



BURGESS HILL
— GIRLS —

Low Level Concerns Policy – All Staff	
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Responsible for Initiating Review of Policy	Head of Prep School & Deputy Head of School
Committee to Review	Welfare & Boarding Committee
Last Review Date	October 2022
Review Period	Annually
Approved by (Committee and Date)	Welfare & Boarding Committee October 2022
Effective Date of Policy	August 2022
Next Review Date	August 2023
Related Policies	Staff Code of Conduct



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Purpose

This policy is based upon the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022'. It sets out a framework where 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 at Burgess Hill Girls. The term Low Level Concern in no way reflects the importance with which the school will view allegations.

The 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 policy, our staff code of conduct and in the Teacher's Professional Standards are lived, monitored, and reinforced.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the current statutory guidance – 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Part 4, Section 2.

Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to all staff and other individuals who work or volunteer in Burgess Hill Girls.

Definition of a low-level concern (as defined in KCSIE 2022)

A low-level concern is any 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 Burgess Hill Girls Staff Code of Conduct, and
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to make a referral to the LADO

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Allegation that may meet the harm threshold (*KCSIE, 2022*)

The term 'allegation' means that it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; and/or
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; and/or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children. This may include behaviour that has happened outside of school.

Examples (provided in KCSIE 2022) of behaviour that could require reporting of a low-level concern, that don't meet the allegation threshold include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly or familiar with children;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone or other device unless for the purposes of social media eg: School Twitter, Instagram, Facebook. Once posted all photos should be deleted from the device.
- 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.

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 Safeguarding Policy), are shared responsibly and with the Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead, 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 potential false allegations or misunderstandings.



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Reporting low-level concerns

Where a low-level concern has been identified, this should be reported as soon as possible to the Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead. However, it is never too late to share a low-level concern if this has not already happened.

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.

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.

When concerns are reported, the Head or DSL will record the details of the concern on the Confide Portal.

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 (DSL and or HR advice may also need to be taken).



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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 school's Staff Code of Conduct:** no further action will be required
- **constitutes a low-level concern:** no further action is required, or additional training/guidance/support may be required to rectify the behaviour via normal day to day management processes. The employee should understand that failure to improve or a repeat of the behaviour may lead to further action being taken, e.g. via the school disciplinary procedures.
- **is serious enough to consult with or refer to the LADO:** a referral should be made to the LADO and DSL and or HR advice taken.

Allegations procedure within the Safeguarding Policy will be followed:

- 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 or Police: a referral should be made to the LADO and DSL and HR advice taken as necessary. In this case the school's Safeguarding Policy and Disciplinary Policy will be followed.

When considered with any other low-level concerns that have previously be made, records will be made on the Confide Portal 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;



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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.

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 to explain why the behaviour was consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct.

Should the low-level concerns file be reviewed?

The records will be reviewed periodically, 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 using the Confide Portal.

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.



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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. The safeguarding governor may also review an anonymised sample to ensure that these concerns have been handled appropriately.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually alongside the safeguarding policy to include any KCSIE updates.

Last Reviewed: August 2022	
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