

# Safeguarding children

Woodcroft School pupil policy 01.11.25 a

This policy has been approved by the directors of Woodcroft School on 01.11.25 and will be reviewed in September 2026 or sooner if new legislation or guidance requires. It is based on the template developed by Essex County Council.

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## 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 (KCSIE)* DfE, 2025.

This *Safeguarding children policy* reflects the updated requirements of KCSIE, including new expectations around online safety, cyber-security, attendance, and the safe and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within schools.

This policy is for all staff, parents, directors, 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 (Part 1 and Annex C: Role of the designated safeguarding lead;)* – DfE 2025
- *Behaviour management policy*
- *Staff handbook under Guidelines on safe working practice*

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (everyone under the age of 18) is defined in KCSIE 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 underpins all systems, processes and policies. It is important that our values are understood and shared by all children, staff, parents, carers, directors, advisers and the wider school community. Only by working in partnership, can we truly keep children safe.

## Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in *Working together to safeguard children* – DfE, 2023, on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three safeguarding partners: the local authority; police; and health, to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB). In Essex, the statutory partners are Essex County Council, Essex police and three NHS Integrated Care Boards covering the county.

Section 157 for independent schools places a statutory responsibility on the board of directors to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the school.

Woodcroft School is situated in Essex and works in accordance with the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Procedures. Woodcroft also places pupils from many other local authorities. Where concerns arise from issues associated with the pupil's home environment or locality, the relevant procedures of the sending authority are followed. Our school also works in accordance with the following legislation and guidance, which is not exhaustive:

- *Children Act, 1989 & 2004*
- *Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex* – ESCB, 2024
- *Keeping Children Safe In Education* – DfE, 2025
- *Prevent Duty Guidance England and Wales* – HO, 2023
- *What to Do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused* – HMG, 2015
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* – DfE, 2023

## 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 lead and deputy designated safeguarding leads) are shown on the first page of this policy. However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play. (Please see *KCSIE part 1, page 4 – The role of school and college staff*.)

## The board of directors

The board of directors ensure that the policies, procedures and training at Woodcroft are effective and comply with the law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the *Safeguarding children policy* reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.

Woodcroft's director for safeguarding arrangements is Daniel Edwards and he takes strategic responsibility at board level. The board ensures there is a named designated safeguarding lead and at least one deputy safeguarding lead in place.

The board 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 board ensures that all adults in our school who work with children undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction as appropriate and that it is 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 pupils safe.

The board ensures our pupils are taught about safeguarding (including online safety) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Any use of AI or generative AI is risk assessed, filtered and monitored, and complies with the DfE's *Generative AI: Product Safety Expectations (2025)*. We work in accordance with government regulations regarding the mandatory subjects of Relationships Education (for primary age pupils), Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary age pupils) and Health Education (for all pupils in state funded schools).

The board and school management 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 *Recruitment, selection and disclosure policy*). It ensures that volunteers are appropriately supervised in school (see *Student and volunteer policy*), and that filtering and monitoring systems are in place (see *Online safety policy*).

## **The head teacher**

*The Teachers' Standards, 2012* state that teachers (which includes head teachers) should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. The head teacher works in accordance with all statutory requirements for safeguarding and is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the board are followed by all staff. At Woodcroft, the head teacher is the designated safeguarding lead.

## **The designated safeguarding lead and deputies**

Our designated safeguarding lead has ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Their role includes managing child protection referrals, working with other agencies, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained and raising awareness of all safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. They ensure that everyone at Woodcroft (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of these 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 Essex Children's Social Care (Children and Families Hub) and sending local authorities are made in accordance with current procedures. They work with the local authorities and other bodies, such as police and social care as required, to ensure that information is shared appropriately.

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 leads in an identified precedence will act in their absence. The full description of the roles can be found in KCSIE annex C.

## **Multi-disciplinary safeguarding team**

Woodcroft's multi-disciplinary safeguarding team meetings are attended by a core group consisting of the designated lead and deputy leads for safeguarding, the nominated director for safeguarding and, where required, additional professionals from Woodcroft and/or local authorities. All are bound by a code of confidentiality. The fundamental principle is to ensure a 'team around the child' approach to the work, emphasising collaborative working, consistent communication and the sharing of skills. As part of this multi-disciplinary way of working all pupils are included in the confidential *Safeguarding meeting file* when starting at Woodcroft. New parents are informed of this and signed agreement is sought. Pupils who have left Woodcroft are retained on the file until the handover of safeguarding responsibilities has taken place, so that progress can be monitored and support provided to pupils' new schools. Further meetings may occur as a result of these multi-disciplinary discussions. Should safeguarding issues arise from a safeguarding team meeting, the school's designated safeguarding lead will take them forward in line with the school's policy and procedures.

## All school staff

Everyone at Woodcroft has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our pupils can learn. Any child may benefit from early help and 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 pupils 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 pupil's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the designated safeguarding lead or deputy. They do not assume that others have taken action.

## Types of abuse and specific safeguarding issues

KCSIE describes abuse in the following way: 'Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by 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 another child or children'.

KCSIE refers to four categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

Our staff must always reassure pupils who report abuse or are victims of abuse that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe. Staff should never make a pupil feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

All Woodcroft staff must be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and be able to identify pupils who may be in need of help or protection. They should be aware of environmental factors which may impact on a pupil's welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context. Staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely 'stand-alone' events and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

In addition, staff should be aware of other types of abuse and safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images, can be signs that children are at risk.

## Attendance / children missing education

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have, are entitled to a full time education. Woodcroft recognises that a child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow the school 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, so we work with parents and other partners to keep children in school whenever possible.

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, such as the local authority attendance team, social care or the police. Parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school.

Our school must inform the local authority of any pupil who has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of ten days or more. From September 2025 *Working together to improve school attendance (2024)* is statutory. Absence, particularly unexplained or persistent absence, must be treated as a safeguarding concern and may warrant referral to the DSL or external agencies. Attendance data will be monitored for emerging patterns that could indicate neglect, exploitation or mental health risks.

We work in accordance with the Essex protocol for children who go missing during the school day to ensure that there is an appropriate response to pupils who go missing.

## **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

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 and/or through violence or threat of violence. CCE and CSE can affect male and female children 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 to or 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. Woodcroft has adopted the definition of CSE from the 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'.

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 must be alert to the signs of a pupil becoming at risk of, or subject to, CSE and must take appropriate action to respond to any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

### **Child on child abuse**

This form of abuse is sexual violence and/or sexual harassment between children in schools.

Children with special educational needs who are on the Autistic Spectrum, or with other conditions originating out of attachment and/or social, emotional and mental health needs, are at risk of both becoming victims and perpetrators of child on child abuse. Their understanding of social norms, lack of behavioural filters and drive to achieve what they desire can result in children acting out towards other children or accepting behaviours from others that are abusive in nature. This abusive behaviour can take the form of physical, emotional, sexual or cyber abuse. It is more prevalent in mainstream settings from male to female, although other forms are also possible. For example, children within the same gender group may instigate abusive relationships towards others of the same gender.

Woodcroft School takes this risk very seriously and highlights the possibility and appropriate actions in initial staff safeguarding training and subsequent refreshers. The high staffing ratio and our working practice, that pupils should not be left together without adult supervision, helps minimise the chance of such happenings occurring within school.

### **Contextual safeguarding**

Contextual safeguarding recognises that as children grow and develop, they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family, and that children may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks. Contextual safeguarding looks at how these risks can be understood to keep children safe. It is an approach that has often been used to apply to adolescents, though the lessons can equally be applied to younger children.

## **Domestic abuse**

This can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical acts of violence or threatening behaviour and can include emotional, psychological, controlling or coercive behaviour, sexual and economic abuse. Woodcroft recognises that exposure to domestic abuse can have a serious, long term emotional and psychological impact on children. We work with other key partners and will share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue for a pupil or family or be placing a pupil at risk of harm.

## **Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB)**

It is normal for some children to display sexualised behaviour towards other children as they develop. However, HSB is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children, and which may be harmful or abusive (derived from Hackett, 2014). It may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour.

HSB encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as those it is directed towards.

We understand that children can experience HSB in various settings, including at a childcare / education setting, at home (or at another home), online or in a public place.

We understand that, if a child's sexual behaviour is not developmentally appropriate or expected for their age, it is important to respond quickly, before the behaviour becomes harmful to that child or other children. We recognise HSB may also be a sign that a child has suffered their own trauma or abuse and we will respond to ensure they receive the right help at the right time to address the concerning behaviour.

## **Honour based abuse including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast flattening and forced marriage**

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 child abuse.

As of October 2015, the Serious Crime Act – HO, 2015, introduced a duty on teachers and other professionals to notify the police of known cases of female genital mutilation where it appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18. Woodcroft will operate in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to this issue, and in line with local safeguarding procedures.

Breast flattening is the process during which young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.

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 must make sure they understand how to report concerns where this may be an issue.

## **Online safety and AI**

We recognise that our pupils are growing up in an increasingly complex digital world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but we recognise it also presents challenges and risks, including those emerging from the widespread adoption of AI tools and services. Any child can be vulnerable online, and their vulnerability can fluctuate depending on their age, developmental stage and personal circumstance. We want to equip our pupils with the knowledge needed to make the best use of the internet and technology in a safe, considered and respectful way, so they are able to reap the benefits of the online world. The range of online risks could be categorised as:

*Content* Being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material, for example: pornography; fake news; suicide; or racist, 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 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; or financial scams.

Woodcroft uses an internet filtering service for school computers and devices and follows the DfE *Cyber security standards*. Our systems will be reviewed and assessed annually using the DfE's *Plan technology for your school* tool. The online safety coordinator attended the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) ambassador course and is responsible for cascading the training to others, where appropriate.

Teachers, senior teacher's assistants and therapists will complete the Thinkuknow online training course, which has been jointly developed by CEOP and the NSPCC. Online safety and mobile technology issues are periodically brought to the attention of parents through parent newsletters, and questionnaires are used to gather information on pupil and parent training needs. (See Woodcroft's *Online safety policy*.)

### **Artificial intelligence (AI)**

The school's policy and practice aims to reflect the updated requirements of KCSIE, including new expectations around AI within schools. Any use of AI within school will be subject to risk assessment, filtering, monitoring and compliance with the DfE's *Generative AI: Product Safety Expectations (2025)*. The particulars of how these aims are to be met, including the school's specific rules on AI use, is detailed in the AI section of our *Online safety policy*.

## **Prevention of radicalisation**

As of 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 and 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; and
- 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. 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 social care and/or the CHANNEL panel.

## **Serious violence**

All staff are aware of the risk factors and indicators which may signal that pupils are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that a pupil has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

## Wellbeing and mental health

Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a pupil has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. 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, staff must seek advice and work with other agencies as appropriate to support a pupil and ensure they receive the help they need.

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that schools play a key part in this. Woodcroft aims 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 wellbeing of our pupils. Parents should share any concerns about the wellbeing of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

## Children potentially at risk of greater harm

We recognise that some pupils may potentially be at risk of greater harm and require additional help and support. These may be pupils 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 pupils and that they receive the right help at the right time.

Woodcroft, as a school working with children with special educational needs, understands these children can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse, such as behaviour, mood and injury, relate to the pupil's disability, so further exploration is not carried out.
- That they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others.
- The potential to be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs.
- Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

## Procedures

Woodcroft works with key local partners, including those in our sending authorities, to promote the welfare of our pupils and protect them from harm. This includes providing a coordinated offer of early help when additional needs are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans, which provide additional support. This may be through a *Child in Need Plan* or a *Child Protection Plan*.

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected or 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 the designated safeguarding lead or, in their absence, the designated safeguarding deputies. Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone through the appropriate local authorities Children and Families team and /or the police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the relevant Children and Families team. (As a school with multiple sending authorities, the designated safeguarding lead will decide which local authority team(s) to contact depending on where any incident or concern happened or is reported to have happened. Concerns

will be referred to Essex County Council where an incident is reported to have happened at school. In this case the relevant sending authority will also be informed.)

The school may also seek advice from social care or another appropriate agency about a concern if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to social care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place a pupil at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. If it is necessary for another agency to meet with a pupil in school, we will always seek to inform parents or carers, unless we are advised not to by that agency. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families teams and/or police for advice on when to share information with parents and carers.

If a member of staff continues to have concerns about a pupil and feels the situation is not being addressed or does not appear to be improving, they should press for re-consideration of the case with the designated safeguarding lead.

If, for any reason, the designated safeguarding lead or deputies 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 pupil.

When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our school they must be informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the designated safeguarding lead and deputies and how to share concerns with them.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex* – ESCB, 2024
- *Essex Safeguarding Children Board Guidelines; Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Child Protection Procedures* – ESCB, May 2025
- KCSIE – DfE, 2025
- *Prevent Duty, Counter Terrorism and Security Act* – HMG, 2015
- *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* – DfE, 2025
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* – DfE, 2023

## Training

In line with statutory requirements, the designated safeguarding lead and deputies undertake level 3 child protection training at least every two years and training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate. All staff members and directors receive appropriate child protection training which is regularly updated and in line with advice from the ESCB. In addition, all staff members and other adults working with Woodcroft pupils receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard pupils effectively. Safeguarding training now includes awareness of online harm and the responsible use of AI. All staff receive annual updates covering emerging digital risks, AI safety and cyber security. Records of any child protection training undertaken are kept for all staff and directors.

## Professional confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with our pupils, 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 the 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 safeguarding lead or deputies with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the pupil's best interests to do so.

## Records and information sharing

Well kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Woodcroft is clear about the need to record any concern held about a pupil within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

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 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. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Our use of data for child protection purposes is recorded in our online *Pupil privacy notice*.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, should record it as soon as possible on Woodcroft's blue form: *Safeguarding record of concerns* (see *Appendix C*). The form notes 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 any action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead or deputies, who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records relating to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that pupil and kept separately to the main pupil file. All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for twenty five years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school or educational setting.

In line with statutory guidance, where a pupil transfers from our school to another school or educational setting, their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting. These will be marked *Confidential* and for the attention of the receiving school's designated safeguarding lead, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to Woodcroft if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school. Where appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead may also make contact with the new educational setting in advance of the pupil's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the pupil arrives.

When a pupil joins Woodcroft, we request child protection records from the previous educational establishment.

## Inter-agency working

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for pupils on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parents and carers. The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions.

If a child is subject to a *Child in Need Plan* or a *Child Protection Plan*, the designated safeguarding lead 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 lead will ensure the school is represented,

provides appropriate information and contributes to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the *Child Protection Plan* or the pupil's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the pupil at further risk of significant harm. In this case the designated safeguarding lead will inform the pupil's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed.

## 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 our staff induction and are outlined in our *Staff handbook* under *Guidelines on safe working practice*. The school works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET procedures – ESCB, in respect of allegations against an adult working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity.

The school has processes in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff or adult working with our pupils. Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff must be referred to the head teacher, or the nominated deputy in their absence, as they have responsibility for managing employment issues. Where the allegation concerns an agency member of staff, the head teacher will liaise with the agency, while following due process. Where the concern involves the head teacher, it should be reported direct to the managing director, Daniel Edwards.

The SET procedures – ESCB, require that, where an allegation against a member of staff is received, the head teacher, senior named person or the managing director must inform the duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the Children's Workforce Allegations Management Team on 03 330 139 797 within one working day. However, wherever possible, contact with the LADO will be made immediately as they will then advise on how to proceed and whether the matter requires police involvement. This will include advice on speaking to pupils and parents. The school does not carry out any investigation before speaking to the LADO.

Staffing matters are confidential and the school operates within a statutory framework around data protection.

## 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 pupils. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard pupils, such as guiding a pupil 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 (see reference on page 2) and recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context.

## Whistleblowing

All members of staff should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the school management team. We have whistleblowing procedures in place and these are available in the school *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 on: 0800 028 0285. This helpline is available from 08:00 to 20:00, 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 24 hour helpline on: 0808 800 5000, or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).

## Appendix A – missing pupil protocol

Arrangements for pupils who go missing during the school day.

### Definition of missing

The definition of missing from the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance which is used in Essex is *'anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and his or her wellbeing confirmed'*.

### Introduction

This guidance sets out the procedures to follow when a pupil goes missing from school. Missing children are among the most vulnerable in our community. Sometimes children go missing from educational settings and when this occurs it is important that action is taken, in line with local procedures, quickly to address this. This appendix should be read in conjunction with the documents listed immediately below:

- Essex Schools Infolink for the model *Child protection policy* and other resources.
- ESCB for the SET procedures and other resources.

A pupil going missing could be a one-off incident that, following investigation, does not need further work. However, a pupil going missing frequently could be an indicator of underlying exploitation or other forms of child abuse.

Schools should consider missing episodes like any other child protection concern and take action as appropriate, for example, by contacting parents, the Children and Families Hub consultation line, and in an emergency, the priority line or the police. It may be appropriate to use the relevant local authority's early help procedures (for example, in Essex, holding a Team Around the Family meeting) to address the issues and prevent escalation. Advice should be sought and concerns should be escalated if there is no improvement.

Where children missing frequently are open to children's social care, a specific plan may be in place. Where this is the case, the educational setting may be set actions as part of the plan and should receive a copy if consent has been provided.

### When a pupil goes missing

When it is suspected that a pupil is missing from school this must be addressed immediately. Active steps to locate the pupil should be taken, for example, searching the premises and surrounding areas, contacting the pupil by phone, text and social media, and contacting their parents. If none of these actions locate the pupil, then they must be reported missing to the police by dialling 101 (or 999 if there is a belief that the pupil is immediately suffering significant harm). It is important that the police are informed of any checks already completed, as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks.

Staff must inform the missing pupil's parents. Where there is a social worker allocated to the pupil, they should also be informed.

After a pupil has been reported missing, any further information should be communicated to the police by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number that the police would have provided following the initial report. Further information must be passed to the police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the pupil until informed of their return.

### When the pupil is found

If the pupil is found by staff, or if the pupil returns to the premises of their own accord, the police must be notified immediately by dialling 101 (or 999 if the matter is an emergency). It is important that this action is prioritised, as the pupil will remain classified as a missing person until seen by the police.

## Essex police

On receiving a report of a missing child, Essex police will classify the child as missing and will respond based on the level of risk involved.

Essex police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all missing children who have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police, and on these occasions the parents can assist by reporting their observations of their child to officers, e.g. did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance, etc. The setting may also be able to contribute to this process and should provide the police with any relevant information or observations.

Each child that returns from missing will be offered a 'missing chat' (an independent return from missing interview) by a person not involved in their care. This will be facilitated by the local authority with responsibility for the pupil. Missing chats are offered to all children from Essex who go missing.

## Appendix B – local and national safeguarding contacts

0345 603 7627 Essex Children and Families Hub

Option 1 *Members of the public should speak to a Family Adviser. Professionals should speak to the Consultation Line (for advice) or in an emergency ask for the Priority Line.*

0345 606 1212 Emergency Duty Team – out of office hours  
([eds@essex.gov.uk](mailto:eds@essex.gov.uk))

999 Police or ambulance emergency service

101 Police non-emergency line  
(control room will direct you to the relevant child abuse office)

*Note: more details on when to contact the police can be found in the National Police Chiefs Council booklet When to Call the Police – guidance for schools and colleges.*

020 8539 5522 Whipps Cross Hospital

0808 800 5000 NSPCC: help for adults concerned about a child

0800 1111 Childline: help for children and young people

*Note: a list of the current social care contacts for each pupil's LA is kept in the school office.*

## Appendix C – safeguarding record of concerns (blue form)

Blue forms are available from the school office. They must be put in an envelope with a blue sticker (also available from the office) and handed in person to the designated senior person, or in their absence the deputy designated senior person.

Example:

**Safeguarding record of concerns** Woodcroft School 01/20 Private and confidential

Pupil's name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Please record your concerns below, place in a sealed envelope marked 'Private and confidential' and hand in person to the head teacher or in their absence to the deputy safeguarding lead.  
Please include the following information regarding your concerns:

- The date, time and context
- The sequence of events
- Your actual concerns
- The pupil's actual words, if applicable

Staff member recording concerns \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_