

▶ **Safeguarding scenario:** "It's probably nothing... but it doesn't feel quite right."

As a former headteacher and safeguarding consultant, I've learned that many serious safeguarding concerns start with a member of staff trusting their instincts and speaking up about something that simply doesn't feel right.

 **Scenario**

A teaching assistant approaches the DSL and says: *"I'm not sure if this is a safeguarding concern, but I've noticed a colleague regularly messaging one of our older pupils through the school's online learning platform outside school hours. The messages appear friendly rather than educational. The pupil often talks about the staff member and seems excited when they receive messages. I've also overheard the colleague saying things like 'You can always message me if you need anything' and 'You don't need to tell anyone about our chats.' I don't think anything inappropriate has happened, but it has made me feel uncomfortable."*

 **Questions for reflection**

- Does this scenario raise any safeguarding concerns?
- What concerns relate to the adult's behaviour?
- What concerns might there be for the pupil involved?
- What should happen next?
- Would you feel confident reporting this as a low-level concern?

 **Suggested discussion points**

Yes. This should be reported and recorded as a potential low-level concern.

At this stage there may be no evidence of harm, but safeguarding is about recognising behaviours that fall outside professional boundaries before they escalate.


 **Potential adult behaviour concerns**


- Communication appears personal rather than educational.
- Contact is taking place beyond expected school purposes.
- An exclusive relationship may be developing.
- Requests for secrecy undermine transparency.
- The behaviour could represent boundary-blurring or early grooming behaviours.

 **What about the child?**

The pupil may be:

- Seeking reassurance, validation or belonging.
- Experiencing emotional difficulties.
- Struggling with friendships or family relationships.
- Showing signs of unmet needs.

 The strongest safeguarding cultures are built on professional curiosity and staff feeling confident enough to say:

 "I can't explain exactly why, but something doesn't feel right." **Those conversations often protect both children and staff.**