# Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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| 1.0 | January 2018 | To establish a trust-wide policy |
| 2.0 | November 2018 | To replace previous policy following an update to the Keeping Children Safe In Education Document |
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| 7.0 | September 2021 | To replace previous policy following an update to the Keeping Children Safe in Education Document |
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| 9.1 | February 2023 | Update to Trustee Safeguarding Lead |
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| 14.0 | January 2026 | Appointment of new Lead Trustee for Safeguarding |

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|---|---|---|
| 14.1 | April 2026 | Update to leadership responsibility for safeguarding |
| 15.0 | September 2026 | To replace previous policy following an update to the Keeping Children Safe in Education Document |
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# St Mary's Church of England First School

# Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The Nominated Lead Trustee for Safeguarding is
Richard Purchase

The person who takes leadership responsibility for safeguarding in Initio Learning Trust is
Brian Boyes

The person with day to day responsibility for safeguarding in Initio Learning Trust is Kelly Overhill, Trust Safeguarding Officer

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is
Mick Homer

Our Deputy Safeguarding Lead is/ Leads are
Lisa Thornicroft

# Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for Initio Learning Trust is based on a template provided by the Dorset Safeguarding and Standards Team; it reflects the Local Authority Interagency Safeguarding Procedures (on the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership website) and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026.

This Trust Policy has been designed to be adapted by headteachers and safeguarding leads to reflect each school's contextual information.

In drawing up the Trust's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, the Trust has considered the range of people who will refer to the Policy i.e. trustees, leaders, teaching staff, support and lunch staff, parent helpers, volunteers, supply staff etc, as well as students and parents. The Trust will monitor the implementation of the Policy as part of its annual monitoring cycle and will consider such issues as:

- How does the Trust and its schools demonstrate that staff have read and applied this Policy?
- How will a visiting staff member/teacher be made aware of the information contained within the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and their responsibility to comply?
- Who will inform volunteers from the local community about issues such as confidentiality or how to raise concerns about practice in a Trust school?
- The implications of the Policy on training for staff, trustees, leaders, DSLs etc.
- The ongoing involvement of the school's Children's Safeguarding Board in implementation of the Policy

This policy consists of three main documents:

A. The overarching safeguarding policy (statement of principles)

B. Detailed child protection procedures and

C. Child protection summary sheet. The latter is printed separately and provided routinely for those adults who will not have the opportunity to read this policy in its entirety but will have unsupervised contact, even as a 'one-off', with students on a temporary or intermittent basis such as supply, peripatetic or visiting professionals.

| Designated Safeguarding Lead | Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) | Nominated Safeguarding Trustee | Nominated Trust Safeguarding Lead | Nominated Trust Safeguarding Officer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mick Homer | Lisa Thornicroft | Richard Purchase | Brian Boyes | Kelly Overhill |

**Named personnel with designated responsibility regarding allegations against staff**

| Designated Senior Manager (this would normally be the Head teacher) | Deputy Designated Senior Manager |
|---|---|
| Mick Homer | Rox Crabb |

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**1: Introduction**

Everyone at St Mary's Church of England First School who come into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Trust and school staff are particularly important in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as we are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns escalating. Our school staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children to prevent concerns from escalating. Our school will work with Local Authority Children's Social Care, the Police, Health services and other relevant agencies to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including volunteers, trainee teachers, contractors and/or apprentices, working in or on behalf of the Trust and its schools. It provides information about the actions the school expects from all staff, it will be updated annually and known to everyone working within the Trust and its schools. It will be available to parents on request and via our website.

This policy is in line with statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

Everyone working in or for the Trust and our schools must share the objective to help keep children and young people safe by:

- Providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn and develop in our school setting;
- Identifying and responding to 'early help' needs of children and families;
- Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in our school setting;
- Maintaining a culture of vigilance and an attitude of 'It could happen here'

**2. Our schools' Commitment**

St Mary's Church of England First School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our students. Each student's welfare is of paramount importance. Throughout this document 'children' includes everyone under the age of 18.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- *Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge;*
- *Protecting children from maltreatment;*
- *preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;*
- *taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.*

**2.1 Child Protection** refers to procedures and actions undertaken regarding children who are at risk of being seriously harmed or have been significantly harmed.

The Trust and its schools recognise that:

- Some children may be especially vulnerable to abuse including those missing/unexplained and/or persistent absences from education, those experiencing extra-familial risk, young carers, children affected by parental offending or having a parent/carer in custody or with a special educational need or disability.
- Children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. Subsequently whilst at school their behaviour may be disruptive and/or challenging.
- Children can be both victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- Children who harm others may have been maltreated themselves.
- Allegations against staff can be made, however careful and safe our recruitment practices are.

**2.2 Our Approach to Safeguarding Children**

St Mary's Church of England First School will ensure all staff are aware of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities and that they are able to identify children and young people where concerns about their safety and welfare arise. We will ensure all staff and students know they can raise issues with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSL) and that their concerns will be taken seriously. There will always be a DSL (or Deputy DSL) on each school site and robust cover arrangements in place to ensure concerns are monitored without delay when the DSL is unavailable. DSLs will have appropriate status, authority, training, skills, experience and understanding of how to manage concerns in an effective way with the welfare of children and young people as their primary focus.

**3. Roles and Responsibilities**

**3.1 All staff and volunteers will:**

Fully comply with the Trust and its schools' policies and procedures, attend appropriate training and inform the Safeguarding Lead of any concerns, read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

**4. Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSL) within the Trust's schools will:**

**4.1 Referrals**

- The DSL will act as a source of support, advice and expertise and have access to the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership, guidance and Procedures.
- Consult with and/or refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to Local Authority Children's Social Care and maintain a record of all referrals.
- Liaise with the Headteacher to advise of any issues and ongoing investigations and ensure there is always cover for this role.

- Attend and contribute to safeguarding and child protection meetings as appropriate.
- Monitor and support Child in Need and Child Protection plans;
- Keep detailed, accurate and securely stored electronic records on MyConcern, which will include the details of action taken, decisions reached and outcomes of all actions taken.
- Ensure robust cover arrangements are in place to ensure concerns are monitored without delay when the DSL is unavailable.

**4.2 Training**

- Recognise how to identify signs of abuse and know when it is appropriate to make a referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care;
- Have knowledge of the local authorityEscalation policy and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role
- The process of a child protection case conference and be able to attend and contribute to these;
- Ensure that all staff have access to and understand the school's safeguarding policy and Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure that all staff have induction safeguarding training and receive regular updates.
- Access resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses at least every two years.

**4.3 Raising Awareness**

- Ensure parents are made aware of the safeguarding policy which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the school in this to avoid conflict later.
- When a child leaves the school, ensure the child protection file is copied to the new school in a timely manner and transferred to the new school separately from the main student file, as well as ensure the student's Social Worker is informed if appropriate.
- The school will complete an annual audit and regular quality assurance, to ensure that the school is meeting its requirements under statutory guidance.
- Help promote the educational outcomes by sharing information about welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues for children that have or have had a social worker with teachers and leadership

**5. Our Headteacher of a Trust school will ensure that*:***

- The policies and procedures adopted by Initio Learning Trust are fully implemented and followed by all staff.
- All students are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn about safeguarding, including keeping themselves safe online, relationship education and extra-familial risks including exploitation.
- Sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the deputy to carry out their roles effectively, including the attendance at initial and review child protection conferences, core group and other necessary meetings.
- All staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice in regard to children, and such concerns are addressed sensitively and effectively

in a timely manner in accordance with the agreed Whistle Blowing Policy
- They have completed Safer Recruitment and Managing Allegations training.
- The procedure for managing allegations against staff is known to staff and displayed within the school.
- Operate the procedure for managing allegations effectively and refer relevant concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- That anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk to a child is referred to the DBS and any other relevant professional body.
- A senior manager is appointed to deal with allegations against staff in the absence of the Headteacher.
- Ensure the school operates a mobile phone-free environment throughout the school day.

**6. Initio Learning Trust will ensure that:**

- The Trust will ensure the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy is updated and reviewed annually and work with the Trust Board regarding this.
- The school has a Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures in place that are in accordance with statutory guidance and locally agreed inter-agency procedures, and the policy is made available to parents on request and can be viewed online.
- The school operates safer recruitment procedures and makes sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff and volunteers who work with children;
- The school follows the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance, and the statutory guidance Keeping Safe in Education 2026, for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers.
- A senior member of the school's leadership team is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding (and deputy).
- There is a named Local School Committee Member/Trustee lead for safeguarding and Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) within the school.
- Staff undertake appropriate safeguarding/child protection training, at regular intervals;
- Comply with the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Partnership, guidance.
- They remedy, without delay, any deficiencies or weaknesses regarding safeguarding arrangements.
- Line managers are nominated to be responsible for liaising with the LADO and /or partner agencies in the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Headteacher, taking appropriate action to minimise any further possible risk to the children in our school.
- Where services or activities are provided on the school premises by another group or individual, the school will check they have appropriate policies and procedures in place about safeguarding children and have 'hire agreements' with external groups and individuals.
- Policies and procedures are reviewed annually and provide information as part of the

annual audit in regard to how the above duties have been discharged.

**7. Supporting Children and Working in Partnership with Parents**

- St Mary's Church of England First School recognises that children's welfare is paramount. Good safeguarding, child protection practice and securing good outcomes for children rely on a positive, open and honest working partnership with parents/carers.
- Whilst we may, on occasion, need to make referrals to Local Authority Children's Social Care without consultation with parents, we will make every effort to maintain a positive working relationship with them whilst fulfilling our duties to protect children.
- Children will be given an explanation, appropriate to their age and understanding of what action is being taken on their behalf and why.
- We will endeavour to preserve the privacy, dignity and right to confidentiality of the child and parents/carers whilst discharging our statutory duties.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead within a Trust school will determine which members of staff 'need to know' personal information for the purpose of supporting and protecting the child on the principle that those working directly with children will need to know, in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.
- Staff will not be enabled to share this information further without the expressed permission of the DSL.

**8. Information about Safeguarding for students**

Through the curriculum and lessons students are taught to understand and manage risks they may encounter during school life and work out with staff how these risks may be overcome, considering their wishes and feelings.

- They are regularly reminded about online safety and bullying procedures and taught how to conduct themselves and behave in a responsible and respectful manner.
- Opportunities are provided for children to learn about democracy and the rule of law, positive relationships and safe choices.
- All students know there is Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsible for their safety and welfare and who this is and that they have a right to speak to this member of staff, or any other, if they are worried or concerned.
- students are reminded that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, but that they will be listened to, heard and informed of what steps can be taken to protect them from harm and that feedback will be sought, so that their views about actions are known.
- There is a display in the school identifying the DSLs and children are made aware of this.
- Children and young people are made aware that toilets may be checked for safeguarding and / or behaviour purposes. Wherever possible, this will be conducted by a member of staff of the same gender, however, in exceptional circumstances, this may not be possible.

**9. Information Sharing**

**9.1 A Partnership Approach**

St Mary's Church of England First School recognises that it is essential to establish positive and effective working relationships with other agencies that are partners of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership. There is a joint responsibility on all these agencies to share information to ensure the safeguarding of all children and work together to secure positive outcomes.

This will include:

- Social workers/ police attending a Trust school following a Strategy discussion, which has found a child to be at risk of significant harm.
- Trust schools will ensure that all staff are aware of the Family Help services available in order to make timely referrals for support. Family help involves providing support as soon as a problem emerges and spans two strands, community based (universal services) and targeted (partnership based support.).
- The appropriate member of staff will attend /lead on TAF and TAC meetings as required
- CAFCASS workers attending the Trust's schools.

**9.2 Operation Encompass**

St Mary's Church of England First School is part of Operation Encompass. This is a police and education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people who experience Domestic Abuse. In November 2025, a new statutory duty was placed on the police to notify a child's education setting if they have reasonable grounds to believe a child may be a victim of domestic abuse. This notification duty means the police will share information about Domestic Abuse incidents with our schools prior to the start of the next school day. This duty includes all children connected to a household where police have attended a domestic abuse incident, including children who were physically present at the incident, children not physically present during the incident, and situations where a child might reside in another household temporarily or permanently.

Trust staff and parents are fully aware that trust schools are part of Operation Encompass.

We are aware that we must do nothing that puts the child/ren or the non-abusing adult at risk.

The Operation Encompass information is stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information.

**10. Identifying children who may be at risk or may have been significantly harmed**

There are four categories of abuse; physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Teachers, staff and volunteers in school are well placed to observe any physical, emotional or behavioural signs which indicate that a child may have additional needs or be at risk of or suffering significant harm.

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. Children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to

the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication. The relationships between staff, students, parents/carers and the public which foster respect, confidence and trust can lead to disclosures of abuse, and/or school staff being alerted to concerns.

- **Harm** means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;
- **Development** means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;
- **Health** includes physical and mental health;
- **Ill-treatment** includes sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.
- **Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation** are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, another child, children or young people or by an organised gang or network.

**10.1. Definitions and Indicators of Abuse**

**10.2 Physical Abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**10.3 Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.
It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
It may include:

- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability,
- Overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- Verbal abuse such as persistent criticism, belittling or name calling.
- Serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it

may occur alone.

**10.4 Sexual Abuse** Involves forcing, causing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

- The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities.
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Children may be sexually abused within the family, institutional or in community settings and are statistically more likely to know their abuser than not. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**10.5 Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food and clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caretakers);
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment;
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

**11. Taking action to ensure that children are safe at school and home**

All staff within the Trust and its schools must read and follow the statutory guidance for schools and colleges; **Part 1 Safeguarding Information for All Staff, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.**

It is not the responsibility of the school staff to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. Accordingly, all concerns regarding the welfare of students will be recorded and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to any discussion with parents/carers.

**All Trust and School Staff Must Immediately Report**

- Any suspicion that a child is injured, marked, or bruised in a way which is not readily attributable to the normal knocks or scrapes received in play.
- Any explanation given which appears inconsistent or suspicious.

- Behaviors that raise suspicions that a child may have suffered harm.
- Any concerns that a child may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment, or emotional maltreatment.
- Concerns that a child is presenting signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect.
- Any significant changes in a child's presentation, including non-attendance.
- Any hint or disclosure of abuse about or by a child or young person.
- Concerns regarding person(s) who may pose a risk to children (e.g. those living in a household with children present).
- Information which indicates that the child is living with someone who does not have parental responsibility for them for a period of more than 28 days (which is known as Private fostering).

## 12. Responding to Disclosure

Disclosures or information that a child has been harmed may be received from students, parents/carers, other professionals or members of the public. The Trust and its schools recognise that those who disclose such information may do so with difficulty, having chosen carefully to whom they will speak. Accordingly, all staff will handle disclosures with sensitivity.

Such information cannot remain confidential and staff will immediately communicate what they have been told to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and make a record using clear, straightforward language.

Staff will not investigate but will, wherever possible, listen, record and pass on information to the DSL in order that s/he can make an informed decision of what to do next.

**All Trust and school staff will:**

- Listen to and take seriously any disclosure or information that a child may be at risk of harm;
- Clarify the information without asking leading or probing questions;
- Make a clear and comprehensive record of what the child has said using MyConcern
- Try to keep questions to a minimum and of an 'open' nature e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?' rather than 'Did x hit you?';
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise;
- Not express feelings or judgements regarding any person alleged to have harmed the child;
- Explain sensitively to the child or young person that they have a responsibility to pass the information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- Reassure and support the child or young person as far as possible;
- Not promise secrecy;
- Explain that only those who 'need to know' will be told;
- Explain what will happen next and that the child will be involved as appropriate.

**13. Confidentiality**

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPR) (previously known as Serious Case Reviews). Where poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe. (2024. Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners))

The UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe. Under the DUAA 2025, safeguarding is explicitly established as a 'Recognised Legitimate Interest', ensuring that data protection legislation is never a barrier to protecting a child.

The Trust and its schools will ensure:

- Information is shared with Local Authority Children's Social Care and/or Police where the child/young person is or may be at risk of significant harm;
- student's and/or parent's/carer's confidentiality is respected;
- That any information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure.

**14: Student Information**

The Trust and its schools' record-keeping policies for child welfare and child protection is consistent with the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance which is known to all staff.

In order to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them, Trust schools require accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives;
- Names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility (if different from above);
- Emergency contact details (if different from above);
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school (if different from above);
- Any relevant court orders in place including those, which affect any person's access to the child (e.g. Residence Order, Contact Order, Care Order, Injunctions etc.);
- If the child is or has been subject to a child in need, child protection or care plan;
- Name and contact detail of GP;
- Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead of each Trust school will collate, securely store and agree access to this Child Protection information.

All child protection documents will be retained on MyConcern and the level of need indicated as per the trust's guidance. MyConcern securely stores the child protection records and is only accessible to the DSL and deputy DSLs plus others where deemed necessary. On transfer, these records will be transferred via Myconcern, electronically transferred or printed from

Myconcern and hand delivered to the receiving setting who will be required to sign for them as soon as possible or within 5 days of the child attending a new setting.

**15. Action by the Trust and its schools' Designated Safeguarding Lead (or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in their absence)**

Following any information raising concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Consider the child's wishes and feelings, but not promise confidentiality;
- Consider any urgent medical needs of the child;
- Make an immediate referral via a discussion **with Family Support and Advice line (Dorset) or Children's Services First Response Hub (BCP)** if there has been a disclosure and/or allegation of abuse or there are clear grounds for concerns about the child's safety and well-being;
- Wherever possible, talk to parents, unless to do so may place a child at risk of significant harm, impede any police investigation and/or place the member of staff or others at risk;
- Whether to make a child protection referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care because a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm and if this needs to be undertaken immediately;
- Contact the designated officer for safeguarding in another agency if that agency is working with the family;
  **OR**
- Decide not to make a referral at this stage, but retain the information on MyConcern.Consider if Family Help support will be helpful to the child and family at this time.If this is appropriate referrals will also be progressed via the **Dorset - Family Support and Advice Line or BCP - Children's Services First Response Hub**.

All information and actions taken, including the reasons for any decisions made and outcomes, will be fully documented. If a child is resident outside of the Dorset or BCP area the referral should be made to their Local Authority Children's Social Care services.

**15.1 Action following a Safeguarding Referral**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or other appropriate member of staff will:

- Maintain contact with the child's allocated Social Worker;
- Contribute to any Strategy Discussion and/or Strategy Meeting as required;
- Provide a report for, attend and contribute to any initial or review Child Protection Conference.
- Provide a written report to the conference organiser, 3 days prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) or 5 days prior to the Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC)
- Share the content of this report with the parent/carer, prior to the meeting;
- Attend Core Group Meetings for any child subject to a Child Protection Plan;
- Attend TAF meetings in order to be part of a plan for the child/ren.
- Where a child on a child protection plan moves from the school or goes missing, immediately inform the child's Social Worker.

**15.2 Dealing with Disagreements and Escalation of Concerns**

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between

agencies and professionals. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard a child. The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership escalations policy should be used.

Professional disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- The need for action;
- Progressing plans and communication.

Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with this policy and be aware that:

- The safety of children and young people are the paramount consideration in any professional activity;
- Resolution should be sought within the shortest time scale possible to ensure the child is protected;
- As a guide, professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working week or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is shortest);
- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.

The Trust and its schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads or other appropriate member of staff will:

- Contact the line manager in Local Authority Children's Social Care if they consider the response to a referral has not led to the child being adequately safeguarded.
- Contact the line manager in Local Authority Children's Social Care if they consider that the child is not being adequately safeguarded by the child protection plan.
- Use the Local Authority escalation policy if this does not resolve the concern.
  Dorset Multi-Agency Procedure for Resolution of Professional Differences
  BCP - DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND ESCALATION PROCEDURE

## 16. Safer Recruitment and Selection

St Mary's Church of England First School pays full regard to the statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Keeping Safe in Education 2026- Part three, Safer recruitment.

We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the school and who is therefore likely to be perceived and experienced by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult. This includes volunteers, and staff employed by contractors.

Safer recruitment practice includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and

academic/vocational qualifications, obtaining professional references, checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service

In line with statutory changes, underpinned by regulations, the following will apply:

(a) DBS and barred list checks will be undertaken for all posts that are deemed regulated activity, and for all other posts an enhanced DBS check will be undertaken.

(b) Our school is committed to keeping an up to date Single Central record which details a range of checks carried out on our staff.

(c) All new appointments to our school workforce who have lived outside the UK will be subject to additional checks as appropriate.

(d) Our school ensures that supply staff have undergone the necessary checks and will be made aware of this policy.

(e) Identity checks must be carried out on all appointments to our school workforce before the appointment is made as part of the recruitment process.

(f) Staff responsible for recruiting and appointing must be suitably qualified and have completed training on recruitment and selection, with a minimum of one trained staff member sitting on interview panels.

In settings subject to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework, staff and volunteers engaged in regulated activity must not be permitted to begin work under any circumstances until the school has physically received the full Enhanced DBS certificate with children's barred list check. No exceptions, risk assessments or temporary supervision apply to EYFS provision.

**17. Safe Practice**

The Trust and its schools will comply with the current guidance for Safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2022) and ensure that information in this guidance regarding conduct, is known to all staff, visitors and volunteers who come into any Trust school. https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/

Safe working practice ensures that students are safe and that all staff within the Trust and its schools:

- Are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Work openly, honestly and transparently.

- Work with other colleagues where possible in situations that could be open to question.
- Discuss and/or take advice from school management on any incident that may cause concern.
- Record any incidents or decisions made.
- Apply professional standards respectfully in relation to diversity issues.
- Be aware of information-sharing and confidentiality policies.
- Are aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

**18. Positive Handling**

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use 'reasonable force' to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. The use of force may involve either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of the classroom. If a child in a Trust school has additional needs, a care plan will be put in place to address actions to be taken prior to using any form of positive handling, this may be by distraction techniques, removing any objects which could cause harm to the child, and using de-escalation strategies.

Trust and school staff will familiarise themselves with the Department for Education's guidance for use of reasonable force in schools https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools and Keeping Children safe in Education 2026.

They will follow each individual school's Behaviour Policy. Trust schools will offer training to staff if appropriate use of physical intervention and/or restraint.

**19. School Training and Staff Induction**

The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead will undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and refresher training at two yearly intervals.

All other school staff, including non-teaching staff, will undertake appropriate induction training and safeguarding/child protection training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding effectively, which will be updated regularly, including a yearly update. The school will maintain a register of who has undertaken training and when.

All staff (including temporary staff, volunteers, and staff employed by contractors) are provided with the school's safeguarding policy and informed of the school's safeguarding arrangements on induction. The school will maintain a register of who has received this information and when.

Headteachers and at least one Local School Committees member will complete safer recruitment

training (mandatory in maintained schools; best practice in others) either through a multi-agency taught session, through National College or by completing the NSPCC on-line course.

Those working within governance ie. Lead trustee, Local School Committees members, clerks receive training, briefings or other input which equips them to understand fully and comply with their legal safeguarding duties as governors, set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026. Attendance includes those who also work with children and have attended child protection training in that role.

Please refer to the current Schedule of Training for Trust Board and Local School Committees.

**20. Extended School and Off-Site Arrangements**

Where extended school activities are provided by and managed by a Trust school, their own safeguarding policy and procedures apply. If other organisations provide services or activities on a Trust school site, the school will check that they have appropriate procedures in place to keep children safe, including safer recruitment procedures.

When a trust school's students attend off-site activities, including day and residential visits and/or other activities, the school will check that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. The school will also undertake appropriate and robust risk assessments for the venue, location and activity to be undertaken in accordance with the school's Risk Assessment protocol.

**21. Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors.**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) Part 4 – Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff, including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors.

Where an allegation is made against any person working in, or on behalf of, the Trust and any of its schools that he or she 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 or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The Trust and its schools will follow the Government's Allegations Management process.

Whilst the Trust and its schools acknowledge such allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge they may be founded. It is, therefore, essential that all allegations are investigated properly, in line with agreed procedures and outcomes are recorded. All Trust and school staff will maintain a culture of vigilance based on the notion

that ‘it could happen here’. Staff are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times in line with the **code of conduct** of each Trust school.

The Trust and its schools’ staff will be encouraged to use the **whistle blowing policy** if they have concerns regarding the conduct or behaviour of a colleague and they feel that matter has not been addressed appropriately by the Trust or the school.

For guidance on action to be taken upon receiving or identifying an allegation or concern - please follow the guidance in the current Managing Allegations and Low Level Concerns Policy.

**22. Children with special educational needs and disabilities**

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges, SEND children can be up to four times more likely to be abused due to additional vulnerabilities. As a Trust, we will ensure a culture of vigilance in each Trust school that reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child’s disability without further exploration;
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

**23. Mental Health**

All of the staff atSt Mary's Church of England First School have an awareness that mental health in some cases can develop into safeguarding concerns. This includes self harm, suicidal ideation or risk of suicide. These could be an indicator that a child is at risk or has suffered abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff will not attempt a mental health diagnosis. However, the staff are in a good position to observe the children on a daily basis and therefore identify those whose behaviour indicates they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

When children have suffered **adverse childhood experiences**, this may impact on them though-out their lives. This can also then have an impact on their behaviour, their ability to learn and affect their mental health.

If staff have a concern about the mental health of a child, they will follow school policy and report their concerns to the DSL. If staff feel that a child is in danger they should call 999 or take the child to A&E.

**24. Children who are questioning their gender and requests for social transition.**

The Trust and its schools will take time to understand the thoughts and feelings of children

who are questioning their gender and approach all situations with professional curiosity about the full range of the child's experiences.

The school will not initiate any action regarding a pupil's social transition, action will only be considered when a child or their parent/carer makes a specific request for support. In responding to any such request the school will act in accordance with Keeping children safe in education 2026 applying the following principles:

- Parents and carers will be engaged as a matter of priority and their views taken into account. If involving the parents would create a safeguarding risk to the child the DSL will be involved to determine what action is needed to safeguard the child before parents are contacted or any decisions are made.
- The statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children is paramount. Any decision regarding social transition will evaluate what is in the overall best interests of the individual child, as well as the impact on other children in the school.
- In compliance with Keeping Children safe in Education 2026, the Equality Act 2010, and health and safety regulations, the school will not allow pupils into toilets, changing rooms, or residential accommodation designated for the opposite biological sex, with no exceptions. Similarly, where single-sex sports have been implemented for safety reasons, there will be no exceptions allowing pupils to participate in sports designated for the opposite sex. Where a child does not wish to use the facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will consider if alternative arrangements can be provided that do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy, or dignity of any child.
- The school's decision making process for any social transition request will be fully documented and records kept on MyConcern. Having correct information is essential for safeguarding; therefore, relevant staff will be made aware of a child's biological sex, and it must be legally and accurately recorded on arbor in all cases.
- Any agreed support for social transition will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains in the best interests of the child and the school community. Staff will be particularly conscious of the vulnerabilities of children who have socially transitioned from an early age and may be where peers or staff may be unaware of their biological sex, involving the DSL in these cases.

## 25. Further Information on Safeguarding Issues

Safeguarding covers more than the contribution made to child protection in relation to individual children. It also encompasses issues such as student health and safety, bullying, arrangements for meeting the medical needs of children, providing first aid, school security, drugs and substance misuse, gang related activity and promoting positive behaviour.

Below are some of the issues that all staff atSt Mary's Church of England First School take seriously and will act in line with the safeguarding policy to ensure children are safe.

### 25.1 Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by

prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical.

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level bullying can have a significant effect on a child's wellbeing and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people.

All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying must be reported and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures. All students and parents receive a copy of the anti-bullying procedures on joining the school and the subject of bullying is addressed at regular intervals in the (PSHE) curriculum. If the bullying is particularly serious, or the anti-bullying procedures are deemed to be ineffective, the Headteacher and the DSL of a Trust school will consider implementing safeguarding procedures.

For further information please see the DfE guidance, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying) and each individual Trust school's Anti-bullying Policy.

**25.2 Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or pattern of incidents. That abuse can be but is not limited to:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Or emotional

Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development and ability to learn.

**25.3 Online Safety**

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content;
- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications;
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm.
- Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate

advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

The Trust and its schools recognise that its students will use mobile phones and computers at some time. They are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, behaviours, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. Cyber-bullying by students via emails and texts will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and managed through our anti-bullying procedures.

Chatrooms and social networking sites are the most obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful content and behaviour, which students are not allowed to access in school. Some students will undoubtedly 'chat' on mobiles or social networking sites at home and the school will encourage parents to consider measures to keep their children safe when using social media.

The Trust and each of its schools have an Online Safety Policy that is known to all staff and students.

**25.4 Making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes including those generated using AI**

Consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including those generated using AI, is defined as the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams online by children and young people under the age of 18. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat rooms or forums, it can also involve sharing images between devices with services which work offline.

All incidences of making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including those generated by AI must be reported and will be managed through our Making or Sharing nudes and Semi-nudes policy.

**25.5 Filtering and monitoring**

Initio Learning Trust is doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the school or college's IT system As part of this process, Initio Learning Trust ensures their schools have appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place. Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn. Initio Learning Trust have considered the age range of their students, the number of students, how often they access the IT system and the proportionality of costs vs risks.

Whilst filtering and monitoring are an important part of the online safety picture for schools to consider, it is only one part. Initio Learning Trust considers a whole school approach to online safety. Initio Learning Trust understands that the online safety and Artificial Intelligence (AI) landscape is evolving continuously. This rapid change makes technical measures less effective as a sole solution, and therefore, we prioritise teaching our learners about online risks and how to stay safe through the curriculum.

Whilst it is essential that Initio Learning Trust ensures that appropriate filters and monitoring

systems are in place, we are careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regard to online teaching and safeguarding.

Initio Learning Trust ensures that staff undergo regularly updated safeguarding training and that online safety training including their responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring is integrated, aligned and considered as part of the overarching safeguarding approach and the requirement to ensure children are taught about safeguarding, including online.

The Trust completes a review of filtering and monitoring systems at least annually to ensure their effectiveness , which includes physical checks to verify that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices across all relevant physical school locations, with a formal log kept of these checks.

**25.6 Information and support.**

There is a wealth of information available to support schools and colleges to keep children safe online. The following is not exhaustive but should provide a useful starting point:

- UKCIS. Online Safety in schools and Colleges: Questions for the governing board.
- NSPCC. Provides online advice regarding online safety arrangements.
- South West Grid for Learning. Provides advice on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements.

**25.7 Photography and Images**

Most people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely understandable and acceptable reasons. However, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have safeguards in place.

To protect students, the Trust and its schools will:

- Seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for e.g. on our website or in newspapers or publications);
- Seek parental consent;
- Use only the student’s first name with an image;
- Ensure students are appropriately dressed;
- Only use school equipment to make images of children (no personal devices are permitted for this purpose);
- Encourage students to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

**25.8 Children Missing Education**

All staff within the Trust and its schools understand that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions and/or unexplained absences can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual

and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines.

Trust and school staff will follow the local guidance available on the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website. Where reasonably possible, the school will hold three emergency contact numbers for each student. This goes beyond the legal minimum and is good practice as it provides additional options to contact a responsible adult when a child is missing education. (https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p_ch_miss_care_home_ed.html )

**25.9 Home Education**

Where parents inform our schools that they express a wish to 'home educate' their child, they must inform the school, preferably in writing Trust schools will then follow the Initio Learning Trust's Elective Home Education process and will not take the pupil off the school's roll until they have the form signed off by the School Improvement Lead, Inclusion or the relevant Director of Education. Dorset - Educating your child at home and flexi-schooling

BCP - Educating your child at home (Elective Home Education)

25.10 **Temporary Accommodation Notifications**

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act places a new duty on local housing authorities in England to notify educational institutions when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. This notification is made when consent has been given from the parent, those with parental responsibility, or the child themselves in cases of 16-17-year-olds living independently.

This notification enables school staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children at the earliest opportunity and support them to improve their outcomes. However, whilst any discussion with the local housing authority will be progressed as appropriate, this notification does not, and should not, replace the school's existing safeguarding and welfare duties, nor does it replace the requirement to make a referral to local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm

**25.11 Prejudice-Based Harm**

All staff must recognise that children may experience prejudice-based harm including racism, faith-based prejudice, and other forms of discrimination and this could be a safeguarding harm in their own right, rather than treat it solely as behavioural or anti-bullying incident. Faith-targeted abuse and discriminatory behaviour severely impair a child's welfare, mental health, and sense of physical and emotional safety. As a Trust we are committed to fostering an inclusive, anti-discriminatory culture as a core statutory safeguarding duty, requiring all staff to exercise professional curiosity, challenge inappropriate discriminatory attitudes, and report all concerns regarding prejudice-based harm.

**26 Children who harm others**

The Trust and its schools recognise that the harm caused to children by the harmful and bullying behaviour of other children can be significant. Children who harm others should be held responsible for their behaviour and the school staff are alerted to the fact that they are likely to pose a risk to other children in the school, home and community.

Where this harm involves sexual abuse, serious physical or serious emotional abuse, the safeguarding procedures set out in the Child on Child abuse (including harassment and violence)
policy in line with this policy will be applied. The Trust and its schools recognise that children who harm others are likely to have considerable needs themselves and may have experienced or be experiencing significant harm.

Such children and young people are likely to be children in need, and some will, in addition, be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, and may themselves be in need of protection. Children and young people who abuse others should be held responsible for their abusive behaviour, while being identified and responded to in a way that meets their needs as well as protecting others.

**26.1Child on Child Abuse** (including harassment and violence)

Child on Child abuse (including harassment and violence) is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate). Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including:

- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Sexual Violence
- Sexual harassment
- Upskirting
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including those generated using AI.
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

The Trust and its schools recognise that abuse is abuse and should never be passed off as banter, just having a laugh or part of growing up and we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child on child abuse.

Our Child on Childabuse (including harassment and violence) policy sets out our procedures with regards to child on child abuse (including harassment and violence)

When, the Trust or one of its schools, consider issues of child on child abuse (including harassment and violence) we will follow processes and procedures set out in this policy and the trusts child on child abuse (including harassment and violence) policy. All staff should act in the best interests of the child, consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator, as well as any other students that are involved or impacted.

Where a child has caused significant harm to another child, through sexual abuse or serious physical or emotional abuse, the school will make separate referrals to Local Authority Children's Social Care for the victim(s) and perpetrator(s).

**26.2 Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

St Mary's Church of England First School will ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of:

- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; as this risks normalising them and can lead to a culture of misogyny, misandry and an unsafe environment
- challenging behaviours (which are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, vaginas and penises. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be especially vulnerable. Disabled and deaf children are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children.

St Mary's Church of England First School will ensure that all staff are aware of:

- Indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury may relate to abuse and not the student’s disability
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs;
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers to disclose abuse.

‘Upskirting’ has now become a criminal offence and therefore requires a safeguarding response if happening in school.

When, the Trust or one of its schools, consider issues of sexual violence and sexual harassment between children we will follow guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 5 and seek support from our Local Authority Children’s Social Care partners.

## 27 Child Exploitation

### 27.1 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical

contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, oral sex or an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity
(g) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
(h) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology.

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for child sexual exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given. Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they don't comply (all of which are common features in cases of child sexual exploitation) consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child.

Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange: all children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.

One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something); for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator.

Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Whilst there can be gifts or treats involved in other forms of sexual abuse (e.g. a father who sexually abuses but also buys the child toys) it is most likely referred to as child sexual exploitation if the 'exchange', as the core dynamic at play, results in financial gain for or enhanced status of, the perpetrator. Where the gain is only for the perpetrator/facilitator, there is most likely a financial gain (money, discharge of a debt or free/discounted goods or services) or increased status as a result of the abuse. If sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the only gain for the perpetrator (and there is no gain for the child/young person) this would not normally constitute child sexual exploitation, but should be responded to as a different form of child sexual abuse.

If, as a Trust or one of its schools, we are concerned a child is being sexually exploited we will follow the procedures set out in this document and make reference to the local guidance provided by the PAN Dorset safeguarding Partnership.

Further guidance can be obtained from 'Child Sexual Exploitation Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation can be useful when considering cases of CSE'. (Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners)

**27.2 Child Criminal Exploitation**

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy) published by the Home Office, criminal exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and victims may strongly identify as being part of this group. The Trust and its schools recognise that this exploitation may constitute modern slavery. In accordance with the Modern Slavery statutory guidance, a relevant child protection referral and a National Referral Mechanism referral for Modern slavery must be completed in parallel immediately when a potential victim is identified.

**27.3 County Lines**

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

**27.4 Serious Violence**

Serious violence is a continuing safeguarding concern. It may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with, or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict or bullying, and it can also be associated with criminal exploitation. Staff should report any concerns about a child carrying or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so) to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), who will assess the risk and take appropriate action. Where relevant, this will include any action needed to de-escalate peer conflict.

Schools play a key role in protecting children from violence, safeguarding victims, as well as those who may be at risk of, or are involved in violence (who may also be victims themselves). Staff should be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of or involved in serious violence. These risks are higher for children with disrupted education (e.g. suspensions, permanent exclusions, time in alternative provision) or a history of offending. Staff should also try to be alert to when children might be at highest risk around the school day (for example immediately after school).

Early, evidence-based support for those considered at risk, as well as in 'teachable moments' when issues emerge is vital. This includes access to trusted adults, social and emotional skill support, and, where available, targeted interventions such as mentoring or therapeutic support. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) can find further information further guidance on referrals and when to contact the police, in Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

**28. Contextual Safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm and risk beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Therefore, the Local Authority Children's Social Care practitioners and school staff need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices.

Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. If, as a Trust or one of its schools, we are concerned a child is being exploited in an extra-familiar context, as previously outlined, we will follow the procedures set out in this document and consult or refer to Local Authority Children's Social Care. (https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/)

**29. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. This procedure is

typically performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 13 but in some cases, it is performed on new-born infants or on young women before marriage or pregnancy.

If, we as a Trust or one of its schools, are concerned that a child may be at risk of FGM we will follow the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Partnership guidance following the referrals procedure.

**29.1 FGM Mandatory Reporting Duty**

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining students, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.

**29.2 So-called 'honour-based' Abuse**

Honour based abuse is a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups. To protect perceived cultural religious beliefs and or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and or the community by breaking the honour code. For young victims this is a form of child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

It can be distinguished from other forms of violence as it is often committed with some degree of approval and or collusion for family and/or the community members. Women and men, and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse.

Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a child in the name of honour will be treated seriously and an immediate referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care will be made with reference to the local Pan Dorset Continuum of Need.

**30. Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism**

From 1 July 2015 all schools must have regard to the statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, paragraphs

57-76 of the guidance are in relation to schools and child care providers, and states that schools should have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

The Trust and each of its schools will fulfil our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty. It is essential that staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

St Mary's Church of England First School has a Prevent risk assessment which is updated annually and which specifies the local risks to which all staff should be alert to.

The Trust and its schools aim to build students' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views. The Prevent duty is not intended to stop students debating controversial issues. On the contrary, the school will provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments. We will be mindful of the risk of children being exposed to extremist materials via the internet.

If, as a Trust or one of its schools we are concerned, we will follow safeguarding procedures and refer to the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership's guidance on Prevent. (Radicalisation, Terrorist and Extremist Ideology)

**30.1 Channel**

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the Trust, or one of its schools may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

**31. Children with Family members in Prison.**

There are around 200,000 children in England and Wales who have a parent sent to prison each year. This places the children at risk of poor outcomes, including poverty, stigma and isolation. They may also suffer from poor mental health. NICCO provides information for professionals who work with the offender and their children to assist in mitigating the negative consequences for the children.

## 32. References

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026); Statutory guidance for schools and colleges, Department for Education.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026); A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, HM Government.

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2026); Advice for practitioners, Department for Education.

Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (including the 2025 statutory police notification duties under Operation Encompass).

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (The Prevent Duty).

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015).

Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Contextual Safeguarding Network; Research, toolkit, and guidance for extra-familial harm, University of Bedfordshire.

Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: Advice for Education Settings; UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS).

Developing and Implementing a Low-Level Concerns Policy; Farrer & Co in collaboration with the Safer Recruitment Consortium.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Framework; Evidence-informed response toolkits, NSPCC Learning & The Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO); Support databases for children with family members in prison.

Operation Encompass National Platform; Educational settings oversight and Key Adult technical training.

Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Policies and Procedures Manual.

BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership Regional Guidance and Dispute Resolution protocols.

**Appendix 1**

**seful Contacts**

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Dorset - 01305 221122
BCP - 01202 817600

Dorset Family Support and Advice Line
01305 228558

BCP Children's Services First Response Hub
01202 735046

Dorset Safeguarding and Standards Advisor's
01305 221122

BCP Education Safeguarding Advisers
01202 456117
01202 817722