



Castle Vale Nursery School

Acting Head Teacher: Christina Meakin

Making a difference. All of our children, all of the time.

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Castle Vale Nursery School Managing Low level Concerns Policy

It is the aim of the Governing Body of Castle Vale Nursery School and Children's Centre to support the implementation of policies and procedures which support the vision of:

Making a difference. All of our children, all of the time.

We follow the policies and procedures from Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) which includes the governments prevent strategy.

Equal opportunities for all - 'An entitlement to learning must be an entitlement for all pupils'. Our school uses the Equality Act 2010: To treat everyone Equally and Fairly regardless of: Age, Disability, Gender, Gender Identity, Race and Nationality, Religion or belief, Pregnancy, Marriage, Sexual Orientation. Our children are treated as individuals with their own abilities, difficulties, attitudes, backgrounds and experiences.

We are a Silver RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL This policy is in accordance with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests of the child), Article 12 (respect for the views of the child), Article 13 (freedom of expression), Article 16 (right to privacy), Article 23 (children with a disability), Article 28 (right to education), Article 29 (goals of education), Article 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups), Article 31 (leisure, play and culture).

1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy sets out our approach to managing 'low-level' concerns about adults working in or on behalf of our nursery. It is important that schools and colleges have appropriate policies and processes in place to manage and record any such concerns and take appropriate action to safeguard children. (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025)

The purpose of this policy is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which Castle Vale Nursery School's values and expected behaviour set out in the staff code of conduct are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff. (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025)

If implemented correctly, this should:

- enable schools and colleges to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
 - minimise the risk of abuse, and
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- 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. Keeping Children Safe in Education
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2. What is a Low-Level Concern?

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. (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025)

Low-level concerns are differentiated from concerns that can cause **harm**. The harms threshold is the point at which a concern is no longer low-level and constitutes a threat of harm to a child. This threshold is defined as an accusation that an adult 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.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, including behaviour that has happened outside of school.

While low-level concerns are, by their nature, less serious than concerns which meet the harms threshold, the school understands that many serious safeguarding concerns, e.g., child sexual abuse, often begin with low-level concerns, e.g., being overly friendly with children. The school will ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of recognising concerns before they escalate from low level to serious, wherever possible.

Examples of low-level concerns 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.
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(Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025)

Additional examples relevant to our nursery setting:

- Inappropriate conversations with children about personal matters
- Not following nappy changing procedures appropriately
- Excessive physical contact beyond what is necessary for care
- Sharing personal contact details with parents inappropriately
- Comments about a child's appearance that could be misinterpreted

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.

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.

3. Reporting a Low-Level Concern

- Speak directly to the Headteacher (Christina Meakin) or Deputy DSL (Izzie Darby)
- Complete a Low-Level Concern Report Form (see Appendix A)
- Reports can be made verbally initially but must be followed up in writing
- Anonymous reports will be accepted, though we encourage staff to identify themselves where possible

At Castle Vale Nursery School, staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, 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.

Low-level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If we are in any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, Castle Vale Nursery School should consult with their LADO.

4. Recording Low-Level Concerns

All low-level concerns should be recorded in writing. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible.

Our recording system:

- All low-level concerns will be recorded on the Low-Level Concern Report Form
- Records will be stored electronically and will be password protected and stored on a secure, encrypted system
- Records will be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Keeping Children Safe in Education

5. Responding to Low-Level Concerns

If the concern has been raised via a third party, the headteacher (or a nominated deputy) should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously, and
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

Our response procedure:

1. Initial assessment - The Headteacher will review the concern within 24 hours
2. Gather information - Speak to all relevant parties including the individual about whom the concern is about to give them the opportunity to respond.
3. Determine what further action may need to be taken.
 - Determine whether the concern is unfounded, a low-level concern or whether the concern is serious enough to be escalated and dealt with as an allegation.
 - Determine whether the concern, when considered alongside any other low-level concerns previously made about the same individual, should be reclassified as an allegation
 - Consult with and seek advice from LADO if there is any doubt that the low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold
 - Referral to disciplinary procedures (if appropriate)
4. Ensure accurate and detailed records are kept of all internal and external conversations regarding evaluating the concern, and any action or decisions taken.

Where the concern is unfounded

If it is discovered upon evaluation that the low-level concern refers to behaviour that was not considered to be in breach of the Staff Code of Conduct, the Headteacher will speak to the individual about whom the concern was made to discuss their behaviour, why and how the behaviour may have been misconstrued, and what they can do to avoid such misunderstandings in the future. The Headteacher will also speak to the individual who shared the concern, outlining why the behaviour reported is consistent with school standards and the law. The headteacher will take care to ensure that conversations with individuals who reported concerns that transpired to be unfounded do not deter that individual from reporting concerns in the future. The Headteacher will discuss the concern with the SLT/DSL to discern whether the behaviour, and the reporting of this

behaviour, is indicative of ambiguity in the school policies or procedures, or the training it offers to staff. Where such ambiguity is found, the DSL and headteacher will work together to resolve this with input from other staff members, as necessary.

Where the concern is low-level

Where the Headteacher determines that a concern is low-level, the school will respond to this in a sensitive and proportionate manner. The following procedure will be followed:

- The Headteacher holds a meeting with the individual about whom the concern was reported, during which they will:
 - Talk to the individual in a non-accusatory and sympathetic manner.
 - Inform them of how their behaviour was perceived by the individual who reported the concern (without naming them, where possible).
 - Clearly state what about their behaviour was inappropriate and problematic.
 - Discuss the reasons for the behaviour with the individual.
 - Inform the individual clearly what about their behaviour needs to change.
 - Discuss any support that the individual may require in order to achieve the proper standards of behaviour.
 - Allow the individual the opportunity to respond to the concern in their own words.
 - The Headteacher will ask the individual to re-read the Staff Code of Conduct.
 - The DSL and the headteacher will consider whether the individual should receive guidance, supervision, or any further training.
 - Where considered appropriate in the circumstances, the Headteacher will develop an action plan, with input from the individual, that outlines ongoing and transparent monitoring of the individual's behaviour and any other support measures implemented to ensure the staff member's behaviour improves.
 - Where it is necessary to undergo an investigation into the behaviour, this will be done discreetly, and information will only be disclosed to individuals on a need-to-know basis.
 - Where any pupil or other individual has been made to feel uncomfortable by the individual's behaviour, they will be offered pastoral support, where appropriate. The Headteacher will ensure that all details of the low-level concern, including any resultant actions taken, are recorded, and securely stored in line with the Data Protection Policy.

The Headteacher will ensure that these records are kept organised and up-to-date, and that it is easy to refer to them if any other concerns are reported about the same individual.

The specific approach to handling low-level concerns will be adapted on a case-by-case basis. It is unlikely that a low-level concern will result in disciplinary procedures; however,

individuals may be given warnings in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure where behaviour does not improve once it is brought to their attention. Where behaviour does not improve over a longer period, the concerns will be escalated and dealt with.

Where the Concern is Evaluated as Serious

The Head teacher may decide on evaluation that a concern is more serious than originally thought, e.g., alongside previous concerns. Where this decision is made, the concern will be escalated and dealt with as an allegation. The Head teacher will then follow the procedures laid out in the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

6. Review of Patterns

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, Castle Vale Nursery School should decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low-level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO (as per Part four, Section one KCSIE).

Our review process:

- The Headteacher will review all low-level concern records termly
- Any patterns or repeated concerns about an individual will trigger a formal review

Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

7. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Low-level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

8. References

Low-level concerns should not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference.

9. Retention of Records

Castle Vale Nursery School will retain information at least until the individual leaves their employment.

10. Staff Training and Awareness

All staff will:

- Receive training on this policy during induction
- Receive annual refresher training on low-level concerns
- Have access to this policy at all times
- Be encouraged to ask questions if they are unsure about any aspect

11. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary procedure

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and DSL, and in response to any new safeguarding requirements or concerns surrounding the wider cultural issues in the school. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2026.

Appendix A: Low-Level Concern Report Form

CONFIDENTIAL

Your details	
Name	
Role	
Date and time of completing this form	
Details of the low-level concern	
Name and role of the staff member the concern relates to	
Date, time and location of the incident	
Details of the concern Please include as much detail as possible. Think about the following: What behaviour and/ or incident are you reporting? What exactly happened? What was said/done, who was present, and the context.	
Why does the behaviour and/ or incident concern you? What is it about the behaviour that has caused you concern? Why do you believe the behaviour and/ or incident is not consistent with our Staff Code of Conduct?	
Have you discussed this with anyone else? If yes, who?	

Any other relevant information?	
Signature	
Date	
FOR USE BY THE HEAD TEACHER UPON RECEIPT OF CONCERN	
Date and time concern received	
Head Teacher's Signature	
Actions to be taken, e.g. no action/ investigation/ reclassification as allegation meeting the harms threshold.	
