appropriately and maintain a culture of safer working practices.

Safeguarding commitment – Aims of Low Level Concern Policy

- To create a culture in which all concerns about adults (including where the threshold for an allegation is not met) are shared responsibly and with the right person, and are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
- To ensure an open and transparent culture; enable all staff to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working for or with Island Learning Centre are clear about professional boundaries and act within them, in accordance with the ethos and values of our School.

This Policy enables all staff to share concerns **(no matter how small)** about their own or other staff members behaviour with the head teacher or designated safeguarding lead the absence of the head teacher. The focus is on low-level concerns regarding adults' behaviour towards children –including the options of selfreporting by adults, or adults sharing such concerns about the behaviour of other adults. Whilst it does not focus on the sharing of concerns (i) about adults by children, or (ii) in the context of peer-on-peer abuse, or (iii) in the context of adults' behaviour towards adults, we believe that the same fundamental principles should nonetheless apply.

The Child protection policy set out the procedure for Allegations that meet the harm threshold. This procedure should be used in all cases when it is alleged a member of staff, supply staff, volunteer, Governor, or another adult who works with children has either:

- ☐ **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;**
or ☐ **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;**
or ☐ **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children; or**
- ☐ **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.**

The child protection policy provides specific procedures on how to respond to the above cases.

Low Level Concern Definition

A low-level concern is any concern about an adult's behaviour towards a child that does not meet the allegation threshold set out above, or is not otherwise serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a manner which:

- **is not consistent with the Code of Conduct, or policies stated above.** 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.**

Staff do not need to be able to determine in each case whether their concern is a low-level concern, or if it is in fact serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO, or meets the threshold of an allegation. Once staff share what they believe to be a low-level concern, that determination will be made by the head teacher.

(See Appendix 1 - Spectrum of Behaviour)

Importance of Sharing low level concerns

Abuse, including sexual abuse, within organisations is an increasingly well documented phenomenon. In relation to grooming type behaviours, it is usually the case that predatory conduct was observed and regarded as questionable at the time by others.

It is also the case that offenders groom the potentially protective adults and systems around them. It is also often the case that such conduct was not shared with the relevant individual at the organisation until after substantive abuse was alleged against the offender.

A number of serious case reviews show that despite concerns about an offender being known, when taken in isolation, they were not treated seriously or considered as meeting the thresholds for reporting to the LADO at the time.

At Island Learning Centre we ensure the following actions are in place in order to reduce risks related to offending:

- reduce the opportunity and acceptability of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour;
- increase the effort required to offend;
- increase the risk and perception of the risk of detection;
- ensure there are robust and effective staff support systems in place;
- Avoid over-relying on DBS and checks

Sharing low level concerns

If a member of staff believes that they or another adult may have acted in a manner which:

- **is not consistent with the Code of Conduct, key policies and guidelines.**

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.**

Staff will verbally pass this concern directly to the Head Teacher, HT, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the absence of the head teacher.

Responding and Recording

The HT **will** complete the following actions –

- Ask the member of staff reporting the concern to describe the concern, including the context, the antecedence and the behaviour or concerning actions. The HT will also ask the member of staff to record their concern on a low level concern reporting form (**Appendix 2**) This will include the brief context in which the low level concern arose, the concern itself and any relevant incidents.
- Review the information and determine whether the behaviour –**(i)** is entirely consistent with the Code of Conduct, policies and the law, **(ii)** constitutes a low-level concern, **(iii)** is serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO **(iv)** when considered with any other low-level concerns that have previously been raised about the same individual, should be reclassified as an allegation and referred to the LADO/other relevant external agencies;
- Seek advice from the LADO in cases where there is in any doubt whatsoever in relation to point **(iii)**
- Speak to the individual about whom the low level concern has been raised (unless advised not to do so by the LADO/other relevant external agencies, where they have been contacted)
- Make appropriate records of all internal conversations – including with the person who initially shared the low-level concern and the adult about whom the concern has been shared.
- Make appropriate records of all external conversations such as the LADO
- Record any specific action taken.

Follow up actions

If the HT decides that the low level concern amounts to -

(i) entirely consistent behaviours and actions with the code of conduct and policies,

The HT will –

- inform the individual in question what was shared about their behaviour, and give them an opportunity to respond to it.
- Speak to the person who shared the low-level concern to provide them with feedback about how and why the behaviour is consistent with the Code of conduct, policies and the law.

(ii) behaviours/actions which do constitutes a low-level concern,

The HT will respond in a sensitive and proportionate way. Ensuring that the concerns when raised are handled promptly and effectively whilst also protecting staff from any potential false allegations or misunderstandings. Any conversation with the member of staff will form part of an initial assessment giving every opportunity for the member of staff to explain their behaviour/actions in the context of the School values, the code of conduct and relevant policies.

Such conversation should include being clear with the individual as to why their behaviour is concerning, problematic or inappropriate, what change is required in their behaviour, enquiring what, if any, support they might need in order to achieve and maintain that, and being clear about the consequences if they fail to reach the required standard or repeat the behaviour in question.

Ongoing and transparent monitoring of the individual's behaviour may be appropriate. An action plan or risk assessment which is agreed with the individual, and regularly reviewed with them, may also be appropriate. The HT/DSL will also consider whether the concerns in question trigger either the disciplinary, grievance or whistleblowing procedures.

(iii) behaviours/actions that appear sufficiently serious,

The HT will make a referral to the LADO. HT will follow the procedure set out in the with Child Protection Policy (Annex 5 – Allegations against adults who work with children)

Records

Records of low level concerns will be kept in a central low level concerns file. Where multiple low-level concerns have been shared regarding the same individual these will be kept in chronological order as a running record. These records will be kept confidential and held securely. The HT will review the central low-level concerns file periodically to ensure that all such concerns are being dealt with promptly and appropriately, and that any potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour are identified. Low-level concerns will not be referred to in references unless they relate to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or consistent poor performance. However, where a low-level concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral and found to be substantiated, this will be referred to in a reference.

Importance of Self-reporting

Members of staff may find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others. A member of staff may have behaved in a way that on reflection falls below the expectations as set out in the key policies and guidelines. Self-reporting in these circumstances is encouraged as it demonstrates awareness of the expected behavioural standards and self- awareness of an individual's actions and how they could be perceived.

Anonymity

If a member of staff raising the concern does not wish to be named, then Island Learning Centre will respect that persons wishes as far as possible. However, anonymity cannot be promised to those who share concerns as there may be circumstances where the staff member will need to be named for example - in circumstances where a fair disciplinary investigation is needed.

Governance

The head teacher will inform the Governance Body about the implementation of the low-level concerns policy and any evidence as to its effectiveness. The Governor responsible for safeguarding will also review an anonymised sample of low-level concerns at regular intervals, in order to ensure that these concerns have been responded to promptly and appropriately.

Appendix 1 - Spectrum of Behaviour

Allegation -Behaviour which indicates 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 he or she would 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*

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 the Federations Code of Conduct/ Policies and Guidelines 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 Federations Code of Conduct, policies and guidelines and the law.

Appendix 2

| Low Level Concerns - Reporting Form | | | |
|---|--|-------------|--|
| <p>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 manner which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not consistent with the Code of Conduct,/Policies/Guidelines 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. <p>Please provide a concise record – including brief context in which the low-level concern arose, and details which are chronological, and as precise and accurate as possible – of any such concern and relevant incidents.</p> | | | |
| Staff Member | | Date | |
| Description/Detail of the low level concern | | | |
| Signed | | | |
| Received by DSL/HT | | Date | |

Actions taken by DSL/HT

Signed