

Safeguarding Policy (Children)

1. Policy Statement

Wessex Academia is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We believe that all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, have the right to be protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

This policy sets out our approach to safeguarding children in all activities delivered by the organisation, including **in-person and online courses, workshops, tutoring, and related educational activities**.

This policy focuses **solely on safeguarding children** (anyone under the age of 18) and does not address safeguarding responsibilities in relation to vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, volunteers, contractors, and associates working with or on behalf of Wessex Academia share a duty to safeguard children.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework (UK)

This policy is informed by, and complies with, relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (statutory guidance)
- Education Act 2002
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (insofar as it relates to children)
- The Online Safety Act 2023
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR (as they relate to children)

We also follow good practice guidance from recognised safeguarding bodies such as local safeguarding partners and national child protection organisations.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All children who participate in our in-person or online courses

- All staff, volunteers, tutors, trainers, facilitators, contractors, and trustees
- All safeguarding concerns arising from activities organised or delivered by Wessex Academia

The policy applies across:

- Physical teaching venues
- Online learning platforms
- One-to-one and group sessions
- Formal and informal interactions connected to our courses

4. Definitions

Child: Any person under the age of 18.

Safeguarding: Protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health or development, ensuring safe and effective care, and taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.

Child abuse: All forms of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect.

Online safeguarding: Measures taken to protect children from harm when using digital platforms, including exposure to inappropriate content, online grooming, cyberbullying, and misuse of technology.

5. Principles of Safeguarding

Our safeguarding practice is underpinned by the following principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- All children have a right to be heard and taken seriously
- Concerns are acted upon promptly and appropriately
- We work in partnership with parents, carers, and statutory agencies

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Wessex Academia will appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) with overall responsibility for safeguarding children. A Deputy DSL will be appointed where possible.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Acting as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Making referrals to children's social care or the police where appropriate
- Providing advice and support to staff
- Maintaining secure safeguarding records
- Ensuring safeguarding training is completed and updated
- Reviewing and updating this policy

6.2 Staff, Tutors, and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Reading, understanding, and complying with this policy
- Completing safeguarding training as required
- Maintaining professional boundaries
- Reporting safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL
- Acting in the best interests of children at all times

Failure to follow safeguarding procedures may result in disciplinary action.

7. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

Wessex Academia is committed to safer recruitment practices. Where roles involve regulated activity with children, we will:

- Obtain enhanced DBS checks with children's barred list checks as appropriate
- Verify identity, qualifications, and employment history
- Take up references, including at least one that addresses suitability to work with children
- Ensure safeguarding responsibilities are clearly included in role descriptions

No individual will be permitted to begin unsupervised work with children until all required checks are completed.

8. Safeguarding Training

All staff, tutors, and volunteers will receive safeguarding training that:

- Is appropriate to their role
- Covers recognising signs of abuse and neglect
- Explains how to respond to disclosures

- Includes online safeguarding risks
- Is refreshed regularly

The DSL will receive enhanced and role-specific safeguarding training.

9. Code of Conduct

All adults working with children must:

- Treat children with respect and dignity
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- Avoid favouritism or exclusive relationships
- Use appropriate language and behaviour at all times
- Never engage in physical contact that is inappropriate or unnecessary
- Never communicate with children outside approved organisational channels

Any breach of the code of conduct must be reported to the DSL.

10. Safeguarding in In-Person Courses

To safeguard children in physical settings, we will:

- Carry out risk assessments for venues and activities
- Ensure appropriate supervision ratios
- Maintain clear sign-in and sign-out procedures
- Ensure children are not left unsupervised
- Respond appropriately to accidents or incidents
- Ensure first aid arrangements are in place

Physical contact will be limited to what is appropriate, necessary, and in line with professional standards.

11. Safeguarding in Online Courses

We recognise that online learning presents specific safeguarding risks. To mitigate these risks, we will:

- Use approved and secure online platforms
- Apply appropriate privacy and security settings
- Require parental consent where appropriate

- Ensure online sessions are professional and transparent
- Avoid one-to-one online contact unless authorised and recorded
- Prohibit private messaging between staff and children
- Encourage cameras and microphones to be used in line with safeguarding guidance

Staff must not:

- Keep recordings of sessions on any personal device
- Communicate with children via personal social media accounts
- Use personal devices where organisational devices are available

12. Recognising Signs of Abuse

Staff should be alert to indicators of:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Online abuse, including grooming and exploitation

Indicators may include changes in behaviour, distress, withdrawal, unexplained injuries, or concerning online interactions.

13. Responding to Disclosures and Concerns

If a child discloses abuse or a safeguarding concern:

- Listen calmly and carefully
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not investigate or ask leading questions
- Record the information accurately
- Report the concern immediately to the DSL

If a child is in immediate danger, emergency services must be contacted without delay.

14. Reporting and Referrals

The DSL will decide whether a concern requires:

- Internal monitoring
- Referral to children's social care
- Referral to the police
- Advice from safeguarding partners

All decisions and actions will be recorded securely.

15. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

Safeguarding records will:

- Be factual, accurate, and timely
- Be stored securely with restricted access
- Be shared only on a need-to-know basis
- Comply with data protection legislation

Safeguarding information will be retained in line with legal and organisational requirements.

16. Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Any allegation or concern about a member of staff or volunteer must be reported immediately to the DSL.

The organisation will follow appropriate procedures, including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required.

The welfare of the child will always be the primary consideration.

17. Whistleblowing

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns about unsafe or poor safeguarding practice. Concerns may be raised with the DSL or through the organisation's whistleblowing procedures.

18. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, guidance, or organisational practice.

19. Approval

This safeguarding policy was approved by:

- Governing Body: Wessex Academia Directors
- Date: 1st January 2026

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Gavin Fraser-Gosling (formerly Gavin Ridley)

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