



# Victoria

## ACADEMIES TRUST

### **Low Level Concerns Policy**

Date of Policy	July 2024	Review Period	1 Year
Date of Next Review	July 2025	AC or Board Approved	Board
Type of Policy	Trust	Signed (chair)	

## **Allegations made against/concerns raised in relation to teachers, including supply teachers, other staff, volunteers, and contractors**

Our aim is to provide a safe and supportive environment securing wellbeing and best possible outcomes for the children at our school. We take all possible steps to safeguard our children and to ensure that the adults who work at Victoria Academies Trust are safe to work with children. However, we do recognise that sometimes the behaviour of adults may lead to an allegation of abuse being made.

The executive leadership team ensures that there are procedures in place for dealing with the two sections covering two levels (see below) of concern and/or allegations against staff members, supply staff, volunteers, and contractors:

- Allegations that **may** meet the harms threshold.
- Allegation/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold, referred to for the purposes of this guidance as '**low level concerns**'.

### Allegations that **may** meet the harms threshold

We have an good understanding and give due regard to Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 guidance and Allegations of Abuse - SSCB where it is alleged that anyone working in our education setting providing education for children under 18 years of age, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors 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 he or she 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 relates to members of staff, supply staff, volunteers, and contractors, who are currently working in any education setting, regardless of whether the school or college is where the alleged abuse took place. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching and/or historical allegations of abuse will be referred to the police.

We understand that if we are not the employer of an individual, we still have responsibility to ensure allegations are dealt with appropriately. In no circumstances will we decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome. The executive leadership team (ELT) will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply teacher, or redeploy them to another part of the school, whilst they carry out their investigation.

If an allegation is made or information is received about an adult who works at our school which indicates that they may be unsuitable to work with children, the member of staff receiving the information should inform the Head Teacher immediately. Should an allegation be made against the Head Teacher, this will be reported to the executive leadership team.

The Head Teacher or ELT will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day. No member of staff or ELT will undertake further investigations before receiving advice from the LADO.

### **Learning lessons**

It is important that lessons are learnt when managing all levels and types of allegations.

The Head Teacher will review the circumstances of all substantiated cases with the LA's LADO to determine whether improvements can be made to the school's procedures to help prevent similar events in the future. This will be done throughout the entirety of the process and at conclusion.

Lessons will also be learnt from the use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. The LADO and case manager will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

Where an allegation is concluded to be either unfounded, false, malicious or unsubstantiated the Head Teacher/ELT (and if they have been involved the LADO) will consider the facts of each case and determine whether any lessons can be learned, and improvements made.

### **Allegation/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold - referred to for the purposes of this guidance as 'low level concerns'**

At Victoria Academies Trust we promote an open and transparent culture in which **all** concerns about adults are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Creating this culture enables us to identify inappropriate, problematic, or concerning behaviour early, minimising the risk of abuse and ensuring that adults who work in or on behalf of our schools are clear about professional boundaries and act within them in accordance with our ethos and values.

#### **What is a low-level concern?**

Low level does not mean that the concern is insignificant. It is any concern, no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or nagging doubt that an adult working in or on behalf of the school 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 pupils.

All staff have a good understanding of what constitutes a low-level concern, and our ELT ensure that these low-level concerns are included as part of our staff code of conduct and safeguarding policies. Head Teachers and the Director of School for safeguarding will deliver annual training for all staff.

### **Sharing low-level concerns**

We understand how crucial it is that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively will also protect those working in or on behalf of our setting from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

If we are in any doubt as to whether information shared about a member of our staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harms threshold, we will consult with the LADO.

Any member of staff or volunteer who does not feel confident to raise their concerns with the Head Teacher or ELT knows to contact the LADO.

The school has a legal duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or if there is reason to believe the member of staff has committed one of a number of listed offences, and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity or would have been removed had they not left. The DBS will consider whether to bar the person. If these circumstances arise in relation to a member of staff at our school, a referral will be made as soon as possible after the resignation or removal of the individual in accordance with advice from the LADO and/or HR. The DSL has a responsibility to inform Barring service.

This policy needs to be used in conjunction with the school/trust staff code of conduct, KCSIE and The Trust Allegations policy.