



MacIntyre Academies

Low Level Concern Policy

To be read alongside the Academy Safeguarding Policy

| Version: | Changes/Updates | Responsibility: | Date: |
|----------|---|-----------------|--------|
| V2 | <p>Updated to refer to KCSIE 2022</p> <p>Clarification throughout that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the policy relates to any individual, rather than only members of staff.- where a low-level concern is raised to the Group Director, this may be shared and followed up by the Head of Operations, as his Deputy. <p>Removed the link to Farrer & Co 2020 guidance which was obsolete.</p> <p>Inserted example of LLC poster for clarity in section 6.</p> | Group Director | Feb 23 |

Person Responsible:

Group Director

Type of policy

Non-statutory

Date of first draft:

Dec 2021

Date of staff consultation:

Dec 2021 via MAT Safeguarding Forum

Date adopted by the Trust Board:

Mar 2022

Date reviewed:

Feb 2023

Date of next review:

Feb 2024

This policy should be read alongside:

- The Academy Safeguarding Policy
- MAT Staff Code of Conduct
- MAT Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

At Macintyre Academies Trust we take safeguarding very seriously. This includes ensuring that adults who work with children do so in a way that is in accordance with the ethos and policies set out by the Trust, including the Staff Code of Conduct. This policy sets out the detail and processes for staff regarding low-level concerns they may have.

2. Summary

It may be possible that an individual (be that a member of staff, a volunteer or a visitor) acts in a way that does not cause risk to children, but is however inappropriate. An individual who has such a concern about another individual should inform the Principal about their concern using the low-level Record of Concern Form. The form can be accessed electronically via a QR code featured on posters around the Academy. Alternatively, staff can download a form from the shared folder MAT Common/ Safeguarding.

Where a low-level concern relates to the conduct of a Principal, Head of School, Head of Care or Deputy Principal, or a member of the MAT Central Team this should be reported to the Group Director. This can be done via the alternative QR code on the low-level concern poster. An individual may also wish to report a low-level concern to the Group Director where they perceive a lack of action following having raised a low-level concern to the Academy Principal (e.g. not taking Low Level Concerns seriously enough in your view).

Where Low Level Concerns are raised with the Group Director, these may also be accessed and actioned by the Head of Operations as his Deputy, as indicated on the posters.

3. Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022

The following is taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 Part Four.

424. *As part of their whole school or college approach to safeguarding, schools and colleges should ensure that they promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school or college (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.*

425. *Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:*

- *enable schools and colleges to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early*
- *minimise the risk of abuse, and*
- *ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school or college are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the institution.*

What is a low-level concern?

426. *The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern 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, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and*
- *does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:*
- *being over friendly with children*
- *having favourites*

- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children.

427. 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.

428. Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: 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.

429. It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly 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 schools and colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

4. Clarity around Allegation vs Low-Level Concern vs Appropriate Conduct

Allegation

Behaviour which indicates that 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 in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

(Note: If this is the case staff should act without delay: refer to the Academy Safeguarding Policy Section 13, or use the MAT Whistleblowing Policy)

A low-level concern

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.

Appropriate Conduct

Behaviour which is entirely consistent with the Trust Code of Conduct, and the Law.

5. Storing and use of Low-Level Concerns and follow-up information

Records of low-level concerns will be stored confidentially in accordance with the MAT Data Protection Policy and MAT Data Retention Schedule.

It is at the discretion of the Academy Principal as to whether the low-level concerns are accessible only to them as Principal, or whether access is shared with one other nominated Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, usually the Head of School or Deputy Principal. Details of who has access to the concerns raised are always clearly shown on the academy low-level concern Poster.

Where low-level Concerns relate to the Principal (and/or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) they will be reported to the Group Director. Only the Group Director and Head of Operations, as his Deputy, will have access to these.

The staff member reporting the concern must keep the information confidential and not share the concern with others as this could prejudice future action or process.

Low-level Concerns will not be referred to in references unless they have been formalised into more significant concerns resulting in disciplinary or misconduct procedures.

When staff leave Macintyre Academies, any record of Low-Level concerns which are stored about them will be reviewed as to whether that information needs to be kept. Consideration will be given to:

- a) whether some or all of the information contained within any record may have any reasonably likely value in terms of any potential historic employment or abuse claim so as to justify keeping it, in line with normal safeguarding records practice; or
- b) if, on balance, any record is not considered to have any reasonably likely value, still less actionable concern, it should be deleted accordingly in line with the MAT Retention Schedule.

6. Low level concern form

The form is available to all via:

- Posters which are found around the academy premises in places they can be used with discretion. The posters include a QR code linking to the electronic form. The form can be used anonymously, but offers the user a space to add their name.
- In document form via the shared drive in the directory MAT Common / Safeguarding

Importantly, Principals and the Group Director operate with an open-door policy and if a staff member feels more comfortable to have a face to face or telephone conversation, they are encouraged to do so.

Nagging doubt?

It's important to pass on those nagging doubts or things that give you a sense of unease about any adult working with children (or young people).

Do you feel that an adult working in (or on behalf of) Endeavour Academy or Endeavour House may have acted in a way that:

- Is not consistent with the staff code of conduct, (could also be inappropriate conduct outside of work)
- and
- Does not meet the allegations threshold (so you don't consider it a safeguarding concern)

These worries you may have are considered low level concerns and can be reported using the following QR codes. The QR codes also include a link to the relevant policies

Endeavour Academy



This QR code will take you to a quick form to report your concern to Ash for the Academy or Helen and Kevin for the House

If you prefer, you can also speak directly to them instead

Endeavour House



If your concern relates to:

- The Principal
- The Head of School
- The Deputy Principal



Then use this code to report it to Kevin Rodger and Gemma Deehan

 A printable form is available from MAT Common / Safeguarding

Access the Safeguarding Policy and Low Level Concerns Policy at www.endeavour-academy.org/policies-and-reports

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or earlier when required.

Appendix - **Process to follow when a Low-Level Concern is raised**

