

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

For implementation September 2026

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Approving Body	South Bank Academies Board of Trustees
Date of approval	4 September 2026
Date of next review	September 2027

Section 1 – Policy Statement

1.1 Purpose

South Bank Academies is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person. The Trust recognises that effective safeguarding is fundamental to providing high-quality education and enabling children to achieve their full potential. This policy sets out the Trust's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection and provides a clear framework for preventing harm, identifying concerns, responding appropriately and working collaboratively with families and partner agencies to safeguard children. The welfare of the child is the Trust's paramount consideration in all safeguarding decisions.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to every adult working on behalf of South Bank Academies, including:

- employees;
- supply and agency staff;
- volunteers;
- governors and trustees;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- work placement students;
- visitors;
- any other individual engaged to work with children on behalf of the Trust.

All adults working within the Trust have a responsibility to safeguard children and to act immediately if they have any concern regarding a child's welfare. This policy should be read alongside the Trust's related safeguarding procedures and associated policies.

1.3 Commitment

South Bank Academies is committed to creating a culture in which:

- every child feels safe, respected and listened to;
- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- concerns are identified early and acted upon promptly;
- children receive timely support appropriate to their needs;
- staff are confident to raise concerns without hesitation;
- safeguarding practice is continually reviewed and strengthened;
- children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination;
- all decisions place the welfare of children at their centre.

The Trust recognises that safeguarding extends beyond responding to child protection concerns. It includes creating an environment in which children can thrive academically, socially and emotionally, whilst feeling safe both within the Trust and beyond.

1.4 A Child-Centred Approach

The Trust adopts a child-centred approach to safeguarding. Children's wishes, feelings and lived experiences will be considered when making safeguarding decisions, taking account of their age, understanding and individual circumstances. Safeguarding arrangements will seek to ensure that children:

- know how to seek help;
- are listened to when they raise concerns;
- receive appropriate support;
- understand how to stay safe, including online;
- are treated with dignity and respect;
- are protected from discrimination.

Staff should never assume that someone else has taken action. Every concern matters, and every member of staff has a responsibility to act.

1.5 Safeguarding Culture

The Trust is committed to maintaining a strong safeguarding culture in which safeguarding is embedded throughout leadership, teaching, pastoral care and daily practice.

This culture is characterised by:

- vigilance;
- openness;
- professional curiosity;
- effective information sharing;
- reflective practice;
- partnership working;
- continuous improvement.

Leaders will actively promote an environment where staff feel confident to raise concerns, seek advice and challenge practice where necessary. Safeguarding concerns will always be taken seriously and managed fairly, proportionately and without delay.

1.6 Equality and Inclusion

South Bank Academies recognises that some children may experience additional barriers to recognising abuse, seeking help or accessing support. Safeguarding arrangements will be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all children, including those with:

- special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- communication needs;
- mental health needs;
- protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010;
- caring responsibilities;
- experiences of discrimination or disadvantage.

The Trust will ensure that safeguarding practice is equitable, inclusive and responsive to individual need.

1.7 Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board. It will also be reviewed earlier where:

- statutory guidance changes;
- legislation changes;
- learning from safeguarding practice indicates revision is necessary;
- recommendations arise from serious case reviews, safeguarding practice reviews or inspections;
- local safeguarding arrangements require amendment.

Minor administrative amendments, including updates to named staff, contact details or organisational structures, may be made during the year without requiring full Board approval, provided they do not alter the substantive content of the policy.

Section 2 – Legislative Framework

2.1 Statutory Context

This policy has been developed in accordance with current legislation and statutory guidance relating to safeguarding and child protection. South Bank Academies will fulfil its statutory safeguarding responsibilities by maintaining effective safeguarding arrangements that protect children from harm, promote their welfare and support positive outcomes. The Trust will keep this policy under review to ensure continued compliance with changes to legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements.

2.2 Keeping Children Safe in Education

This policy has been written in accordance with the current edition of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) issued by the Department for Education. All staff must read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education and confirm that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders, governors and trustees are expected to be familiar with the wider requirements of KCSIE relevant to their responsibilities. The Trust will ensure that safeguarding arrangements remain fully aligned with KCSIE and any subsequent statutory updates.

2.3 Working Together to Safeguard Children

Safeguarding is most effective when agencies work collaboratively. South Bank Academies will work in partnership with children, families, local authorities, health services, the police and other safeguarding partners in accordance with *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. This includes effective multi-agency working, timely information sharing, early identification of need and coordinated support for children and families.

2.4 Family Help

In accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, the Trust recognises Family Help as the national approach to providing coordinated support for children and families whose needs do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention. South Bank Academies will identify emerging needs early and contribute to Family Help arrangements where appropriate. Detailed arrangements are set out in Section 5.

2.5 Safeguarding Responsibilities

The safeguarding responsibilities contained within this policy are informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance.

Primary Legislation

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2002
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Crime and Policing Act 2026

Statutory Guidance

This policy has particular regard to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (current edition)
- Prevent Duty Guidance
- Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers
- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation

- Behaviour in Schools
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Statutory Guidance
- Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: Advice for Education Settings Working with Children and Young People
- Meeting Digital and Technology Standards in Schools and Colleges – Filtering and Monitoring Standards

2.6 Local Safeguarding Arrangements

South Bank Academies will work in partnership with the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and other safeguarding agencies. The Trust will:

- follow locally agreed safeguarding procedures;
- participate in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- contribute appropriately to assessments and child protection planning;
- cooperate with safeguarding reviews and investigations;
- implement learning arising from local and national safeguarding reviews.

Where local procedures differ from national guidance, staff should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

2.7 Professional Judgement

While legislation and statutory guidance provide the framework for safeguarding practice, effective safeguarding depends upon informed professional judgement. Staff should exercise professional curiosity and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead whenever uncertainty exists. Where there is doubt, concerns should always be shared.

2.8 Relationship to Other Trust Policies

This policy should be read alongside the Trust's wider safeguarding framework, including policies relating to:

- staff conduct;
- behaviour;
- attendance;
- online safety;
- anti-bullying;
- safer recruitment;
- whistleblowing;
- health and safety;
- educational visits;
- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- SEND;
- data protection.

A full list of related Trust policies is provided in Appendix E.

Section 3 – Policy Aims

3.1 Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of every child;
- ensure that the welfare of the child remains the Trust's paramount consideration in all safeguarding decisions;
- establish clear safeguarding responsibilities for Trustees, governors, leaders, staff, volunteers and all adults working on behalf of the Trust;
- support the early identification of children who may be vulnerable or at risk of harm and ensure timely intervention, including Family Help where appropriate (see Section 5);
- ensure that concerns regarding abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding risks are recognised, recorded and acted upon promptly;

- promote effective partnership working with children, parents and carers, safeguarding partners and other agencies to improve outcomes for children;
- create and maintain a strong safeguarding culture in which concerns are identified early, professional curiosity is encouraged and children feel confident to seek help;
- ensure that safer recruitment, professional conduct and safeguarding training contribute to a safe learning environment;
- promote the safe and responsible use of technology and protect children from online harm;
- ensure that safeguarding arrangements are regularly monitored, reviewed and strengthened through effective governance and quality assurance.

3.2 Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working on behalf of South Bank Academies, including:

- Trustees;
- governors;
- employees;
- agency and supply staff;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- visitors;
- anyone undertaking work or providing services on behalf of the Trust.

Every adult has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and must comply with the expectations set out in this policy.

3.3 Application of the Policy

This policy applies to all children attending South Bank Academies, regardless of age, ability, background, ethnicity, culture, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or individual circumstances. The Trust recognises that some children may experience additional vulnerabilities or face barriers to recognising abuse or seeking help. Safeguarding arrangements will therefore be responsive to individual need and underpinned by the principles of equality, inclusion and respect. The policy should be read alongside the Trust's wider safeguarding arrangements, including related policies and procedures referenced throughout this document.

3.4 Expectations of Staff

All adults working on behalf of South Bank Academies are expected to:

- read and understand this policy;
- fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities in accordance with statutory guidance;
- maintain an attitude of professional curiosity;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- participate in safeguarding training and continuous professional development;
- contribute to a culture in which safeguarding is recognised as everyone's responsibility.

Detailed responsibilities for specific roles are set out in Section 9, with the statutory responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead described in Section 10.

3.5 Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance or local safeguarding arrangements require amendment. South Bank Academies is committed to the continuous improvement of its safeguarding practice. Learning arising from safeguarding reviews, quality assurance, staff feedback, student voice and emerging safeguarding risks will inform future revisions to this policy. Further information regarding governance, monitoring and policy review is provided in Section 18.

Section 4 – Safeguarding Principles

4.1 Introduction

Safeguarding is fundamental to the work of South Bank Academies and is central to the Trust's vision of providing an outstanding education within a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. The Trust recognises that effective safeguarding extends beyond protecting children from abuse. It encompasses promoting their welfare, supporting their physical and mental health, enabling them to learn safely and ensuring they are prepared for life in modern Britain. Every child has the right to feel safe, to be listened to and to receive appropriate support whenever concerns arise.

4.2 Definition of Safeguarding

For the purposes of this policy, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding includes child protection but extends far beyond it. It is a proactive, preventative and collaborative responsibility shared by every adult working within the Trust.

4.3 The Paramountcy Principle

In accordance with the Children Act 1989, the welfare of the child is the Trust's paramount consideration. Where safeguarding decisions require professional judgement, the interests and safety of the child will always take precedence over competing considerations. Children's wishes and feelings will be sought wherever appropriate and given due weight in accordance with their age, understanding and individual circumstances.

4.4 Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

Every adult working on behalf of South Bank Academies has a responsibility to safeguard children. This responsibility applies irrespective of role or seniority and cannot be delegated. Detailed responsibilities are set out in Section 9.

4.5 A Child-Centred Approach

South Bank Academies is committed to adopting a child-centred approach to safeguarding. Children should:

- feel safe within the Trust;
- know how to seek help;
- understand who they can speak to if they are worried;
- be listened to when they raise concerns;
- receive timely and appropriate support.

Safeguarding decisions should consider each child's individual needs, lived experiences, strengths and vulnerabilities.

4.6 Early Identification and Early Intervention

Where emerging needs are identified, the Trust will work proactively with children, families and partner agencies, including through Family Help where appropriate. Concerns will be reviewed regularly and escalated promptly where risks increase (see Section 5).

4.7 Professional Curiosity

Professional curiosity is a fundamental safeguarding principle within South Bank Academies. Staff are expected to:

- remain professionally inquisitive;
- respectfully explore concerns;

- ask appropriate questions;
- consider the wider context of children's lives;
- seek clarification where explanations do not fully account for observed concerns.
- Professional curiosity enables safeguarding concerns to be identified earlier and supports more effective decision-making.

Where uncertainty exists, staff should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

4.8 Partnership Working

The Trust is committed to developing effective partnerships with children, parents and carers, Family Help services, Children's Social Care, the Police, Health Services, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant safeguarding partners. Information will be shared appropriately, lawfully and in the best interests of children.

4.9 Inclusion and Equality

Safeguarding arrangements will take account of children's individual circumstances, including special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), communication needs, mental health, protected characteristics and other factors that may increase vulnerability. Further guidance is provided in Section 6.

4.10 Safe Learning Environment

The Trust is committed to providing an environment where children:

- feel physically safe;
- feel emotionally secure;
- are treated with dignity and respect;
- experience positive relationships;
- understand expectations for behaviour;
- are protected from discrimination, bullying, harassment and abuse.
- Safeguarding considerations will inform curriculum design, behaviour management, attendance strategies, enrichment activities and educational visits.

4.11 Online Safety

The Trust recognises that safeguarding extends to children's experiences online. Children may be exposed to a range of online risks, including abuse, exploitation, bullying, harmful content and emerging technologies such as AI-enabled abuse and digitally manipulated content. Online safety is embedded throughout safeguarding practice and the wider curriculum. The Trust will maintain effective filtering and monitoring systems and provide education that enables children to use technology safely, responsibly and critically. Further information is provided in Section 16.

4.12 Safeguarding Culture

These safeguarding principles underpin every aspect of the Trust's work and contribute to a safeguarding culture in which children feel safe, concerns are acted upon promptly and safeguarding is recognised as everyone's responsibility. The Trust's approach to safeguarding culture is described further in Section 8.

Section 5 – Family Help

5.1 Introduction

South Bank Academies recognises that children achieve the best outcomes when concerns are identified early and appropriate support is provided before needs escalate.

The Trust is committed to working proactively with children, families and partner agencies to promote positive outcomes through timely intervention. In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, this policy reflects the introduction of Family Help, which replaces the previous national Early Help approach. Family Help is intended to provide coordinated support to children and families where additional needs have been identified, reducing the likelihood that concerns escalate to statutory child protection intervention. The

introduction of Family Help does not alter the Trust's statutory duty to make an immediate referral where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

5.2 The Trust's Commitment

South Bank Academies believes that:

- early identification improves outcomes for children;
- families should receive support at the earliest appropriate opportunity;
- safeguarding is strengthened through partnership working;
- intervention should be proportionate to identified need;
- children's welfare should remain central throughout all support arrangements.

The Trust will work collaboratively with children, families and partner agencies to ensure that support is timely, coordinated and focused upon improving outcomes.

5.3 What is Family Help?

Family Help is a coordinated, multi-agency approach to supporting children and families where additional needs have been identified but the threshold for statutory child protection intervention has not been met.

Support may be provided by one or more agencies depending upon the individual circumstances of the child and family. Family Help aims to:

- identify emerging needs;
- coordinate support across services;
- strengthen family resilience;
- reduce barriers to education and wellbeing;
- improve long-term outcomes for children.

5.4 Identifying Need

All staff have an important role in recognising children who may benefit from additional support. Concerns may arise through:

- changes in attendance;
- deterioration in behaviour;
- emotional wellbeing concerns;
- declining educational engagement;
- safeguarding disclosures;
- repeated low-level safeguarding concerns;
- family circumstances;
- contextual safeguarding risks;
- observations made by staff;
- information shared by partner agencies.

Staff should remain professionally curious and consider whether patterns of concern indicate that additional support may be required.

5.5 Indicators That Family Help May Be Appropriate

Family Help may be considered where concerns include, but are not limited to:

Attendance

- persistent absence;
- repeated lateness;
- reduced engagement with education.
- Behaviour
- significant changes in behaviour;
- repeated suspensions;
- emotional dysregulation;

- conflict with peers.
- Emotional Wellbeing
- anxiety;
- low mood;
- social isolation;
- low self-esteem;
- emerging mental health concerns.
- Family Circumstances
- parental conflict;
- domestic abuse;
- housing difficulties;
- financial hardship;
- parental ill health;
- substance misuse;
- bereavement;
- caring responsibilities.

Education

- declining academic progress;
- disengagement from learning;
- unmet additional needs;
- barriers to participation.
- Emerging Safeguarding Concerns
- low-level neglect;
- online or contextual safeguarding risks;
- emerging indicators of exploitation;
- concerning peer relationships.

The presence of one indicator does not automatically require Family Help. However, several concerns occurring together or concerns that persist over time may indicate that coordinated intervention is required.

5.6 Responsibilities of All Staff

All staff should:

- identify emerging concerns;
- maintain professional curiosity;
- record concerns accurately;
- report concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- contribute information where requested;
- continue to support children throughout Family Help involvement.

Staff should not make Family Help referrals directly unless this forms part of their designated professional role.

5.7 Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will:

- consider whether Family Help is appropriate;
- assess the child's level of need;
- consult with the child and family where appropriate;
- coordinate referrals;
- liaise with partner agencies;
- contribute to Family Help assessments;
- monitor the effectiveness of support;
- review progress regularly;

- escalate concerns promptly where risks increase.

Where concerns indicate that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the DSL will make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care rather than pursuing Family Help.

5.8 Working with Families

South Bank Academies believes that effective safeguarding is strengthened through positive relationships with parents and carers. Where appropriate and safe to do so, families will be:

- involved in discussions;
- informed of concerns;
- encouraged to participate in planning;
- supported to access services;
- treated with respect and dignity.

The Trust recognises that there may be circumstances where informing parents could place a child at greater risk. In such cases, advice will be sought from Children's Social Care and other safeguarding partners before information is shared.

5.9 Thresholds for Intervention

The Trust recognises three broad levels of need:

Level of Need	Typical Response
Universal	High-quality education, pastoral support and universal services.
Family Help	Coordinated multi-agency support where additional needs have been identified.
Statutory Safeguarding	Referral to Children's Social Care where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, or where statutory intervention is otherwise required.

Professional judgement should always be exercised when considering thresholds. Where uncertainty exists, advice should be sought from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

5.10 Multi-Agency Working

The Trust recognises that no single agency can meet every safeguarding need. South Bank Academies will work collaboratively with Family Help services, Children's Social Care, the Police, Health Services, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant agencies as appropriate.

5.11 Monitoring and Review

The DSL will monitor Family Help involvement to ensure that:

- support remains appropriate;
- agreed actions are progressing;
- children's outcomes are improving;
- emerging risks are identified promptly;
- intervention is escalated where necessary.

Where Family Help is no longer meeting the child's needs, the DSL will consider whether a referral to Children's Social Care is required.

5.12 Key Principles

Family Help within South Bank Academies is underpinned by the following principles:

- early identification;
- child-centred practice;
- partnership working;
- professional curiosity;

- proportionate intervention;
- coordinated support;
- timely escalation where risks increase.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to contribute to the early identification of children who may benefit from additional support.

Section 6 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

6.1 Equality Duties

In fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities, the Trust will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. The Trust will ensure that safeguarding arrangements:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- foster good relations;
- are accessible to all children;
- recognise and respond appropriately to individual needs.

Safeguarding decisions will always be based upon the individual circumstances of the child and their best interests.

6.2 Children Who May Be More Vulnerable

The Trust recognises that safeguarding concerns may present differently for different children. Some children may be more vulnerable because of their individual circumstances or may face additional barriers to recognising abuse or seeking help. This may include, but is not limited to, children who:

- have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND);
- have communication or speech and language needs;
- have mental health needs;
- are looked after or previously looked after;
- are young carers;
- are experiencing housing instability or financial hardship;
- have experienced trauma or adverse childhood experiences;
- are missing education or frequently absent;
- are at risk of exploitation;
- identify as LGBTQ+;
- are newly arrived in the United Kingdom;
- speak English as an additional language;
- experience discrimination, racism or prejudice.

The Trust recognises that vulnerability is dynamic and that any child may become vulnerable at different points in their life.

6.3 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The Trust acknowledges that children with SEND can face additional safeguarding challenges. These may include:

- communication barriers;
- assumptions that indicators of abuse relate solely to disability;
- greater dependence upon adults;
- social isolation;
- increased vulnerability to bullying, exploitation or abuse;
- reduced ability to recognise or report inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff working with children with SEND should:
 - remain professionally curious;

- understand each child's communication needs;
- ensure safeguarding information is accessible;
- avoid making assumptions;
- consider whether behaviour may indicate an unmet safeguarding need.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) will work closely together to ensure appropriate support is provided.

6.4 Protected Characteristics

The Trust recognises, values and celebrates diversity. Safeguarding practice will be free from discrimination on the grounds of:

- age;
- disability;
- sex;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity.
- Marriage and civil partnership

The Trust will challenge discriminatory behaviour, prejudice and harassment wherever it occurs.

6.5 Cultural Awareness

The Trust recognises that children and families come from a wide range of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. While culture and faith should always be respected, they must never be used to justify practices that place children at risk of harm. Safeguarding decisions will always prioritise the safety and welfare of the child. Staff should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead whenever cultural or religious issues arise within safeguarding practice.

6.6 Inclusive Communication

Children should be able to access safeguarding support in ways that are appropriate to their needs. The Trust will endeavour to ensure that:

- information is presented in accessible formats where required;
- interpreters are used where appropriate;
- communication needs are recognised;
- children have sufficient time to express themselves;
- reasonable adjustments are made to enable children to participate fully.

Every child should be able to access safeguarding support in a way that is appropriate to their communication needs.

6.7 Children Who Are Questioning Their Gender

South Bank Academies recognises that children who are questioning their gender may require sensitive, thoughtful and individualised support. The Trust will consider each case on its individual circumstances, taking account of the child's welfare, wishes and feelings, age, understanding, any relevant clinical or professional advice, and its legal responsibilities. Where a child is questioning their gender, the Trust will:

- adopt a child-centred and evidence-informed approach;
- consider any safeguarding or welfare concerns;
- involve parents or carers wherever appropriate, unless doing so would place the child at risk of harm;
- work with relevant professionals and external agencies where necessary;
- carefully consider requests relating to social transition on a case-by-case basis;

- comply with statutory requirements relating to single-sex facilities, residential accommodation and sport;
- maintain accurate pupil records in accordance with legal requirements.

The Trust recognises that children who are questioning their gender may be particularly vulnerable to bullying, harassment, discrimination, poor mental health or online abuse. Appropriate pastoral and safeguarding support will therefore be provided where required.

6.8 Tackling Discrimination

The Trust recognises that discrimination, prejudice and hate incidents can have a significant impact on children's safety and wellbeing. All incidents of:

- racism;
- sexism;
- homophobia;
- biphobia;
- transphobia;
- disability discrimination;
- religious intolerance;
- other forms of prejudice;

will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. Where such behaviour places a child at risk of harm, it will be managed as a safeguarding concern.

6.9 Promoting Inclusion Through Education

The curriculum plays an important role in safeguarding. Through an inclusive curriculum and pastoral programme, the Trust will promote:

- respect for others;
- healthy relationships;
- equality;
- diversity;
- British values;
- online safety;
- emotional wellbeing;
- resilience;
- responsible citizenship.

These themes support the Trust's wider safeguarding and inclusion strategy by promoting respect, belonging and positive relationships.

6.10 Partnership with Families

The Trust recognises that effective safeguarding depends upon positive relationships with parents and carers. Where appropriate and safe to do so, families will be:

- involved in safeguarding discussions;
- supported to access services;
- encouraged to participate in planning;
- kept appropriately informed.

The Trust will always place the safety and welfare of the child above all other considerations.

6.11 Monitoring Equality in Safeguarding

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor safeguarding practice to ensure that:

- children have equitable access to safeguarding support;
- barriers to reporting are identified and addressed;

- safeguarding outcomes are fair and inclusive;
- staff understand additional vulnerabilities;
- safeguarding arrangements remain accessible to all children.

Learning identified through monitoring will inform staff training, policy review and continuous improvement.

Section 7 – Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

7.1 Safeguarding Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every adult working within South Bank Academies has a legal, professional and moral responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare. No member of staff should assume that safeguarding concerns have already been identified or reported by another colleague.

Every member of staff is expected to:

- remain alert to indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- maintain an attitude of professional curiosity;
- understand the Trust's safeguarding procedures;
- respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns;
- report concerns without delay;
- maintain accurate safeguarding records;
- contribute to safeguarding plans where appropriate;
- participate in safeguarding training and continuous professional development.

Detailed safeguarding responsibilities for specific roles are set out in Section 9.

7.2 Promoting Children's Welfare

Safeguarding extends beyond protecting children from abuse. The Trust is equally committed to promoting children's overall welfare by supporting their:

- physical health;
- emotional wellbeing;
- mental health;
- personal development;
- educational achievement;
- attendance and engagement;
- resilience;
- preparation for adulthood.

Children learn most effectively when they feel safe, supported and respected. The Trust therefore seeks to create an environment in which children are able to flourish both academically and personally.

7.3 Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may arise in many different ways. Concerns may result from:

- something a child says;
- something a member of staff observes;
- changes in behaviour;
- attendance patterns;
- online activity;
- information received from another agency;
- concerns raised by parents or carers;
- patterns of low-level concerns that, when viewed collectively, suggest increasing vulnerability.

Staff should recognise that safeguarding concerns are not always obvious. Professional curiosity and careful observation are essential components of effective safeguarding practice.

7.4 Listening to Children

South Bank Academies recognises that children are often the best source of information about their own lives.

Children should be encouraged to:

- express their views;
- raise concerns;
- ask for help;
- participate in safeguarding decisions where appropriate.
- When children disclose information, staff should:
 - remain calm;
 - listen carefully;
 - avoid asking leading questions;
 - reassure the child that they have done the right thing;
 - explain that information will need to be shared with people who can help;
 - record the disclosure accurately;
 - report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Children should never be promised confidentiality.

7.5 Working with Parents and Carers

The Trust recognises the important role parents and carers play in safeguarding children. Where appropriate and safe to do so, the Trust will:

- communicate openly with families;
- involve parents in safeguarding discussions;
- provide advice and support;
- signpost families to appropriate services;
- work collaboratively to improve outcomes.

Where informing parents may place a child at increased risk, advice will be sought from Children's Social Care or the Police before information is shared.

7.6 Information Sharing

Effective safeguarding depends upon timely, accurate and proportionate information sharing. Safeguarding information will be shared lawfully, securely and in the best interests of the child. Data protection legislation does not prevent the sharing of information for safeguarding purposes, and concerns about data protection must never delay action where a child is at risk. Further guidance is provided in Section 15.

7.7 Early Identification

The Trust is committed to identifying concerns at the earliest possible stage. Early identification may prevent concerns from escalating and improve long-term outcomes for children. Staff should never ignore:

- repeated minor concerns;
- unexplained behavioural or attendance changes;
- emotional withdrawal;
- increasing online or contextual risks.

Small concerns, when viewed collectively, may indicate a developing safeguarding issue.

7.8 Partnership Working

The Trust recognises that safeguarding is strengthened through effective partnership working. South Bank Academies will work collaboratively with children, families, Family Help services, Children's Social Care, the Police, Health Services, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant safeguarding partners. Staff will contribute appropriately to safeguarding assessments, meetings and reviews.

7.9 Recording and Reporting

All safeguarding concerns must be:

- recorded promptly;
- factual;
- accurate;
- objective;
- shared immediately with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Records should include sufficient factual detail to provide a clear chronology of concerns, actions taken and outcomes. Staff should never retain safeguarding records independently. All safeguarding information must be managed in accordance with Trust procedures.

7.10 Alternative Provision

Where the Trust commissions or places a student in alternative provision or another education setting, it will satisfy itself that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place. The Trust will maintain oversight of the student's attendance, welfare and progress, work collaboratively with the provider and ensure safeguarding information is shared appropriately.

7.11 Continuous Vigilance

Safeguarding is an ongoing responsibility. Every adult should maintain an attitude of:

- vigilance;
- professional curiosity;
- accountability;
- compassion.

As children's needs change over time, safeguarding arrangements must remain responsive and proportionate.

7.12 Creating a Safe Environment

The Trust is committed to maintaining an environment where:

- children feel physically and emotionally safe;
- positive relationships are promoted;
- bullying, discrimination and harassment are challenged;
- children understand how to seek help;
- staff model professional behaviour;
- safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly.

Every interaction between adults and children contributes to the safeguarding culture of the Trust.

7.13 Key Principles

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is underpinned by the following principles:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- children should be listened to and respected;
- concerns should be identified early;
- professional curiosity should inform decision-making;
- partnership working improves outcomes;

The Trust expects every adult working on its behalf to demonstrate these principles through their daily practice.

Section 8 – Safeguarding Culture

8.1 A Whole-Trust Approach

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Every member of the Trust community contributes to safeguarding, including:

- Trustees;

- governors;
- senior leaders;
- teachers;
- support staff;
- safeguarding staff;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- agency workers;
- visitors.

The Trust expects safeguarding to be considered in every aspect of organisational practice, including curriculum, student support, recruitment, educational visits, digital technologies and strategic decision-making. Safeguarding is not the responsibility of one individual or one team. It is everyone's responsibility.

8.2 Leadership Commitment

The Executive Principal, senior leaders and Trustees will actively promote a culture in which safeguarding remains a strategic priority, recognising that safeguarding culture is established through daily behaviours rather than policy alone. Leadership will demonstrate this commitment by:

- modelling high professional standards;
- ensuring safeguarding is regularly discussed at leadership meetings;
- allocating appropriate resources;
- promoting open communication;
- supporting staff to raise concerns;
- providing appropriate training;
- reviewing safeguarding practice regularly;
- learning from safeguarding incidents.

8.3 Listening to Children

Children should know that their voices matter. The Trust will ensure that children:

- understand who they can speak to if they are worried;
- feel confident that adults will listen;
- are encouraged to contribute to safeguarding discussions;
- participate in student voice activities;
- receive regular opportunities to provide feedback about their safety and wellbeing.

The Trust will regularly evaluate whether children feel safe and whether safeguarding arrangements are meeting their needs. Children's views will inform safeguarding improvement wherever appropriate.

8.4 Psychological Safety for Staff

Effective safeguarding depends upon staff feeling confident to speak up. South Bank Academies is committed to creating an environment where staff:

- raise safeguarding concerns without hesitation;
- seek advice when uncertain;
- challenge practice respectfully;
- report low-level concerns;
- contribute openly to safeguarding discussions.

No member of staff will be criticised for reporting a genuine safeguarding concern made in good faith. Leaders will promote a culture of openness, trust and shared responsibility.

8.5 Learning Culture

The Trust recognises that safeguarding practice should continually evolve. Safeguarding improvements will be informed by:

- safeguarding audits;
- supervision;
- student voice;
- parent feedback;
- staff feedback;
- safeguarding reviews;
- national safeguarding developments;
- inspection findings;
- emerging safeguarding risks.

Learning identified through these activities will inform policy development, staff training, leadership practice and continuous improvement. The Trust believes that learning from safeguarding practice strengthens organisational culture and improves outcomes for children.

8.6 Safeguarding Through the Curriculum

The curriculum plays a significant role in safeguarding. Children will receive age-appropriate education to help them:

- understand consent;
- recognise abuse, exploitation and healthy relationships;
- stay safe online;
- manage risk;
- understand British Values;
- recognise radicalisation and extremism;
- understand the responsible use of AI and digital technologies;
- seek help when required.

Safeguarding education will be delivered through the curriculum, tutorial programme, assemblies, enrichment activities and other appropriate opportunities.

8.7 Online Safeguarding Culture

The Trust recognises that safeguarding extends beyond the physical environment. The safeguarding culture promoted within South Bank Academies also applies to children's experiences online. The Trust will:

- promote responsible use of technology;
- educate children about online risks;
- maintain effective filtering and monitoring;
- respond appropriately to online safeguarding concerns.

Children should understand that safeguarding expectations apply equally online and offline. Further information is provided in Section 16.

8.8 Working in Partnership

Safeguarding culture is strengthened through positive relationships. The Trust will work collaboratively with children, parents and carers, Family Help services, Children's Social Care, the Police, Health Services, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant partners. Partnership working will be characterised by openness, respect and shared responsibility.

Section 9 – Roles and Responsibilities

9.1 The Trust Board

The Board of Trustees has overall strategic responsibility for safeguarding arrangements across South Bank Academies. The Trust Board will ensure that:

- safeguarding remains a strategic priority;

- the welfare of children is central to decision-making;
- this policy is reviewed and approved annually;
- safeguarding arrangements comply with current legislation and statutory guidance;
- ensure appropriate safeguarding leadership, staffing and resources are in place;
- effective safeguarding systems operate across the Trust;
- safer recruitment arrangements are robust;
- appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are implemented;
- safeguarding training is provided for Trustees;
- safeguarding receives appropriate challenge and scrutiny.

The Board will seek assurance not only that safeguarding policies exist, but that they are implemented effectively and improve outcomes for children.

9.2 The Safeguarding Governor

The Board will appoint a Safeguarding Governor to provide strategic oversight and constructive challenge.

The Safeguarding Governor will:

- meet regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- review safeguarding reports;
- monitor implementation of safeguarding policies;
- undertake safeguarding visits where appropriate;
- review safeguarding training compliance;
- review safeguarding audits;
- seek assurance regarding filtering and monitoring;
- provide appropriate challenge to senior leaders;
- report safeguarding matters to the Board.

The Safeguarding Governor will not become involved in individual safeguarding cases.

9.3 Executive Principal

The Executive Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements operate effectively throughout the Trust. The Executive Principal will:

- provide strategic leadership for safeguarding across the Trust;
- support the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- ensure sufficient staffing and resources;
- promote safeguarding through leadership practice;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training;
- oversee safeguarding quality assurance;
- ensure concerns are acted upon appropriately;
- report safeguarding matters to the Trust Board;
- ensure safeguarding informs organisational improvement.

The Executive Principal will ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are embedded within leadership accountability and organisational decision-making.

9.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Trust will appoint a suitably qualified senior leader as the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will have appropriate status, authority, training, time and resources to fulfil the responsibilities of the role. The DSL is responsible for:

- providing strategic leadership for safeguarding;
- managing safeguarding referrals;
- supporting staff with safeguarding concerns;
- maintaining safeguarding records;
- liaising with Children's Social Care, Family Help and partner agencies;

- promoting early intervention;
- overseeing safeguarding training;
- monitoring safeguarding practice;
- quality assuring safeguarding records;
- supporting children and families;
- ensuring statutory safeguarding responsibilities are fulfilled;
- reporting safeguarding themes to senior leaders and Trustees.

A full description of the DSL's responsibilities is provided in Section 10.

9.5 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Trust will appoint one or more Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. Deputy DSLs will:

- provide operational safeguarding support;
- undertake safeguarding duties in the absence of the DSL;
- contribute to safeguarding assessments;
- support record keeping;
- liaise with partner agencies where appropriate;
- contribute to safeguarding quality assurance.

The ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

9.6 Senior Leaders

Senior leaders will:

- model exemplary safeguarding practice and ensure safeguarding informs leadership decisions;
- support safeguarding investigations;
- monitor safeguarding within their areas of responsibility;
- ensure staff fulfil safeguarding responsibilities;
- contribute to safeguarding quality assurance.

Safeguarding should be considered as part of all leadership decisions.

9.7 Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children

South Bank Academies will ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced member of staff is appointed as the Designated Teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children, in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Designated Teacher will:

- promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- ensure that their educational, pastoral and wider support needs are understood and appropriately addressed;
- contribute to the development and review of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for looked-after children;
- work with the relevant Virtual School Head to support the progress and educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including the appropriate use of Pupil Premium Plus;
- liaise with local authorities, social workers, carers and other relevant professionals as appropriate; and
- work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure that safeguarding concerns, educational needs and wider vulnerabilities are considered together.

The Designated Teacher will have appropriate training and will maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil the role effectively.

9.8 Teachers and Support Staff

All staff have an individual responsibility to safeguard children. All staff, including those who do not work directly with children, must read and understand Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education and receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required. Every member of staff must:

- complete safeguarding induction;
- undertake safeguarding training;
- maintain professional curiosity;
- recognise indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- understand local safeguarding procedures;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately;
- record concerns accurately;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- contribute to safeguarding plans where requested;
- support children appropriately.

Staff should never investigate safeguarding concerns themselves.

9.9 Volunteers, Agency Staff and Contractors

All adults working on behalf of the Trust must comply with this policy. Appropriate safeguarding information will be provided during induction. Volunteers, contractors and agency staff must:

- understand how to report safeguarding concerns;
- know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- follow Trust safeguarding procedures.

Any safeguarding concern must be reported immediately.

9.10 Students

Children also contribute to safeguarding. Students are encouraged to:

- treat others with respect;
- report concerns;
- support peers appropriately;
- seek help whenever needed;
- behave responsibly online;
- contribute through student voice.

Students will receive safeguarding education appropriate to their age and stage of development.

9.11 Parents and Carers

The Trust recognises parents and carers as important safeguarding partners. Parents are encouraged to:

- work collaboratively with the Trust;
- share safeguarding concerns;
- support safeguarding interventions;
- participate in Family Help where appropriate;
- promote regular attendance;
- support online safety.

The Trust will communicate openly with families wherever it is appropriate and safe to do so.

9.12 All Adults Working Within the Trust

Every adult is expected to demonstrate the highest standards of professional conduct in accordance with the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct and Section 14 – Safer Working Practice and Professional Conduct.

Safeguarding concerns or allegations about adults working in or on behalf of the Trust, including supply staff, volunteers and contractors, must be managed in accordance with KCSIE Part Four and the Trust's allegations and low-level concerns procedures. Staff must know how to report concerns about another adult and how to escalate concerns about safeguarding practice within the Trust.

This includes:

- treating children with dignity and respect;
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries;
- safeguarding confidential information;
- reporting concerns promptly.

9.13 Shared Accountability

Effective safeguarding depends upon collaboration, effective communication, timely information sharing and a shared commitment to protecting children. Every member of the Trust community has an important role in protecting children and promoting their welfare.

Section 10 – The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

10.1 Availability

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or an appropriately trained Deputy DSL) will always be available during normal operating hours for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns. The Trust will maintain robust cover arrangements for periods when the DSL is unavailable through illness, leave or other circumstances. Appropriately trained Deputy DSLs will provide continuity of safeguarding leadership and ensure concerns are received, monitored and acted upon without delay. For out of hours, staff should contact the principals of each provider of the Trust.

10.2 Strategic Leadership

The DSL provides strategic leadership for safeguarding across the Trust. This includes ensuring that safeguarding remains:

- child-centred;
- compliant with statutory guidance;
- embedded throughout Trust culture;
- appropriately resourced and subject to continuous improvement.

The DSL will work closely with the Executive Principal, senior leaders, Trustees and external safeguarding partners to promote the welfare of children.

10.3 Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

Safeguarding Leadership

- lead safeguarding and child protection across the Trust;
- promote a positive safeguarding culture and ensure safeguarding remains a strategic priority;
- advising leaders on safeguarding matters;
- supporting safeguarding decision-making.
- Managing Safeguarding Concerns
- receiving safeguarding concerns from staff;
- assessing levels of risk;
- determining appropriate safeguarding action;
- making referrals where appropriate;
- monitoring safeguarding interventions;
- ensuring children receive appropriate support.

Family Help

The DSL will:

- identify children who may benefit from Family Help;
- coordinate referrals where appropriate;
- contribute to Family Help assessments;
- participate in multi-agency planning;
- monitor the effectiveness of support;
- ensure concerns are escalated promptly where risk increases.

The DSL will ensure that Family Help is considered at the earliest appropriate opportunity while recognising that immediate referral to Children's Social Care is required where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm.

10.4 Referrals

The DSL is responsible for making referrals to:

- Children's Social Care;
- Family Help services;
- Police;
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Channel Panel (where appropriate);
- other safeguarding agencies.

Where another member of staff makes a referral because immediate action is required, the DSL should be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

10.5 Working with Other Agencies

The DSL will establish effective professional relationships with Children's Social Care, Family Help services, the Police, Health Services, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant safeguarding partners. The Trust will contribute fully to safeguarding assessments, strategy discussions, child protection conferences and other multi-agency meetings where appropriate.

10.6 Record Keeping

The DSL is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding records are:

- accurate;
- factual;
- timely;
- confidential;
- secure; and
- well organised.

Safeguarding records should:

- clearly identify concerns;
- record actions taken;
- evidence decision-making;
- record outcomes; and
- demonstrate ongoing monitoring.

Where a child leaves South Bank Academies and transfers to another educational setting, the DSL will ensure that the child protection file is transferred securely in accordance with the requirements and timescales set out in Section 15.11 of this policy.

10.7 Information Sharing

The DSL will ensure that safeguarding information is shared lawfully, proportionately, promptly and securely in the best interests of the child. Where uncertainty exists, the welfare of the child will remain the primary consideration. Further information regarding information sharing is contained within Section 15.

10.8 Staff Training and Support

The DSL will ensure that all staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. This includes:

- safeguarding induction;
- annual safeguarding updates;
- statutory safeguarding training;
- online safety training;
- Prevent awareness;
- guidance regarding local safeguarding priorities.

The DSL will also provide advice and support to staff whenever safeguarding concerns arise. Staff training and safeguarding learning will be informed by safeguarding reviews, inspection findings, emerging safeguarding risks and Trust quality assurance activities.

10.9 Raising Awareness

The DSL will promote awareness of safeguarding by ensuring that:

- this policy is available to all staff;
- safeguarding procedures are understood;
- children know how to seek help;
- parents understand the Trust's safeguarding responsibilities;
- safeguarding remains visible throughout the Trust.

The DSL will contribute to safeguarding awareness through staff briefings, induction, training, student education and regular safeguarding communications.

10.10 Quality Assurance

The DSL is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. This includes auditing safeguarding records, monitoring referral activity, evaluating safeguarding outcomes, reviewing training compliance and identifying themes or emerging risks. Where improvements are identified, the DSL will work with senior leaders to implement appropriate actions.

10.11 Reporting to Leaders and Trustees

The DSL will provide regular safeguarding reports to the Executive Principal and Trust Board. Reports will include, where appropriate:

- safeguarding activity and referral trends;
- training compliance and audit findings;
- emerging risks and policy developments;
- areas requiring further improvement.

Reports will protect the confidentiality of individual children while enabling leaders to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

10.12 Professional Development

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSLs will undertake safeguarding training at least every two years, together with regular safeguarding updates, to maintain the knowledge and skills required to perform the role effectively. The Trust encourages continuous professional development through:

- safeguarding networks;
- local authority briefings;
- national safeguarding updates;
- professional supervision where appropriate;
- reflection on safeguarding practice.

Section 11 – Recognising Abuse and Neglect

11.1 Introduction

South Bank Academies is committed to ensuring that all staff understand how to recognise the indicators of abuse and neglect and respond appropriately to concerns. Abuse and neglect can affect any child, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, culture, sexual orientation or socio-economic background. Children who experience abuse may not disclose their experiences directly and, in many cases, concerns arise through changes in behaviour, presentation, attendance or emotional wellbeing rather than through a verbal disclosure. All staff should maintain an attitude of "**it could happen here**" and respond to concerns with professional curiosity and appropriate professional judgement. Where there is any concern that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, abuse or neglect, staff must report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with this policy.

11.2 Understanding Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. A child may be abused by an adult or another child. A child may be abused by:

- a parent or carer;
- another family member;
- another child or young person;
- an adult in a position of trust;
- an individual known to the child;
- an individual unknown to the child;
- organised criminal groups.
- Abuse may occur:
- in the family home;
- within the community;
- within educational settings;
- online;
- through technology;
- through exploitation.

Children may experience more than one type of abuse at the same time.

The absence of visible injuries or a direct disclosure should never be interpreted as evidence that abuse has not occurred.

11.3 Physical Abuse

Definition

Physical abuse is the deliberate infliction of physical harm or injury upon a child.

It may involve:

- hitting;
- shaking;
- throwing;
- poisoning;
- burning or scalding;
- drowning;
- suffocating;
- fabricating or inducing illness.

Possible Indicators

Possible indicators of physical abuse include:

- unexplained injuries;
- injuries inconsistent with the explanation provided;
- injuries at different stages of healing;
- frequent attendance with injuries;

- reluctance to change clothes;
- fear of physical contact;
- flinching when approached;
- aggressive behaviour;
- fear of going home.

These indicators should always be considered alongside the wider context of the child's circumstances.

11.4 Emotional Abuse

Definition

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development.

It may include:

- making a child feel worthless or unloved;
- humiliating or degrading a child;
- unrealistic expectations;
- intimidation;
- coercive or controlling behaviour;
- exposing children to domestic abuse;
- preventing normal social interaction;
- serious bullying, including online bullying.

Possible Indicators

Possible indicators include:

- excessive anxiety;
- low confidence;
- emotional withdrawal;
- depression;
- self-harm;
- attention-seeking behaviour;
- developmental delay;
- fearfulness;
- poor attachment;
- persistent sadness.

Emotional abuse is often cumulative and may develop gradually over time.

11.5 Sexual Abuse

Definition

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Sexual abuse may involve:

- physical contact;
- non-contact abuse;
- online abuse;
- grooming;
- sexual exploitation;
- coercion;
- manipulation.
- Children may also experience sexual abuse through:

- sharing indecent images;
- online grooming;
- live streaming;
- AI-generated sexual images;
- manipulated or deepfake imagery;
- coercive online relationships.

Possible Indicators

Possible indicators include:

- age-inappropriate sexualised behaviour;
- sexual knowledge beyond developmental expectations;
- unexplained gifts;
- secrecy;
- changes in friendships;
- anxiety;
- depression;
- reluctance to attend education;
- self-harm;
- pregnancy;
- sexually transmitted infections.

Children experiencing sexual abuse frequently delay disclosure due to fear, shame or manipulation.

11.6 Neglect

Definition

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may include failure to provide:

- adequate food;
- clothing;
- shelter;
- supervision;
- medical treatment;
- emotional support;
- education.

Possible Indicators

Possible indicators include:

- persistent hunger;
- poor hygiene;
- inappropriate clothing;
- untreated medical conditions;
- repeated tiredness;
- poor attendance;
- developmental delay;
- emotional withdrawal;
- frequent illness;
- inadequate supervision.

Neglect often develops gradually and should be considered cumulatively.

11.7 Indicators of Abuse

Indicators of abuse may be physical, emotional, behavioural or social. Staff should consider patterns of concern rather than isolated incidents and always exercise professional judgement when assessing safeguarding risks. Possible indicators may include:

Physical Indicators

- unexplained injuries;
- repeated injuries;
- poor hygiene;
- weight loss;
- untreated health needs;
- fatigue.

Emotional Indicators

- anxiety;
- emotional withdrawal;
- low mood;
- self-harm;
- suicidal ideation;
- excessive fearfulness.
- Behavioural Indicators
- sudden changes in behaviour;
- aggression;
- risk-taking behaviour;
- persistent absence;
- disengagement from education;
- significant deterioration in academic performance.

Social Indicators

- isolation;
- changes in friendship groups;
- concerning online relationships;
- exploitation by peers;
- association with older individuals.

No single indicator should be viewed in isolation. Professional judgement should always be exercised.

11.8 Additional Vulnerabilities

Some children may experience additional barriers to recognising abuse or seeking help, including children with SEND, communication needs, mental health difficulties, those who are looked after, young carers, children missing education and those experiencing exploitation or discrimination. Further guidance is provided in Section 6. Staff should avoid making assumptions that indicators relate solely to disability or additional needs.

11.9 Responding to Concerns

If abuse or neglect is suspected, staff must:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- reassure the child appropriately;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- explain that information cannot remain confidential;
- make a factual written record;
- report the concern immediately to the DSL.
- Staff must never:

- investigate allegations themselves;
- confront alleged perpetrators;
- promise confidentiality;
- delay reporting concerns.

Where there is immediate risk of harm, appropriate emergency action should be taken in accordance with Trust safeguarding procedures.

11.10 Children Missing Education

The Trust recognises that children missing education may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, forced marriage, radicalisation and other safeguarding concerns. Attendance concerns should therefore always be considered as part of safeguarding practice. Staff should report persistent absence or unexplained patterns of non-attendance in accordance with the Trust's attendance and safeguarding procedures.

11.11 Key Principles

All members of staff should remember that:

- abuse can affect any child;
- abuse may occur online or offline;
- abuse often presents through patterns rather than isolated incidents;
- children may not disclose abuse directly;
- professional curiosity is essential;
- it is better to report a concern than overlook one;
- safeguarding decisions should always place the welfare of the child first.

Where there is any doubt about a child's safety or welfare, advice should be sought immediately from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Section 12 – Specific Safeguarding Issues

12.1 Introduction

While all forms of abuse require an appropriate safeguarding response, some safeguarding issues present particular risks to children and require additional awareness by staff. The Trust recognises that safeguarding risks continue to evolve. Staff should remain informed about emerging safeguarding themes and understand that many children may experience multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities.

The issues outlined in this section do not represent an exhaustive list. Staff should remain professionally curious and discuss any safeguarding concern with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

12.2 Child-on-Child Abuse

South Bank Academies recognises that children can abuse other children.

Child-on-child abuse will never be dismissed as:

- "banter";
- "part of growing up";
- "horseplay";
- "a relationship issue."

The Trust adopts a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse. Abuse may occur in school, outside school, online or within intimate relationships.

Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse may include:

- bullying;
- cyberbullying;

- physical abuse;
- sexual violence;
- sexual harassment;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- initiation or hazing rituals;
- image-based abuse;
- coercive behaviour;
- emotional abuse;
- economic abuse;
- abuse within intimate relationships.

Children who abuse others may themselves be experiencing abuse or other safeguarding concerns. Each child involved should therefore be considered individually.

12.3 Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

South Bank Academies recognises that sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between children of any age or gender. Such behaviour is unacceptable and will always be taken seriously. Sexual violence includes behaviours that constitute criminal offences. Sexual harassment includes unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including:

- sexual comments;
- sexualised language;
- inappropriate touching;
- online harassment;
- sharing sexual images;
- unwanted sexual attention;
- sexist behaviour.

Staff must never dismiss sexual harassment as:

- harmless banter;
- teasing;
- part of growing up.

Every report should be considered on its own merits and responded to promptly.

12.4 Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Children display sexual behaviour across a broad developmental spectrum. However, some behaviours may be inappropriate, problematic or harmful. The Trust will respond proportionately according to:

- the child's age;
- developmental stage;
- context;
- level of coercion;
- power imbalance;
- frequency;
- severity.

Where harmful sexual behaviour is suspected, advice should be sought immediately from the DSL.

Children displaying harmful sexual behaviour should be regarded as children who may themselves require safeguarding support.

12.5 Bullying

The Trust recognises that bullying can have a significant safeguarding impact. Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, social, discriminatory or online. Bullying may become a safeguarding concern where it:

- causes significant emotional harm;

- involves exploitation;
- involves violence;
- forms part of wider abuse;
- targets vulnerable children.

12.6 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying involves bullying through technology. Examples include abusive messages, social media misuse, image sharing, impersonation, online exclusion and other forms of digital harassment. The safeguarding impact of cyberbullying can extend beyond the school day. Staff should consider online behaviour when assessing safeguarding concerns.

12.7 Children Missing Education

Children missing education are recognised as being at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation and other safeguarding concerns. Attendance concerns should always be viewed through a safeguarding lens and responded to promptly in accordance with the Trust's attendance and safeguarding procedures. The Trust will investigate unexplained absence promptly and work with families and partner agencies where concerns arise.

12.8 Attendance as a Safeguarding Issue

Regular attendance is an important protective factor.

Persistent absence may indicate:

- safeguarding concerns;
- emotional wellbeing needs;
- exploitation;
- neglect;
- family difficulties;
- mental health concerns.

Attendance information should contribute to safeguarding decision-making and be considered alongside other indicators.

12.9 Children Requiring Mental Health Support

The Trust recognises that mental health concerns can both arise from and contribute to safeguarding issues. Where concerns arise, staff should listen carefully, record concerns, consult the DSL and consider wider safeguarding factors when determining appropriate support. The Trust will provide appropriate pastoral support while recognising that safeguarding and mental health are closely connected.

12.10 Self-Harm

Self-harm should always be taken seriously. It may indicate:

- emotional distress;
- trauma;
- abuse;
- exploitation;
- mental ill health.
- Where self-harm is identified, staff should:
 - remain calm;
 - avoid judgement;
 - report concerns immediately;
 - ensure appropriate support is provided.

The Trust recognises that self-harm is a safeguarding concern requiring careful assessment.

12.11 Domestic Abuse

Children living in households where domestic abuse occurs may experience significant emotional harm even where they are not the direct victim. Domestic abuse may affect:

- behaviour;
- attendance;
- relationships;
- mental health;
- educational progress.

The Trust will respond appropriately to concerns and work collaboratively with safeguarding partners.

12.12 Homelessness

The Trust recognises that housing instability and homelessness can significantly increase safeguarding risks.

Children experiencing homelessness may be vulnerable to:

- exploitation;
- poor attendance;
- mental health difficulties;
- disrupted education;
- criminal activity.

Where concerns arise, staff should consult the DSL to ensure appropriate support is coordinated.

12.13 Serious Violence

Serious violence is a safeguarding concern and may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict, bullying or criminal exploitation.

Possible indicators that a child may be at risk of, or involved in, serious violence include:

- unexplained injuries;
- increased aggression;
- association with older peers;
- carrying or using weapons;
- unexplained money or expensive items;
- changes in friendship groups;
- repeated suspensions or disrupted education;
- a history of offending; and
- involvement in, or vulnerability to, criminal exploitation.

Staff should recognise that children involved in serious violence may themselves be victims of abuse, exploitation or coercion. Any concern that a child is carrying or using a weapon, or has expressed an intention to do so, must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL.

The DSL will assess the risk to both the individual child and others, taking account of wider safeguarding information and concerns, and determine the appropriate action. Depending on the level of risk, this may include:

- putting in place a safety and support plan;
- taking appropriate action to de-escalate peer conflict;
- providing or coordinating early and targeted support; and
- making referrals to the Police, Children's Social Care or other relevant safeguarding agencies where appropriate.

The Trust will work collaboratively with safeguarding partners to protect children who have experienced serious violence and those who may be at risk of, or involved in, serious violence, recognising that children who cause harm may also have safeguarding needs.

12.14 Contextual Safeguarding

South Bank Academies recognises that many safeguarding risks occur outside the family home.

Children may be vulnerable to harm in a range of community, peer and online settings. These experiences can significantly affect their safety, wellbeing and educational engagement. Contextual safeguarding recognises that children may be harmed through:

- peer groups;
- neighbourhoods;
- public spaces;
- transport;
- social media;
- online platforms;
- organised criminal activity.

The Trust will consider the wider context of children's lives when assessing safeguarding concerns and will work collaboratively with safeguarding partners to reduce identified risks.

12.15 Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation is a form of child abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity for the benefit of others. Children involved in criminal exploitation are victims of abuse, even where they appear to participate willingly.

Possible indicators include:

- unexplained money or expensive items;
- unexplained absences;
- association with older individuals or gangs;
- carrying weapons;
- drug-related activity;
- changes in behaviour;
- repeated missing episodes;
- increased secrecy.

Staff should report concerns immediately to the DSL.

12.16 County Lines

County Lines is a form of Child Criminal Exploitation in which organised criminal groups exploit children to transport drugs, money or weapons between locations. Children may experience:

- violence;
- intimidation;
- debt bondage;
- coercion;
- physical or sexual abuse.

The Trust will work with Police, Children's Social Care and other safeguarding partners where concerns arise.

12.17 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse involving coercion, manipulation or deception.

Children may be exploited through:

- relationships;
- gifts, money or accommodation;
- transport;
- alcohol or drugs;
- online communication.
- Possible indicators include:
- unexplained gifts;
- older relationships;
- repeated missing episodes;

- sexualised behaviour;
- changes in emotional wellbeing;
- unexplained injuries;
- secrecy.

The Trust recognises that exploitation may occur without physical contact.

12.18 Children Missing from Home or Care

Children who are missing from home or education may be at increased risk of:

- exploitation;
- abuse;
- neglect;
- trafficking;
- forced marriage;
- radicalisation.

The Trust will investigate unexplained absences promptly, maintain effective attendance monitoring and liaise with safeguarding partners where concerns arise.

12.19 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Children may be trafficked or exploited for:

- criminal exploitation;
- sexual exploitation;
- domestic servitude;
- forced labour;
- financial gain.
- Potential indicators include:
- fearfulness;
- lack of identity documents;
- poor living conditions;
- unexplained travel;
- controlling adults;
- inconsistent accounts.

Staff should never attempt to investigate concerns independently.

12.20 Radicalisation and Extremism

The Trust has a statutory duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. Children may become vulnerable to extremist ideology through:

- online activity;
- peer influence;
- family members;
- community networks.
- Possible indicators include:
- intolerance;
- sudden changes in behaviour;
- fixation on extremist material;
- attempts to justify violence;
- isolation from previous friendship groups.

Concerns should be reported immediately to the DSL. Where appropriate, referrals will be made to the Channel Programme.

12.21 Online Safety

Online safety is an integral part of safeguarding. Children may be exposed to online risks including cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, harmful content, extremist material, financial scams and image-based abuse. Further information is contained within Section 16.

12.22 Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies

The Trust recognises that artificial intelligence (AI) presents both educational opportunities and safeguarding risks. Emerging technologies may be used to:

- manipulate images or video;
- impersonate individuals;
- facilitate online grooming;
- generate abusive content;
- support fraud and financial exploitation.
- Staff should remain aware of the safeguarding implications of rapidly developing technologies and report concerns promptly.

The Trust will review emerging risks regularly and update safeguarding practice where appropriate.

12.23 Deepfakes and Digitally Manipulated Content

Digitally manipulated or AI-generated content can be used to:

- create false sexual images;
- facilitate bullying;
- blackmail children;
- damage reputations;
- support exploitation.

Reports involving digitally manipulated, AI-generated or deepfake images or videos should always be treated as safeguarding concerns. Staff must not view, copy, print, forward or share such material unless this is unavoidable and necessary to safeguard a child or support an investigation. Concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL and managed in accordance with statutory guidance.

12.24 Financial Exploitation

Children may be targeted for financial exploitation, including:

- online fraud;
- money mulling;
- coercion into opening bank accounts;
- cryptocurrency scams;
- identity theft.
- Possible indicators include:
- unexplained money;
- unusual banking activity;
- secrecy regarding finances;
- pressure from older individuals.

Staff should recognise that financial exploitation is frequently linked to criminal exploitation.

12.25 Nude and Semi-Nude Image Sharing (Youth-Produced Sexual Imagery)

The Trust recognises that children may create, send or receive nude or semi-nude images. Incidents will be managed in accordance with current statutory guidance. Staff must never:

- view images unnecessarily;
- copy images;
- share images;

- ask children to produce further images.

Any concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response, including referral to external agencies where necessary.

12.26 Honour-Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Trust recognises that so-called honour-based abuse encompasses a range of harmful practices, including:

- forced marriage;
- female genital mutilation (FGM);
- abuse committed to protect perceived family honour.
- These practices are forms of abuse and are never acceptable.
- Staff should remain alert to indicators such as:
- extended absence from education;
- discussions regarding overseas travel;
- anxiety about family expectations;
- controlling family relationships.

Teachers have a statutory duty to report known cases of FGM in girls under the age of 18 to the Police. Concerns regarding forced marriage or honour-based abuse should be reported immediately to the DSL.

12.27 Substance Misuse

Substance misuse involving children or family members may increase safeguarding risk. Concerns may relate to:

- alcohol;
- illegal drugs;
- misuse of prescribed medication;
- volatile substances.

Where substance misuse places a child at risk of harm, appropriate safeguarding action will be taken.

Section 13 – Safer Recruitment

13.1 Principles of Safer Recruitment

South Bank Academies is committed to ensuring that only suitable individuals are appointed to work with children. All recruitment will be undertaken in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), relevant employment legislation and the Trust's Recruitment and Selection Policy. The Trust will ensure that recruitment processes:

- deter unsuitable applicants;
- identify and reject unsuitable candidates;
- promote safeguarding throughout recruitment;
- are fair, transparent and consistent;
- comply with statutory safeguarding requirements;
- support equality, diversity and inclusion;
- promote a safeguarding culture.

Safeguarding considerations will inform every stage of the recruitment process.

13.2 Responsibilities

The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring that safer recruitment arrangements operate effectively across the Trust. Managers involved in recruitment are responsible for following recruitment procedures, ensuring all required pre-employment checks are completed and recorded, and seeking advice where safeguarding concerns arise.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will provide advice where safeguarding issues arise during recruitment.

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13.3 Recruitment Planning

Before recruitment begins, recruiting managers should:

- review the job description and person specification;
- identify safeguarding responsibilities associated with the role;
- ensure safeguarding expectations are clearly described;
- identify the appropriate level of pre-employment checks.

Every job description should clearly state the safeguarding responsibilities associated with the role.

13.4 Advertising

All recruitment advertisements will include a safeguarding statement confirming that South Bank Academies is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Advertisements will make clear that safeguarding checks will be undertaken; satisfactory references are required; enhanced DBS checks will be undertaken where appropriate; and online searches may be undertaken on shortlisted candidates as part of the recruitment process.

- safeguarding checks will be undertaken;
- satisfactory references are required;
- enhanced DBS checks will be undertaken where appropriate;
- online searches may be undertaken as part of the recruitment process.

13.5 Application Forms

The Trust will require applicants to complete a formal application form. Curriculum vitae (CVs) will not normally be accepted as the sole source of application information. Application forms should provide sufficient information to establish employment history, verify qualifications, identify unexplained gaps and highlight any issues requiring clarification during the recruitment process. Recruiting managers should explore any anomalies during the selection process.

13.6 Shortlisting

Shortlisting should be undertaken by at least two appropriately trained individuals wherever practicable. Recruiters should review applications carefully, identify inconsistencies or gaps in employment and note matters requiring clarification at interview. Online searches will be undertaken on shortlisted candidates in accordance with statutory guidance to identify publicly available information relevant to the candidate's suitability to work with children. Information obtained through online searches will be considered fairly, proportionately and in accordance with data protection legislation.

13.7 Interviews

Every interview should include assessment of the applicant's suitability to work with children.

Interview questions should explore:

- safeguarding knowledge;
- professional conduct;
- attitudes towards safeguarding;
- understanding of professional boundaries;
- previous safeguarding experience where appropriate.

Candidates should be asked to explain:

- gaps in employment;
- discrepancies within the application;
- safeguarding concerns identified during recruitment.

Interview panels should include at least one member who has completed appropriate Safer Recruitment training where required by statutory guidance.

13.8 Pre-Employment Checks

The Trust will complete all statutory pre-employment checks before an individual begins work. Checks may include, as appropriate:

- identity verification;
- enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check;
- children's barred list check;
- prohibition from teaching check;
- prohibition from management check (where applicable);
- right to work check;
- verification of qualifications;
- professional registration;
- medical fitness declaration;
- overseas criminal record checks where appropriate;
- references;
- section 128 direction checks where applicable.

Employment will not commence until the Trust is satisfied that all required safeguarding checks have been completed or an appropriate risk assessment has been undertaken where permitted by legislation.

13.9 References

References form an important part of safer recruitment. References should be obtained directly from the referee and reviewed before appointment wherever reasonably practicable. They should verify employment history, comment on suitability to work with children and identify any safeguarding concerns or relevant disciplinary history. References will be reviewed before appointment wherever reasonably practicable. Any concerns arising from references will be explored before employment is confirmed.

13.10 Single Central Record

The Trust will maintain an accurate and up-to-date Single Central Record (SCR) in accordance with statutory guidance. The SCR will record the required safeguarding checks for:

- employees;
- agency staff;
- supply staff;
- governors and trustees where required;
- contractors where appropriate;
- volunteers where required.

The Single Central Record will be monitored regularly and audited periodically to ensure ongoing compliance. Prior to 1 September 2026, the Trust will review all existing volunteer roles to determine whether they constitute regulated activity under the amended statutory definition. The Single Central Record and associated safeguarding records will be audited to ensure that all volunteers undertaking regulated activity have the required enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information recorded.

13.11 Agency Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

The Trust recognises that safeguarding responsibilities extend beyond directly employed staff. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements will therefore be implemented for:

Agency Staff

The Trust will obtain written confirmation that all required safeguarding checks have been completed before agency staff commence work.

Contractors

Risk assessments will determine the level of safeguarding supervision and checks required.

Volunteers

From 1 September 2026, in accordance with the Crime and Policing Act 2026 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the supervision exemption from regulated activity no longer applies. A volunteer who regularly teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children, or who otherwise meets the statutory definition of regulated activity, will be regarded as engaging in regulated activity whether or not they are supervised. Any volunteer undertaking regulated activity must have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check including children's barred list information before undertaking that activity, subject to the arrangements permitted by statutory guidance.

The Trust will assess each volunteer role to determine whether it constitutes regulated activity and will ensure that the appropriate safeguarding checks are completed and recorded before the volunteer undertakes the role.

Volunteers whose activity does not meet the statutory definition of regulated activity will be subject to appropriate safeguarding checks and supervision in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and the nature of their role. All volunteers will receive safeguarding information and induction appropriate to their role.

13.12 Induction

All newly appointed staff will receive safeguarding induction before, or as soon as reasonably practicable after, commencing work. Induction will include:

- this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the Staff Code of Conduct;
- Reading all of Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- safeguarding reporting procedures, including the roles of the DSL and Deputy DSLs;
- behaviour expectations;
- whistleblowing arrangements;
- online safety;
- acceptable use of technology;

Staff will confirm that they have read and understood the relevant safeguarding documentation.

13.13 Ongoing Suitability

Safeguarding responsibilities continue throughout employment. Staff are expected to:

- maintain professional conduct;
- report any relevant changes affecting their suitability to work with children;
- comply with safeguarding policies;
- undertake safeguarding training;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

Where safeguarding concerns arise regarding an adult working within the Trust, these will be managed in accordance with Section 17 of this policy.

13.14 Visitors

All visitors will:

- sign in on arrival;
- receive appropriate safeguarding information;
- wear visitor identification;
- remain appropriately supervised where required.

The Trust will ensure that visitors understand how to report safeguarding concerns during their visit.

13.15 Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Safer recruitment arrangements will be monitored through recruitment file audits, Single Central Record audits, safeguarding reviews and other quality assurance activities. Learning identified will inform policy review, staff training and continuous improvement. Learning arising from recruitment activity will inform policy review, staff training and continuous improvement.

Section 14 – Safer Working Practice and Professional Conduct

14.1 Professional Standards

All adults working within the Trust must:

- place children's welfare first;
- act professionally and exercise sound professional judgement at all times;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- model respectful behaviour;
- treat children with dignity and respect;
- avoid behaviour that could be misinterpreted.

Staff should always consider whether their behaviour would withstand professional scrutiny.

14.2 Professional Boundaries

Adults working with children occupy positions of trust. Staff must not:

- develop inappropriate relationships or show favouritism towards students;
- communicate through personal social media;
- exchange personal contact details;
- meet students socially without authorisation;
- give inappropriate gifts;
- borrow money from, or accept inappropriate gifts from students;
- Appropriate professional relationships should always be maintained.

14.3 One-to-One Working

There will be occasions where one-to-one working is necessary. Wherever possible staff should:

- work in rooms with visibility panels;
- inform colleagues;
- leave doors open where appropriate;
- ensure the location is suitable;
- maintain appropriate records where required.

One-to-one working should always be proportionate, transparent and justifiable.

14.4 Physical Contact

The Trust recognises that appropriate physical contact may occasionally be necessary. Examples include:

- preventing immediate harm;
- first aid;
- supporting children with SEND;
- assisting during educational activities.
- Physical contact should always be:
 - necessary;
 - proportionate;
 - age appropriate;
 - recorded where appropriate;
 - in the child's best interests.

Corporal punishment is prohibited.

14.5 Communication with Students

Communication with students should be professional at all times. Staff should communicate with students only through Trust-approved communication systems and learning platforms. Staff must not communicate with students through personal messaging services or personal social media accounts.

14.6 Social Media

Staff should use social media responsibly. They should not:

- discuss students online;
- identify students;
- share confidential information;
- undermine public confidence in the Trust.

Privacy settings do not remove professional responsibilities.

14.7 Use of Technology

Technology should support learning whilst safeguarding children. Staff should use Trust-approved devices, software and systems wherever possible. The use of personal devices for professional purposes should only occur where authorised and in accordance with Trust policy. The use of personal devices for professional purposes should only occur where authorised.

14.8 Artificial Intelligence

Where AI is used professionally, staff remain responsible for:

- safeguarding;
- confidentiality;
- accuracy;
- professional judgement.

AI may support professional practice but must never replace professional safeguarding judgement. All safeguarding decisions remain the responsibility of appropriately trained professionals.

14.9 Photography and Images

Images of children should only be taken:

- for legitimate educational purposes;
- using authorised equipment;
- in accordance with parental permissions;
- following Trust procedures.

Personal devices should not normally be used.

14.10 Educational Visits

All educational visits must be appropriately risk assessed and include suitable safeguarding arrangements, taking account of pupils' medical, behavioural and additional needs. Safeguarding responsibilities remain unchanged whilst off-site.

14.11 Confidentiality

Staff must:

- protect confidential information;
- share safeguarding information appropriately;
- avoid discussing safeguarding in public areas;
- comply with data protection legislation.

Confidentiality should never prevent safeguarding concerns from being shared appropriately.

14.12 Low-Level Concerns

The Trust encourages staff to report low-level concerns regarding adult behaviour. Early reporting supports reflection, professional development and timely intervention. Low-level concerns are considered further in Section 17.

14.13 Whistleblowing

Where staff believe safeguarding practice is unsafe or concerns are not being addressed appropriately, they should follow the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy. The Trust promotes an open culture in which staff feel confident to speak up.

Section 15 – Information Sharing and Record Keeping

15.1 Principles of Information Sharing

Information sharing should always be:

- lawful;
- necessary;
- proportionate;
- relevant;
- accurate;
- timely;
- secure.

Staff should only share information with individuals who have a legitimate professional need to know. Safeguarding information should never be shared for convenience or curiosity.

15.2 Sharing Information to Safeguard Children

The Trust recognises that concerns about confidentiality or data protection should never prevent the sharing of information where a child is at risk of harm. Information should be shared promptly where it is necessary to:

- protect a child from abuse or neglect;
- support a safeguarding assessment;
- contribute to Family Help arrangements;
- support Child in Need or Child Protection planning;
- assist Police investigations;
- fulfil statutory safeguarding duties.

Staff should seek advice from the DSL where uncertainty exists but should not delay sharing information if immediate action is required to safeguard a child.

15.3 Confidentiality

Children, parents and carers have a right to expect that personal information will be handled sensitively and securely. However, confidentiality is not absolute. Staff must never promise a child that information will be kept secret where safeguarding concerns are disclosed. Children should instead be reassured that information will only be shared with those who need it in order to keep them safe. Safeguarding information will always be managed with sensitivity and respect.

15.4 Consent

Where appropriate, the Trust will seek consent before sharing personal information. However, consent is not required where:

- there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm;
- seeking consent would place a child at greater risk;
- it would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime;
- another legal basis for sharing applies.

Where there is any doubt, staff should seek advice from the DSL.

15.5 Data Protection

The Trust will process safeguarding information in accordance with:

- the Data Protection Act 2018;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025;
- relevant statutory safeguarding guidance.

Data protection legislation supports the appropriate sharing of information to safeguard children and should never be viewed as a barrier to effective safeguarding.

15.6 Recording Safeguarding Concerns

Every safeguarding concern must be recorded promptly. Records should be:

- factual;
- accurate;
- objective;
- contemporaneous;
- signed or attributable to the author;
- securely stored.

Records should clearly distinguish between observed facts, disclosures, professional opinion, actions taken and decisions made. Where a child has made a disclosure, the child's own words should be recorded as accurately as possible.

15.7 Safeguarding Records

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding records are maintained appropriately. Safeguarding records should include sufficient information to provide a clear chronology of concerns, decisions, actions taken, referrals and outcomes. Safeguarding records should provide a clear audit trail of decision-making and intervention.

15.8 Electronic Recording Systems

The Trust will maintain secure systems for recording and managing safeguarding information. Electronic safeguarding systems should:

- restrict access to authorised staff;
- maintain audit trails;
- enable timely recording;
- support secure information sharing;
- protect confidentiality.

Where electronic systems are unavailable, appropriate contingency arrangements will be implemented to ensure safeguarding concerns continue to be recorded and acted upon without delay.

15.9 Access to Safeguarding Information

Access will be limited to those who require the information to fulfil their professional responsibilities, including the DSL, Deputy DSLs and relevant safeguarding partners. Access will always be proportionate and in the best interests of the child.

15.10 Multi-Agency Information Sharing

South Bank Academies is committed to effective partnership working. The Trust will contribute appropriately to Family Help, Child in Need, Child Protection and other multi-agency safeguarding processes. Information shared will be accurate, relevant, timely and evidence-informed.

15.11 Transfer of Child Protection Files

Where a child leaves South Bank Academies and transfers to another educational setting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will ensure that the child's child protection file is transferred to the receiving setting as soon as possible and within five days for an in-year transfer, or within the first five days of the start of a new term.

The DSL will ensure that:

- the receiving educational setting is identified;
- the child protection file is transferred separately from the main student file;
- records are transferred securely and confidentially;
- confirmation of receipt is obtained and retained;
- appropriate discussions take place between Designated Safeguarding Leads where necessary; and
- a record of the transfer, including the date and confirmation of receipt, is maintained.

Where appropriate, the DSL will consider whether additional safeguarding information should be shared with the receiving setting in advance of the child's transfer, particularly where this would enable the receiving setting to assess risk, put appropriate support in place or safeguard the child or others from the point of arrival.

All information will be shared in accordance with statutory guidance, data protection legislation and the principles set out within this policy.

15.12 Record Retention

Safeguarding records will be retained in accordance with:

- statutory guidance;
- information governance requirements;
- the Trust's Records Management Policy.

Records will be disposed of securely when the retention period expires.

15.13 Recording Decision-Making

Recording safeguarding information is not simply an administrative task. Good safeguarding records should demonstrate:

- professional curiosity;
- evidence-informed decision-making;
- proportionate responses;
- clear rationale for actions taken;
- ongoing review of risk.

Where decisions are made not to refer concerns externally, the reasons for those decisions should be clearly recorded.

15.14 Quality Assurance

The DSL will undertake regular quality assurance to ensure safeguarding records are complete, accurate, timely and compliant with statutory guidance. Learning identified through quality assurance will inform staff training, supervision and policy review.

15.15 Key Principles

All staff should remember that:

- safeguarding information saves lives;
- timely information sharing protects children;
- data protection legislation supports safeguarding;
- confidentiality should never prevent appropriate safeguarding action;
- safeguarding records should be factual and professional;
- when in doubt, advice should be sought from the DSL.

The Trust expects all staff to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality while recognising that the welfare of the child remains the overriding consideration.

Section 16 – Online Safety, Filtering and Monitoring

16.1 Introduction

South Bank Academies recognises that technology plays an integral role in children's education, communication and everyday lives. The Trust is committed to ensuring that technology is used safely, responsibly and appropriately, whilst recognising that online environments present a range of safeguarding opportunities and risks. Online safety is not viewed as a separate issue but as an essential component of safeguarding and child protection. The Trust therefore adopts a whole-organisation approach to online safety, ensuring that it is embedded within leadership, governance, curriculum, pastoral support, staff training and safeguarding practice. The Trust's online safety arrangements reflect KCSIE 2026, the Department for Education's Filtering and Monitoring Standards and other relevant statutory guidance.

16.2 Principles

The Trust is committed to ensuring that:

- children can access technology safely to enhance learning;
- online safeguarding is integrated into wider safeguarding practice;
- appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are implemented and reviewed at least once each academic term;
- staff, students and parents understand online risks;
- emerging technologies are reviewed proactively;
- safeguarding arrangements evolve alongside technological developments.

Online safety is everyone's responsibility.

16.3 Leadership Responsibilities

The Executive Principal, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), senior leaders and Trustees will work collaboratively to ensure effective online safeguarding arrangements. The Trust will designate a senior leadership team member with responsibility for filtering and monitoring.

The effectiveness of the Trust's filtering and monitoring arrangements will be formally reviewed at least once each academic term. The review will be led by the senior leadership team member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the DSL and appropriate IT staff or providers.

The review will include appropriate checks to ensure that filtering and monitoring arrangements are operating effectively and remain proportionate to the Trust's safeguarding risks. A record of the reviews, checks undertaken, findings and resulting actions will be maintained.

Leaders will also:

- assess emerging online risks;
- ensure staff receive appropriate training;
- promote online safety through the curriculum;
- allocate appropriate resources; and
- monitor safeguarding incidents involving technology.

The Trust Board will receive appropriate assurance that filtering and monitoring arrangements remain effective and proportionate.

16.4 Filtering and Monitoring

The Trust will maintain appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to safeguard children whilst supporting effective teaching and learning. Filtering systems will seek to:

- reduce access to harmful content;

- minimise exposure to illegal material;
- support age-appropriate internet access;
- protect children from online abuse.
- Monitoring arrangements will assist the Trust in identifying safeguarding concerns, including:
 - attempts to access inappropriate material;
 - online bullying;
 - extremist content;
 - self-harm searches;
 - exploitation;
 - other behaviours that may indicate safeguarding concerns.

Filtering and monitoring systems do not replace effective supervision, professional curiosity or safeguarding education.

16.5 Acceptable Use of Technology

The Trust will maintain clear expectations regarding the appropriate use of technology. Separate Acceptable Use Agreements will be provided for:

- students;
- staff;
- visitors where appropriate.

Acceptable Use Agreements will set out expectations for the safe and responsible use of technology, including safeguarding responsibilities, data security and confidentiality.

16.6 Online Risks

The Trust recognises that children may encounter a wide range of online safeguarding risks. Children may encounter a range of online safeguarding risks, including cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, harmful content, misinformation, financial scams, image-based abuse, online hate and other forms of digital harm. Staff should remain alert to changing online behaviours that may indicate safeguarding concerns.

16.7 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Trust recognises the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) within education and society. AI presents significant opportunities to enhance teaching, learning and administrative efficiency. However, it also introduces safeguarding risks that require careful management. Potential safeguarding concerns include:

- AI-generated harmful content;
- AI-assisted grooming;
- impersonation;
- manipulation of images or audio;
- misinformation;
- exploitation through automated communication;
- inappropriate use of generative AI tools.

The Trust will ensure that staff and students are educated about the safe, ethical and responsible use of AI. Safeguarding decisions will always remain the responsibility of appropriately trained professionals and will never be delegated to AI systems.

16.8 Deepfakes and Digitally Manipulated Content

The Trust recognises that AI-generated or digitally manipulated images, video and audio may be used to:

- facilitate bullying;
- create indecent images;
- blackmail children;
- spread misinformation;
- undermine trust;

- facilitate exploitation.

Any report involving manipulated content will be treated as a safeguarding concern and responded to promptly.

16.9 Online Behaviour

The standards of behaviour expected within the Trust apply equally online. Students are expected to:

- communicate respectfully;
- protect personal information;
- report online concerns;
- use technology responsibly;
- avoid behaviour that may place themselves or others at risk.

Online behaviour that causes harm to another child may be managed as a safeguarding concern, even where it occurs outside school.

16.10 Online Safety Education

Online safety education will be delivered through the Trust's curriculum, tutorial programme, assemblies and wider pastoral provision. Children will receive age-appropriate education regarding:

- safe use of technology;
- healthy online relationships;
- recognising online manipulation;
- protecting personal information and managing digital footprints
- consent;
- reporting concerns;
- AI awareness;
- financial scams;
- critically evaluating online information, including misinformation and disinformation.

The Trust aims to develop digitally resilient young people who can participate safely and responsibly online.

16.11 Staff Training

All staff will receive appropriate training regarding online safeguarding. Training will include emerging online risks, filtering and monitoring, online exploitation, AI-related safeguarding risks, professional conduct and the safe use of technology. Training will be updated regularly to reflect technological developments.

16.12 Parents and Carers

The Trust recognises that parents and carers play a vital role in supporting children's online safety. The Trust will provide guidance on parental controls, social media, gaming, AI, online exploitation and reporting concerns where appropriate. The Trust encourages positive partnership working to promote safe online behaviours beyond the school environment.

16.13 Mobile Technology

The Trust will establish clear expectations regarding the use of mobile devices within the educational environment. The use of personal devices by staff or students will be managed in accordance with Trust policies. Unauthorised recording, photography or sharing of images involving students or staff will be treated seriously and may constitute a safeguarding concern.

16.14 Responding to Online Safeguarding Concerns

Where online safeguarding concerns arise, staff should:

- remain calm;
- preserve evidence where appropriate;
- avoid investigating independently;
- report concerns immediately to the DSL;
- support the child appropriately.

The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response, including referral to external agencies where required.

16.15 Monitoring and Review

Online safeguarding arrangements will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective, proportionate and aligned with statutory guidance. Reviews will consider safeguarding incidents, stakeholder feedback, filtering and monitoring reports and emerging technological developments.

Section 17 – Managing Safeguarding Concerns About Adults

17.1 Scope

South Bank Academies is committed to ensuring that concerns about the conduct of adults working with children are managed promptly, fairly and in accordance with statutory guidance. This section should be read alongside the Trust's Staff Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing Policy and relevant disciplinary procedures. This section applies to all adults working on behalf of South Bank Academies, including:

- employees;
- agency staff;
- volunteers;
- governors and trustees;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- visitors working with children.
- The procedures apply regardless of whether the concern arises:
 - within the workplace;
 - outside work;
 - online;
 - through the use of technology;
 - during educational visits;
 - during activities organised by the Trust.

17.2 Guiding Principles

When managing concerns about adults, the Trust will:

- place the welfare of children at the centre of decision-making;
- ensure concerns are managed fairly and consistently;
- comply with statutory guidance;
- protect the rights of all parties;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- work collaboratively with external agencies;
- ensure concerns are addressed without unnecessary delay.

The Trust recognises that safeguarding children and supporting staff are not mutually exclusive. Both are essential to maintaining confidence in safeguarding arrangements.

17.3 Allegations That May Meet the Harm Threshold

An allegation may meet the harm threshold where an adult working with children 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 they 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.

These concerns must always be treated seriously and managed in accordance with statutory guidance.

17.4 Immediate Action

Where an allegation that may meet the harm threshold is received, the person receiving the concern must report it immediately to the Executive Principal. Where the allegation concerns the Executive Principal, it must be reported immediately to the Chair of Trustees. No attempt should be made to investigate the allegation before appropriate advice has been obtained. The Trust will take appropriate steps to safeguard children while ensuring that any subsequent investigation is not compromised.

The Role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Executive Principal (or Chair of Trustees where appropriate) will consult the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) promptly where an allegation may meet the harm threshold. The LADO will advise on whether the allegation meets the harm threshold and the appropriate management of the case, including any involvement of the Police, Children's Social Care or other agencies. The Trust will follow the advice provided by the LADO and cooperate fully with any external investigation.

17.6 Suspension and Alternative Arrangements

Suspension is a neutral act and should not be an automatic response. The Trust will carefully consider whether:

- suspension is necessary to safeguard children;
- alternative duties are appropriate;
- additional supervision can adequately manage risk;
- temporary redeployment is appropriate.

The welfare of children will remain the primary consideration.

17.7 Low-Level Concerns

South Bank Academies promotes a culture in which staff are encouraged to report low-level concerns about the behaviour of adults working with children. A low-level concern is behaviour that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct but does not meet the harm threshold. Examples may include:

- being over-familiar with children;
- using inappropriate language;
- failing to maintain professional boundaries;
- using personal devices contrary to Trust procedures;
- isolated incidents of poor professional judgement.

Low-level concerns should be reported to the Executive Principal as soon as reasonably practicable.

Where the concern relates to the Executive Principal, it should be reported to the Chair of Trustees.

17.8 Responding to Low-Level Concerns

Low-level concerns will be recorded, reviewed proportionately and considered alongside any previous concerns to identify patterns of behaviour requiring further action. While individual concerns may appear minor, repeated low-level concerns may indicate a pattern of behaviour requiring formal intervention. The Trust encourages early reporting to support professional reflection, improvement and safeguarding.

17.9 Self-Reporting

Staff are encouraged to report any situation in which their own conduct may have been:

- misunderstood;
- misinterpreted;
- inconsistent with professional expectations.

Self-reporting enables concerns to be managed openly and transparently and may help protect both children and staff.

17.10 Confidentiality

The Trust will manage allegations and low-level concerns with appropriate confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to know. Information will only be shared with

those who have a legitimate professional need to know in order to protect children, support a fair process and preserve the integrity of any investigation. Confidentiality should not prevent the sharing of information where this is necessary to safeguard children or fulfil statutory duties.

17.11 Support for Staff

Being subject to a safeguarding allegation or concern can be distressing. The Trust will ensure that appropriate welfare support is available to staff during safeguarding processes. Appropriate support may include regular communication, access to wellbeing services and signposting to professional advice throughout the process. Providing support does not prejudice the outcome of any investigation.

17.12 Whistleblowing

The Trust encourages staff to raise concerns where they believe:

- safeguarding procedures are not being followed;
- children remain at risk;
- concerns have not been appropriately addressed;
- professional misconduct is occurring.

Staff should follow the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy where they feel unable to raise concerns through normal management channels. The Trust will ensure that staff can raise genuine concerns without fear of victimisation.

17.13 Learning Lessons

Following the conclusion of any safeguarding allegation or significant low-level concern, the Executive Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider whether any learning should be identified. Following the conclusion of an allegation or significant low-level concern, the Trust will consider whether any learning should inform policy, training, supervision or wider safeguarding practice. The Trust is committed to learning from safeguarding practice to strengthen future safeguarding arrangements.

17.14 Record Keeping

Records relating to allegations and low-level concerns will be:

- factual;
- accurate;
- confidential;
- securely stored;
- retained in accordance with statutory guidance and the Trust's Records Management Policy.

The Executive Principal will ensure that records provide a clear audit trail of decisions and actions taken.

17.15 Resignation During an Investigation

The resignation of an employee, volunteer or contractor will not prevent the Trust from following safeguarding procedures where concerns have been raised. The Trust will continue to work with the LADO, Police, Children's Social Care and other relevant agencies as appropriate. Where required by law or statutory guidance, referrals will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) or other relevant regulatory bodies, irrespective of whether the individual resigns before the conclusion of internal procedures.

Section 18 – Governance, Monitoring and Quality Assurance

18.1 The Role of the Trust Board

The Trust Board has overall strategic responsibility for safeguarding and child protection across South Bank Academies. The Board will ensure that:

- ensure safeguarding remains central to strategic decision-making;
- statutory safeguarding duties are fulfilled;
- this policy is reviewed and approved annually;

- ensure appropriate leadership, staffing and resources are in place;
- safeguarding arrangements are subject to effective scrutiny;
- safer recruitment procedures operate effectively;
- filtering and monitoring systems are reviewed regularly.

Trustees will seek assurance that safeguarding arrangements are effective in practice and not merely compliant in policy.

18.2 The Safeguarding Governor

The Trust Board will appoint a Safeguarding Governor to provide focused oversight and constructive challenge.

The Safeguarding Governor will:

- meet regularly with the Executive Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- review safeguarding reports and trends;
- monitor implementation of this policy;
- review safeguarding training compliance;
- scrutinise safeguarding audit findings;
- review the effectiveness of filtering and monitoring arrangements;
- undertake safeguarding visits where appropriate;
- report safeguarding matters to the Trust Board.

The Safeguarding Governor will not become involved in the operational management of individual safeguarding cases.

18.3 Executive Principal

The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively throughout the Trust. The Executive Principal will:

- promote a strong safeguarding culture through strategic leadership;
- support the DSL in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities;
- ensure appropriate staffing, training and resources;
- oversee safeguarding quality assurance;
- ensure concerns are managed appropriately;
- report safeguarding matters to the Trust Board and lead organisational improvement where required.

18.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will provide professional leadership for safeguarding and child protection. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in Section 10, the DSL will:

- monitor safeguarding practice across the Trust;
- analyse safeguarding trends;
- identify emerging safeguarding risks;
- evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding interventions;
- coordinate safeguarding audits;
- contribute to policy review;
- advise senior leaders and Trustees on safeguarding developments.

The DSL will ensure that safeguarding arrangements continue to reflect current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding priorities.

18.5 Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

The Trust will regularly monitor safeguarding arrangements to ensure they remain effective. Monitoring activities may include safeguarding audits, file reviews, supervision, analysis of attendance and behaviour, training compliance, stakeholder feedback, review of safeguarding referrals and Family Help involvement. Monitoring will focus on both compliance and impact.

18.6 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance provides assurance that safeguarding procedures are operating effectively and consistently. Quality assurance will evaluate the quality of safeguarding records, decision-making, multi-agency working, support provided to children and staff confidence in safeguarding arrangements. Learning identified through quality assurance will inform policy review, staff development and organisational improvement.

18.7 Safeguarding Audits

The Trust will undertake regular safeguarding audits to evaluate compliance with statutory requirements and the effectiveness of safeguarding practice. Audits may review safeguarding documentation, recruitment arrangements, safeguarding records, training compliance, online safety, filtering and monitoring, and wider safeguarding systems. Action plans arising from audits will be monitored until completion.

18.8 Training and Professional Development

The Trust is committed to maintaining a knowledgeable and confident workforce. Training arrangements will ensure that all staff, DSLs and Trustees receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role, with future training informed by audit findings, emerging risks and changes to statutory guidance. Professional development will reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding priorities.

18.9 Learning from Practice Reviews

The Trust recognises the importance of learning from safeguarding practice. Relevant findings from:

- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews;
- Domestic Homicide Reviews;
- Local Safeguarding Children Partnership reviews;
- Serious Incident Reviews;
- Ofsted inspections;
- internal safeguarding investigations;
- will be considered when reviewing safeguarding arrangements.

Where improvements are identified, these will be incorporated into policy, procedures, training and operational practice.

18.10 Student and Parent Voice

The Trust believes that safeguarding arrangements are strengthened by listening to the experiences of children and their families. The Trust will seek feedback from students and parents through surveys, forums, focus groups and other appropriate mechanisms. Feedback will inform continuous improvement and help evaluate whether children feel safe, supported and listened to.

18.11 Annual Safeguarding Report

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will provide an annual safeguarding report to the Trust Board. The annual safeguarding report will summarise safeguarding activity, referral trends, Family Help involvement, training compliance, audit findings, emerging risks, quality assurance outcomes and priorities for improvement. The report will preserve the confidentiality of individual children while providing strategic assurance.

18.12 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- annually;
- following changes to legislation or statutory guidance;
- following significant safeguarding incidents;
- following safeguarding reviews;
- where local safeguarding arrangements change;
- where monitoring identifies the need for revision.

Minor administrative updates, including changes to named personnel or contact details, may be made during the year without requiring full Board approval.

18.13 Measuring Effectiveness

The effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements will be evaluated through a range of quantitative and qualitative measures, including:

- student perceptions of safety;
- safeguarding audit outcomes;
- timeliness of safeguarding responses;
- quality of safeguarding records;
- attendance and engagement data;
- staff training compliance;
- inspection outcomes;
- student, parent and staff feedback;
- implementation of safeguarding action plans.

Success will be measured not simply by compliance, but by the positive difference safeguarding arrangements make to the lives of children.

Appendix A – Categories and Indicators of Abuse

A.1 Purpose

This appendix provides staff with an overview of the four recognised categories of abuse and examples of indicators that may suggest a child is at risk of harm. The indicators listed are not exhaustive and should not be viewed in isolation. The presence of one or more indicators does not necessarily mean that abuse has occurred; however, they should prompt professional curiosity and appropriate discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Staff should remember that abuse may present through a pattern of concerns rather than a single incident and that children may experience more than one form of abuse simultaneously.

A.2 Physical Abuse

Definition

Physical abuse is the deliberate infliction of physical harm or injury upon a child.

Possible Indicators

- unexplained bruises, burns or fractures;
- injuries inconsistent with the explanation provided;
- injuries at different stages of healing;
- repeated injuries;
- reluctance to change clothing for sport or practical activities;
- flinching when approached;
- fear of physical contact;
- fear of going home;
- aggressive or withdrawn behaviour.

A.3 Emotional Abuse

Definition

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child resulting in severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development.

Possible Indicators

- persistent low self-esteem;
- anxiety or excessive fearfulness;
- depression or persistent sadness;
- self-harm;
- emotional withdrawal;
- attention-seeking behaviour;
- delayed emotional development;
- lack of confidence;
- excessive need for approval;
- extreme compliance or aggression.

A.4 Sexual Abuse

Definition

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child understands what is happening.

Possible Indicators

- age-inappropriate sexual knowledge;
- sexualised behaviour;
- unexplained gifts or money;
- secrecy;
- reluctance to attend school or college;
- changes in friendships;
- anxiety or depression;
- self-harm;
- pregnancy;
- sexually transmitted infections;
- online grooming;
- coercion to share images.

A.5 Neglect

Definition

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.

Possible Indicators

- persistent hunger;
- poor hygiene;
- inappropriate clothing;
- untreated medical conditions;
- repeated tiredness;
- poor attendance;
- inadequate supervision;

- delayed development;
- emotional withdrawal;
- repeated illness.

A.6 Indicators That May Be Seen Across All Categories

Safeguarding concerns often emerge through patterns of behaviour rather than obvious signs of abuse. Staff should remain alert to:

- Physical unexplained injuries;
- poor hygiene;
- weight loss;
- fatigue;
- untreated health needs.
- Behavioural
- sudden changes in behaviour;
- aggression;
- risk-taking;
- disengagement from education;
- persistent absence;
- deterioration in academic performance.
- Emotional
- anxiety;
- low mood;
- emotional withdrawal;
- self-harm;
- suicidal ideation.
- Social
- isolation;
- changes in friendship groups;
- association with older individuals;
- concerning online relationships;
- exploitation by peers.

A.7 Children Who May Be More Vulnerable

Some children may face additional barriers to recognising abuse or seeking help. This may include children who:

- have SEND;
- have communication needs;
- experience mental health difficulties;
- are looked after or previously looked after;
- are young carers;
- experience family instability;
- are vulnerable to exploitation;
- are missing education;
- experience discrimination or prejudice.
- Staff should avoid making assumptions that behaviours relate solely to disability or additional needs.

A.8 Professional Curiosity

Safeguarding concerns rarely present as a single obvious incident. Staff should:

- consider patterns over time;
- explore inconsistencies;
- ask appropriate questions;
- consider the wider context of the child's life;
- seek advice whenever unsure.
- It is better to share a concern than to overlook one.

A.9 Remember

When considering possible abuse:

- listen carefully;
- remain calm;
- do not investigate;
- record facts, not opinions;
- use the child's own words wherever possible;
- report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Appendix B – Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

B.1 If a Child Discloses Abuse

If a child chooses to disclose abuse or neglect, staff should remember that they may have taken considerable time and courage to do so. Staff should:

- remain calm and listen carefully;
- allow the child to speak freely;
- take the disclosure seriously;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone;
- explain that the information cannot be kept confidential and will need to be shared with people who can help;
- record the disclosure accurately using the child's own words wherever possible;
- report the concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

B.2 Do Not

Staff must never:

- promise confidentiality;
- ask leading or investigative questions;
- interrupt unnecessarily;
- express shock or disbelief;
- criticise the child or any other person;
- confront the alleged perpetrator;
- attempt to investigate the concern themselves;
- delay reporting the concern.

The role of school staff is to recognise, respond, record and report—not to investigate.

B.3 Listen – Reassure – Record – Report

All safeguarding concerns should follow four simple steps.

Listen

- Give the child your full attention.
- Allow them to speak at their own pace.
- Use open prompts only where clarification is needed, such as: "Tell me what happened." "Can you explain that to me?"
- Avoid asking "why" questions.

Reassure

Tell the child:

- "Thank you for telling me."
- "You've done the right thing."
- "I'm glad you spoke to me."
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.

Record

Record:

- date and time;
- exactly what was said;
- the child's own words wherever possible;
- observations;
- any injuries observed;
- actions taken.
- Do not include assumptions or personal opinions.
- Complete the safeguarding record as soon as possible after the conversation.

Report

Report immediately to:

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead; or
- a Deputy DSL.
- If there is an immediate risk of harm and no DSL is available:
- contact Children's Social Care and/or the Police without delay;
- inform the DSL as soon as possible afterwards.

B.4 Immediate Danger

If a child is in immediate danger:

- contact emergency services (999) if appropriate;
- take reasonable action to protect the child;
- inform the DSL immediately.
- Staff should never delay emergency action whilst attempting to contact another colleague.

B.5 Recording Good Practice

Safeguarding records should be:

- factual;
- objective;
- timely;
- signed or attributable to the author;
- securely stored.
- Good records should distinguish between:
 - what was observed;
 - what the child said;
 - professional observations;
 - actions taken.

B.6 Professional Curiosity

Not all safeguarding concerns arise through disclosures. Remain alert to:

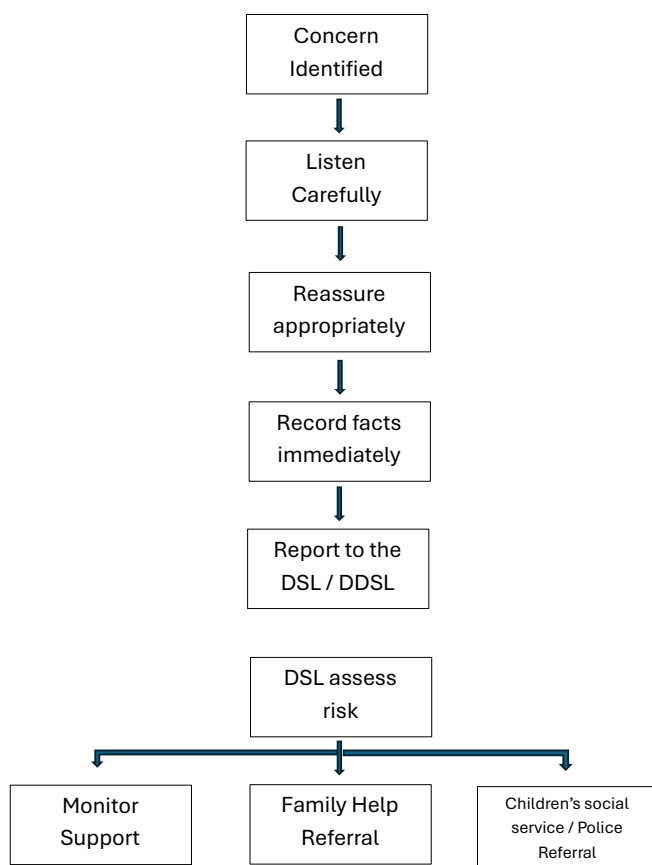
- changes in behaviour;
- attendance concerns;
- deterioration in appearance;
- changes in friendship groups;
- repeated minor concerns;
- unexplained injuries;
- emotional withdrawal.
- Small concerns viewed together may indicate significant harm.

B.7 Remember

If you are unsure whether something is a safeguarding concern:

- Report it anyway.
- It is always better to share a concern than to miss an opportunity to protect a child.

B.7 Safeguarding Response Flowchart



Appendix C – Safeguarding Contacts and Reporting Procedures

Each academy works differently operationally within Safeguarding, and they also are in different boroughs in London. Therefore, it is important to note the differences within each academy below:

South Bank University Sixth Form (SBUSixth), 56 Brixton Hill, Brixton, London SW2 1QS

Principal: Kishan Pithia
DSL: Sharon Carnegie
DDSLs: Mrs Delma Russell
Safeguarding Governor: Calista Francis

Local Authority: Lambeth

Local Authority contacts: Lambeth Council Safeguarding Partnership
www.helpandprotection@lambeth.gov.uk 020 7926 3100
LADO: **Andrew Zachariades**, Edward Snelgar on 020 7926 4679 or 07720 828 700 or
LADO@lambeth.gov.uk

Internal reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns by staff:

All staff will always report concerns via the academy's CPOMS system. If a child is at harm or in danger it is imperative the staff member speaks to a member of the Safeguarding team immediately. Concerns and worries should not be reported after the child has left the academy.

Internal and external reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns by students: Students can send emails to any member of staff about any safeguarding concerns. The staff member will then report this as above. Students, parents, and external agencies can also email safeguarding@SBUSixth.ac.uk. This email is monitored during office hours by the Safeguarding team. Students can also speak to any member of staff if they have any worries or concerns, and the staff member will follow the academy's reporting procedures.

South Bank University Academy, Trafalgar St, London SE17 2TP

Principal: Annette Moses
DSL: Matt Goss
DDSLs: Ebunoluwa Jubril
Safeguarding Governor: Safia Barikzai
Local Authority contacts: The Southwark Safeguarding Board
<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/children-s-social-care/child-protection/southwark-safeguarding-children-board>

Southwark's LADO is:

Eva Simcock – Tel: 020 7525 0689; Mob: 07943076608; Email: Eva.Simcock@southwark.gov.uk. LADO can also be contacted via Qau.Safeguarding@southwark.gov.uk.

There is also a duty system and one of the CP Coordinators in Quality Assurance Unit is on duty each day to deal with LADO issues when LADO is unavailable. Duty telephone number for enquiries/referrals is 020 7525 3297

The LA's Strategic Lead Officer for safeguarding in education services is: the Director of Children's Services Alasdair Smith 020 7525 0654

The LA's Schools Safeguarding Coordinator is: Apo ÇAĞIRICI 020 7525 2715

Children-missing-from-education Southwark

We also note the 'Safeguarding information for professionals and the community in Southwark' on Southwark Council's website.

Internal reporting procedures for safeguarding concerns by staff:

All staff will always report concerns via the academy's CPOMS system. If a child is at harm or in danger it is imperative the staff member speaks to a member of the Safeguarding team immediately. Concerns and worries should not be reported after the child has left academy.

Appendix D – Glossary of Safeguarding Terms

D.1 Purpose

This glossary explains key safeguarding terms used throughout this policy. It is intended to support staff in understanding safeguarding terminology and should be read alongside *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026* and other relevant statutory guidance.

D.2 Safeguarding Terms

Term	Definition
Abuse	A form of maltreatment of a child. Abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual or through neglect and can occur online or offline.
Child	Anyone under the age of 18 years.
Child in Need (Section 17)	A child who requires services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development.
Child Protection	Activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.
Children Missing Education (CME)	Children who are not receiving a suitable education and may be at increased safeguarding risk.
Contextual Safeguarding	An approach that recognises that children may experience abuse in peer groups, schools, neighbourhoods and online, as well as within their family.
Early Intervention	Support provided when concerns first emerge to prevent needs from escalating. Within KCSIE 2026 this is primarily delivered through Family Help arrangements.
Family Help	A coordinated multi-agency approach providing early support for children and families where additional needs have been identified.
Harm Threshold	The statutory threshold at which concerns indicate a child may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, requiring Children's Social Care involvement.
Safeguarding	Protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring they grow up in safe and effective care, and enabling them to achieve the best outcomes.
Significant Harm	The legal threshold that may justify compulsory intervention by Children's Social Care to protect a child.

D.3 Forms of Abuse

Abbreviation	Meaning
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HSB	Harmful Sexual Behaviour
HBA	Honour-Based Abuse

D.4 Safeguarding Roles

Abbreviation	Meaning
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Abbreviation	Meaning
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer – the officer responsible for managing allegations against adults working with children.
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
Executive Principal	The senior leader with overall responsibility for safeguarding across the Trust.
Safeguarding Governor	The governor responsible for providing strategic oversight and challenge in relation to safeguarding.

D.5 Multi-Agency Safeguarding

Abbreviation	Meaning
Children's Social Care	The local authority service responsible for protecting children and promoting their welfare.
Family Help	Local multi-agency service providing coordinated support to children and families.
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children Partnership
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
Channel	The multi-agency programme that provides support to individuals vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

D.6 Online Safety and Technology

Term	Definition
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computer systems capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence. AI can support education but also create safeguarding risks such as impersonation, grooming and manipulated content.
Deepfake	AI-generated or digitally manipulated image, audio or video designed to appear genuine.
Filtering	Technical systems that restrict access to harmful or inappropriate online content.
Monitoring	Systems that identify online activity which may indicate safeguarding concerns.
Sextortion	A form of online blackmail in which someone threatens to share sexual images unless demands are met.
Money Muling	The recruitment of individuals to transfer or receive criminal funds through their own bank account.

D.7 Legislation and Statutory Guidance

Abbreviation	Meaning
KCSIE	<i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i> (Department for Education)
Working Together	<i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> – statutory guidance for organisations working with children and families.
Equality Act	Equality Act 2010
UK GDPR	UK General Data Protection Regulation
Data Protection Act	Data Protection Act 2018

Appendix E – Staff Safeguarding Quick Reference Guide

If You Have a Safeguarding Concern, Remember the Four Rs

Recognise

Be alert to signs that a child may be experiencing abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Concerns may arise from:

- something a child says;
- something you observe;
- changes in behaviour;
- attendance concerns;
- online activity;
- information from another person or agency.

Respond

If a child speaks to you:

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Take them seriously.
- ✓ Reassure them they have done the right thing.
- ✓ Explain that you cannot keep the information secret.

Do not:

- ✗ promise confidentiality;
- ✗ ask leading questions;
- ✗ investigate;
- ✗ confront anyone involved.

Record

Record:

- the date and time;
- exactly what was said (using the child's own words wherever possible);
- what you observed;
- any action taken.
- Records should be:
 - factual;
 - accurate;
 - objective;
 - completed as soon as possible.

Report

- Report your concern immediately to:
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); or
- Deputy DSL.
- Do not wait until the end of the day.

Immediate Danger

If a child is in immediate danger:

- contact 999 where appropriate;
- contact Children's Social Care immediately;
- inform the DSL as soon as possible.

Remember

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

You are not expected to investigate.

You are expected to:

- ✓ recognise
- ✓ respond
- ✓ record
- ✓ report

If You Are Unsure...

Speak to the DSL.

It is always better to share a concern than to overlook one.