

# St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School



## Safeguarding Policy 2025-2026

Approved by: The Governing Body of St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

Date: September 2025

Next review due: September 2026

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## Child protection Policy

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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 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## 1. Introduction

**Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children.** 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 professionals 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, 2025)*

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, 2025)
- 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)

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

- **Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge**
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online.
- 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

**Our school has a whole-school approach to safeguarding, which ensures that keeping children safe is at the heart of everything we do, and it underpins all systems, processes and policies. It is important that our values are understood and shared by all children, staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider school community. We believe that, only by working in partnership, can we truly keep children safe.**

## 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 \(2025\)](#)

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. However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play.

#### **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 Governors for safeguarding arrangements are 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 has worked 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 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.

#### **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 deputy designated safeguarding leads are trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead. If for any reason the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable, the deputy designated safeguarding lead/leads is able to act in their absence.

### **All school staff**

Everyone in our school has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment where our children can learn. All staff are aware of the types of abuse and safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm, so we are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. We understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, missing education and consensual/non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images can be signs that children are at risk. In addition, we recognise that any child may benefit from additional help and all staff members are aware of the local early help process and our role in it.

All staff members are aware of and follow school safeguarding processes (as set out in this policy), and are also aware of how to make a referral to Social Care, if there is a need to do so. Staff understand that, if they have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) – we do not assume that others have taken action.

Our staff understand that children may not always feel able or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. This may be because they are embarrassed, scared or do not recognise they are experiencing abuse, either at home or out in the community. We understand there are many factors which may impact on our children's welfare and safety and we also understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We recognise that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues rarely occur in isolation and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Our staff will always reassure children who report abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

## **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:** a form of abuse causing physical harm to a child – this includes where an adult fabricates or deliberately induces illness in a child

- ❖ **Emotional:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development
- ❖ **Sexual:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities (through actual physical or online contact)
- ❖ **Neglect:** 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

In addition, Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education contains important information about specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues. Some of these, and our approach to them, are explained here:

### **Child criminal exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

CSE is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community. It may occur over time or be a one-off occurrence. The definition of CSE from the Department of Education (DfE, 2017) is:

*"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".*

We recognise 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 lead will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

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

## **Prevention of radicalisation**

The Prevent Duty 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. If a child on roll at our school is referred to the Channel Panel, a representative from the school may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with an assessment and support plan. Our school operates in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate. Where we have concerns about extremism or radicalisation, we will seek advice from appropriate agencies and, if necessary, refer to the Police, Social Care and/or the Channel Panel.

## **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 2025 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.

### **Children who are absent from education**

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 good attendance begins with our school being somewhere our children want to be, and also that some children find it harder to attend school for a range of reasons. We will always try to understand underlying reasons for absence and will work collaboratively with other partners to support children to attend school and to ensure that they receive the right help at the right time.

A child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, and we follow the procedures for unauthorised absence and for children missing education. It is also recognised that, when not in school, children may be vulnerable to or exposed to other risks. We believe that early intervention to address absence from school is vital, so we work with parents/carers and other partners to keep children in school and remove any barriers to them accessing their education.

Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where this does not happen, we will attempt contact with parents (parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, to enable us to communicate with someone if we need to). 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.

### **Risk in the community**

We understand that safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside a child's home or our school. All staff are aware of 'contextual safeguarding' and we are therefore mindful of whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and / or welfare. We always consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and will share it with other agencies when appropriate, to support better understanding of a child and their family. This is to ensure that our children and families receive the right help at the right time.

### **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.

As part of our safeguarding arrangements and our work with safeguarding partners, our school are signed up to [Operation Encompass](#). Operation Encompass is a national initiative which aims to provide support to children who have experienced domestic abuse. It means the Police inform us if they have attended an incident of domestic abuse which involves a child on our roll, so that appropriate support can be put in place. Any information in relation to this will be held on the child's child protection file, as with any other safeguarding information.

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

### **Harmful sexual behaviour:**

We understand that children's sexual behaviours exist on a continuum, ranging from age-appropriate / developmental to inappropriate / problematic / abusive. We also understand that harmful sexual behaviour and child-on-child abuse can occur between children of any age and gender, either in person or online. We recognise that children who display harmful sexual behaviour may have experienced their own abuse and trauma, and we will support them accordingly.

Our school has a 'zero-tolerance' approach to harmful sexual behaviour of any kind, and any inappropriate behaviour is challenged and addressed. We work in accordance with all statutory guidance in relation to such behaviours and with other agencies as appropriate.

We seek to teach our pupils about healthy and respectful relationships, boundaries and consent, equality, the law and how to keep themselves safe (on and offline).

Our RSE policy explains, in depth, how we teach about love, relationships and looking after one another in a way that is both congruent with the teaching of the church and tailor made for the community in which we teach.

### **Mental Health**

We recognise that good mental health for all our pupils and staff is very important, and we understand the part our school plays in this. We aim 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 can increase someone's vulnerability and also protective factors that can promote or strengthen resilience. The more risk factors present in someone's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are needed to counter-balance these to promote resilience and keep children safe.

Our 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. We understand that, where children have suffered abuse or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Where we have concerns this may impact on mental health, we will seek advice and work with other agencies as appropriate to support a child and ensure they receive the help they need.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents/carers to support the wellbeing of our pupils. We expect parents/carers, if they have any concerns about the wellbeing of their child, to share this with us, so we can ensure that appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

### **Online safety**

We recognise that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. Whilst this presents many positive and exciting opportunities, we recognise it also presents challenges and risks, in the form of:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, suicide, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes;
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying
- **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and / or financial scams

All staff in our school are aware of the risks to children online. We understand any child can be vulnerable online, and that their vulnerability can vary according to age, developmental stage and personal circumstances. We aim to equip all our pupils with the knowledge they need to use the internet and technology safely, and we want to work with parents to support them to keep their children safe online.

We have systems in school to filter information and block internet access to harmful sites and inappropriate content. These systems are monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective, and all staff are trained in online safety and how to report concerns.

### **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.

### **So-called 'honour-based abuse' (including Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage)**

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or 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. We understand that this form of abuse often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

*Female Genital Mutilation* (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.

As of October 2015, the Serious Crime Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015) introduced a duty on teachers (and other professionals) to notify the police of known cases of FGM where it appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18. Our school operates in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to this issue, and in line with local safeguarding procedures.

*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.

### **Children potentially at risk of greater harm**

We recognise that some children may potentially be at risk of greater harm and require additional help and support. These may be children with a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, those in Care or previously in Care or those requiring mental health support. We work with Social Care and other appropriate agencies to ensure there is a joined-up approach to planning for these children and that they receive the right help at the right time.

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.

### **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.

## **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, 2025)
- 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 1 and 2]* 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.

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. Information sharing and confidentiality

Sharing information is a key part of safeguarding work and we understand that decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have a profound impact on a child's life. Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to

process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information, where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life, would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns.

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 will 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**

Accurate records are an essential aspect of effective child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and the Safeguarding Officer, who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records related to child protection are 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 important that agencies work together to keep children safe, and there is a legal requirement to do so. We work with other relevant agencies, such as Social Care, the Virtual School, Police and Health / mental health services to

support children and keep them safe. This includes where a child in our school (or who was previously known to us) has a Child in Need, Child Protection or Care Plan. Where this is the case, it is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure our school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called.

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.

### **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.

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.

### **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. Behaviour, 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.

We recognise there are some children who have needs that require additional support and a more personalised approach and we always consider all behaviour, and our response to it, in the context of safeguarding.

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with children and young people for a variety of reasons, this may include:

- to comfort a child or young person in distress (*appropriate to their age and individual specific needs identified through a risk assessment*);
- to direct a child or young person;
- or curricular reasons (*for example in PE, Music, Drama etc*);
- in an emergency, to avert danger to the child, young person or others;

The guidance produced by the Department for Education [Use of Reasonable Force \(DfE, 2013\)](#) states that:

*“Schools **should not** have a ‘no contact’ policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a child or young person or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a child or young person causing harm.”*

## 11. 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 in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity).

The guidance in KCSIE (Part 4) 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.

Any concerns about an adult in our setting should be reported to the Headteacher who will then decide how to take this forward. In some cases, it might not be clear whether an incident constitutes an allegation. If this is the case, it will be necessary for us to explore the concerns to establish some facts – this initial fact-finding is not an investigation, it is to clarify information and to direct our response to the concern raised.

Where an allegation against a member of staff is received, and it is felt that any of the above criteria apply, the SET procedures require this to be reported to the Duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) [LADO@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@thurrock.gov.uk). We may not carry out any investigation before a Children’s Workforce Allegations Team referral has been made.

In the event of an allegation relating to the conduct and behaviour of an agency member of staff, the Headteacher will liaise with the agency, while following due process, to facilitate a joint investigation or enable the agency to move this forward.

Any concern relating to the Headteacher should be reported directly to the Chair of Governors, who will refer the matter to the Children’s Workforce Allegations Team.

Staffing matters are confidential and the school operates within a statutory framework around Data Protection. We do not share information about any individual staff member with anyone other than appropriate statutory agencies.

## 12. Whistleblowing

All members of staff and the wider school community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the school leadership team. We have 'whistleblowing' procedures in place and these are available in the Whistleblowing Policy.

However, for any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, or where they feel their concerns have not been addressed, they may contact the [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing) on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email at: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).