



LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS STATEMENT

2023-2026

MAT Board Approval:	October 2023
Next Review:	Autumn 2026
Member of Staff Responsible:	Vicki Shelley and Maggie Spence

To be read alongside the academy Safeguarding Policy and the Trust Allegations against Staff Policy, and the Trust Working in Academies: Code of Conduct.

Our Vision

'To Love, To Learn, To Serve' sums up the DoWMAT's vision for those who come together to create the MAT, enabling all to flourish both as individuals and in community with each other; living life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Our Values

To Love

The New Testament sums up the entire law as a call to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Galatians 5:14). The Bible teaches that we are only able to love because God first loved us (1 John 4:10). This love is expected to characterise the way in which the DoWMAT operates, makes decisions, builds relationships, and carries out its day-to-day business: each person putting the needs of others before their own, with a commitment to the flourishing of all. The exposition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that love is patient, kind, forgiving, generous, humble, trusting, respectful, hopeful, resilient and enduring. Those who learn and work in the DoWMAT, and all who come into contact with it, can expect to experience that love in the way that they are treated.



To Learn



The DoWMAT is a Christian learning community that is committed to enabling all to live a life of freedom and transformation as a result of the hope and wisdom that learning brings. Learning is at the heart of the Church of England’s vision for and commitment to education. Growing in wisdom is celebrated in the Bible and all are exhorted to listen, to seek guidance, to acquire knowledge and to learn discretion (Proverbs 1: 1-6), largely through human relationships and interactions. Jesus’ teaching, as summed up in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10), describes human beings who are learning to live a life that is characterised by humility, compassion, mercy, righteousness and peace. The learning that takes place within the DoWMAT is expected to be recognisably rooted in these godly characteristics and focused upon enabling the holistic development of people who are made in the image of God.

To Serve

Service and servant leadership, was a striking feature of the way in which Jesus lived his life. The example he gave to his disciples in washing their feet (John 13:1-17) provides us with a role model for the way in which we should seek to live in community with others. Putting the needs of others before our own, supporting people in their growth and development as holistic human beings, enabling people’s gifts and talents to come to the fore as a result of our service to them are all defining characteristics of the way in which the DoWMAT operates. In serving others and meeting their needs through generosity of spirit, we manifest God’s grace and love for others (1 Peter 4:8-11).



These core values underpin all aspects of our Trust as we strive to make a positive difference to the lives of all DoWMAT pupils whilst they are at school and in later life. Through these values, we can be sure our community is one of hope; a place of transformation and trust, where all are treated with respect and dignity.

OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONALS | COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS | STRONG SYSTEMS | CONFIDENT LEARNERS

All DoWMAT staff are asked to be vigilant and report any concerns in the most appropriate way. For **concerns where the allegations may meet the harms threshold**, the appropriate policy to follow would be the Allegations against Staff Policy.

For all **Low-Level concerns about Staff that do not meet the harm threshold**, it is recommended that DoWMAT staff follow the guidance in this statement, which is based on part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school
- Pre-employment vetting checks

NB: It is important to respond to and deal with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

Definition of low-level concerns

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – 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 allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating pupils

Sharing low-level concerns

DoWMAT recognises the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

This culture will be created by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others.
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns to the Headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns are about the Headteacher, they should be referred to the Chair of the Local Academy Board. If the concerns are about a member of the Central Team, they should be referred to the CEO. If they are about the CEO, they should be referred to the Chair of the DoWMAT Board of Directors.
- Empowering staff to self-refer.
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage.
- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system.

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Headteacher / CEO / Chair will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

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

The Headteacher / CEO / Chair will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the Trust's Working in Academies: code of Conduct. The Headteacher / CEO / Chair will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

Record keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken. (*Record Form included in Appendix 1*).

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority.

- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school / Trust plus 6 years unless barred from working with children.

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, the individual's employer will be notified, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

References

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance.

Appendix 1

Low Level Concern – Adults in School

Date:
Reported by:
Adult involved:
Incident:
Other Comments:
Action taken:
Follow up:
Information Passed to HT:
Signed: