



KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION

PART FOUR: ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ADULTS

All adults working with children and young people in an education setting need to understand the importance of recording and reporting low-level concerns.



Allegation/concerns have been separated into two sections

1. Allegations that may meet the harms threshold
2. Allegation/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold / 'low level concerns'



Creating a Safe Culture

Governing bodies and proprietors need:

- policies and processes in place to deal with any concerns;
- a system to record concerns;
- low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. Eg 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;
- a transparent open culture where all concerns about adults are shared, recorded and dealt with appropriately; and,
- to ensure that adults working in the organisation are clear about professional boundaries.

Low-Level Concerns

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it 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; and,
- does not meet the allegations threshold or not considered serious enough to refer to the LADO.

Examples

- Being over friendly with children
- Having favourites
- 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.

Sharing Low-Level Concerns

Low-level concerns should be reported to an nominated person that the school has decided on such as a Values Guardian/ Safeguarding Champion. Where there are concerns/allegations about the headteacher or principal, this should be referred to the chair of governors, chair of the management committee or proprietor of an independent school.

The governing body or proprietor should ensure:

- staff code of conduct, behaviour policies and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively;
- appropriate action is taken to safeguard children; and,
- a whole school or college approach to dealing with any concerns.

It is important staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where:

- 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.



Recording Low-Level Concerns

The Head, Principal or DSL should record all low-level concerns. Records should include:

- the details of the concern;
- how the concern arose; and,
- the actions taken.

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern is identified, the school or college should decide on a course of action.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022: Updates and Changes

These changes come into effect 1st September 2022

Creating a Safe Culture

Throughout the process in handling allegations and at conclusion of a case in which an allegation is substantiated, the LADO should review the circumstances of the case with the case manager to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the school's or college's procedures to help prevent similar events in the future.

This should include issues arising from any decision to suspend the member of staff, the duration of the suspension and whether or not suspension was justified. Lessons should also be learnt from the use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. The LADO and case manager should consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

For all other cases, where the allegation concluded to be either, unfounded, false, malicious, or unsubstantiated the case manager (and if they have been involved the LADO) should consider the facts and determine whether any lessons can be learned and if improvements can be made.

Low-Level Concerns

The guidance now makes clear that schools and colleges can choose to whom low-level concerns about staff are reported to, so long as it is clear in their policies.

All staff should be aware of how to handle low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing, with KCSIE 2022 being clear that this information should be contained in the staff behaviour policy; also known as the code of conduct.





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