**Safeguarding Children and Child Protection**

At Growing Stars Preschool, we work with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.

We support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children’s health and development. In our setting we strive to protect children from the risk of radicalisation, and we promote acceptance and tolerance of other beliefs and cultures (please refer to our inclusion and equality policy for further information). Safeguarding is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with the nursery’s other policies and procedures.

**Legal framework and definition of safeguarding**

* Children Act 1989 and 2004
* Childcare Act 2006
* Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
* Children and Social Work Act 2017
* The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2021
* Working together to safeguard children 2018
* Keeping children safe in education 2019
* Data Protection Act 2018
* What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused 2015
* Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in relation to this policy is defined as:

* Protecting children from maltreatment
* Preventing the impairment of children’s health or development
* Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
* Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

(Definition taken from the HM Government document ‘Working together to safeguard children 2018).

**Policy intention**

To safeguard children and promote their welfare we will

* Create an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image
* Provide positive role models and develop a safe culture where staff are confident to raise concerns about professional conduct

**Types of abuse and particular procedures followed**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution or community setting by those known to them or a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child or children.

What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused (advice for practitioners) 2015.

The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, but will help us to recognise that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

**Indicators of child abuse**

* Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
* Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
* Unexplained injuries to a child or conflicting reports from parents or staff
* Repeated injuries
* Unaddressed illnesses or injuries
* Significant changes to behaviour patterns
* Child makes a disclosure
* Child makes an indirect disclosure

Softer (indirect) signs of abuse as defined by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) include:

* Low self-esteem
* Wetting and soiling
* Recurrent nightmares
* Aggressive behaviour
* Withdrawing communication
* Habitual body rocking
* Indiscriminate contact or affection seeking
* Over-friendliness towards strangers
* Excessive clinginess
* Persistently seeking attention

**Peer on Peer abuse**

We are aware that peer on peer abuse does take place, so we include children in our policies when we talk about potential abusers. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. We will report this in the same way as we do for adults abusing children and will take advice from the appropriate bodies in this area.

**Physical Abuse**

Action needs to be taken if staff have reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g. fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles and face.

Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries. These should also be logged at Growing Stars Preschool and we ask parents to disclose any known childhood cuts and grazes when dropping off their children.

Children and babies may be abused physically through shaking or throwing. Other injuries may include burns or scalds. These are not usual childhood injuries and should always be logged and discussed with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and management team.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)**

This type of physical abuse is practised as a cultural ritual by certain ethnic groups and there is now more awareness of its prevalence in some communities in England including its effect on the child and any other siblings involved. This procedure may be carried out shortly after birth and during childhood as well as adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman’s first pregnancy and varies widely according to the community. Symptoms may include bleeding, painful areas, acute urinary retention, urinary infection, wound infection, septicaemia, incontinence, vaginal and pelvic infections with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as physiological concerns. If you have concerns about a child relating to this area, you should contact the children's social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse. There is a mandatory duty to report to police any case where an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, we will report this as we would any other form of suspected abuse.

**Fabricated illness**

This is also a type of physical abuse. This is where a child is presented with an illness that is fabricated by the adult carer. The carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation.

The signs may include a carer exaggerating a real illness or symptoms, complete fabrication of symptoms or inducing physical illness, e.g. through poisoning, starvation, inappropriate diet. This may also be presented through false allegations of abuse or encouraging the child to appear disabled or ill to obtain unnecessary treatment or specialist support.

**Sexual abuse**

Action needs to be taken if the staff member has witnessed an occasion(s) where a child indicated sexual activity through words, play, drawing, had an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters or had an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour or language. This may include acting out sexual activity on dolls/toys or in the role play area with their peers, drawing pictures that are inappropriate for a child, talking about sexual activities or using sexual language or words. The child may become worried when their clothes are removed or with nappy changes.

The physical symptoms may include genital trauma, discharge and bruises between the legs or signs of a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Emotional symptoms could include a distinct change in a child’s behaviour. They may be withdrawn or overly extroverted and outgoing. They may withdraw away from a particular adult and become distressed if they reach out for them, but they may also be particularly clingy to a potential abuser so all symptoms and signs should be looked at together and assessed as a whole.

If a child opens up about a sexual assault then the following steps should be taken;

* The adult should reassure the child and listen without interrupting if the child wishes to talk
* The observed instances will be detailed in a confidential report
* The observed instances will be reported to the manager or/ and DSL
* The matter will be referred to the local authority children’s social care team (see reporting procedures)

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

Working Together to Safeguard Children defines CSE as “…a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity

(a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants,

and/or

(b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs and symptoms this may manifest as. If we have concerns we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and we will record and refer as appropriate.

**Adult sexual exploitation**

As part of our safeguarding procedures we will also ensure that staff and students are safeguarded from sexual exploitation.

**Emotional abuse**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there is a severe, adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child, caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

This may include extremes of discipline where a child is shouted at or put down on a consistent basis, lack of emotional attachment by a parent, or it may include parents or carers placing inappropriate age or developmental expectations upon them. Emotional abuse may also be imposed through the child witnessing domestic abuse and alcohol and drug misuse by adults caring for them.

The child is likely to show extremes of emotion with this type of abuse. This may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive or clingy in order to receive their love and attention. This type of abuse is harder to identify as the child is not likely to show any physical signs.

**Neglect**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there has been any type of neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation or failure to seek medical treatment, when required, on behalf of the child), which results in serious impairment of the child’s health or development, including failure to thrive.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at Preschool unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child’s growth or hurt them), arriving in the same nappy they went home in or a child having an illness or identified special

educational need or disability that is not being addressed by the parent.

A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child’s needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g. a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at Growing Stars Preschool.   They may be clingy and emotional.

**Reporting Procedures**

All staff have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns and suspicions of abuse. These concerns will be discussed with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

* Staff will report their concerns to the DSL (in the absence of the DSL they will be reported to the Deputy DSL)
* Any signs of marks/injuries to a child or information a child has given will be recorded and stored securely
* If appropriate, the incident will be discussed with the parent/carer, such discussions will be recorded and the parent will have access to these records on request
* If there are queries/concerns regarding the injury/information given then the following procedures will take place:

The designated safeguarding lead will:

* Contact the Local Authority children’s social care team to report concerns and seek advice. If it is believed a child is in immediate danger we will contact the police. If the safeguarding concern relates to an allegation against an adult working or volunteering with children then the DSL will follow the reporting allegations procedure (see below).
* Record the information and action taken relating to the concern raised
* Speak to the parents (unless advised not do so by LA children’s social care team)
* The designated safeguarding lead will follow up with the Local Authority children’s social care team if they have not contacted the setting within the timeframe set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018). We will never assume that action has been taken

Keeping children safe is our highest priority and if, for whatever reason, staff do not feel able to report concerns to the DSL or deputy DSL they should use our ‘Speak up service’, call the Local Authority children’s social care team or the NSPCC and report their concerns anonymously.

These contact numbers are displayed, in the kitchen, the notice board and in the toilets.

**Recording Suspicions of Abuse and Disclosures**

Staff should make an objective record of any observation or disclosure, supported by the manager or designated safeguarding lead (DSL). This record should include:

* Child’s name
* Child’s address
* Age of the child and date of birth
* Date and time of the observation or the disclosure
* Exact words spoken by the child
* Exact position and type of any injuries or marks seen
* Exact observation of any incident including any concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time
* Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate)

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and the DSL, dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse it is important not to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly and disclosure is not forced or words put into the child’s mouth. As soon as possible after the disclosure details must be logged accurately.

It may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with the local authority children’s social care team and Ofsted. Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information/concerns they have with regard to a child. The nursery expects all members of staff to cooperate with the local authority children’s social care, police, and Ofsted in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about the supposed or actual behaviour of a parent or member of staff.

**Informing Parents**

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the local authority children’s social care team/police does not allow this. This will usually be the case where the parent or family member is the likely abuser or where a child may be endangered by this disclosure. In these cases the investigating officers will inform parents.

**Confidentiality**

All suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared in line with guidance from the local authority.

**Support to families**

Growing Stars Preschool takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff, students and volunteers within the setting.

The setting continues to welcome the child and the family whilst enquiries are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgmental manner whilst any external investigations are carried out in the best interest of the child.

Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child’s parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child, only if appropriate in line with guidance of the local authority with the proviso that the care and safety of the child is paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child’s family.

**Allegations against adults working or volunteering with children**

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, student or volunteer or any other person who works at Growing Stars Pre-School regardless of whether the allegation relates to the Pre-school premises or elsewhere, we will follow the procedure below.

The allegation should be reported to the manager. If this person is the subject of the allegation then this should be reported to the The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Ofsted will then be informed immediately.  In order for this to be investigated by the appropriate bodies promptly:

* The LADO will be informed immediately for advice and guidance
* If as an individual you feel this will not be taken seriously or are worried about the allegation getting back to the person in question then it is your duty to inform the LADO yourself directly
* A full investigation will be carried out by the appropriate professionals (LADO, Ofsted) to determine how this will be handled
* Growing Stars Pre-school will follow all instructions from the LADO and Ofsted and ask all staff members to do the same and co-operate where required
* Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation in line with LADO support and advice
* Growing Stars Preschool reserves the right to suspend any member of staff during an investigation
* All enquiries/external investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file for access by the relevant authorities
* Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being reinstated
* Found allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisations including the local authority children’s social care team and where an offence is believed to have been committed, the police
* Found allegations will be dealt with as gross misconduct in accordance with our disciplinary procedures and may result in the termination of employment, Ofsted will be notified immediately of this decision
* Growing Stars Pre-school will also notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure their records are updated
* All records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 21 years and 3 months if that is longer. This will ensure accurate information is available for references and future DBS checks and avoids any unnecessary reinvestigation
* Growing Stars Pre-school retains the right to dismiss any member of staff in connection with founded allegations following an inquiry
* Counselling will be available for any member of the Pre-school who is affected by an allegation, their colleagues in the Pre-school and the parents.

**Monitoring children’s attendance**

As part of our requirements under the statutory framework and guidance documents we are required to monitor children’s attendance patterns to ensure they are consistent and have no cause for concern.

Parents should please inform the Pre-School prior to their children taking holidays or days off, and all sickness should be called into the Pre-school on the day so the management are able to account for a child’s absence.

Where a child is part of a child protection plan, or during a referral process, any absences will immediately be reported to the local authority children’s social care team to ensure the child remains safeguarded.

This should not stop parents taking precious time with their children, but enables children’s attendance to be logged so we know the child is safe.

**Looked after children**

As part of our safeguarding practice we will ensure our staff are aware of how to keep looked after children safe. In order to do this we ask that we are informed of:

* The legal status of the child (e.g. whether the child is being looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order)
* Contact arrangements for the biological parents (or those with parental responsibility)
* The child’s care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her
* The details of the child’s social worker and any other support agencies involved
* Any child protection plan or care plan in place for the child in question. Please refer to the Looked After Children policy for further details.

**Staffing and volunteering**

Our policy is to provide a secure and safe environment for all children. We only allow an adult who is employed by the Pre-school to care for children and who has an enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to be left alone with children. We will obtain enhanced criminal records checks (DBS) for all volunteers and do not allow any volunteers to be unsupervised with children.

All staff will attend child protection training and receive initial basic child protection training during their induction period. This will include the procedures for spotting signs and behaviours of abuse and abusers/potential abusers, recording and reporting concerns and creating a safe and secure environment for the children in the nursery. During induction staff will be given contact details for the LADO (local authority designated officer), the local authority children’s social care team and Ofsted to enable them to report any safeguarding concerns, independently, if they feel it necessary to do so.  It will be displayed on our safeguarding notice board.

We have named persons within the Pre-school who take lead responsibility for safeguarding and coordinating child protection and welfare issues, known as the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL), there is always at least one designated person on duty during all opening hours of the setting.

These designated persons will receive comprehensive training at least every two years and update their knowledge on an ongoing basis, but at least once a year.

Growing Stars Pre-school DSL’s liaise with the local authority children’s social care team, undertakes specific training, including a child protection training course, and receives regular updates to developments within this field. They in turn support the ongoing development and knowledge update of all staff on the team.

There will always be at least one designated lead available at all times our provision is open. This will ensure that prompt action can be taken.

We ensure the following:

* We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of all children
* Applicants for posts at Growing Stars Preschool are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information
* We give staff members, volunteers and students regular opportunities to declare changes that may affect their suitability to care for the children. This includes information about their health, medication or about changes in their home life such as child protection plans for their own children
* We abide by the requirements of the EYFS and any Ofsted guidance in respect to obtaining references and suitability checks for staff, students and volunteers, to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers working in the setting are suitable to do so
* We ensure we receive at least two written references BEFORE a new member of staff commences employment with us
* All students will have enhanced DBS checks conducted on them before their placement starts
* Volunteers, including students, do not work unsupervised
* We abide by the requirements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2006 in respect of any person who is disqualified from providing childcare, is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern
* We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the Pre-school and take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the Pre-school so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children
* All visitors/contractors will be supervised whilst on the premises, especially when in the areas the children use
* As a staff team we will be fully aware of how to safeguard the whole Pre-school environment and be aware of potential dangers on the Pre-school boundaries such as drones or strangers lingering. We will ensure the children remain safe at all times
* The Staff Behaviour Policy sits alongside this policy to enable us to monitor changes in behaviours that may cause concern. All staff sign up to this policy too to ensure any changes are reported to management, so we are able to support the individual staff member and ensure the safety and care of the children is not compromised.
* All staff have access to and comply with the whistleblowing policy which will enable them to share any concerns that may arise about their colleagues in an appropriate manner
* Signs of inappropriate staff behaviour may include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images. This is not an exhaustive list, any changes in behaviour must be reported and acted upon immediately
* All staff will receive regular supervision meetings where opportunities will be made available to discuss any issues relating to individual children, child protection training and any needs for further support
* We use peer on peer and manager observations in the setting to ensure that the care we provide for children is at the highest level and any areas for staff development are quickly highlighted. Peer observations allow us to share constructive feedback, develop practice and build trust so that staff are able to share any concerns they may have. Any concerns are raised with the designated lead and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner
* The deployment of staff within the Pre-school allows for constant supervision and support.  We also operate a Phones and Other Electronic Devices and Social Media policy which states how we will keep children safe from these devices whilst at Pre-school.  This also links to our Online Safety policy.

**Extremism - the Prevent Duty**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 we have a duty to refer any concerns of extremism to the police or the Central Bedfordshire prevent team through Channel referral; 0300 300 8585.  This may be a cause for concern relating to a change in behaviour of a child or family member, comments causing concern made to a member of the team (or other persons in the setting) or actions that lead staff to be worried about the safety of a child in their care. We have a Prevent Duty and Radicalisation policy in place. Please refer to this for specific details.

**Online Safety**

We take the safety of our children very seriously and this includes their online safety. Please refer to the Online Safety policy for details on this.

**Human Trafficking and Slavery**

Please refer to our Human Trafficking and Slavery policy for detail on how we keep children safe in this area.

Growing Stars Pre-school has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare. Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of the registered person at the earliest opportunity.