

# École Française de Bristol



L'École Française de Bristol

Pour faire vivre ton français

## Low Level Concerns Policy

<b>Last review date:</b>	<b>December 2025</b>
<b>Next review date:</b>	<b>December 2026</b>

## Introduction

A positive culture where concerns can be identified and spoken about openly is a vital component of a strong safeguarding system. All adults who have contact with children in our setting must behave appropriately and behaviour which is not consistent with the standards and values of our setting and which does not meet the expectations set out in our staff code of conduct, needs to be addressed. Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum – from the inadvertent or thoughtless, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. It is crucial that all concerns about adults, including allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low level concerns), are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately.

## Legislation

This policy is in line with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025**. Although written for schools, early years settings must have regard for KCSIE as required by the **EYFS 2025**.

This policy also aligns with:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- EYFS 2025 Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements
- Bristol City Council LADO procedures
- The Prevent Duty
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018

## Aims

- To create a transparent and open culture where concerns can be shared safely.
- To ensure all staff understand professional boundaries and expectations.
- To identify and address concerns early to minimise risks to children.
- To protect staff from false allegations and professional misunderstandings.
- To ensure compliance with KCSIE 2025, EYFS 2025, safer recruitment, and suitability monitoring requirements.
- To support pattern-spotting so that repeated low-level concerns can be escalated appropriately.

## Terminology – Allegations, Concerns and Harm Threshold

It is important to recognise that, in practice, the words 'allegation' and 'concern' can be and are used interchangeably by different people. Sometimes individuals may shy away from the word 'allegation' and express it as a 'concern' instead. The crucial point is that whatever the language used, the behaviour referred to may, on the one hand, be capable of meeting the harm threshold (and hence be referable), or, on the other, it does not meet the harm threshold (in which case it should be treated as a low-level concern). So, the focus should not be on the language used by the person disclosing it; the focus should, instead, be on the behaviour being described.

## Allegations That May Meet the Harm Threshold

An allegation meets the harm threshold if it is alleged that a person working 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** (including behaviour in their personal life, online life, or in the community).

Such allegations **must be referred to the LADO**.

## **Allegations That Don't Meet the Harm Threshold – Low Level Concerns**

A low-level concern is **any concern, however small**, that an adult's behaviour:

- is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct
- may be inappropriate, unprofessional, or represent poor judgement
- causes a sense of unease ("nagging doubt")
- could indicate emerging boundary issues
- could, over time, form part of a pattern
- involves conduct **inside or outside work**, including digital behaviour

Low-level concerns do not meet the harm threshold but **must still be recorded, reviewed, and appropriately addressed**.

### **Procedure for Dealing with a Low-Level Concern.**

Concerns should be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy. Anonymous reporting is permitted, though complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Staff are encouraged, wherever possible, to be named to support a culture of openness.

Staff who feel unable to report internally may use the **Whistleblowing Policy**, as required by KCSIE and EYFS.

### **DSL Review and Initial Response**

The DSL/DDSL will:

1. Make suitable enquiries (including speaking with the individual concerned and any witnesses).
2. Review the behaviour to determine whether it:
  - (i) is consistent with the Code of Conduct and law
  - (ii) constitutes a low-level concern
  - (iii) may merit **consultation with the LADO** (no-names basis if appropriate)
  - (iv) forms part of a **pattern of concerns** that may now meet the threshold
  - (v) **meets the harm threshold** and must be referred to the LADO
3. Where there is any uncertainty, the DSL **will seek LADO advice**.
4. Address the concern sensitively. This may involve supervision, reflective conversation, additional training, or early disciplinary management.

Where the behaviour is consistent with the Code of Conduct, the DSL will provide feedback and record the rationale.

Feedback will also be provided to the reporting individual.

### **Digital and Online Behaviour**

Low-level concerns include misuse of:

- personal mobile phones
- social media
- messaging apps
- unapproved communication with parents or pupils
- images or recordings of children
- online accounts that blur professional boundaries

## Parents Raising Concerns (EYFS requirement)

When a parent or carer raises a concern about staff behaviour:

- The DSL/Manager will determine whether it is a complaint, low-level concern, or allegation.
- EYFS **28-day complaints handling** requirements apply where relevant.
- LADO advice will be sought where needed.
- The parent will be informed of the rationale behind the categorisation.

## Record Keeping

A written record of all low-level concerns will be made using the Low-Level Concerns Recording Form.

Records will include:

- Name (unless anonymity is requested)
- Details of the concern
- Context
- Witness statements
- Actions taken
- LADO consultation notes
- Chronology of multiple concerns

The central low-level concerns file will be:

- secure
- confidential
- accessible only to DSL, DDSL, and Registered Person
- **reviewed regularly to identify patterns**

When a staff member leaves, records will be reviewed to decide whether they must be retained for safeguarding or legal purposes.

## Self-Reporting

Staff should feel safe and confident to self-report if:

- they believe their behaviour may have been misinterpreted
- they may have breached the Code of Conduct
- they found themselves in a situation that could appear compromising

Self-reporting is strongly encouraged under KCSIE 2025.

Self-reporting is an important means of maintaining a culture where everyone aspires to the highest standards of conduct and behaviour.

## **Supporting Staff**

EFB has a duty of care to its staff. Concerns will be handled sensitively, discreetly and with a need-to-know approach. Support will be provided depending on the nature of the concern.

## **Concerns Raised by Parents or Carers**

The DSL/Manager will distinguish between:

- a cause for concern
- a complaint
- a low-level concern
- an allegation

Parents will be informed of the rationale for the decision, and EYFS statutory requirements for complaints handling will be followed.

## **Record Keeping (retention, confidentiality, chronology)**

- A written record of all low-level concerns will be made, using the setting's Low-Level Concerns Recording Form. This will be used to record details of the concern and the enquiry into it.
- We will retain all records of low-level concerns (including those which are subsequently deemed to relate to behaviour which is entirely consistent with the Staff Code of Conduct) in a central low-level concerns file. Where multiple low-level concerns have been shared regarding the same individual, these will be kept in chronological order as a running record and with a timeline alongside.
- Records will be kept confidential and held securely and will only be accessed by those who need to access them. In most cases this will be the DSL, Deputy DSL and Registered Person.
- The rationale for storing such records on a central file, rather than in staff members' personnel files, is that (a) it makes it easier to address possible issues (particularly around clarity of Staff Code of Conduct) and review the file and spot any potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour; and (b) it reassures staff and encourages them to share low-level concerns.
- Where an issue also triggers our Disciplinary, Grievance or whistleblowing Procedures that requires records to be made and retained on a staff member's personnel file, this will be done in the normal way, in addition to the records of the low-level concern(s) being retained in a central low-level concerns file.
- The DSL or Deputy DSL will review the central low-level concerns file periodically to ensure that all such concerns are being dealt with promptly and appropriately, and that any potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour are identified. A record of these reviews will be made.
- There is no specific retention period for a low-level concerns record. We will therefore keep the record until further guidance states otherwise. However, when a member of staff leaves, any low-level concerns recorded about them will be reviewed to determine whether the record has any value (either as a safeguarding measure or its relevance to any future claims) and therefore necessary to keep or not.

## References

In line with KCSIE 2025:

- Substantiated allegations must appear in references.
- Low-level concerns must not appear unless:
  - they resulted in disciplinary action, or
  - relate to issues that would normally appear in a reference (e.g., sustained misconduct or performance issues).

## Appendix A: Level of Risk Table

**These examples are not exhaustive, nor will the examples set out below be appropriate in every context.**

LADO referral	Low level concern /LADO Guidance	Appropriate Conduct
<p>An allegation made which meets the threshold for referral to the LADO and appears in the first instance to meet the threshold for referral to police. Allegations that may meet the harms threshold relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children;</li> <li>• possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;</li> <li>• behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or</li> <li>• behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (including behaviour <b>outside work</b>, online behaviour, personal relationships, or community conduct)..</li> </ul>	<p>Behaviour/concerns that do not meet the setting's code of conduct but <b>may</b> not meet the allegation thresholds. Refer to setting's low level concern policy and procedure.</p> <p>There may have been a series or patterns of low-level concerns which cumulatively meet the threshold of an allegation, and result in a referral to LADO.</p> <p><b>If the designated safeguarding lead is unclear whether the incident meets the threshold of harm/risk of harm, they may need to seek guidance from the LADO before deciding if the concern or allegation meets the threshold of harm.</b></p>	<p>Behaviour which is consistent and in line with the setting's code of conduct and law.</p>
<p>Taking and sharing images of children in a state of undress, sexual Abuse.</p>	<p>Trying to help a child with intimate or personal care tasks which the child can undertake independently.</p>	<p>Using physical intervention to stop a child from running into the road during an outing.</p>
<p>Physically harming a child with intent, with or without leaving a mark. Force feeding, physical restraining or using force as a form of punishment, verbally bullying or humiliating, deliberately leaving children in soiled clothing.</p>	<p>Threatening to use corporal punishment.</p>	<p>A qualified first aider causes an injury when carrying out CPR on a casualty in cardiac arrest.</p>
	<p>Indulges in fun fights, tickling, or 'rough play' with children.</p>	
	<p>Use insensitive or unprofessional language or using inappropriate gestures around children including inappropriate nicknames which may demean, humiliate, or might be interpreted as such.</p>	
<p>Social care involvement with own children. Conviction or caution such as a conviction for assault.</p>	<p>Bringing the setting into disrepute, for example through the inappropriate use of social media.</p>	<p>Shouts at children if warning in an emergency/safety situation.</p>
	<p>Undermining the fundamental British values/expressing prejudicial views.</p>	
<p>Personal persistent noncompliance with setting policies (babysitting, changing procedures not adhered to, behaviour, lone working, mobile</p>	<p>Social contact or communication with children or parents and carers outside of the setting without agreement with the setting's manager.</p>	<p>Comforts a child who is hurt or distressed in line with setting's positive handling/code of conduct.</p>

phone, social media) persistent blurring of work life boundaries.	Discussing personal, sexual relationships in the presence of children.
	Showing favouritism to a child or behaving in a manner which is either favourable or unfavourable to children.
	Handling of children that is inconsistent with the setting's positive handling policy such as gripping a child's hand too tightly if holding hands.

## Appendix B: Record Keeping Form for Low Level Concern

### Low Level Concerns Recording Form ([available to print here](#))

<b>Date and time of record:</b>	
<b>Reporting</b> <i>(If the person who raises the low-level concern does not wish to be named, the DSL/manager will respect that person's wishes as far as possible. Anonymity can never be promised when adults share low level concerns. Where possible adults are encouraged to consent to being named to help create a culture of openness and transparency. If the adult is self-reporting, then they should put their own name and role here).</i>	
<b>Full Name of the adult reporting the concern:</b>	
<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Details of the adult involved</b> <i>(who the concern is about)</i>	
<b>Full Name:</b>	
<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Section 1. Details of the alleged incident/concern</b>	
<b>Date and time of incident:</b>	<b>Location of incident:</b>
<b>Details of the incident/concern:</b> <i>(Provide an accurate and precise account of the concern/incident in chronological order and include the context in which the low-level concern arose, who is involved and what has happened. Include details of any witnesses including witness statements, and a statement from the adult involved, include any other relevant or contextual information and precipitating factors that may be appropriate to factor in. Where the low-level concern is provided verbally then this form can be used to record the verbal conversation).</i>	
<b>Signed by:</b>	
<b>Section 2: To be completed by the DSL</b>	
<b>Conclusion of incident/concern:</b> <i>(Including rationale on why this concern does not meet the threshold of an allegation)</i>	
<b>Action taken:</b> <i>(This may include training, support and supervision, or the setting's disciplinary procedure being used to address conduct or performance, it may include strengthening the setting's own safeguarding policies and procedures).</i>	
<b>Review of actions taken:</b> <i>(Where multiple low-level concerns have been shared regarding the same individual, these will be kept in chronological order as a running record).</i>	
<b>Name of DSL:</b>	<b>Signature:</b>

Please use this form to record any concern (no matter how small) when an adult may have acted in a way which is not consistent with L'Ecole Francaise de Bristol's code of conduct (including relating to their conduct outside of work) if the concern does not meet the threshold of an allegation.

This record will be held securely in accordance with L'école Francaise de Bristol low-level concerns policy.