

St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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Headteacher:	Mrs E Poulteney	Chair of Local Governing Body:	Ms H Taylor
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SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT



At St Thomas' we are learning to follow Jesus, showing respect and consideration for ourselves and others. We all have the opportunity to learn and work to the best of our ability in a safe and loving environment.

SCHOOL AIMS

In establishing curriculum aims the Governors accept the DFE's curriculum policy statement and summarise their own curriculum aims in the following way:

- To create an environment where a true Christian Community, in accordance with Gospel values, can be fostered and lived, where all knowledge should be seen as a religious experience.
- To help pupils know and understand the belief, values, attitudes and practices of Catholics, to give them an understanding and tolerance of other denominations and faiths and to help them develop their own relationship with God.
- To educate the whole child so that overall growth will lead to an individual who can express themselves freely, who is confident to use their God given gifts and become a valued member of society.
- To develop enquiring minds and the ability to question and argue rationally.
- To help pupils use number and language effectively and to teach them knowledge and skills of value in adult life.
- To help children understand the physical world and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations, being concerned for the underprivileged at all times.
- To help children appreciate and enjoy human achievement and understand that knowledge is of value in its own right.
- To stay safe, be healthy, achieve and enjoy, make a positive contribution to society and achieve economic well-being.

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

(Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE, September 2023)

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024)
- The school Behaviour policy
- The Staff Code of Conduct
- Information sharing- Advice for practitioners (May 2024)
- The safeguarding response to children missing from education
- The role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex C of KCSIE)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in school guidance (2018)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (everyone under the age of 18) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- 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 all children to have the best outcomes

2. Statutory framework

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a statutory responsibility on the Governing Body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the school.

The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice in Thurrock are the responsibilities of the [Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership \(TLSCP\)](#) In Essex, all professionals must work in accordance with the [SET Procedures \(TLSCP, 2019\)](#).

Our school also works in accordance with all government legislation and guidance.

3. Roles and responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within schools and the Local Authority who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names

of those in our school with these specific responsibilities (the Designated Safeguarding and deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads) are shown on the cover sheet of this document.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body ensures that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective and comply with the law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.

The Governor for safeguarding arrangements is named on the front cover of this document. These Governors take leadership responsibility for safeguarding arrangements in our school. The Governing Body ensures there is a named Designated Safeguarding Lead and at least one deputy Safeguarding Lead in place.

The Governing Body ensures the school contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. It ensures that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Governing Body ensures that all staff members undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction and that it is then regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The Governing Body ensures that children are taught how to keep themselves safe (including online) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. From September 2020, the school will be working in accordance with new government regulations and advice from the Catholic Education Service and the Brentwood Religious Education Service which make the subjects of Relationships Education (for Primary age pupils) and Health Education for all pupils in state funded schools mandatory. The Governing Body will ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems for online usage are in place.

The Governing Body and school leadership team are responsible for ensuring the school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. It adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and has recruitment and selection procedures in place (see the School's Safer Recruitment Policy for further information). It ensures that volunteers are appropriately supervised in school.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Leads in school take lead responsibility for managing child protection referrals, safeguarding training and raising awareness of all child protection policies and procedures. They are aware of pupils who have a social worker and help promote educational outcomes by sharing information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues with relevant staff. DSL's ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of procedures and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for other staff (on child protection matters) and ensure that timely referrals to Thurrock MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) are made in accordance with current SET procedures. They work with the local authority and other agencies as required. DSL's also have a role in working with others to ensure that the school's filtering and Monitoring systems are functional and effective.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher works in accordance with the requirements upon all school staff, ensuring that all safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the Governing Body are followed by all staff.

All school staff

All staff are committed to safeguarding children and young people and we expect everyone who works in our school to share this commitment. Everyone in our school has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our children can learn. All staff members are aware of the local early help process and our role in it. They are aware of signs of abuse and neglect so they are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. All staff members are aware of and follow school processes (as set out in this policy) and are aware of how to make a referral to Social Care if there is a need to do so. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with a Designated Safeguarding Lead – they do not assume that others have taken action. However, it should be remembered that sometimes children will 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.

Adults in our school take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage children and young people to talk to us about anything that worries them. However, it should be remembered 'that sometimes children will 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. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speak to the DSL'.

We will always act in the best interest of the child.

4. Abuse, Neglect and exploitation

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024) defines abuse as the maltreatment of a child:

'Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.'

The four main types of abuse referred to in Keeping Children Safe in Education are:

- Physical
- Emotional (including Mental Health)
- Sexual
- Neglect

All staff are aware of environmental factors which may impact on a child's welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). Staff are aware of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm and understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education and sexting put children in danger. We are also aware that children and their families who experience homelessness are vulnerable.

Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

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Mental Health

All staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. School staff are not expected or trained to diagnose mental health conditions or issues, but may notice behaviours that may be of concern.

Where staff have a mental health concern about a child that may also be a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken by informing the designated safeguarding lead. They should not assume others have taken action.

Child on child abuse

Staff recognise that school may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children at risk of, or who have suffered harm. Nevertheless, whilst at school, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant, or they may instead be withdrawn, or display abusive behaviours towards other children. We recognise that some children may abuse their peers and any incidents of child on child abuse will be managed in the same way as any other child protection concern and will follow the same procedures. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as appropriate.

Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways including:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Initiation/ hazing type violence and rituals (could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.)

KCSIE 2024 Part 5 sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

We do not tolerate any harmful behaviour in school and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. St Thomas’ has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be passed off, for example, as “banter”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

We use lessons and assemblies to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is and we encourage them to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Our

school understands the different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with child on child abuse. We recognise that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys' perpetrators, but that all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Staff understand that even if there are no reported cases of child on child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported.

If a child needs to bring a phone onto the school site, a message must be submitted to the Headteacher in writing. The parent/carer will receive a letter stating if permission has been granted. The school takes no responsibility for loss or damage of any device. They are to be stored in the school office during the day.

At St Thomas' pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online, to be effective we present this information in an age-appropriate way. We are sensitive to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse, and children with special educational needs or disabilities.

All staff are aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

Filtering and Monitoring

- Filtering refers to the technology preventing access to harmful or inappropriate content, whilst monitoring refers to the practical steps staff take to ensure harmful or inappropriate access is not made. Monitoring can include:
 - o Physical monitoring
 - o Live software monitoring
 - o Monitoring user logs
 - o Monitoring individual devices
- We make sure that any school devices used away from the school site are also subject to filtering and monitoring procedures.
- Each year (at least) our designated safeguarding lead, along with our IT team and a governor, review our filtering and monitoring procedures to ensure that they effectively prevent access to harmful or inappropriate content. They also ensure that the systems we have in place to report any difficulties with the system are understood by all staff and reports are effectively managed.
- All our staff undertake training to understand the risks of poor filtering and monitoring, and know how to share their concerns
- All our staff have taken part in annual cybersecurity training

When children use the school's network to access the internet, they are protected from inappropriate content by our filtering and monitoring systems which are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness. However, many pupils may be able to access the internet independently; to minimise inappropriate use, as a school, we ensure that users may only access the school's networks through a properly enforced password protection policy and that internet access is filtered according to age by our Local Authority. Inappropriate use is automatically blocked or will flag up to the Local Authority who will inform the school immediately. In addition, we have our own monitoring software that enables us to view each child's laptop at any given time to ensure their safety.

For more information on monitoring and filtering please refer to the school E-safety policy.

Risk Assessments Report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should include the time and location of the incident. Subsequent risk assessments will include any actions required to make the location safer.

Extra- Familial harms

It is important to understand Extra-familial harms and identify any necessary support for siblings following incidents of sexual violence or sexual harassment.

KCSIE (2024), paragraph 21 says:

‘Extra familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation.’

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

As a school, we understand that children with special educational needs, disabilities, or particular health conditions (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child’s disability, without further exploration
- That they may be more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than others
- The potential to be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs
- Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers and reporting these challenges.

Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGB is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGB can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGB (whether or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGB.

Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. At St Thomas of Canterbury, we endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced by providing a safe space for them to speak out and share concerns with a member of staff.

Children who are absent from school

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have are entitled to a full-time education. We recognise that a child absent from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow the school procedures for unauthorised absence and for children missing education. Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency (Missing Education and Child Employment Service, Social Care or Police). Parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, so we are able to communicate with someone if we need to.

Our school will work in conjunction with the local authority if any pupil fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 21 days or more.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community. The definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) from the Department of Education (DfE, 2017):

"Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when 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 (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) 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 through the use of technology".

Potential vulnerabilities of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) may include;

- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- Recent bereavement or loss;
- Social isolation or social difficulties;
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
- Economic vulnerability;
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited;
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work;
- Having a physical or learning disability;
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
- Sexual identity.

Although the above vulnerabilities increase the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), it must be remembered that not all children with these indicators will be exploited and CSE can occur without any of these issues.

It is understood that a significant number of children who are victims of CSE go missing from home, care and education at some point. Our school is alert to the signs and indicators of a child becoming at risk of, or subject to, CSE and will take appropriate action to respond to any concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Leads will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child 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. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Some of the following can be indicators of CCE:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;

- children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Child criminal exploitation is a geographically widespread form of harm which is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line” Exploitation is an integral part of the county lines offending model with children and vulnerable adults exploited to move [and store] drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

Our school works with key partners locally to prevent and respond to child criminal exploitation.

Prevention of radicalisation

From July 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015) placed a new duty on schools and other education providers. Under section 26 of the Act, schools are required, in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. This duty is known as the Prevent Duty. It requires schools to:

- teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and must promote community cohesion.
- be safe spaces in which children / young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and the extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology, and learn how to challenge these ideas.
- be mindful of their existing duties to forbid political indoctrination and secure a balanced presentation of political issues.

CHANNEL is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

Staff should be alert to changes in children’s behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead making a Prevent referral. Our school works in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate.

KCSIE (2023), paragraph 23 says:

‘Children can be at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, and radicalisation.’

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a 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.

At St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School, we are working in partnership with Essex Police to identify and provide appropriate support to pupils who have experienced domestic abuse in their household, this scheme is called **Operation Encompass**.

In order to achieve this, Essex Police will share information of all medium/ high risk domestic abuse incidents where one of our pupils has been present, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead/s.

The National Domestic Abuse helpline can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.

Honour- Based Abuse – So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse (HBA) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. All forms of so called HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such.

Where staff are concerned that a child might be at risk of HBA, they must contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a matter of urgency.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse. FGM typically takes place between birth and around 15 years old; however, it is believed that the majority of cases happen between the ages of 5 and 8.

Risk factors for FGM include:

- low level of integration into UK society
- mother or a sister who has undergone FGM
- girls who are withdrawn from PSHE
- visiting female elder from the country of origin
- being taken on a long holiday to the country of origin
- talk about a ‘special’ procedure to become a woman

Symptoms of FGM

FGM may be likely if there is a visiting female elder, there is talk of a special procedure or celebration to become a woman, or parents wish to take their daughter out-of-school to visit an ‘at-risk’ country (especially before the summer holidays) or parents who wish to withdraw their children from learning about FGM. Staff should not assume that FGM only happens outside the UK.

Indications that FGM may have already taken place may include:

- difficulty walking, sitting or standing and may even look uncomfortable.
- spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating.
- spending long periods of time away from a classroom during the day with bladder or menstrual problems.
- frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems.
- prolonged or repeated absences from school or college, especially with noticeable behaviour changes (e.g. withdrawal or depression) on the girl's return
- reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations.
- confiding in a professional without being explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.
- talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

Female Genital Mutilation reporting procedures

Where there is a disclosure of FGM it is important that staff know what their statutory response should be. Keeping Children Safe in Education states '**whilst all staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific legal duty on teachers. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police**'.

The mandatory reporting procedures say:

'It is recommended that you make a report orally by calling 101, the single non-emergency number.'

'Where there is a risk to life or likelihood of serious immediate harm, professionals should report the case immediately to police, including dialling 999 if appropriate'.

See here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information-accessible-version#reporting>

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is one entered into without the full consent of one or both parties. It is where violence, threats or other forms of coercion is used and is a crime. Our staff understand how to report concerns where this may be an issue.

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years old – under 18 if disabled- by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last 28 days or more. There are clear definitions of who is a close relative. School staff should notify the DSL if they become aware of private fostering arrangements.

Parents and private foster carers both have a legal duty to inform the relevant local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start; not to do so is a criminal offence.

Whilst most privately fostered children are appropriately supported and looked after, they are a potentially vulnerable group who should be monitored by the local authority, particularly when the child has come from another country. In some cases privately fostered children are affected by abuse and neglect, or be involved in trafficking, child sexual exploitation or modern-day slavery.

The designated safeguarding lead will speak to the family of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform the LA. The school itself has a duty to inform the local authority of the private fostering arrangements.

On admission to the school, we will take steps to verify the relationship of the adults to the child who is being registered.

Children with a Social Worker

We recognise that when a child has a social worker, it is an indicator that the child is more at risk than most pupils. This may mean that they are more vulnerable to further harm, as well as facing educational barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and poor mental health. We take these needs into account when making plans to support pupils who have a social worker.

5. Procedures

Our school works with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans which provide additional support (through a 'Child in Need' or a 'Child Protection' plan).

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance;

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- Information sharing; Advice for practitioners (DfE May 2024)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Reporting concerns

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it on CPOMS as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. [See Appendix 2 and 3] All records will be dated and will include the action taken. The Designated Safeguarding Leads will be alerted of a disclosure and then decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any staff member or visitor to the school will refer any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Leads. Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the MASH Team and / or the Police. Wherever possible, the school will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the MASH Team and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

If a member of staff continues to have concerns about a child and feels the situation is not being addressed or does not appear to be improving, the staff member concerned should press for re-consideration of the case with the Designated Safeguarding Leads.

If, for any reason, the Designated Safeguarding Leads are not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Safeguarding contact details are displayed in the school to ensure that all staff members have unfettered access to safeguarding support, should it be required. Any individual may refer to Social Care where there is suspected or actual risk of harm to a child. **The number of Thurrock Multi -Agency Safeguarding Hub – MASH Team is 01375 652802.**

When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our school they are informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the Designated Safeguarding Leads and how to share concerns with them.

DPA and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare. If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

6. Training

The Designated Safeguarding Leads undertake Level 3 child protection training at least every two years. All staff members and governors receive appropriate child protection training which is regularly updated and in line with advice from the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Board (TLSCB). In addition, all staff members receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Records of any child protection training undertaken is kept for all staff and governors.

As part of their annual training, all staff are expected to sign to confirm when they have read the following documents:

- Part 1 of the latest KCSIE document
- Information sharing; advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people parents and carers (DfE 2024)
- Updated School Child protection policy
- Trust whistleblowing policy
- Trust Code of Conduct Policy
- Trust managing safeguarding allegations against adults.
- E-safety policy

Members of the Governing Body of the school take part in mandatory safeguarding training to ensure that they can ‘assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools and colleges are effective.’ This training is regularly updated.

The school ensures that the Designated Safeguarding Leads also undertake training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads have training in Safer Recruitment.

All staff have training annually on Cyber- Security

7. Professional confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents / carers or pupils), or promise to keep a secret. In accordance

with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities.

Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the Designated Leads with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

DPA and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare. If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

8. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, are recorded in writing. Information is kept confidential and stored securely.

Our school is clear about the need to record all concerns and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Records should include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, and
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

Any records related to child protection are now stored securely via an electronic system (CPOMS.) All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

Where a pupil transfers from our school to another school / educational setting (including colleges), their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting. If the receiving school does not use CPOMS, these will be marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's Designated Safeguarding Leads, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to us if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school and then destroy any copies held in our school. Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may also make contact with the new educational setting in advance of the child's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the child arrives.

Where a pupil joins our school, we will request child protection records from the previous educational establishment (if none are received).

9. Inter-agency working

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Leads to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any child protection conference called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Whoever attends will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions at the conference.

If a child is subject to a Child Protection or a Child in Need plan, the Designated Safeguarding Leads will ensure the child is monitored regarding their school attendance, emotional well-being, academic progress, welfare and presentation. If the school is part of the core group, the Designated Safeguarding Leads will ensure the school is

represented, provide appropriate information and contribute to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the Child Protection Plan and /or the child's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of significant harm. In this case the Designated Safeguarding Leads will inform the child's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed.

On receipt of any information, the Designated Safeguarding Lead/s will decide on the appropriate support the child requires, this could be silent or overt. (Appendix 4) All information sharing and resulting actions will be undertaken in accordance with Safeguarding and Child Protection regulations. We will record this information and store this in accordance with the record keeping procedures outlined in this policy.

Out of school providers

Whilst our Out-of-school providers are responsible for their own safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, the school may refer any concerns they have about the provider to the local authority.

10. Allegations about members of the workforce

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the Staff Behaviour policy / Code of Conduct. The school works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET procedures (TLSCB, 2019) in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity). Section 7 of the current SET procedures and the CCT '**Procedure for dealing with safeguarding allegations against adults in school**' provides detailed information on this. Copies of this policy can be found in the staff shared area and on the staff noticeboard.

The guidance in KCSIE (Part Four) should be followed where it is alleged that anyone working in the school or college that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including supply teachers and volunteers 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 to children; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Where there are concerns about the proprietor of an independent school, the member of staff should contact the local authority Designated Officer without delay.

11. Promoting positive mental health and resilience in school

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that schools play a key part in this. Our school wants to develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of all pupils and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors which increase someone's vulnerability and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency. The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counter balance and promote further growth of resilience.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

12. Use of reasonable force

The term ‘reasonable force’ covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people, such as guiding a child to safety or breaking up a fight.

‘Reasonable’ means using no more force than is needed. Our school works in accordance with statutory and local guidance on the use of reasonable force and recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context.

13. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is ‘making a disclosure in the public interest’ and occurs when a worker (or member of the wider school community) raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others, for example pupils in the school or members of the public.

All staff members are made aware of the duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of staff in line with the CCT Code of Conduct / Whistleblowing policy.

Low level concerns about staff behaviour

At St Thomas of Canterbury, we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may harm children, including governors, volunteers, supply teachers and agency staff. Any concerns about the conduct of other adults in the school should be taken to the headteacher without delay; any concerns about the headteacher should go to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted by email.

Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff, supply teachers, volunteers or contractors should be reported to the headteacher.

Concerns may come from various sources, for example, a suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

The headteacher has to decide whether the concern is an allegation or low-level concern. The term ‘low-level’ concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Before contacting the LADO, schools and colleges should conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation.

The LADO’s role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, children’s social care, the school or college, or a combination of these.

Low-level Concerns

Concerns may be graded Low-level if the concern does not meet the criteria for an allegation; and the person* has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work. Example behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- being over 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; or,

- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Low-level concerns will be recorded in writing, including:

- name* of individual sharing their concerns
- details of the concern
- context in which the concern arose
- action taken

(* if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible)

We want everyone to feel able to report any Child Protection / Safeguarding concerns. However, for members of staff who feel unable to raise these concerns internally, they can call the **NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline** on: **0800 028 0285** (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the **NSPCC general helpline** on: **0808 800 5000** (24 hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Early Help

All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs (see appendix 4)

Children with additional needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as Family Hubs or schools, organising additional support with local partners as needed. When an agency is supporting these children, an Early Help Plan and a Lead Professional are helpful to share information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family.

For children whose needs are intensive, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, involving either an Early Help Plan or a Shared Family Assessment (SFA), with a Lead Professional to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require. Examples of intensive services are children's mental health services and Family Solutions.

Specialist services are where the needs of the child are so great that statutory and/or specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. Examples of specialist services are Children's Social Care or Youth Offending Service. By working together effectively with children that have additional needs and by providing coordinated multi-disciplinary/agency support and services for those with intensive needs, we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

Appendix 1

The School's Designated Safeguarding Leads are:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Mrs Emilie Poulteney | Headteacher |
| ● Miss Louise McAnally | Assistant Headteacher |
| ● Mrs Nicola Smith | Assistant Headteacher |
| ● Mrs Susie Coppin | Assistant Headteacher |

Extract from our School Prospectus

'We believe that the welfare of your child is of paramount importance. Like other schools in Thurrock, we are obliged to follow set procedures when we are concerned about the welfare of your child. Whenever possible we would want to discuss our concerns first with you first.

However, there may be times when our concerns are such that we will be obliged to follow procedures laid down by the area protection committee and, in the unlikely event of this happening, you may be contacted by a Social Worker, or someone from another agency whose job it is to ensure your child is protected at all times.

If you have any worries about Child Protection issues please contact one of the school DSL's or deputy.'

Appendix 2

Dealing with disclosure

LISTEN - a child who alleges that abuse has taken place must be listened to

ACCEPT - respect the child's point of view

DON'T MAKE PROMISES - do not offer confidentiality, explain what happens next, if you don't know, say you will find out

ALLEVIATE FEELINGS OF GUILT

ACKNOWLEDGE AND EMPATHISE

DO NOT INTERROGATE - police and social services

DO NOT CRITICISE

DO NOT ASK THE PUPIL TO REPEAT THEIR DISCLOSURE

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

INFORM THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

MAKE BRIEF NOTES AT THE TIME - any statements made by the child must be as near verbatim as possible

DO NOT DESTROY YOUR ORIGINAL NOTES

RECORD ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION - written records must be made of events, conversations and observations. A written record must be kept of all action taken via CPOMS.

DRAW DIAGRAMS IF NECESSARY - body map (CPOMS) Inform the designated teacher for child protection and ensure the necessary procedures are followed. A referral should be made to social services and police.

ENSURE PROPER SUPPORT FOR THE CHILD IN ANY SOCIAL SERVICES INTERVIEW - parent, or adult with parental permission (A parent should not be informed where there has been an allegation of sexual abuse, or there has been other serious abuse or if to inform the parent may be putting the child at increased risk.)

Child-on-child sexual abuse: what to do if a child makes a disclosure

Make sure you understand our child protection policy and procedures for dealing with peer-on-peer abuse, and follow these.

- ✓ Listen and reassure the child that they will be supported and kept safe
- ✓ Make a written record as soon as possible, stating only the facts
- ✓ Tell our designated safeguarding lead (DSL) urgently:
- ✓ Where appropriate, take action yourself:

children's social care
 - If an offence has been committed, report it to the police (even if the alleged perpetrator is under 10 – the age of criminal responsibility)
 - Find out whether the victim and alleged perpetrator share classes, premises or transport, and consider how best to deal with this

- ✗ Dismiss the incident as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'having a laugh'
- ✗ Ask leading questions
- ✗ Promise total confidentiality – explain who you will need to tell and why
- ✗ View photos or videos of a sexual nature
If you do so by accident or think you might need to in order to deal with the issue effectively, talk to our DSL
- ✗ Take notes while the child is talking, if at all possible
- ✗ Tell anyone about the disclosure unless they need to know in order to progress it

Key definitions

Child-on-child sexual abuse: when a child (anyone under the age of 18) commits an act of sexual violence or harassment against another child

Sexual violence: rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching)

Sexual harassment: unwanted conduct of a sexual nature – such as sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour like interfering with clothes, or online harassment such as sexting

Upskirting: taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

Sexual activity is an offence if:

- Person B (the victim) does not consent
- Person A (the perpetrator) does not reasonably believe that Person B consents

Someone consents if they:

- Agree by choice
- Have the freedom and capacity to choose

Actions where there are concerns about a child

