



## **Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy 2022**

**Last Review Date: August 2022**

**Review Date: September 2023**

**We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.**

**Willow Banks Forest School aims to keep all children safe.**

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This policy is written in line with statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

[Keeping children safe in education 2022.pdf](#)

[Working together to safeguard children 2018](#)

We work within the procedures and recommendations of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership:

<http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/>

And the procedures and recommendations of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership:

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/index.html>

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*“all agencies take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children’s welfare are minimised. Where there are concerns, all agencies take action to address those concerns, working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.”*

## **1.Introduction:**

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility at Willow Banks forest school. Forest school staff play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. All forest school staff are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children. Our forest school staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children to prevent concerns from escalating. Our forest school will work closely with our feeder schools, Local Authority Children's Social Care, the Police, Health services and other relevant agencies to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

## **2. Safeguarding Policy**

This policy applies to all staff (including supply and peripatetic staff), volunteers, contractors and/or apprentices, working in or on behalf of the forest school. It provides information about the actions the forest school expects from all staff.

This policy will be updated annually and known to everyone working in the forest school. It will be available to parents on request and via our website.

This policy is written in line with statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Everyone working in or for our school must share the objective to help keep children and young people safe by:

- Providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn and develop in our forest school setting;
- Identifying and responding to 'early help assessment' needs of children and families;
- Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in our school setting;
- Maintaining a culture of vigilance and an attitude of 'It could happen here'.

### **2.1 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:**

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

### **2.2 Child Protection**

Child Protection refers to procedures and actions undertaken regarding children who are at risk of significant harm or have been significantly harmed.

The forest school recognises that:

- Some children may be especially vulnerable to abuse including those missing education, those experiencing extra-familial risk or with a special educational need or disability.
- Children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way; subsequently whilst at forest school their behaviour may be disruptive and/or challenging.
- Children can be both victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- Children who harm others may have been maltreated themselves.
  - Allegations against staff can be made, however careful and safe our recruitment practices are.

## **2.3 Our Approach to Safeguarding Children**

- We will ensure all staff are aware of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities
- All staff have appropriate training to ensure they are able to identify children and young people where concerns about their safety and welfare arise.
- We will ensure all staff and pupils know they can raise issues with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or Deputy DSLs) and that their concerns will be taken seriously.
- There will always be a DSL (or Deputy DSL) on site.
- All DSLs (or Deputy DSLs) will have appropriate training and understanding of how to manage concerns in an effective way with the welfare of children and young people as their primary focus.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **3.1 All staff and volunteers will:**

- Fully comply with Willow Banks Forest School's policies and procedures
- Attend appropriate training and inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead of any concerns.
- The director/owner of the forest school will ensure that all measures are in place to support all staff to understand and fulfil their role and responsibilities to safeguard all our students.
- The Director and DSLs will read and sign to say they have read the full guidance of "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (KCSIE) 2022".
- All forest school staff, forest school assistants, volunteers and any other children working directly with children in school will read and sign to say they have read and understood KCSIE 2022 Part 1.

## **4. Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSL)**

### **Named Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)**

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Victoria Predeth
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Melanie Ricketts

#### **4.1 Referrals**

- The DSL will act as a source of support, advice and expertise within the forest school and have access to the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership, guidance and Procedures.
- Consult with and/or refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to Local Authority Children's Social Care and maintain a record of all referrals.
- Liaise with the Director to advise of any issues and ongoing investigations and ensure there is always cover for this role.
- Attend and contribute to safeguarding and child protection meetings as appropriate.
- Monitor and support Child in Need and Child Protection plans.
- Keep detailed, accurate and securely stored written or electronic records, which will include the outcomes of all actions taken.

#### **4.2 Training**

- Recognise how to identify signs of abuse and know when it is appropriate to make a referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care;
- Have knowledge of the local Safeguarding Children Partnership's Escalation policy and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role.
- DSL's to attend regular drop in sessions with the local Safeguarding Advisor for Schools Team
- Ensure an up to date copy of the local Safeguarding Children Partnership's escalation policy and threshold guidance is kept onsite for all staff to access.
- Ensure that all staff have access to and understand the school's safeguarding policy and Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure that all staff have induction safeguarding training and receive regular updates.
- Access resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses at least every two years.

#### **4.3 Raising Awareness**

- The DSL will ensure this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is updated and reviewed annually.
- Ensure parents are made aware of the safeguarding policy which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the forest school in this to avoid conflict later.
- When a child transitions from the forest school, ensure any files corresponding to that child are copied for the new setting and transferred to the new school in five days or less, as well as ensure the pupil's Social Worker is informed.
- The DSL and the Local Governor Safeguarding Lead will Complete the Annual Audit return for the local authority, to ensure it meets the requirements for the framework.

#### **5. The director/owner of the forest school will ensure that:**

- The policies and procedures adopted by Willow Banks forest school are fully implemented and followed by all staff.
- The forest school has a safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures in place that are in accordance with statutory guidance and locally agreed inter-agency procedure
- To ensure all policies are updated regularly and available to our feeder schools and parents by request, or via the forest school website.
- The forest school operates safer recruitment procedures and makes sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff and volunteers who work with children;
- The forest school follows the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance - as the forest school is on the border of two counties, we follow the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- Comply with the local authority safeguarding children partnership guidance
- The forest school follows statutory guidance Keeping Safe in Education 2022, in dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers
- All pupils are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn about safeguarding, including keeping themselves safe online, relationship education and extra-familial risks including Child Criminal exploitation.
- Sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the deputy to carry out their roles effectively, including any necessary meetings or training.

Staff undertake appropriate safeguarding/child protection training (including online safety) at induction;

- All staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice with regard to children, and such concerns are addressed sensitively and effectively in a timely manner in accordance with the forest schools Whistle Blowing Policy.
- They have completed Safer Recruitment training.
- The procedure for managing allegations against staff is known to staff
- Operate the procedure for managing allegations effectively and refer relevant concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- That anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk to a child is referred to the DBS and any other relevant professional body.
- A senior staff member is appointed to deal with allegations against staff in the absence of the Director/owner.
- To ensure a nominated senior staff member is allocated to work alongside nominated external individuals (feeder school representatives) in the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Director/owner of the forest school. The nominated individuals will be responsible for liaising with the LADO and or partner agencies, they must take appropriate action to minimise any further possible risk to the children in the forest school
- They should be aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

## **6. Supporting Our Students and Working in Partnership with Parents**

- Staff at Willow Banks forest school aim to keep all children safe. So good safeguarding, child protection practice and securing good outcomes for children relies on a positive, open and honest working partnership with parents/carers.
- We may, on occasion, need to make referrals to Local Authority Children's Social Care without consultation with parents, we will make every effort to maintain a positive working relationship with them whilst fulfilling our duties to protect children.
- Children will be given an explanation, appropriate to their age and understanding of what action is being taken on their behalf and why.
- We will endeavour to preserve the privacy, dignity and right to confidentiality of the child and parents/carers whilst discharging our statutory duties.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine which members of staff 'need to know' personal information for the purpose of supporting and protecting the child on the principle of those working directly with children will need to know, in accordance with our Data Protection Policy
- Staff will not be able to share this information further without the expressed permission of the DSL.

## **7. Information about Safeguarding for Pupils**

The forest school plays a crucial role in preventative education. Preventative education is most effective in the context of a whole-school approach that prepares pupils and students for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment.

The forest school will have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of forest school life.

These will be underpinned by the forest school's behaviour policy and pastoral support, as well as being reinforced throughout the whole curriculum program. This program should be fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities).

This program will tackle at an age-appropriate stages issues such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships.
- Boundaries and consent.
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality.
- Body confidence and self-esteem.
- How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour.
- The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and how to access support. What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.

Through the forest school curriculum, students are taught to understand and manage risks they may encounter and work out with support from staff how these risks may be overcome, considering their wishes and feelings.

- They are regularly reminded about online safety and bullying procedures and taught how to conduct themselves and behave in a responsible and respectful manner.
- Opportunities are provided for children to learn about positive relationships and safe choices.
- All pupils know there is Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsible for their safety and welfare, who this is and that they have a right to speak to this member of staff, or any other, if they are worried or concerned.
- Pupils are reminded that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, but that they will be listened to, heard and informed of what steps can be taken to protect them from harm and that feedback will be sought, so that their views about actions are known.
- The forest school DSL's are identified on a display board that the children are made aware of.

## **8. Working In Partnership With Other Agencies**

The forest school recognises that it is essential to establish positive and effective working relationships with other agencies that are partners of the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership,

There is a joint responsibility on all these agencies to share information to ensure the safeguarding of all children and work together to secure positive outcomes.

This will include:

- Social workers/ police attending the school following a Strategy discussion, which has found a child to be at risk of significant harm.
- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the Early Help Services available in order to make timely referrals for support
- The appropriate member of staff will attend /lead on TAF and TAC meetings as required.

## **9. Identifying children who may be at risk or may have been significantly harmed**

There are four categories of abuse; physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Teachers, staff and volunteers in school are well placed to observe any physical, emotional or behavioural signs which indicate that a child may have additional needs or be at risk of or suffering significant harm. The relationships between staff, pupils, parents/carers and the public which foster respect, confidence and trust can lead to disclosures of abuse, and/or school staff being alerted to concerns.

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.

For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation, or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication

- Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others.
- Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; Health includes physical and mental health;
- Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.
- Abuse and Neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, another child, children or young people.

### **9.1. Definitions and Indicators of Abuse**

**9.2 Physical Abuse** 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.

**9.3 Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include:

- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability,
- Overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- Serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**9.4 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 occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food and clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caretakers);
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment;
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

**9.5 Sexual Abuse** Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

- The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities.
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## **9.6 Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. It covers types of abuse such as psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

## **10. Taking action to ensure that children are safe at forest school and home**

All staff must read and follow the statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Safeguarding Information for All Staff, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (see section 3.1). It is not the responsibility of the forest school staff to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. Accordingly, all concerns regarding the welfare of pupils will be recorded and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to any discussion with parents/carers.

All forest school staff Must Immediately Report

- Any suspicion that a child is injured, marked, or bruised in a way which is not readily attributable to the normal knocks or scrapes received in play.
- Any explanation given which appears inconsistent or suspicious.
- Behaviours which give rise to suspicions that a child may have suffered harm.
- Any concerns that a child may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment, or emotional maltreatment.
- Concerns that a child is presenting signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect.
- Any significant changes in a child's presentation, including non-attendance.
- Any hint or disclosure of abuse about or by a child or young person.
- Concerns regarding person(s) who may pose a risk to children (e.g. those living in a household with children present).
- Information which indicates that the child is living with someone who does not have parental responsibility for them for a period of more than 28 days (which is known as Private Fostering).

## **11. Responding to Disclosure**

Disclosures or information that a child has been harmed may be received from pupils, parents/carers, other professionals or members of the public. The school recognises that those who disclose such information may do so with difficulty, having chosen carefully to whom they will speak. Accordingly, all staff will handle disclosures with sensitivity.

Such information cannot remain confidential and staff will immediately communicate what they have been told to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and make a record using clear, straightforward language. Staff will not investigate but will, wherever possible, listen, record and pass on information to the DSL in order that s/he can make an informed decision of what to do next.

### **All staff will:**

- Listen to and take seriously any disclosure or information that a child may be at risk of harm;
- Clarify the information without asking leading or probing questions;
- Make a written record of what the child has said using a concern form;
- Try to keep questions to a minimum and of an 'open' nature e.g. 'Can you tell me what happened?' rather than 'Did x hit you?';
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise;
- Will not express feelings or judgements regarding any person alleged to have harmed the child;
- Explain sensitively to the child or young person that they have a responsibility to pass the information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- Reassure and support the child or young person as far as possible;
- Not promise secrecy;
- Explain that only those who 'need to know' will be told;
- Explain what will happen next and that the child will be involved as appropriate.

## **12. Confidentiality**

Information sharing is essential for effective safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is a key factor identified in many Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) (previously known as Serious Case Reviews), that poor information sharing has resulted in missed opportunities to take action that keeps children and young people safe. The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 does not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe.

Willow Banks Forest School has a clear and explicit Staff Code of Conduct Policy which includes a requirement for confidentiality in the workplace. However, where there is a concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding consideration. (as stated above)

The school will ensure:

- Information is shared with Local Authority Children's Social Care and/or Police where the child/young person is or may be at risk of significant harm;
- Pupil's and/or parent's/carer's confidentiality is respected;
- That any information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure.

## **13: Pupil Information**

The forest school's record-keeping policy for child welfare and child protection is consistent with the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership, guidance which is known to all staff.

In order to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them, our school requires accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives;
- Names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility (if different from above);
- Emergency contact details (if different from above);
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school (if different from above);
- Any relevant court orders in place including those, which affect any person's access to the child (e.g. Residence Order, Contact Order, Care Order, Injunctions etc.);
- If the child is or has been subject to a child in need, child protection or care plan;
- Name and contact detail of GP;
- Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will collate, securely store and agree access to this Child Protection information. All child protection documents will be retained in an electronic 'Child Protection' file, separate from the child's main school file. The main file will clearly show an alert that a child protection file exists and the location of this. This child protection file will be securely stored and only accessible to the Headteacher and the Designated

Safeguarding Lead. These records will be securely transferred when a child moves to another school or setting, and clearly marked 'Child Protection, Confidential, for attention of Designated Safeguarding Lead.

#### **14. Action by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in their absence)**

Following any information raising concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Consider the child 's wishes and feelings, but not promise confidentiality;
- Consider any urgent medical needs of the child;
- Make an immediate referral via a discussion with Children's Advice and Duty Service (CHAD) (Dorset schools) or a discussion with Somerset Education Safeguarding Service (Somerset schools) if there has been a disclosure and/or allegation of abuse or there are clear grounds for concerns about the child's safety and well-being;
- Wherever possible, talk to parents, unless to do so may place a child at risk of significant harm, impede any police investigation and/or place the member of staff or others at risk;
- Whether to make a child protection referral to social care because a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm and if this needs to be undertaken immediately;
- Contact the designated officer for safeguarding in another agency if that agency is working with the family; OR
- Decide not to make a referral at this stage, but retain the information in written notes on the child's school file;
- Consider if Early Help support will be helpful to the child and family at this time. If this is appropriate referrals will also be progressed via the **Dorset - Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)** or the **Somerset Early Help Advice Hub**.

All information and actions taken, including the reasons for any decisions made, will be fully documented. If a child is resident outside of the Dorset area the referral should be made to their local Social Care services.

##### **14.1 Action following a Safeguarding Referral**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or other appropriate member of staff will:

- Maintain contact with the child's allocated Social Worker;
- Contribute to any Strategy Discussion and/or Strategy Meeting as required;
- Provide a written report to the child's feeder school and contribute to any discussions or meetings as required;
- Provide a report for, attend and contribute to any initial or review Child Protection Conference.
- Provide a written report to the conference organiser, 3 days prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) or 5 days prior to the Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC)
- Share the content of this report with the parent/carer, prior to the meeting;
- Attend Core Group Meetings for any child subject to a Child Protection Plan;

- Attend TAF meetings in order to be part of a plan for the child/ren.
- Where a child on a Child Protection Plan moves from the school or goes missing, immediately inform the child's Social Worker.

## **14.2 Dealing with Disagreements and Escalation of Concerns**

Effective working together depends on an open approach and honest relationships between agencies and professionals. Problem resolution is an integral part of professional co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. Occasionally situations arise when workers within one agency feel that the actions, inaction or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard a child. The local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership; escalations policy should be used.

Professional disagreements can arise in a number of areas, but are most likely to arise around:

- Levels of need;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- The need for action;
- Progressing plans and communication.

Where professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm, they must be assertive, act swiftly and ensure that they challenge the relevant professionals in line with this policy and be aware that:

- The safety of children and young people are the paramount consideration in any professional activity;
- Resolution should be sought within the shortest time scale possible to ensure the child is protected;
- As a guide, professionals should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working week or a timescale that protects the child from harm (whichever is shortest);
- Disagreements should be resolved at the lowest possible stage.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or other appropriate member of staff will:

- Contact the line manager in Local Authority Children's Social Care if they consider the response to a referral has not led to the child being adequately safeguarded.
- Contact the line manager in Local Authority Children's Social Care if they consider that the child is not being adequately safeguarded by the child protection plan.
- Dorset Schools - Use the PDSCP escalation policy if this does not resolve the concern.

URL: [https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_escalation.html](https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p_escalation.html)

- Somerset Schools – Use the Resolving Professional Differences protocol. URL: [Resolving-ProfessionalDifferences-protocol-April-2021.pdf \(safeguardingsomerset.org.uk\)](https://www.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/Resolving-ProfessionalDifferences-protocol-April-2021.pdf)

## **16. Safer Recruitment and Selection**

Willow Banks Forest School pays full regard to the statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Keeping Safe in Education 2022 - Part three; Safer recruitment. We ensure that all

appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the school and who is therefore likely to be perceived and experienced by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult. This includes volunteers, supervised volunteers and staff employed by contractors.

Safer recruitment practice includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic/vocational qualifications, obtaining professional references, checking employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service

In line with statutory changes, underpinned by regulations, the following will apply:

- The forest school will only accept copies of a curriculum vitae alongside an application form. **A curriculum vitae on its own will not provide adequate information.**
- DBS and children's barred list checks will be undertaken for all posts that are deemed regulated activity, and for all other posts an enhanced DBS check will be undertaken unless they are supervised roles that are deemed not to meet the definition of regulated activity (KCSIE 2022).
- As part of the shortlisting process the forest school will consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the forest school might want to explore with the applicant at interview.
- The forest school is committed to keeping an up to date Single Central record, which details a range of checks carried out on our staff.
- All new appointments to our forest school workforce who have lived outside the UK will be subject to additional checks as appropriate.
- Our forest school ensures that supply staff have undergone the necessary checks and will be made aware of this policy.
- Identity checks must be carried out on all appointments to our forest school workforce before the appointment is made as part of the recruitment process.
- Staff responsible for recruiting and appointing must be suitably qualified and have completed training on recruitment and selection, with a minimum of one trained staff member sitting on interview panels.

## 16. Safe Practice

Our forest school will comply with the current 'Guidance for Safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (2019) and ensure that all staff, visitors and volunteers who come into the school know information in this guidance regarding conduct. <https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/>

Safe working practice ensures that pupils are safe and that all staff:

- Are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct, which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Work in an open, honest and transparent way.
- Work with other colleagues where possible in situations that could be open to question.

- Discuss and/or take advice from forest school management over any incident, which may give rise for concern.
- Record any incidents or decisions made.
- Apply professional standards respectfully in relation to diversity issues.
- Be aware of information-sharing and confidentiality policies.
- Are aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them.

## **17. The use of 'Reasonable Force'**

Willow Banks Forest School staff do not routinely use any form of physical contact in order to manage the children, however, there may be occasions when the school staff have to physically restrain pupils with 'reasonable force' only to prevent them from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. This may include guiding a child to safety by the arm, or breaking up a fight, to prevent violence or injury and this action should be taken using no more force than is needed. (p.41 KCSiE 2022) physical restraint is used as a last resort. If a child in forest school has SEND, mental health problems or with medical conditions, a plan will be put in place to carefully consider the risks and recognise the additional vulnerability of these children. By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use 'reasonable force. This means careful consideration and planning has been taken prior to using any form of positive handling, this may be by distraction techniques, removing any objects, which could cause harm to the child, and using de-escalation strategies.

Forest school staff will familiarise themselves with the Department for Education's guidance use of reasonable force in schools [DFE guidance on use of reasonable force in schools](#) and [Keeping Children safe in Education 2020 pages 41-42](#).

Staff will follow the forest school's Behaviour Policy. The forest school will offer training to staff in de-escalation techniques and this must always be their primary focus. They will also be offered training in appropriate use of physical intervention and/or restraint.

## **18. School Training and Staff Induction**

The forest school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead will undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and refresher training annually. All other forest school staff, including non-teaching staff, will undertake appropriate induction training and safeguarding/child protection training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding effectively, which will be updated regularly, including a yearly update. The forest school will maintain a register of who has undertaken training and when. All staff (including temporary staff, volunteers, supervised volunteers and staff employed by contractors) are provided with this Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and informed of the forest school's safeguarding arrangements on induction. The forest school will maintain a register of who has received this information and when.

## **19. Allegations regarding person(s) working in or on behalf of the school (including volunteers)**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) Part 4 – Allegations of abuse made against forest school leaders and other staff, including supply staff and volunteers. Where an allegation is made against any person working in, or on behalf of, the forest school that he or she 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 he or she will pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children

Whilst we acknowledge such allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge they may be founded. It is, therefore, essential that all allegations are investigated properly, in line with agreed procedures and outcomes are recorded. All forest school staff will maintain a culture of vigilance based on the notion that 'it could happen here'. Forest school staff are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times in line with Willow Banks Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff will be encouraged to use the Willow Banks Whistleblowing policy if they have concerns regarding the conduct or behaviour of a colleague and they feel that matter has not been addressed appropriately by the forest school.

It is important that all staff understand the process and procedures to follow if they have a safeguarding concern about another staff member.

### **19.1. Initial Action by person receiving or identifying an allegation or concern**

- Treat the matter seriously and keep an open mind;
- Make a written record of the information using forms in the safeguarding folder. Including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said and sign and date this;
- Immediately report the matter to the Forest School Manager or designated person (unless the allegation is against the Forest School Manager or designated person, in which case the Deputy DSL and the WSG Trustees must be informed).

### **19.2 Initial Action by the Forest School Manager**

- Obtain written details of the concern or allegation, but do not investigate or interview child, adult or witnesses;
- Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 1 working day. The LADO will provide advice and guidance to schools and colleges when considering allegations against adults working with children. The LADO's role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, local authority children's social care, the school or college, or a combination of these. In

straightforward cases, the investigation should normally be undertaken by a senior member of the school's or college's staff.

### **19.3 Subsequent Action by the Forest School Manager (or designated person)**

- In consultation with the deputy safeguarding lead conduct a disciplinary investigation, if an allegation indicates the need for this;
- Contribute to the child protection process by attending professional strategy meetings;
- Ensure clear and comprehensive records regarding the allegation, and action taken, and outcome are retained on the staff member's personnel file;
- Consider along with the LADO whether a referral to the DBS should be made.
- Dates for subsequent reviews, ideally at fortnightly (and no longer than monthly) intervals, should be set at the review meeting if the investigation continues.

## **20. Low-level concerns**

As part of the whole forest school approach to safeguarding, we will ensure that the manager promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the forest school or college (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

The forest school will create a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:

- enable the manager and DSL's to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
- minimise the risk of abuse, and
- ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the forest school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the forest school.

### **20.1 Examples of Low Level Concerns**

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example:

- suspicion;
- complaint;
- disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation;
- as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

## **20.2 Staff code of conduct and safeguarding policies**

As good practice the forest school manager should set out their low-level concerns policy within their staff code of conduct and safeguarding and child protection policies. They should make it clear to staff what a low level concern is and the importance of sharing low-level concerns, and an explanation of what the purpose of the policy is – i.e., to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the forest school's values and expected behaviour set out in the staff code of conduct are lived, monitored and reinforced constantly by all staff.

The forest school manager should ensure their staff code of conduct, behaviour policies and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively and ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard children and facilitate a whole school or college approach to dealing with any concerns.

The forest school can achieve the purpose of their low-level concerns policy by:

- ensuring their staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour, in themselves and others
- empowering staff to share any low-level safeguarding concerns

- addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- handling and responding to such concerns sensitively and proportionately when they are raised, and
- helping identify any weakness in the forest school's safeguarding system.

### **20.3 Sharing low-level concerns**

The forest school manager should ensure that their low-level concerns policy contains a procedure for sharing confidentiality such concerns which is clear, easy to understand and implement. Whether all low-level concerns are shared initially with the manager, DSL, Deputy DSL (or a nominated person, is a matter for the forest school to decide. If the deputy DSL, then the Deputy DSL should inform the manager/DSL of all the low-level concerns and in a timely fashion according to the nature of each particular low-level concern. The manager/DSL should be the ultimate decision maker in respect of all low-level concerns, although it is recognised that depending on the nature of some low-level concerns and/or the role of the deputy DSL in the forest school, the manager/DSL may wish to consult with the deputy DSL and take a more collaborative decision making approach.

Low-level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If the forest school are in any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, they should consult with their LADO.

The forest school manager should ensure they create an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

### **20.4 Recording low-level concerns**

All low-level concerns should be recorded in writing. The record should include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible.

Schools and colleges can decide where these records are kept, but they must be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the

forest school should decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO. Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The forest school will retain the information until the individual leaves their employment.

## **20.5 References**

The forest school should only provide substantiated safeguarding concerns/allegations (including a group of low-level concerns about the same individual) that meet the harm threshold in references. Low-level concerns should not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be included in a reference, for example, misconduct or poor performance. It follows that a low-level concern which relates exclusively to safeguarding (and not to misconduct or poor performance) should not be referred to in a reference.

## **20.6 Responding to low-level concerns**

The forest school's low-level concerns policy should set out the procedure for responding to reports of low-level concerns. If the concern has been raised via a third party, the headteacher/principal (or a nominated deputy) should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously, and
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

The information collected will help them to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken. This information needs to be recorded in writing along with the rationale for their decisions and action taken.

A good low-level concerns policy will simply be a reflection and extension of the forest school's wider staff behaviour policy/code of conduct. More detailed guidance and case studies on low-level concerns can be found in:

Developing and implementing a low-level concerns policy: a guide for organisations which work with children ([farrer.co.uk](http://farrer.co.uk)).

## **21. Children with special educational needs and disabilities**

Willow Banks Forest School has a duty to use their 'best endeavours' to support pupils with SEN and meet their educational needs.

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. SEND children can be up to four times more likely to be abused due to additional vulnerabilities. Willow Banks Forest School will ensure a culture of vigilance, that reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

## **22. Mental Health**

All of the staff at our forest school have an awareness that mental health problems can in some cases be an indicator that a child is or has suffered abuse, neglect or exploitation. Forest school staff would not attempt to make a mental health diagnosis, however, the forest school staff are in a good position to observe the children on a frequent basis in a small group and therefore identify those whose behaviour indicates they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. When children have suffered adverse childhood experiences, this may impact them throughout their lives. It can then have an impact on their behaviour, their ability to learn and affect their mental health. If staff have a concern about the mental health of a child, they will follow Willow Banks Forest School's policy and report their concerns to the DSL.

## **23. Further Information on Safeguarding Issues**

Safeguarding covers more than the contribution made to child protection in relation to individual children. It also encompasses issues such as the children's health and safety, bullying, arrangements for meeting the medical needs of children providing first aid, forest school security, drugs and substance misuse, gang related activity and promoting positive behaviour. Below are some of the issues that all staff take seriously, and will act in line with this policy to ensure children are safe -

### **23.1 Bullying**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and

ensuring immediate physical safety is the forest school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical.

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level bullying can have a significant effect on a child's wellbeing and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people.

All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying must be reported and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures. All pupils and parents receive a copy of the anti-bullying procedures on joining the forest school and a copy of the student code of conduct. If the bullying is particularly serious, or the anti-bullying procedures are deemed to be ineffective, the Headteacher and the DSL will consider implementing safeguarding procedures.

For further information please see the DEF guidance, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, (<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>), the SAST Behaviour Principles and the school Behaviour for Learning policy.

## **23.2 Online Safety**

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into these areas of risk:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material;
- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users;
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm.
- Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing or financial scams (p.35 KCISE 2022).

If there is a concern that a pupil or member of staff are at risk, it should be reported to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

Willow Banks Forest School recognises that its pupils will use mobile phones and computers whilst they are attending forest school. They can be a helpful learning tool, a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that some adults and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, behaviours, online challenges and hoaxes, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. Cyber-bullying by pupils via emails and texts will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and managed through our anti-bullying procedures.

Chatrooms and social networking sites are the most obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful content and behaviour, which forest school students are not allowed to access. Some pupils will undoubtedly 'chat' on mobiles or 18 social networking sites at home and the

school will encourage parents to consider measures to keep their children safe when using social media.

Willow Banks Forest School has an E-Safety Policy that is known to all staff and pupils.

### **23.3 Filters and monitoring**

Forest school staff should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks. The forest school manager will ensure the forest school safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and provides them with a safe environment in which to learn, taking into consideration the age range and number of pupils, and how often they access IT.

The students are encouraged to embrace the no technology rule during their time at forest school, to be able to fully immerse themselves in nature. However we recognise that IT is a useful educational tool, especially when out in the field for research. Students will only have access to the main on-site laptop, forest school mobile phone (with staff supervision) and their own mobiles for research and educational purposes only.

The forest school manager will ensure that there are appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. The forest school manager should consider the age range of the children, the number of children, how often they access the IT system and the proportionality of costs versus safeguarding risks.

South West Grid for Learning. Provides advice on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements.

<https://swgfl.org.uk/>

The forest school will ensure that as part of the requirement for staff to undertake regularly updated safeguarding training and the requirement to ensure that our students are taught about safeguarding, including online, that online safety training is integrated, aligned and considered as part of our safeguarding approach.

### **23.4 Photography and Images**

Most of the people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely understandable and acceptable reasons. However, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have safeguards in place.

To protect pupils, we will:

- Seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (during the referral process);
- Seek parental consent;

- Use only the pupil's first name with an image;
- Ensure pupils are appropriately dressed;
- Only use school equipment to make images of children (no personal devices are permitted for this purpose);
- Encourage pupils to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

There is a wealth of information available to keep children safe online which staff are encouraged to read.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- NSPCC. Provides online advice regarding online safety arrangements.
- South West Grid for Learning. Provides advice on all aspects of a school or college's online safety arrangements.

<https://swgfl.org.uk/>

### **23.5 Children Missing from Education**

Willow Banks Forest school staff understand that a child who is persistently missing from school may be at risk of a range of safeguarding issues, criminal exploitation, including neglect, child sexual abuse, or child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Forest school staff will follow the local guidance available on the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership website and where reasonably possible, the school will hold three emergency contact numbers for each pupil. This goes beyond the legal minimum and is good practice as it provides additional options to contact a responsible adult when a child is missing education.

Dorset Schools -

[https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_ch\\_miss\\_care\\_home\\_ed.html](https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p_ch_miss_care_home_ed.html)

Somerset Schools -

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/school-attendance-and-childrenmissing-education/>

### **23.6 Children Who Harm Others**

Willow Banks Forest School recognises that the harm caused to children by the harmful and bullying behaviour of other children can be significant. Children who harm others should be held responsible for their harmful behaviour and the forest school staff are alerted to the fact that they are likely to pose a risk to other children in the school, home and community.

Where this harm involves sexual abuse, serious physical or serious emotional abuse, the safeguarding procedures set out in this policy will be applied. The forest school recognises that children who harm others are likely to have considerable needs themselves and may have experienced or be experiencing significant harm themselves.

Where a child has caused significant harm to another child, through sexual abuse or serious physical or emotional abuse, the forest school will make separate referrals to Local Authority Children's Social Care for the victim(s) and perpetrator(s).

Such children and young people are likely to be children in need, and some will, in addition, be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, and may themselves be in need of protection. Children and young people who abuse others should be held responsible for their abusive behaviour, while being identified and responded to in a way that meets their needs as well as protecting others.

### **23.7 Child on Child Abuse**

Children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse) and it can take many forms. It can happen both inside and outside of school/college and online. It is important that all forest school staff:

- recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse
- know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should be clear as to the forest school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse.

This can include (but is not limited to):

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse within intimate partner relationships (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse');
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence and sexual harassment;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and seminude images and/or videos; causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- up skirting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. (p. 138 KCSIE 2022)

Children who are victims of child on child abuse will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Child on child abuse can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and is never acceptable.

It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. The Forest School manager will ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of:

- Of the forest school procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse.
- The systems in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.
- How allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported.
- A recognition that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported.
- Making clear that child on child abuse is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- Not tolerating or dismissing child on child abuse as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.
- Recognition that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys’ perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.
- The different forms child-on-child abuse can take

When, the forest school, consider issues of child on child abuse between children we will seek support from our Local Authority Children’s Social Care partners.

Effective support for children with SEND can be accessed here:

Dorset Schools~

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/sen-and-disability-local-offer/education-and-learning/services-to-help-support-your-child/services-in-dorset-to-help-support-children-and-young-people-with-send>

Somerset Schools~

<https://professionalchoices.org.uk/children-young-peoples-services/special-education-needs-and-disabilities-send/>

## **24. Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. (p.104 KCSIE 2022).

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Willow Banks Forest School will consider the following:

- It is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and more likely that sexual harassment will be perpetrated by boys. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of:
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- Not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- Challenging behaviours (which are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, vaginas and penises. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can be especially vulnerable. Disabled and deaf children are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in SEND children. Willow Banks Forest School will ensure it has plans in place to support all the children within its schools so they are protected and any additional needs are taken into consideration as part of this process. Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will require close liaison with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) and the SENCO or the named person with oversight for SEND in the child’s feeder school.

The forest school and feeder school should consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place.

When, the forest school, consider issues of sexual violence and harassment between children we will seek support from our Local authority children’s social care partners.

### **24.1 Upskirting**

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, which is commonly known as the Up-skirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019.

‘Up-skirting’ is where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any sex, can be a victim.

We will ensure that all staff act immediately should an incident of Up skirting arise in our forest school and report this to the police /social care immediately.

### **25. Child Criminal Exploitation**

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy published by the Home Office, criminal exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or
- (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>

## **25.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows: “Child sexual exploitation is 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 using technology.”

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for child sexual exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for ‘normal adolescent behaviours. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly, and appropriate support is given. Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they don’t comply (all of which are common features in cases of child sexual exploitation) consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child. Child sexual exploitation is never the victim’s fault, even if there is some form of exchange: all children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.

One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something); for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator.

Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim. It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family.

Whilst there can be gifts or treats involved in other forms of sexual abuse (e.g. a father who sexually abuses but also buys the child toys) it is most likely referred to as child sexual exploitation if the 'exchange', as the core dynamic at play, results in financial gain for or enhanced status of, the perpetrator. Where the gain is only for the perpetrator/facilitator, there is most likely a financial gain (money, discharge of a debt or free/discounted goods or services) or increased status as a result of the abuse. If sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the only gain for the perpetrator (and there is no gain for the child/young person) this would not normally constitute child sexual exploitation, but should be responded to as a different form of child sexual abuse.

If staff at the forest school are concerned a child is being sexually exploited, we will follow the procedures set out in this document and make reference to the local guidance provided by the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Further guidance can be obtained from 'Child sexual exploitation Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation can be useful when considering cases of CSE'.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/591903/CSE\\_Guidance\\_Core\\_Document\\_13.02.2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf)

## **25.2 County Lines**

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

## **26. Assessment of risk outside the home (prev. contextual safeguarding)**

Assessment of risk outside the home is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm and risk beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Therefore, local authority children's social care practitioners and

school staff need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Assessment of risk outside the home, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts. If, as a school, we are concerned a child is being exploited in an extra-familial context, as previously outlined, we will follow the procedures set out in this document and consult or refer to local authority children's social care. (<https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>)

## **27. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

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. This procedure is typically performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 13 but in some cases, it is performed on newborn infants or on young women before marriage or pregnancy. If, we as a school, are concerned that a child may be at risk of FGM we will follow the local authority Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance following the referrals procedure.

### **27.1 FGM Mandatory Reporting Duty**

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.

([https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_referrals.html](https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p_referrals.html))

### **27.2 So-called 'honour-based' Abuse**

Honour-based abuse is a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups. To protect perceived cultural religious beliefs and or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and or the community by breaking the honour code. For young victims this is a form of child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. It can be distinguished from other forms of violence as it is often committed with some degree of approval and or collusion for family and or the community members. Women and men, and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse. Any suspicion or disclosure of violence or abuse against a child in the name of honour will be treated seriously and an immediate referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care will be made with reference to the local authority continuum of Need.

Dorset Schools -Safeguarding Girls and Young Women at Risk of Abuse through Female Genital Mutilation (proceduresonline.com)

Somerset Schools - Safer Somerset Partnership

## **28. Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism**

From 1 July 2015 all schools must have regard to the statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the CounterTerrorism and Security Act 2015, paragraphs 57-76 of the guidance are in relation to schools and child care providers, and states that schools should have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Willow Banks Forest School will fulfil our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty. It is essential that staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

We aim to build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views. The Prevent duty is not intended to stop pupils debating controversial issues. On the contrary, the school will provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments. We will be mindful of the risk of children being exposed to extremist materials via the internet. If forest school staff are concerned, we will follow safeguarding procedures and refer to the local authority Safeguarding Children's Partnership's guidance on Prevent.

Dorset Schools -

[https://pandorsetsch.proceduresonline.com/p\\_sg\\_ch\\_extremism.html?zoom\\_highlight=prevent+duty](https://pandorsetsch.proceduresonline.com/p_sg_ch_extremism.html?zoom_highlight=prevent+duty)

Somerset Schools -

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/prevent-in-somerset/>

### **28.1 Channel**

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme, which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the school or college may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual's engagement with the programme is voluntary at all stages.

## **29. Children with Family members in Prison.**

There are around 20,000 children in England and Wales who have a parent sent to prison each year. This places the children at risk of poor outcomes, including poverty, stigma and isolation. Children may also suffer from poor mental health. NICCO provides information for

professionals who work with the offender and their children to assist in mitigating the negative consequences for the children.

### **30. Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass operates in all police forces across the UK, it assists the police and schools to work together to provide emotional and practical help to children who are victims of Domestic abuse. The system ensures that when police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult within our feeder schools before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This ensures that the school has up to date relevant information about the child's circumstances and can enable immediate support to be put in place, according to the child's needs. Alternative providers are unable at present to join Operation Encompass, we must maintain good communication with our feeder schools to ensure all relevant student information is shared.

### **31. Homelessness**

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) will make a referral into the local housing Authority should they be concerned that a child in our school is about to become or has become homeless (this does not replace the referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care when a child/ren are at risk).

Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. In most cases school and college staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. When a child of 16/17 years is homeless and is estranged from parents a referral should be made to Local Authority Children's Social Care immediately. (KCSIE 2022)