STOUR VALE ACADEMY TRUST

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Responsible for School-Specific Policy: **Headteacher**	
Monitoring Trust Model Policy: **Chief Executive Officer**	
Monitoring School-Specific Policy: **Headteacher**	

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Section 1 – At a glance

1.1 In brief

This document is the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for schools and other settings within Stour Vale Academy Trust (the "Trust"). The policy applies to all staff, members, trustees, governors and volunteers, temporary and supply/visiting staff working in each setting and related extended school and off-site activities.

Education settings are a vital part of the wider safeguarding system for children. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

Our mission is to improve life opportunities for children and young people by providing the best possible education and care. Through this policy, robust procedures, and a shared moral purpose, we work together with families and external agencies to ensure that all children are protected from harm and empowered to speak up, be heard, and stay safe. Throughout this policy are references to specific paragraphs in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026) which provides further detail. KCSIE is the statutory guidance that all our settings must have regard to.

1.2 Our commitment to safeguarding

- We acknowledge that harm can occur in various settings, including our schools and nurseries, and will be proactive to address risk.
- We adopt a holistic approach to safeguarding which includes deliberately teaching our children how to keep safe and look out for each other.
- We work in partnership with children, their families and partner agencies to safeguard children.
- We are proactive in our support of children's emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- We ensure that in out settings and central team there are clearly understood roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.
- We provide high quality safeguarding training to all staff, governors and trustees and ensure those with a safeguarding leadership role get the specialist training they need.

- We will fulfil the statutory obligations placed on us to keep children safe and promote their wellbeing as laid out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

1.3 Contextual Safeguarding

Each of our schools and nurseries serves a different community and each context is unique. Within that community there will be specific issues relating to locality and context that could impact the safety of children. Each setting will analyse these local risks annually and list their responses.

Schools and settings must also follow local safeguarding procedures through their Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), ensure proper reporting systems, and keep staff informed and updated on relevant local safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding issues specific to our school context:

Issue	How we help manage the risk
Public footpath	Gates either side which require electronic access to enter each side of the split site and are supervised during unstructured time

1.4 Equality Statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or health conditions
- are young carers
- may experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- have English as an additional language
- are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence
- are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- are asylum seekers
- are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs
- are looked after or previously looked after
- are missing from education
- may, following an intention expressed by their parent/carer, be removed from school to be home educated

1.5 Contact Details

Role/Organisation	Name	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Naomi Sevier	nsevier@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Deputy DSL	Lucy Pestridge Holly Whitlock	lpestridge@earls.dudley.sch.uk hwhitlock@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Yvonne Nelson-Brown	01384 813110
Chair of Governors	Andrew Harwood	info@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Link Governor for Safeguarding	Mrs J Morris	jmorris@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Link Trustee for Safeguarding	Stephen Tivey	Trust Office 0121 585 5385
Trust Safeguarding Lead	Paul Ramage	pramage@svat.org.uk 07897 046462
Virtual School Head	Andrew Wright	01384 813494
Children Looked-After Lead	Naomi Sevier	nsevier@earls.dudley.sch.uk
SENCo	Stuart Berry	sberry@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Children's Front Door (MASH)	0300 555 0050	
Out of Hours Duty Team	0300 555 8574	
PREVENT Officer	CTU_GATEWAY@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk	
Stour Vale Academy Trust	CEO – Rachel Salter CFO – Steve Ralph	Trust Office 0121 585 5385

1.6 Links to other Documents

Safer Recruitment

Trust processes to ensure the highest standards of safeguarding in recruitment are explained in the **Recruitment and Selection Policy**. This explains how trust schools meet the requirements of KCSIE Part 3. Each year, all staff sign an **Annual Declaration** reminding them of their safeguarding duties.

Staff Conduct and Managing Allegations

Our Trust **Code of Conduct** highlights the high expectations we have of our staff. We manage visitors to our setting according to our **Visitors Process**. Our processes for managing safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff and other adults are explained in the **Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations Against Adults Policy**. This covers allegations that meet the harm threshold as well as low level concerns, and meets the requirements of KCSIE Part 4.

Behaviour

Each of our settings has its own **Behaviour Policy** or **Relationships and Behaviour Policy** built on a foundation of strong positive relationships and high expectations. In some setting this includes how we manage issues around Bullying and Child on Child Abuse, whereas in others this will be in a separate **Anti Bullying Policy**. These documents explain our procedures around child-on-child abuse as outlined in KCSIE

Part 1, Paragraphs 31-37, and how we proceed when we need to search a child for a prohibited item. Our Trust **Restrictive Interventions Policy**, explains how we manage the rare situations where some form of restrictive intervention, including seclusion is necessary to keep people safe (KCSIE Part 2, Paras 205-207).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our Trust **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy** demonstrates how we promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for everyone in our community of schools and setting. Section 3 of the policy, "Supporting Pupils" is setting specific and outlines raising concerns, managing disclosures and teaching about mental health, ensuring that the requirements of KCSIE Part 1, Paras 47-50 are met.

EYFS settings

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework includes safeguarding requirements that only apply to children from birth to five. The full details of the statutory framework are available here. Our **EYFS Policy** outlines these safeguarding and welfare requirements and in particular

- staff : child ratios and workforce qualifications
- safe eating arrangements
- safe sleeping arrangements

Section 2 – Recognising and Responding to Harm

2.1 Recognising Harm *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 18 – 54)*

All staff are required to read and understand KCSIE Part 1 and this Policy. In particular they are trained to spot the signs of abuse, exploitation or neglect (including online abuse). Training in trauma-informed approaches and understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) further supports staff to recognise change in pupil behaviour which may indicate harm or influences a pupil's ability to disclose. In this way, staff in our settings are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.

Recognising when a child may benefit from support before statutory intervention is central to good safeguarding and staff understand that some groups of children are more likely to need support than others (refer to Section 4)

2.2 Responding to Harm *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 57 - 63)*

Trust staff recognise that, despite our best efforts, it is vital that we have the attitude of "it could happen here" where safeguarding is concerned. We are trained to be professionally curious. That means, when something doesn't seem quite right, we explore further in order to support the child and their family. The safety of the child is always our top priority. It is the responsibility of every member of our community to report a concern. We don't assume that someone else will do it.

Any staff member or school visitor with safeguarding concerns must immediately report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL following the process in the individual Trust setting. This is displayed on posters around the school, in a safeguarding leaflet handed to visitors and as shown in Appendix A of this policy. This will ensure that a member of the safeguarding team is informed without delay and that a rapid decision about how to proceed can be made. Options will include supporting the child in school, undertaking a family help assessment or making a referral to statutory services. If, in an exceptional circumstance, no members of the safeguarding team are available, and it is a serious matter, the staff member should seek guidance from social care directly.

If staff have a safeguarding concern about another adult on school site they must follow the procedures outlined in the linked **Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations against Adults Policy**.

The key steps for responding to concerns about harm are:

Listen and Reassure

- Listen to and believe the child. Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions.
- Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset.
- Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner.
- Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret.

Record and Report

- Write up your conversation following the setting's procedures for recording information as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it.
- Submit your concern for the DSL to access.

In all cases, if staff are unsure they should always speak to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy.

Follow-up and support

Our safeguarding staff are trained to respond to harm in the ways outlined in KCSIE and local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). The setting DSL will lead on ensuring the child is safe and will determine the next steps, including making referrals and offering support. This might include referrals to statutory services such as police or social care or referrals to early help services.

Our settings may offer families targeted early help support and with their consent make referrals to local organisations who offer help. Ongoing pastoral care and support will be provided as needed, with regular communication with relevant staff and parents/carers (where appropriate).

Discussing Concerns with Parents/Carers

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We safeguard with consent wherever possible. Where appropriate, concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing will be discussed with their parents or carers. This will be undertaken by a safeguarding trained member of staff under the guidance of the DSL or Deputy DSL.

In situations where informing parents or carers may place a child at further risk, the DSL will seek advice from the local authority children's social care team before making contact.

Understand the Voice of the Child

We actively seek to understand and consider pupils' wishes and feelings in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. The DSL ensures that children's voices are considered when making decisions that affect their safety, wellbeing, and support, in line with statutory guidance. Where appropriate, these views of the child will be used to inform referrals, plans, and interventions, while always maintaining a focus on their best interests and welfare.

2.3 Working with other agencies *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 64-73) & Part 2 (Paras 132-139)*

Our settings recognise the significant part we play in multi-agency safeguarding practice, and follow all guidance according to KCSIE and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

The DSL and their team will lead on liaising with other agencies to decide whether statutory support (via a referral to Local Authority children's social care) or community-based early help is the most appropriate way forward. All staff have training regarding community based family help and we take a proactive approach, recognising our duty to "provide help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge".

The flowchart in KCSIE (Part 1, Figure 1) which summarises the actions to be taken where there are concerns about a child is included as Appendix B.

Section 3 – Specific Harms

All Trust staff have an awareness of key safeguarding issues, that often overlap and can put child at risk of harm. Certain behaviours and indicators can be signs that children are at risk, for instance, drug and alcohol misuse, unexplained absence, serious violence, exploitation and radicalisation and the sharing of intimate images.

KCSIE provides detail on recognising and responding to numerous specific harms. A brief outline is provided here but it is important to go back to the source document and other training materials when required.

3.1 Physical, Emotional, Sexual Abuse and Neglect *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 19-29)*

All staff are trained to be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school, inside and outside of home, and online. Younger children are most at risk of abuse inside

the family home or from other adults that they know. As children get older and more independent, the risk of extra familial harm grows, including issues such as sexual abuse, abuse in their own intimate relationships, criminal exploitation, youth violence and radicalisation. Evidence shows that mobile technology is a significant contributory factor to these risks.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

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

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may include verbal abuse or involve serious bullying.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact (including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts) or non-contact activities (such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child). Sexual abuse can take place in person or on-line.

Neglect is defined as 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.

3.2 Child-on-Child Abuse *KCSIE Part 1(Paras 31-37), Part 2 (Paras 192-193)*

Staff recognise that children are capable of abusing other children (including online) and all have a responsibility to prevent it or respond appropriately where they believe a child may be at risk. In all Trust settings we have a zero tolerance of any type of discrimination and never downplay certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys".

Examples of child-on-child abuse include:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- faith-targeted abuse and racism
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon
- sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault

- sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment,
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes
- upskirting
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Our staff are trained to recognise the signs of child on child abuse and understand that disclosures must be taken seriously. Any concern, disclosure, or allegation must be reported immediately to the DSL and recorded appropriately.

Victims are supported with care and sensitivity, ensuring they are listened to and offered appropriate support. Safety plans are completed as needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils involved and where necessary, referrals are made to children's social care or the police.

3.3 Exploitation (CCE/CSE) *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 38-44)*

We are committed to safeguarding pupils from all forms of exploitation, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), county lines activity, and trafficking. We understand that exploitation can happen to any child or young person, regardless of background, and often involves coercion, manipulation, or deception.

Possible indicators of exploitation may include unexplained gifts, money, or possessions, changes in behaviour, such as aggression, secrecy, or becoming withdrawn, regularly going missing or being found in areas far from home, involvement in crime or substance misuse or relationships with older individuals or controlling adults.

Any concerns relating to exploitation are treated as safeguarding issues and must be referred promptly to the DSL. We know that children can also become victims of exploitation online, for instance through incidents of Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion, known as Sextortion. The DSL will assess the situation and make referrals to appropriate safeguarding partners or specialist services as needed. Support is offered to the young person throughout, with a focus on safety, empowerment, and recovery.

3.4 Domestic Abuse *KCSIE Part 1 (para 45)*

It is the case that in Trust settings, Domestic Abuse is often the most common safeguarding issue that children are exposed to. Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse, either directly or by seeing, hearing, or experiencing the effects of abuse at home. All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

At least one member of safeguarding staff in each Trust setting will have completed Operation Encompass training, helping us work with police and other agencies to support children and their families.

3.5 Honour Based Abuse (HBA) *KCSIE Annex A (pg 172-174) & Part 1 Para 46*

Honour or faith-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and includes female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All concerns should be recorded and acted upon in line with statutory safeguarding guidance and internal procedures.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs." FGM is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. Factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in KCSIE Annex A. Any teacher who either is informed by a girl under eighteen that an act of FGM has been conducted on her; or observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been conducted on a girl under eighteen must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and they can be supported by the DSL to report this. Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been conducted on a pupil under eighteen must speak to the DSL without delay and follow local safeguarding procedures.

3.6 Serious Violence *KCSIE Part 1 (Paras 51-54)*

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

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

3.7 Online Harm *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 164-169 / 173-177)*

We recognise that the online world presents both opportunities and risks for children and young people. Online harm can take many forms, including cyberbullying, grooming, exposure to inappropriate content, online exploitation, and misinformation. We are committed to educating and protecting our pupils from these risks as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Types of online harm may include cyberbullying, trolling, or online harassment, sharing of indecent images or sexting, online grooming or radicalisation, access to harmful content, including self-harm or extremist material or exploitation through gaming or social media platforms.

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies become more integrated into education and everyday life, the trust recognises both their benefits and potential safeguarding risks. Staff will remain alert to how students may use AI, especially in ways that could impact online safety, data privacy, or wellbeing. This includes emerging risks such as AI-generated bullying - for example, the creation of fake images (deepfakes), harmful content using chatbots, or AI-edited videos designed to harass, humiliate, or target individuals.

Each setting has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to provide children with a safe environment in which to learn. The DSL has responsibility for these systems including training staff. Systems are tested regularly and outcomes reported to the local governing body of each setting.

3.8 Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence *KCSIE Part 5*

At Stour Vale we have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of sexual harassment, sexual violence and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). We recognise that these behaviours are never acceptable and can have a lasting impact on a child's wellbeing, safety, and ability to learn. Sexual harassment and violence can occur between peers, as well as between adults and pupils, and may take place in person or online. This includes unwanted sexual comments or jokes, sharing of sexual images or videos without consent, physical acts of a sexual nature without consent or pressuring someone into sexual activity. Staff are also aware that it is more likely that girls will be victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence. Children with SEND and those that identify as LGBTQ+ are also more likely to be victims.

Staff are trained to recognise the signs of sexual harassment and violence and understand that disclosures must be taken seriously. Any concern, disclosure, or allegation must be reported immediately to the DSL and recorded appropriately. The Trust follows the guidance set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Victims are supported with care and sensitivity, ensuring they are listened to and offered appropriate support. Safety plans are completed as needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils involved and where necessary, referrals are made to children's social care or the police.

When assessing HSB, the ages and developmental stage of the children involved is critical. Each Setting in the trust has at least one member of staff trained in using the Brook Traffic Light Tool Kit to assess children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour so that appropriate support can be put in place.

3.9 Radicalisation and Extremism *KCSIE Annex A (Pg 168-170)*

We recognise that children and young people can be vulnerable to extremist ideologies and radicalisation, both online and offline. We fulfil our duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, including the Prevent Duty, which requires schools to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Trust staff receive training to help them identify signs of radicalisation including being alert to changes in behaviour, language, or attitudes that may indicate a child is being

influenced by extremist ideologies. Concerns about radicalisation are treated as safeguarding issues and must be reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL will assess the risk and, where appropriate, refer to the local Prevent team, Channel programme, or other external agencies for support.

By fostering an inclusive environment that promotes respect and diversity, our settings help build pupils' resilience to radicalisation and support their personal development and safety.

Section 4 – Vulnerable Groups

Some children have additional vulnerabilities and therefore an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers to make disclosures. Staff in Trust settings receive additional training to ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

4.1 Children known or previously known to social care *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 217-220)*

A child's experience of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm. Where children currently have or previously had a social worker, this informs our decisions regarding additional support for welfare, pastoral or academic provisions.

4.2 Looked after and previously looked after children *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 235-247)*

We identify looked after children and those that have been previously looked after as a vulnerable group. Each setting has a named "designated teacher" for looked after children and it is the DSL who has the responsibility to ensure that the school knows about the child's looked after legal status, the details of their social worker and the name of the appropriate Virtual School Head.

4.3 Young Carers *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 248)*

Some children have additional caring responsibilities when compared to others of a similar age. Staff in our settings are trained to be alert to the needs of these children, recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing.

4.4 Children with SEND *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 249-251)*

We recognise that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Our settings have additional support in place for these pupils. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group, including:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- pupils being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other pupils

- the potential for pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) will liaise closely with the DSL to provide additional support in managing the safeguarding needs of this group of children.

Children requiring mental health support may, or may not be, on the setting's SEND register. Staff are trained to understand that mental health issues can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. In these instances, the DSL, SENCo and school mental health lead will coordinate support.

4.5 Children with medical conditions *KCSIE Part 2 (Para 252)*

A child having a medical condition (including allergies and conditions requiring delegated healthcare tasks) is not in itself an indicator that a child is at greater safeguarding risk. However, in the event of a clinical incident taking place in a school or college, the responsible healthcare professional, in conjunction with the DSL should consider whether any safeguarding duty has been triggered and whether any further action is required. Processes for supporting children with medical conditions are detailed in the Trust **Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy** and **Allergy Policy**.

4.6 Children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual *KCSIE Part 2 (Para 253)*

A child or young person being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is not in itself a risk factor for harm; however, they can sometimes be vulnerable to discriminatory bullying. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who are. Our settings work hard to promote inclusion and antidiscrimination through PSHE, assemblies and celebrations, while addressing vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying and taking steps to prevent it.

4.7 Gender Questioning Children *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 254-284)*

Our settings are aware of the potential vulnerabilities of children who are questioning their gender, including the possibility of complex mental health and psychosocial needs, for example relating to relationships with family, peers or their broader social environment, including discriminatory bullying. To make our settings inclusive and welcoming for all, we adopt policies wherever possible that maintain flexibility and avoid rigid rules based on gender stereotypes.

In response to the Cass Review and the updated guidance in the latest version of KCSIE, our settings follow these guidelines:

- Schools will not initiate any action in this area.
- Accommodating social transition is an active intervention so schools and colleges should take a very careful approach.
- Parents and carers should be actively involved and their views treated with importance. In the rare circumstances where involving parents or carers would constitute a greater risk to the child than not involving them, the setting will involve their DSL to determine what action is needed to safeguard the child, before the parents are contacted or any decisions are taken.
- Our settings have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. They should consider how best to fulfil that duty towards a child who is questioning their gender, as well as their peers.
- Our settings do not allow pupils into toilets, changing rooms, or boarding or residential accommodation designated for the opposite sex, with no exceptions.
- Where settings have implemented single-sex sports as being necessary for safety reasons, there should be no exceptions and pupils must not be allowed to participate in sports designated for the opposite sex.
- Settings should be particularly conscious of safeguarding concerns relating to primary aged children. Children who socially transition before puberty, and those who transition prior to receiving clinical advice – are more likely to proceed to a medical pathway than those who do not.

Section 5 – Attendance

Like safeguarding, staff at Stour Vale settings know that attendance is everyone's responsibility. We recognise that regular school attendance is essential for children to achieve their full potential and is a key indicator of their safety and wellbeing. Persistent absence or unexplained patterns of absence can be a safeguarding concern and will be treated as such.

Each setting has an **Attendance Policy** which meets the requirements of the DfE Guidance – Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Each policy details how attendance is managed. Attendance concerns are addressed early through supportive engagement with pupils and families and patterns of persistent or unexplained absence are reported to the DSL, particularly where there are known safeguarding risks. Non-attendance or sudden withdrawal from school can be indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other risks such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, or trafficking.

5.1 Children who are absent from Education *KCSIE Part 2 (Para 221)*

Any child who is absent for ten consecutive school days without explanation, or earlier if there are significant safeguarding concerns, will be referred to the Local Authority in line with Children Missing Education (2024) guidance. Such cases are recorded as safeguarding concerns where appropriate and escalated in accordance with local protocols.

5.2 Alternative Provision *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 210-215)*

Where a school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, it continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil and should therefore be satisfied that the placement meets the pupils needs. Pupils at Alternative Provision settings can often be some of our most vulnerable. The Trust carries out quality assurance work with APs to ensure that trust schools only use those that meet the needs of our children. Schools are responsible for managing day to day attendance and safeguarding of their children at AP in collaboration with the provider.

5.3 Elective Home Education (EHE) *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 222-225)*

Although many home educated children have a positive learning experience, elective home education can mean that some children are not in receipt of suitable education and are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs. Our settings work with parents and other agencies to ensure that parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child.

Section 6 – Safeguarding in the curriculum

We recognise that schools and nurseries play a crucial role in teaching children how to keep themselves and others safe. Furthermore we prepare children for life in modern Britain, creating a culture of tolerance and inclusivity. We have a zero tolerance culture towards discrimination and sexual violence or harassment. Each Stour Vale setting has a carefully planned programme of PSHE, RSE and personal development education based on research evidence and conforming to best practice guidance. In particular, collaborative work between the DSL, SENCo and PSHE lead (where appropriate), ensures that the material is accessible for pupils with SEND or additional vulnerabilities.

These programmes tackle, at an age-appropriate stage, issues such as:

- supporting children to develop the skills that form the building blocks of all positive relationships
- healthy and respectful relationships
- boundaries, consent and kindness in relationships
- stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- body confidence and self-esteem
- how to recognise and report concerns about an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour
- the concepts of, and laws relating to – all forms of sexual harassment, and abuse, and how to access support,
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable, emphasising that it is never the fault of the person experiencing it,
- understanding online harms such as sharing images, the prevalence of deepfakes, pornography and misogynistic influencers and when and where to seek help.

Section 7 – Leadership, Training and Quality Assurance

7.1 Culture

KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 119-121)

All staff play a vital role in ensuring a culture of safeguarding at Stour Vale Academy Trust. The responsibility for policy and culture ultimately rests with the CEO and Trust Board at trust level and with the Headteacher and LGB at the level of individual settings. Clear responsibilities are summarised in section 10.

7.2 Quality Assurance

Stour Vale Academy Trust has comprehensive safeguarding quality assurance processes. These ensure that our statutory duties are met in all our settings. These processes are the responsibility of the Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead, working collaboratively with Headteachers and DSLs. A formal annual review of safeguarding is carried out in each setting alongside more regular support based on individual need. DSLs report to their LGB key safeguarding issues five times per year and the Trust Safeguarding Lead reports to Trustees termly and meets regularly with the Safeguarding Trustee.

7.3 Staff Training

KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 153-157)

Each trust setting produces a comprehensive training plan relating to their individual context. This includes annual statutory training covering all aspects of KCSIE Part 1 (including on-line safety) with a programme of regular updates throughout the year to keep safeguarding at the top of the staff agenda. This training also covers the local safeguarding arrangements for the Local Authority in which that setting sits.

7.4 DSL Training and Support

All DSLs and Deputy DSLs, plus some members of the wider pastoral team (for instance attendance officers) have regular Level 3 Safeguarding Training. Further training, regular updates, sharing of best practice and learning from safeguarding incidents is coordinated by the Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead through regular meetings and group supervision. In addition all DSLs receive regular monthly one-to-one supervision.

7.5 Governor/Trustee Training and Support

A programme of safeguarding training for governors and trustees is provided by the trust to meet statutory requirements but also to ensure that governors in general and safeguarding governors in particular feel confident to perform their vital role.

7.6 Confidentiality and Record-keeping

KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 140-152)

All discussions and decisions made regarding safeguarding concerns are recorded using each setting's confidential safeguarding system (either CPOMS or MyConcern). We ensure that the quality of record keeping is high through regular staff training and internal quality assurance measures. This ensures our settings can spot emerging patterns, offer Early Help before the situation gets too serious and play a proactive part

in effective multi agency working and information sharing. We are very clear that data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information will not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.
Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.
If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main pupil file.
To allow the new school/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this will be within:

- 5 days for an in-year transfer, or
- The first 5 days of the start of a new term

In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

7.7 Filtering and Monitoring *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras. 173-177)*

Trust settings do all they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to on-line risks. Each setting has an appropriate filtering and monitoring system in place. This is regularly reviewed by the DSL and forms part of the Trust safeguarding quality assurance process.

Section 8 – Maintaining a Safe Workforce

8.1 Safer Recruitment *KCSIE Part 3*

As part of our commitment to safeguarding and ensuring the safety of our pupils, the Trust follows robust safer recruitment processes. These are set out in our **Recruitment and Selection Policy** which meets all statutory requirements laid out in Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 3. Through these measures, we strive to ensure that everyone who works in our settings is suitable to do so and understands their responsibility in safeguarding the children in our care. A separate **Volunteers Policy**, outlines our procedures in relation to non-paid helpers on our sites.
All staff sign a professional code of conduct and complete an annual declaration confirming they remain suitable to work with children though the course of their employment.

8. 2 Managing Visitors *KCSIE Part 3 (Paras 377-382)*

All trust settings have clear processes for managing visitors on their sites. These will include processes for signing in and out, checking ID and assuring that visitors in a professional capacity have had the appropriate DBS checks. The Trust **Visitors Process** outlines how we do this.

8.3 Concerns or allegations about staff, visitors and contractors *KCSIE Part 4*

It is vital that we have the attitude of *"it could happen here"* where safeguarding is concerned. We are trained to be professionally curious. That means, when something doesn't seem quite right, we explore further. It is the responsibility of every member of our community to report a concern about a member of staff no matter how minor it might seem. We also encourage staff to be open and honest about their own behaviour so that if they reflect that they may have acted inappropriately or in a manner that may be misconstrued, they raise that as an issue with their Headteacher or senior leader in that setting.

The process that staff must follow to raise a concern is explained in the **Managing Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations Against Adults Policy**. The policy covers both concerns that meet the harm threshold and those low-level concerns that do not. All concerns will be taken seriously and managed promptly in line with KCSIE and local safeguarding procedures. Concerns should be raised with the Headteacher or with the Executive Lead of the setting, where the concern is about the Headteacher or senior leader in that setting.

8.4 Use of premises for non-school activities *KCSIE Part 2 (Paras 208-209)*

When Trust settings hire out facilities to other organisations or individuals, we have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to keep children safe. The LGB must seek assurance that the provider concerned has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place, and the provider must contact the DSL if any safeguarding concerns present themselves. Details are provided in each setting's **Premises Hire Policy**.

Section 9 – Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's responsibility**. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, governors, trustees and members in the setting and is consistent with the procedures of safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

9.1 All Staff

All staff will read and understand the whole of KCSIE Part 1, engage proactively with the annual safeguarding training programme in their setting and place their safeguarding responsibilities above all else.

9.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead

Each Trust setting has a senior member of staff who is appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The DSL takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place). All Trust settings have a wider team of deputy DSLs to ensure that there is always a suitably trained person available to provide safeguarding support. The DSL ensures that the setting plays its part in effective multi agency working, information-sharing and record-keeping. They maintain a list of vulnerable children and work jointly with the SENCo and Senior Mental Health Lead to support pupil wellbeing. A full description of the role of the DSL is provided in KCSIE, Annex B.

9.3 Trust Safeguarding Lead

The Trust Safeguarding Lead is a member of the Executive Leadership Team, responsible for the continuous improvement of safeguarding and child protection across the Trust. They ensure the appropriateness of policies, processes, quality assurance and reporting to the CEO and Trust Board, while providing advice and supervision for DSLs. They represent the Trust with key safeguarding partners and across the wider safeguarding community.

9.4 The CEO / Headteacher

The CEO/Headteacher is responsible for the implementation and communication of this and related policies, ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time and resource and that all staff undertake appropriate training.

9.5 Trustees and local governors

Trustees and local governors take strategic leadership responsibility for the Trust or individual setting, ensuring compliance with their duties under legislation.

Section 10 – Legislation and statutory guidance

The Trust Board has a strategic leadership responsibility to ensure that Stour Vale settings comply with their legal duties. These duties are summarised in KCSIE Part 2(Paras 83-118) In particular these obligations sit within The Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty) and local multiagency safeguarding arrangements (MASA)

The Human Rights Act 1998: The HRA sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to and contains the Articles and protocols of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the Convention) that are deemed to apply in the UK. It compels public organisations to respect and protect an individual's human rights when they make individual decisions about them.

Equality Act 2010: In the context of safeguarding, this guidance, and the legal duties placed on settings in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children,

outlines how the Trust Board should carefully consider how settings are supporting their pupils with regard to particular protected characteristics – including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race.

Public Sector Equality Duty: The PSED places a general duty on the Trust to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) , Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), Safer Working Practice 2022 and the Academy Trust Governance Guide. We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our three local safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which places a duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils

The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, which set out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirement for at least one person conducting an interview to be trained in safer recruitment techniques

Part 3 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school

The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children

Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18

Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children

Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism

The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (referred to in this policy as the '2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations') and Childcare Act 2006, which set out who is disqualified from working with children.

This policy also meets requirements relating to safeguarding and welfare in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2025 update)

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association as well as adhering to the principles under data protection law. For further information please review the setting's data protection policy published on its website.

Appendix A – Setting-specific procedure for reporting a safeguarding concern

Reporting system for adults

- Write up the conversation or concern regarding a pupil with as much information as possible, ensuring the information is factual and avoids sharing the adults own judgement.

- Submit this information via email to safeguarding@earls.dudley.sch.uk

- In addition to this email, best practice includes a follow-up conversation with the DSL or deputy DSL's at the adults earliest convenience

Reporting system for our pupils

Students have three ways of reporting a safeguarding concern.

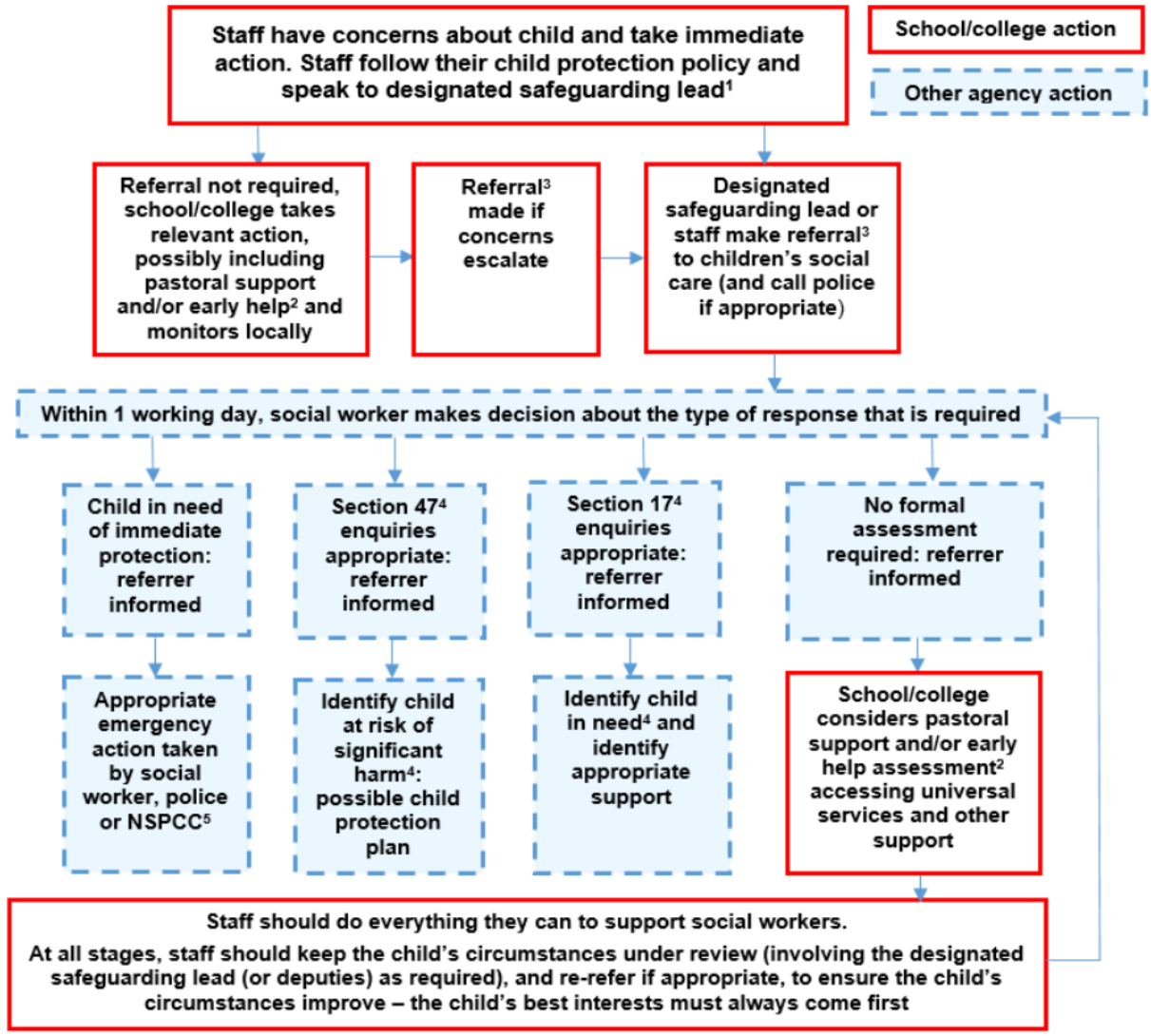
- Pupils can either share their worries or concerns with a trusted adult

- Pupils can 'report a concern' via their classcharts app, a specific designated channel which is monitored by the deputy designated safeguarding lead

- For those students who do not have access to the app or feel uncomfortable to speak to a trusted adult, they can also report concerns via email tell@earls.dudley.sch.uk

Appendix B – General actions to take when you have a concern

Figure 1: Flowchart setting out the actions taken where there are concerns about a child



[1] In cases which also involve a concern or an allegation of abuse against a staff member, see Part four of this guidance.
[2] Family Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from co-ordinated Family Help, a family help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Working Together to Safeguard Children provides detailed guidance on the Family Help process.
[3] Referrals should follow the process set out in the local threshold document and local protocol for assessment. See Working Together to Safeguard Children.
[4] Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make enquiries to decide whether to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Full details are in Working Together to Safeguard Children.
[5] This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).