UNLOCKING POTENTIAL
LEVELLING THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC ARENA

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Mission Statement

The Levels School exists to provide a nurturing environment in which students with specific learning difficulties and co-occurring diagnoses can develop their self-esteem and aspire to be independent young adults who value the rights, responsibilities and rules that exist to promote and support their future welfare. Our approach toward establishing this ideology is predicated on trauma-informed practice and an obligation to develop the social skills required to build their future aspirational communities. We exist to help them find their level.

This policy covers all premises known as The Levels School.

Date of policy	September 2026
Next review date	August 2027
Frequency of policy review (annually, every two years)	Annual
Policy owner	Ben Bridger
Published policy	Yes ☒ No ☐
List of connected policies	GDPR, Safer Recruitment, Staff Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying, Whistleblowing, Digital Safety, Positive Touch addendum, Positive Handling Addendum, Staff Induction Process, Attendance, Procedure for Allegations against Staff, Risk Management, Health and Safety, Fire Safety, Children with Medical Needs who cannot Access Education, Administering Medication, Smoking Alcohol and Misuse of Drugs, Supervision, Educational Visits, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Relational policy

Approved	Governing Body

The Board of Governors acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. Governors undertake a review to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.

The Board of Governors ensures the establishment of familiarity with and the effective operation through monitoring, of school policies, approving those requiring GB sign-off in line with a regular cycle of school policy reviews. This occurs through a cycle of governor committee meetings and full board meetings.

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Contacts list

School Safeguarding points of contact

Role	Name	Contact Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Ben Bridger	ben.bridger@thelevelsschool.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL)	Nicky Wood Tabi Anderson, Debbie Williams	Nicky.wood@thelevelsschool.co.uk tabi.anderson@thelevelsschool.co.uk Debbie.williams@thelevelsschool.co.uk
Safeguarding Governor	Angela Baker	angela.baker@thelevelsschool.co.uk
Chair of Governors	Geraldine O'Sullivan	geraldine.osullivan@thelevelsschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Caroline Cook	caroline.cook@thelevelsschool.co.uk
Local Authority Designated	Anthony Goble Stacey Davis Julian Flack (Asst)	Complete this form: https://somersetsafeguardingchildren.org.uk/document/allegations-reporting-form/ and submit it to:SDInputters@Somerset.gov.uk

Local Authorities Safeguarding points of contact

Local Authority	Telephone Number	Website
Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership	0300 123 2224	https://www.somerset.gov.uk/education-and-families/report-a-child-at-risk/ or childrens@somerset.gov.uk
BANES County Council	01225 396312	https://www.safeguarding-bathnes.org.uk/children/working-children/10-resources-and-links
Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership	**01305 228 558**	https://pdscp.co.uk/working-with-children/applying-thresholds-and-reporting-concerns/ or https://pdscp.co.uk/contact/
North Somerset County Council	**01275 888 808**	https://www.northsomersetsafeguarding.co.uk/children-safeguarding-partnership

Contacts for specific agencies

These contacts are listed here for ease of access. For further information about each section listed below please see their associated appendices at the end of this document.

- If you are concerned about extremism in school, or if you think a child might be at risk: Contact the **Regional Police Prevent Team** on **01278 647466** or email them at channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk
- For concerns about a child who has not attended school and could be at risk, contact:
  Children Missing from Education: MissingChildren@somerset.gov.uk,
- For concerns on Child Sexual Exploitation, County Lines, Dangerous Drugs, Female Genital Mutilation or Honour Based Violence, contact the **Police** on **101** (non-emergency) or **999** if there is imminent chance of risk to the child.
- For queries around working with Children Looked After (CLA) and Students siagnosed with Autism (prev. CAOT), contact can be made to the Somerset Virtual School: thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk or for the DSL: Somerset Virtual School Head; Emily Walters: ewalters@someserset.gov.uk

Below is the list of useful contact details for requesting advice or information.

- DSL Consultation Line: "Family Front Door", **0300 123 3078**
- CAMHS Telephone Advice Line (12.00pm to 2.00pm Monday to Friday) Mendip **07771 977638**. South Somerset **07771 977875**. West **07771 977899**
- Early Help Advice Hub **01823 355803**
- Somerset Direct (MASH): **0300 123 2224**
- Somerset Out of Hours Social Work Emergency Duty Team (EDT) **0300 123 2327**
- N. Somerset, BANES, Bristol & S Gloucestershire Out of Hours Social Work Emergency Duty Team(EDT) **01454 615165**
- Somerset Local Offer SEN guidance: Somerset's SEND Local Offer
- Professional Choices http://professionalchoices.org.uk/
- LGBT – www.stonewall.org.uk
- Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service (SDAS) **0300 303 8788**
- Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDAS) **0800 694 9999**
- Somerset Partnership Integrated Therapy Service **0303 033 3002** (9.00am to 12.00pm, Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri)
- Somerset Support for Education (SSE) http://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/

Reporting a Concern flow chart

If the child is in immediate risk of harm, call the police: 999

Member of staff has concerns about a child's welfare

- Be alert to signs of abuse and question unusual behaviour.
- Follow recording procedures and speak with the DSL or DDSL at the earliest opportunity.

When a Young Person discloses abuse or neglect

- Listen; take their allegation seriously; reassure they have done the right thing and you will take action to keep them safe
- Record information verbatim in writing and then log on MyConcern
- Inform them of what will happen next
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not question further or approach/inform the alleged abuser.

Discuss concerns with Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will consider further actions required, consulting with Children's Social Care via Somerset Direct and the LADO where necessary. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions will be recorded in writing initially and then logged on MyConcern. In the absence of the DSL or DDSLs, the individual may contact Children's Services via Somerset Direct themselves, however anyone can contact Children's Services via Somerset Direct themselves if they wish at any time, should they have any concerns.

Concerns are still present

DSL to refer to Somerset Safeguarding Children partnership

Consultation Line: **0300 123 3078**
Early Help Advice Hub: **01823 355803**
Out of Hours Social Work Emergency Duty Team (EDT) **0300 123 2327**

If the child is still considered at risk of serious harm, call the Police on 999

Safeguarding concerns are met

Additional / Unmet needs
– consult with relevant agencies and undertake an EHA, CAF and/or Team Around the Child meetings

Maintain vigilance & support around child
- Feedback observations in staff briefings

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to set out how we, at The Levels School, use a whole school approach to protect from harm, the children in our care. It is designed to do two things: Provide clear guidelines on how we keep our young people safe and provide clear procedures on how to respond to child protection concerns.

We do so in line with current statutory guidance:

- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Sept 2026) which incorporates Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (as amended).
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (March 2026).
- HM Government advice 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2015).
- Prevent (December 2023) and Prevent Duty: Departmental advice for schools and childminders (December 2023).
- United Kingdom Council for Internet Safety: Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes (2020) – now expanded to cover creation and generation of same and incorporated into KCSIE 2026
- The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership's policies, procedures, guidance and protocols.
- The use of social media for online radicalisation (2015).

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of The Levels School, including senior managers, governing body, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of this organisation.

It will demonstrate how all children and young people are afforded the same protection regardless of their age, disability, gender, racial/cultural heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity.

We, at The Levels School, are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise the additional needs of children from minority ethnic groups and children made vulnerable by their SpLD and co-occurring difficulties, and the barriers they may face specifically around communication. As an education provider who specialise in supporting students with many of these elements, we take great care in providing a safe and secure environment in which they can learn.

Mission Statement for Provision

At the Levels School it is our aim to provide the highest possible standard of care to all who are involved with us. It is our duty to:

- Ensure the staff team always consider that ***'it could happen here'***, where safeguarding is concerned.

- Establish and maintain an environment where education staff and volunteers feel safe, and where they are encouraged to talk and are listened to when they have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the setting whom they can approach if they are concerned for themselves or others and provide them with clear routes of communication to do so safely.
- Ensure that children, who have additional/unmet needs, are supported appropriately by all staff involved. This could include referral to Family Help services or specialist services if they are a child in need or have been / are at risk of being abused and neglected.
- Protect children and young people in our care from maltreatment and impairment of their mental or physical development.
- To provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and take advantage of every learning opportunity, to teach the children about all safeguarding elements pertinent to their developing experiences, including online citizenship and other contemporary issues as they arise.

When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members must always act in the interests of the child to ensure a culture where Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Introduction

It is a fact that education providers and volunteers are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse and vulnerability, changes in behaviour and failure to develop, through their daily contact with children.

All education staff, governors, and volunteers will therefore receive appropriate safeguarding training (which is updated regularly), so that they are knowledgeable and aware of their role in the early recognition of the indicators of abuse or neglect and of the appropriate procedures to follow.

At the Levels School all staff members receive Level 1 (and have access to Level 3) safeguarding and child protection training (through the National College) and regular updates (for example, INSET, via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings and briefings), as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Staff are kept informed via daily staff briefings of local and familial concerns that may impact on children.

Any temporary staff/volunteers will be made aware of the policies and procedures by the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Team - including this **Safeguarding** Policy and our **Staff Code of Conduct**.

Our Staff Induction training includes the provision's **Relational** policy (covering student behaviour management and sanctions) as well as the **Staff Code of Conduct**, **Digital Safety**, **Whistleblowing** and this **Safeguarding** policy. As part of their induction training and as part of their regular updates, (usually at the Inset Training), staff are given Prevent and

Online Safety training as well as FGM, and local safeguarding concerns, such as county lines.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) Part 1 must be read by all staff who work in the provision; and for everyone working directly with children there are mechanisms in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role with regards to safeguarding.

Definition of Key Terms

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child Protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

Staff refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

Child includes everyone under the age of 18 Years old. Those over 18 but on a roll of an education setting will be referred to Adult services for support.

Parent refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example stepparents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

Implementation

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing body. It will be implemented through the school's induction and training programme, and as part of day to day practice. Induction training paperwork will include – this school policy, KCSIE (September 2026) part 1 and the **Staff Code of Conduct** (including **Whistleblowing**, **Digital Safety** – incorporating Staff ICT Acceptable Use, mobile phones, social media, responsibilities around school internet monitoring/ filtering and school's IT security procedures- **Relational**, **Student Expectations**, **Staff Appraisals** and other policies). Compliance with the policy will be monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Governor, through termly Safeguarding audits, staff performance measures and day to day practice.

Legislation and Guidance

To safeguard and promote the welfare of children, this policy is derived from a variety of legislative provisions and statutory guidance, which ensure The Levels School operates in line with good practice found in:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2026).
- Data Protection Act 2018.
- The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment).
- The Education Act 2011 (Section 175/157).

- The Education (student information) (England) Regulations 2005.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0- 25 years. (DfE April 2020).
- Equality Act 2024
- The Prevent Duty 2015.
- Early Years Foundation Stage 2017.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (Section 74, Serious Crime Act 2015).
- Section 26, The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (PREVENT Duty 2015).
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges; (DfE September 2021 – now incorporated in KCISE 2026).
- Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership for Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures (Effective Support for Children and Families).
- Teaching on-line safety in schools (DfE 2019).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026).

Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead at the Levels School is **Ben Bridger**. The status and authority afforded by this role within the provision enables the post holder to carry out the duties of the post including committing resources and where appropriate, supporting and directing other staff. During term time the designated safeguarding lead and or a deputy will always be available (during provision hours) for staff in the provision or other professionals to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Individual arrangements for out of hours/out of term are in place with a named person made available to ensure contact if needed.

DSL and Deputy DSLs Responsibilities in setting

- The DSL/DDSL must refer all cases of suspected abuse or neglect to the Local Authority Children's Services (Safeguarding and Specialist Services) and/or Police (cases where a crime may have been committed) or to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern.
- The DDSL must liaise with the DSL (and Head Teacher), to inform him/her of issues- especially ongoing enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations or Section 42 where Adults are concerned. This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an appropriate adult. See PACE Code C 2019 for statutory guidance.

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies.
- Support staff members around requests for involvement to other agencies.
- Share information with appropriate staff in relation to a child's looked after (CLA) legal status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an Interim Care Order or Care Order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility.
- Ensure they have details of the CLA's social worker and where applicable the name of the virtual school Head Teacher in the authority that looks after the child.
- Have a good knowledge and attend meetings (or submit reports) to contribute to the planning for children who have Child in Need or Child Protection Plans.
- Utilise, implement, scrutinise and monitor the use of early help assessments in the provision.
- Ensure recording child safeguarding and child protection issues are managed through **MyConcern** showing effective chronologies and regular review for monitoring and responding to patterns of behavior.
- Ensure the education provision's Single Central Record is correct, with a record of all staff and Governors DBS checked and **Safer Recruitment** policy procedures are upheld.
- Ensure the provision's site security and risk assessments are maintained and completed to support staff and children feeling safe.
- Work with relevant staff in the provision to ensure the site is safe and secure.
- Ensure that they are responsible for the school's online safety, ensuring it is robust, up-to-date and in line with the **Digital Safety** policy.
- Refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) (cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child).
- Promptly contact the Police (cases where a crime may have been committed).
- Liaise with the Head Teacher to inform him or her of issues especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. Awareness required for Appropriate Adult to be present during police investigation with students.
- Undertake the necessary training and ensure training is shared within the setting.

Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputies will undergo formal training every two years. The DSL also undertakes Prevent and Online Safety training and disseminates this information. The DSL's knowledge and skills are refreshed (for example via e-bulletins, meeting other DSLS, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at least annually. Other requirements are to:

- Understand the assessment process for providing family help and associated interventions, for example through locally agreed common and shared assessment processes such as early help assessments (EHA).
- Have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands our **Safeguarding** policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Understand and support the school with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation.
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals with actions and outcomes.
- Obtain/disseminate access to resources, promote use of training courses available through the National College, Safeguarding Network and attend any relevant or refresher training courses.
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.
- Attend the Local Authority's education DSL conferences that are held termly for updates.

Safeguarding training of staff is achieved through INSET; in which staff are taken through the Prevent duty, a review of KCSIE Part 1 (and key terms from Annex A) and provided with scenarios to exercise their knowledge and demonstrate understanding. Additional staff safeguarding training is done in further sessions during which reporting procedures (in MyConcern and using the school MIS) and internet monitoring and filtering procedures are made clear and staff can ask about definitions of concerns.

At the start of the academic year staff are also required to undertake the Level 1 Certificate in Understanding Safeguarding in Schools on the National College online learning platform. They are also encouraged to undertake the Level 3 if they are interested as well as any of the other qualifications available (EG: County lines, PREVENT, etc). Once this is achieved they will then take the Safeguarding Network's KCSIE Knowledge Check is used as proof of understanding.

Finally, through our regular Safeguarding morning briefings we update staff on local concerns and discuss good practice when identifying and working with specific students who may need additional observation during the week.

Raising Awareness

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) ensures that the provision's policies are known, understood and used appropriately. The DSL ensures that: The school's **Safeguarding** policy is reviewed at least annually, (subject to updates regarding KCSIE and the Education Act) and that the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly. The DSL works with the governing body regarding this. The **Safeguarding** policy is available publicly and parents are informed that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.

- All staff are aware of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and the DSL makes sure staff have access to training opportunities and the latest local policies on safeguarding.
- When children leave the school, the file for safeguarding and any child protection information is sent to any new school /college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This will be transferred separately from the main student file.
- The school obtains proof that the new setting has received the safeguarding file for any child transferring and then destroys any information held on the child in line with data protection guidelines.
- If the child leaves and their whereabouts are unknown or if they move to elective home education the school retains the file and this is reported to Somerset Elective Home Education Team. EHETeam@somerset.gov.uk or phone – 0300 123 2224.

The Governing Body

The Governors ensure that they and the school are compliant under legislation. All Governors and Directors of the company are DBS checked. They will also have regard to this guidance to ensure that the policies, procedures and training in the provision are effective and comply with the law at all times. The responsibilities placed on the Governing Body include:

- Maintaining proprietorial oversight of the school, its Safeguarding practices and adhering to undertake an annual review of the Safeguarding records in line with its policy review.
- Assessing the impact of this policy in keeping children safe.
- Contributing any local, contextual information that may support children's safety and welfare.
- Appointing a nominated governor to liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Head Teacher, on Safeguarding issues.
- Receive and consider regular reports from the Head Teacher about the effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection at the school.
- Keep abreast of training to ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep all children safe.

The Governing Body and Proprietors should be aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 21, the Equality Act 2024, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty 23), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Supporting Children

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals at The Levels School should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, always, what is in the best interests of the child.

Education providers and staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is based on the principle of providing help for families to stay together where it is safe for the children to do so, and looking at alternatives where it is not, whilst acting in the best interests of the child at all times.

The School's policy will differentiate between safeguarding children who have suffered or are at risk of suffering serious harm and those who are in need of additional support from one or more agencies. Subject to local procedures, the former must be reported immediately, the latter will follow the School's assessment process including use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team around the Child/Family (TAC/F) approaches.

Children who may require early help assessment will be offered early intervention through Family Help support services for families (see Appendix C & E).

All staff will be aware of the early help assessment process, and understand their role in identifying emerging problems, including sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment of a child's needs and training in the safeguarding responses to children missing education (CME). It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. This also includes staff monitoring the situation and feeding back to the Designated Safeguarding Lead any ongoing/escalating concerns so that consideration can be given to a request for involvement to Children's Services if the child's situation does not appear to be improving.

Staff and volunteers working within The Levels School are alert to the potential need for early help assessment for children who are more vulnerable. For example:

- Children with a disability and/or specific additional needs.
- Children with special educational needs.
- Children who are acting as a young carer.
- Children who are showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour especially if there is a concern that it is exploitative.
- Children missing education (CME).
- Children whose family circumstances present challenges, such as substance abuse, adult mental health or learning disability, domestic violence.
- Children who are showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.

- Children with poor attendance or high medical absence.
- Children suffering child on child abuse.

All staff members are aware of the main categories of maltreatment: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. They are also aware of the indicators of maltreatment, exploitation and specific safeguarding issues so that they are able to identify cases of children who may need help or protection. (See Appendices for information on further descriptors of abuse and specific safeguarding issues)

Children with SEN and disabilities

As the Levels School is a SEND provision, we must be mindful that sometimes for children with SEN and disabilities, their SEN or disability needs are seen first, and the potential for abuse second. If children are behaving in particular ways or they're looking distressed or their behaviour or demeanour is different from in the past, our staff should think about that being a sign of the potential for abuse, and not simply see it as part of their special educational needs. As part of our training we always look to the wider, contextual safeguarding factors on a child's communications in school.

Emergency Contacts for Children

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) says that provisions will have more than one emergency contacts for every child in the school in case of emergencies, and in case there are welfare concerns at the home. We will endeavour to maintain at least two contact numbers in our MIS for every child on roll.

Mental and Emotional Health of Children

It is widely recognised that a child's emotional health and wellbeing influences their cognitive development and learning as well as their physical and social health and their mental wellbeing in adulthood. It is also documented that children with SEN are more likely to have low self-esteem and poor mental health. In addition to providing an environment and activities designed to promote better mental health, our setting will offer clear support and guidance for children within our pastoral teams and across our PSHE curriculum. The Levels School does not expect staff to diagnose mental health concerns, but to maintain their professional conduct by reporting it to our Mental Health Officer who will follow procedure as laid out in the Early identification section of our **Mental Health and Wellbeing** policy.
https://www.somerset.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/mental-health-and-wellbeing/

Local Issues and Contextual safeguarding

Safeguarding incidents can be associated with factors outside the setting and between children outside of school. This is called contextual safeguarding. Our staff are aware of the definition of contextual safeguarding when reporting concerns and must ensure all information and background detail will be given to the DSL when discussing concerns. We are aware in Somerset there are many local issues that can impact on the safeguarding of children, we will endeavour to be aware of all local issues around the provision and work with children to ensure they are safe. Where available we will attend ONE meetings, Team around the Schools (TAS) and EYS groups to share knowledge.

Dealing with Disclosure

If a child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the member of staff or volunteer will follow the procedure as laid out in the Reporting Abuse or Neglect Procedures diagram at the start of this policy:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what is being said.
- Allow the child to talk freely.
- Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault.
- Reassure the child they have done the right thing, but do not make promises which might not be possible to keep.
- Never promise a child that they will not tell anyone - as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell.
- Listen, only asking questions when necessary to clarify.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.
- Make a written record (see Record Keeping).
- Pass the information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Should a member of staff notice any physical injuries or bruising they should ask the child how they sustained them. All such marks or injuries caused must be recorded and the document handed to the DSL with the child's explanation attached.

Do not examine a child beneath their clothing, ask any leading questions or conduct any further investigations.

Dealing with a disclosure from a child, and safeguarding issues can be stressful. The member of staff/volunteer will, therefore, consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If a staff member receives a disclosure about potential harm caused by another staff member, they should see section: **Managing Allegations.**

If a child is at risk, there must be an immediate referral to children's social care and if a criminal offence has been committed the police must immediately be informed.

Record Keeping

All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing on **MyConcern**. It is crucial that all relevant details, without inference or suggestions and considering the wider context of the child's external life, should be recorded accurately in order to support social care assessments should that become necessary. If in doubt about recording requirements staff should discuss with the DSL. When a child has made a disclosure, the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Record the details of the conversation in writing as soon as possible, and then fill in details on the **MyConcern** online portal within the day, against the child's record.
- Do not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court.
- Record the date, time, witness, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.
- Indicate the position of any injuries.
- Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions.
- Agree and record actions and outcomes.

All written records need to be given to the Designated Safeguarding Lead promptly. No copies should be retained by the member of staff or volunteer.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that all safeguarding records are managed in accordance with the Education (Student Information) (England) Regulations 2015 on **MyConcern**.

If a student who is/or has been the subject of a child protection plan changes provision, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the receiving provision in a secure manner, and separate from the child's academic file.

All child protection recordings should be scrutinised regularly to ensure the action and outcome has been carried and any drift avoided. All records are kept in accordance with SSE Record keeping guidance available on the Support Services for Education website under the Education Safeguarding section policy and guidance.

Confidentiality

Safeguarding and protecting children raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all staff/volunteers in education.

All staff, both teaching and non-teaching staff, have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies (Children's Services: Safeguarding and Specialist Services and the Police).

If a child confides in a member of staff/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff/volunteer tell the child in a manner appropriate to the child's age/stage of development that they cannot promise complete confidentiality – instead they must explain that they may need to pass information to other professionals to help keep the child or other children safe.

Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families during their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts.

Procedure

When a member of staff is concerned about a child, he or she will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with the Reporting a Concern diagram at the

start of this document. The DSL will decide whether the concerns should be referred to Children's Services, with clear regard to the local safeguarding threshold. Any concerns (including allegations) which do not meet the harm threshold, will still be logged internally as "Information Sharing". If it is decided to make a request for involvement to Children's Services this will be discussed with the parents, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of harm.

While it is the DSL's role to make request for involvement, any staff member can make a referral to Children's Services or to the Police if a crime has been committed. If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm (e.g. concern that a family might have plans to carry out Female Genital Mutilation), a referral should be made to Children's Services and/or the Police immediately. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL must be informed as soon as possible.

When a person is employed or engaged to carry out 'teaching' work in England, in the course of their work, discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 or there is a risk this might occur the teacher must report this to the police. This is a mandatory reporting duty. See - Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026): Annex A for further details.

The member of staff must record information regarding the concerns on the same day. The recording must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations.

Attention must also be paid to the attendance and development of any child about whom the school has concerns, or who has been identified as being the subject of a child protection plan and a written record will be kept and attendance procedures followed.

If a student who is/or has been the subject of a child protection plan changes provision, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the receiving provision, in a secure manner, and separate from the child's academic file. Should the child's whereabouts be unknown or they move to elective home education the Social Worker must be informed and the setting follow the procedure for reporting children missing education (CME) and elective home education

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for making the senior leadership team aware of trends in behaviour or concerns that may affect student welfare. Gathering safeguarding data and impact will be embedded into the provision's process to measure effective safeguarding practice and resolve any weaknesses.

Communication with Parents

We are fully committed to working in partnership with Parents. This provision will ensure the **Safeguarding** Policy is available publicly on our website or by request to the school.

Parents will be informed prior to referral, unless it is considered that to do so might place the child at increased risk of significant harm by:

- The behavioural response it prompts e.g. a child being subjected to abuse, maltreatment or threats / forced to remain silent if alleged abuser informed.

- Leading to an unreasonable delay.
- Leading to the risk of loss of evidential material.

The provision may also consider not informing parent(s) where it would place a member of staff, or child, at risk. The provision will ensure that parents/carers understand the responsibilities placed on the school and staff for safeguarding children.

Managing Allegations

An allegation is any information which indicates that a member of staff/volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way which indicates s/he would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

This fourth and final bullet point above relates to members of staff, supply staff and volunteers who are currently working in any school or college regardless of whether the school or college is where the alleged abuse took place. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.

The statements above relate to any child the member of staff/volunteer has contact with in their personal, professional or community life.

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures at the Levels School including safeguarding arrangements. Appropriate whistleblowing procedures are outlined within The Levels School **Whistleblowing** policy. This is accessible to all members of the staff team through induction and on the website/school intranet system. The procedure for raising concerns is clearly outlined. Paper copies are provided at staff induction.

If staff members have concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff, they should report it at once to the **Head teacher**. Where the concern relates to the Head teacher or the Proprietors themselves or it is believed they may be involved in the wrongdoing in some way, the staff member should report their concern to **Geraldine O'Sullivan**, the named Governor with a responsibility for whistleblowing. Geraldine.o'sullivan@thelevelsschool.co.uk

In the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Head Teacher, or where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, allegations should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), within one working day, as well as the Chair of Governors; **Geraldine O'Sullivan**. (See Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: Part Four, for further information).

In cases of serious misconduct, we have a duty to consider if the case needs to be referred to the Secretary of State as required by sections 141D & 141E of the Education Act 2002, to have it reviewed in a TRA investigation.

Allegation Procedure

To avoid any misunderstanding, please see this procedure which is covered in detail in the **Procedure for Allegations against Staff** policy.

Failure to report an allegation in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

Low-Level Concerns

In the event that there is a concern for a member of staff that does not fall into the above criteria, but that concern suggests that a member of staff is unable to do their job effectively or safely, or is compromised because of their mental wellbeing, this would follow the same procedure as above and be reported to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will then triage the low-level concern, recording findings and outcomes on MyConfide. Recommendations for support (if needed) will then follow. This is covered in slightly greater detail in the **Dealing with Allegations Against Staff** policy.

Safer Working Practice

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook, **Code of Conduct**, **Relational** policy and **Safer Recruitment** Document Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (May 2019)

The document seeks to ensure that the responsibilities of school leaders towards children and staff are discharged by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour. This includes guidelines for staff on positive behaviour management in line with the ban on corporal punishment (School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

The school will ensure that supervision at break times and trips are assessed in line with our **Supervision** policy.

Staff who are organizing trips off site will refer to the **Educational Visits**, **Administering Medications** and **Children with Medical Needs** policy, where necessary, to ensure a safe and enjoyable educational experience.

It is not the practice of the Levels School to expect its staff to undertake intimate care of our students. In the event of an emergency which may require this, the school will ensure staff provide support from outside the bathroom, and parents/carers will be contacted immediately to provide practical support on-site.

Restraint and Reasonable Force

As per our **Staff Code of Conduct**, we do not have a restraining policy and as such staff should avoid restraint wherever possible. However, the application of 'reasonable force' as noted in the Safeguarding Policy - Appendix I: Reasonable Force (as supported in governmental guidance "Use of Reasonable Force (July 2015)), will be understood and

supported by the school. This means that staff should always seek to defuse situations using the minimum amount of force for the shortest period necessary.

Please see **Appendix I: Reasonable Force and 'Positive Handling'** for details of acceptable contact and further guidance from the government.

Site Security

The Levels School will make reasonable effort to provide a secure, healthy, hazard-free environment for everyone at and visiting our provision. Consequently, all staff will:

- Maintain suitable/reasonable physical boundaries and barriers such as fencing, gates and locks on doors.
- Directly supervise children at all times, ensuring they remain on the premises and are never permitted to enter hazardous or insecure areas, as per our **Supervision** policy.
- Take all reasonable steps to monitor contractors, governors, inspectors, visitors and volunteers using the premises, requiring them to report to the provision office, sign in and wear a visitor's identification lanyard. All visiting contractors will be DBS checked through Somerset DC.
- Alert contractors, visitors and volunteers to the settings Safeguarding expectations and protocols, as well as advising them of the name of the DSL and Deputy DSLs.
- Update the single central record of staff/volunteers /casual/governance that are in regulated activity with children.
- Fire Drills, First Aid and Lockdown. We will have clear processes and scrutiny with clear records as outlined in our **Health and Safety** and **Fire Safety** policies.
- Filtering and monitoring are an important part of the online safety picture at the Levels School, (network management done through Smoothwall for filtering and monitoring), and is is overseen by the DSL our Governors take a whole school approach to online safety. This includes a clear policy on the use of mobile technology in the school. We ensure that the **Digital Safety** policy for our provision is designed to maintain our digital safety, including the use of smart phone technology.
- Staff, parents and visitors are not permitted to take photographs or other recordings on their personal electronic equipment.

The Levels School believes good site security allows both staff and students to feel safe and confident in their surroundings and offers reassurance to parents and carers.

We note that clearly defined risk management of the site allows staff to manage the school site by limiting trespass and by channeling visitors to the site through appropriate entrances.

Intimate Care

Definitions

Intimate care can be defined as any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out a procedure to intimate personal areas which most people usually carry out themselves, but what some children are unable to do because of their young age, physical difficulties or other special needs. Examples include care associated with continence and menstrual management as well as more ordinary tasks such as help with washing, toileting or dressing. It also includes supervision of children involved in intimate self-care.

Intimate care is any care which involves one of the following:

- Assisting a child to change his/her clothes.
- Changing or washing a child who has soiled him/herself.
- Assisting with toileting issues.
- Supervising a child involved in intimate self-care.
- Providing physical comfort to an upset or distressed child.
- Feeding a child.
- Providing oral care to a child.
- Assisting a child who requires a specific medical procedure and who is not able to carry this out unaided.*

* In the case of a specific procedure, only a person suitably trained and assessed as competent should undertake the procedure. Parents have the responsibility to advise the school of any known intimate care needs relating to their child.

Principles for dealing with situations that may require intimate care or supervision of intimate care:

- The school is committed to ensuring that all staff undertake their responsibilities in such a way that the rights, dignity and welfare of the children is protected.
- The school is committed to ensuring that staff undertaking these responsibilities are supported by policy, training and monitoring.
- All school staff receive child protection training, undertake to help children do as much as possible for themselves and develop each child's ability to achieve independence.
- Parents are informed immediately if an unexpected situation arises, and consulted about dealing with any known issues or concerns.

Personal Care and Toileting

At the Levels School there is an expectation that prior to admission students must have acquired some independence and organisational skills including:

- Being able to carry out a sequence of simple self-care activities reliably e.g. changing for physical activities, using the toilet appropriately, eating with peers and managing personal hygiene.

- Identifying resources required for familiar and routine activities e.g. selecting correct clothing (uniform) and selecting/using appropriate equipment in lessons.

Nevertheless, there may some occasions, for example if ill, or anxious, when any child or young person might need support with toileting or intimate personal care which is not planned or expected. It is also recognized that on residential trips, some children may need support with oral hygiene or night-time continence.

Procedures for occasions where a child needs support with personal intimate care beyond that which is normally provided in school:

- Where a child has insecure control of toileting needs, but can manage independently if prompted, a toileting plan will be drawn up in consultation with parents to include discreet prompting as needed by the teacher or a known and trusted adult.
- Where a child has a toileting "accident", the child will be supported by accompanying them to the toilet but remaining outside the door. If needed spare clothes and wipes will be given for the child to take with them to the toilet. If required to maintain dignity, the child can be offered a shower with support from outside the door.
- The child's parents will be called and asked to provide on-site support if necessary.
- Where a child is known to have occasional accidents, spare clothing will be sent to school and kept in the first aid room with wipes and equipment necessary for the child to manage his or her own care.
- If a child has night-time incontinence, a plan will be agreed with the parent prior to any residential trip. Suitable night protection will be provided by the parent, and the child will be given discreet bags for disposal and space to wash and change away from the other children to maintain dignity.
- All other prompting on a school trip, for example with oral hygiene, or prompting to wash, will be sensitively handled to avoid peer awareness, or delivered to the whole group. Staff will not supervise washing or tooth cleaning directly.

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Broad Terms of Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

It isn't accidental - children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, and slapped or having objects thrown at them. Shaking or hitting babies can cause nonaccidental head injuries (NAHI).

Sometimes parents or carers will make up or cause the symptoms of illness in their child, perhaps giving them medicine they don't need and making the child unwell – this is known as Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII – *see below*).

There's no excuse for physically abusing a child. It causes serious, and often long-lasting, harm – and in severe cases, death.

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and is abuse. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision, medical or health care.

A child may be put in danger or not protected from physical or emotional harm. They may not get the love, care and attention they need from their parents.

A child who's neglected will often suffer from other abuse as well. Neglect is dangerous and can cause serious, long-term damage - even death.

Sexual Abuse A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities.

This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online.

Sometimes the child won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse. They may not even understand that it's wrong.

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development.

Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare or humiliate a child or isolating or ignoring them.

Children who are emotionally abused are often suffering another type of abuse or neglect at the same time – but this isn't always the case

Specific abuse and vulnerability concerns

Domestic Abuse may take many forms but is considered to run the full range of abuses: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent may cause considerable distress to children, and both the physical assaults and psychological abuse suffered by adult victims who experience domestic abuse can have a negative impact on their ability to look after their children.

Children can still suffer the effects of domestic abuse, even if they do not witness the incidents directly. However, in up to 90% of incidents involving domestic violence where children reside in the home, the children are in the same or the next room.

Children's exposure to parental conflict, whether seen, heard or experienced, even where violence is not present, can lead to serious anxiety and distress among children.

Children can see school as a safe retreat from problems at home or alternatively not attend school through a perceived need to be at home to protect abused parents or siblings.

Domestic abuse can therefore have a damaging effect on a child's health, educational attainment and emotional well-being and development. The potential scale of the impact on children is not always easy to assess, but may manifest itself as behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, including poor self-esteem, withdrawal, absenteeism, adult–child conflict, all of which have a detrimental and long-term impact on their holistic well-being.

Children sometimes disclose what is happening or may be reluctant to do so, hoping that someone will realise something is wrong.

Fabricated or Induced Illness by Carer (FII)

FII is a condition whereby a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of their carer, and which is attributed by the adult to another cause.

FII can cause significant harm to children. FII involves a well child being presented by a carer as ill or disabled, or an ill or disabled child being presented with a more significant problem than he or she has in reality and suffering harm as a consequence.

There are three main ways of the parent/carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child:

- Fabrication of signs and symptoms, including fabrication of past medical history.
- Fabrication of signs and symptoms and falsification of hospital charts, records, letters and documents, and specimens of bodily fluids.
- Induction of illness by a variety of means.

The possibility of fabricated and induced illness should be considered where there are discrepancies between professional and parental perceptions of the child's needs or of any illness or disability and where there is a possibility of significant harm to the child.

Where there are suspicions of FII in a child, the school's DSL must make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police. Parents should not be informed of suspicions at this stage.

Child Exploitation; Sexual (CSE) and Criminal (CCE)

The exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affections, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, illicit or sexual activities.

CCE usually involves the child's acquiescence through some form of coercion, either through force or manipulation, sometimes including carrying weapons or transporting illegal items, like drugs. CCE of girls can be a different experience to that of boys and as such the indicators may not be the same, however children who are criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

CSE can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common; involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

The current definition updated March 2017 states:

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 through the use of technology.

Somerset's CSE screening tool can be found at: http://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk

Child on child abuse (including Harmful Sexual Behaviour, Sexual violence and Harassment in education 2021)

Education settings are an important part of the inter-agency framework not only in terms of evaluating and referring concerns to children's services and the police, but also in the assessment and management of risk that the child or young person may pose to themselves and others in the education setting. It is recognised that any child subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, may breach that child's rights, as set out in the Human Rights Act.

When considering whether behaviour is abusive, it is important to consider:

Whether there is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; where there is targeted and repetitive focus on a child's protected characteristics; or whether the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or where there are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys as perpetrators, but all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways and different gender issues can be prevalent. Severe harm may be caused to children by abusive and bullying behaviour of other children, which may be physical, cyber, sexual or emotional and can include gender-based violence/ sexual

assaults, sexting, teenage relationship abuse, child on child exploitation, upskirting, sexual harassment, serious youth violence, sexual bullying or harmful sexual behaviour.

As of Sept 2022 Somerset education settings continue to use the Somerset HSB Protocol, but support The Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool by the Brook Advisory Service (also available via the Support Services for Education website), to help professionals to assess and respond appropriately to sexualised behaviour.
https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/

Government guidance on responding to and managing the sharing of nude and semi-nude (or sexting) incidents can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people

Staff recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers, but abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up".

In order to minimise the risk of child on child abuse the school will:

- Provide a developmentally appropriate PSHE curriculum, in line with the required guidance in KCSIE September 2026 which develops students' understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe. This also includes the amendments to Sex and Relationships Education as covered in the Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education (2026).
- Additionally, through INSET and regular staff briefings we provide up-to-date training for staff in spotting and managing incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviours through the National College courses available online: https://thenationalcollege.co.uk

Detailed documentation on Cyberbullying

Provision for cyber safety is in line with the guidance from:

- The UK Safer Internet Centre (www.saferinternet.org.uk)
- CEOP's 'thinkyouknow' website (www.thinkyouknow.co.uk)

All issues, including Child on child abuse, are tracked in MyConcern and assigned sub-categories to be analysed for emerging patterns on a termly basis through the Safeguarding Sub-Committee. Outcomes from actions and interventions are logged, in accordance with our safeguarding Procedures.

Honour-Based Violence (HBV)

So-called 'honour based' violence (HBV) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage and practices such as breast ironing.

All forms of so-called HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. If in any doubt, staff should speak to the DSL. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBV, or already having suffered HBV.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organisation). It is also sometimes referred to as female genital cutting or female circumcision. The practice is illegal in the UK.

FGM is not an issue that can be decided on by personal preference – it is an illegal, extremely harmful practice, and a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls.

Professionals in health, social care and teaching have a statutory duty to report all cases of FGM to the Police where disclosure or signs of FGM are noted, or where a person knows or suspects FGM has been – or will be – perpetrated.

When someone reports FGM to the Police, they should ask for a crime reference number.

If there is an IMMEDIATE RISK, call the Police on 999 (emergency number).

If there is NOT an immediate risk, call the Police on 101 (non-emergency number).

Forced Marriage

The UK Government describes this as taking someone, usually overseas, to force them to marry (whether or not the FM takes place), or marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not). Breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order is also a criminal offence.

When a disclosure or signs of FM are noted, staff should always alert the DSL and Head Teacher immediately. We should never attempt to intervene directly as a school or through a third party. In such situations, the DSL will always call either Somerset Direct/Police and/or the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151.

Breast Ironing/Binding

Breast ironing (also known as breast flattening) is the pounding and massaging of a pubescent girl's breasts, using hard or heated objects, to try to make them stop developing or to disappear. When a disclosure or signs of breast ironing are noted, staff should always alert the DSL immediately.

Initiation/hazing

Hazing or Initiation is identified as any activity expected of someone in joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate. Any form of initiation is unacceptable

and will not be tolerated. If staff become aware of any form of initiation the school's **Anti-Bullying** and **Relational** policies are followed, the DSL is informed and appropriate sanctions are implemented.

In all cases both the victim and the perpetrator are supported.

Gender Abuse

We recognise gender abuse as any form of targeted verbal or physical abuse directed at someone, using their gender as the main focus of that abuse. As with all forms of abuse the matter is investigated to discover the precise nature of the abuse. The DSL is informed and appropriate action is taken in accordance with the school's anti-bullying, behaviour and safeguarding policies.

The victim and perpetrator are supported to resolve the situation, using restorative justice where appropriate, or social stories where there is evidence of limited social skills and emotional literacy involved, and further support is offered in the form of counselling if this is felt to be appropriate, all in line with our **Relational** policy.

Faith Abuse

Faith abuse is linked to a belief in witchcraft or possession by spirits and demons. In such instances, physical and/or psychological violence may be used in order to "get rid" of the possessing spirit.

Child abuse is never acceptable in any community, in any culture, in any religion, under any circumstances. This includes abuse that might arise through a belief in spirit possession or other spiritual or religious beliefs."

Faith abuse usually occurs in the household where the child lives. It may also occur in a place of worship where alleged "diagnosis" and "exorcism" may take place.

When a disclosure or signs of faith abuse are noted, staff should always alert the DSL immediately. In such situations, the DSL will always call Somerset Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Team on 0300 123 2224.

Extremism and Radicalisation

The UK Government defines extremism as: "The vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs" and/or "calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas."

Radicalisation is defined by the UK Government within this context as: "The process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence"

We take the "Prevent" duty seriously and recognise that Safeguarding against extremism and radicalisation is no different from Safeguarding against any other vulnerability; it is about protecting children and young people from being groomed and exploited by others.

Historical Abuse

Historical abuse (also known as non-recent abuse) is an allegation of neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse made by or on behalf of someone who is now 18 years or over, relating to an incident which took place when the alleged victim was under 18 years old.

The Police should be informed about allegations of crime at the earliest opportunity. Any reports of historic abuse made to Avon and Somerset Police must be to the Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit 01823 349037.

County Lines, Cross Borders, Gangs, Trafficking and Cuckooing

These are police terms for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market/or coastal towns using dedicated mobile or 'deal lines'. Gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Often, they take over the homes of vulnerable adults and children by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing.'

Any activity that is deemed to be suspicious or involve drug dealing/crime/exploitation should be passed to the police on 101. Should young people be thought to be involved the early help assessment is a useful tool. A request for involvement to CSC/police is needed if a child is at immediate risk of harm.

Further information on county lines can be found at: https://www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries-leisure-and-communities/safer-communities/county-lines/

Serious Violence

Indicators of children being involved in serious violent crime may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation

Risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence may include: being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults.

Private Fostering

Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (18 if they are disabled) lives with someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility for 28 days or more.

Private fostering is not the same as fostering arranged by the local authority.

Children and young people become privately fostered for a variety of reasons

- Their parents live overseas, and they come to this country to attend school.
- Their parents are ill and cannot look after them.
- Their parents work away from home, possibly abroad.
- Their parents have come to the UK to study or work and require someone to look after their children.
- They are teenagers who are estranged from their families.

The law says that the Local Authority must be told about all private fostering arrangements. The child's parents or carers should notify us of the arrangement, although anyone else involved in making the arrangement or who is aware of it also has a responsibility to inform us.

The Children Act 1989, and section 44 of the Children Act 2004, outlines the legal duty of the local authority to make sure that the welfare of all privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.

A social worker will need to check the placement is suitable and that all the needs of the child or children are being met. They will also speak to the child or children to make sure that a thorough assessment of the placement is carried out.

When we are made aware a child may be privately fostered a request for involvement will be made to Somerset Direct.

Hate Crime

A Hate Incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender. If you, or anyone you know, has been called names, been bullied or had anything happen to them that you think may be because of one of these factors, then you should report this as a hate incident. Not all hate incidents will amount to criminal offences.

Sexting (including the sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos)

Sexting is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs or images, primarily between mobile phones. It may also include the use of a computer or any digital device. The provision will follow procedures as laid out in the Child on child abuse section above and follow local procedures with police and Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership. It will be logged according to which sub-category of child on child abuse it falls into.

Upskirting

Upskirting typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks for sexual gratification, or causing the victim humiliation, stress or alarm (this is deemed a criminal offence, and

must be reported as such, following local procedures with police and Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, and will be logged as child on child abuse).

Online Abuse

This type of abuse happens on the web, through social networks, playing online games or using a mobile phone. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers.

Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).

Children can feel like there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.

eLIM is part of Support Services for Education. Support Services for Education provides a wide range of services to schools and other educational providers promoting educational excellence for all the children and young people of Somerset and beyond. See website: www.SupportServicesforEducation.co.uk

Grooming

Is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

Missing Children

Anyone under the age of 18 years is to be considered "missing" if he/she is absent from his/her place of residence without authority to a degree or in circumstances where the absence causes concern for safety of the child or a danger to the public".

This includes children and young people who have been forced to leave home and those whose whereabouts are unknown and those who feel they have had to leave home (rather than making a positive choice to do so).

High risks concerns include where:

- The responsible adult has no indication when the child is likely to return
- The child develops a pattern of going missing repeatedly.
- The child's location is unknown, or reason for absence is unknown there is cause for concern for the child because of their vulnerability.
- The child is at high risk of CSE/gangs.

- The child is pregnant or has a young child.
- The child has a history of suicidal thoughts or behaviours.
- The child is at risk of radicalisation.

See Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Protocol for Children who go missing.

https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/p_ch_missing_educ.html

Children Missing Education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who:

Are not on a school roll and are not getting a suitable education other than at school. For more information, refer to the Somerset 's Children Missing in Education Policy.

When children abscond from, or on route to/from, school, unexpectedly going missing from their registered school or education provider, parents/carers must be informed immediately and the Police involved where appropriate.

When children (who are NOT on holiday and/or whose reason for absence is unknown) the absence is recorded as unauthorised and the school will make good attempts to find the child.

Should the child not be found the case will be referred following the Child Missing in Education process. This will involve contacting Somerset Local Authority and the local authority where the student resides, in the case of an overseas student; T4 will be contacted too. The CME referral process does NOT replace Safeguarding procedures for the reporting of Child Protection concerns, which must be observed at all times.

Children on roll

Where there are Children on roll but missing education through complex, refusal or medical need (including those cases open to education welfare service, health or SEN), it remains the setting's responsibility for safeguarding.

Procedures will be put in place to monitor their wellbeing on a regular basis.

Should a child/parent refuse or be non-attending due to a court process for poor attendance the school escalates the monitoring and such a case is referred to The Team around the School which will consider support or escalation.

Appendix B – Single Central Record

Keeping an accurate Single Central Record is a statutory requirement and an essential part of keeping children safe in education and forms part of the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE: September 2026) which applies to all schools. The requirements of the SCR or 'register' are covered by the statutory guidance included within Part Three of KCSIE 2026 and listed under Part 4, Section 21 of the Independent School Standards. Guidance about what information should be held on the SCR is outlined in Part Three of the KCSIE 2026 guidance.

Appendix C – Early Help Assessment

Family Help (the expanded version of the previous Early help), is about working with children, young people and their families to identify and address problems before they escalate, in a holistic manner from very early provisional interventions, through to engagement of external agencies.

Early help assessment looks to engage services that are available to all families as well as services for more vulnerable families who need a greater level of support.

Effective early help assessment means that:

- Parents and or care-givers feel supported to provide stable, consistent and appropriate care for their families.
- Children and young people achieve their education goals.
- Young people are equipped with the skills and attitudes to join the workforce and overcome barriers to employability.
- Children and young people achieve the best possible physical and mental health.
- Children and young people are safe and feel safe.

We want to have a consistent and collaborative early help assessment offer for children, young people and families delivered jointly by all partners. Giving the ability to offer the right help at the right time as soon as a problem emerges. Early help assessment is everyone's responsibility; we want children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving the overall wellbeing and quality of life of all Somerset children, young people and their families.

Providing the right information and advice to enable choice for families so they can be empowered to make positive changes themselves with tailored support where needed. Helping families build protective factors and family resilience so that they have the skills, knowledge and ability to meet the children's needs and to prevent situations escalating

The early help assessment is used to help practitioners gather and understand information about the strengths and needs, based on discussions with the family. The holistic assessment identifies the most appropriate way to meet those needs.

Practitioners in universal or targeted Family Help services can complete an early help assessment on their own or with the support of the Early help assessment Co-ordination Hub.

A directory of early help assessment services is available from the Early Help Advice Hub on 01823 355803. Somerset Choices (https://choices.somerset.gov.uk/025/) and Professional Choices (http://professionalchoices.org.uk/) will also help practitioners and families find information to help prevent escalation of needs and crisis.

Appendix D –Resolving Professional Differences

Resolving Professional Differences

When working with professionals from other agencies there will at times be differences of opinion with regards to how to respond to an identified concern about a child, young person or family. Disagreements can be a sign of developing thinking, and the value of exchanging ideas from different perspectives will not be underestimated and is one of many benefits of partnership working.

Transparency, openness and a willingness to understand and respect individual and agency views are core aspects of a safe multi-agency / inter-agency working. Good preparation, open lines of communication and planning by professionals who take responsibility for decision making will ensure differences of view are kept to a minimum. However, disagreements may disadvantage the child or family involved if they are not resolved constructively and in a timely manner.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a responsibility shared by all agencies. If you feel that a professional or an agency is not acting in the best interests of the child, young person or family, you have a responsibility to respectfully challenge the professional or agency. The Somerset Children Safeguarding Board or the SSE Education Safeguarding Advisor can provide further advice on this matter.

Appendix E – Referral Routes

Referral Routes: Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)

The SSCP has a statutory duty to co-ordinate how agencies work together to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people in Somerset and to ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

Report a child at risk If you are worried about a child or young person who could be in danger please contact:

- Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224
- By email at childrens@somerset.gov.uk
- Or the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss with Children's Social Care what action will be taken. In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.

If you would like to speak to a social worker outside of office hours please phone the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0300 123 23 27. Calls will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

If you suspect child abuse:

- Do listen to the child and take what the child says seriously
- Do act quickly and share your worries with Children's Social Care, the police or the NSPCC - they are there to help you
- Do continue to offer support to the child
- Don't delay or Don't probe/push the child for explanations
- Don't assume someone else is dealing with this. You must act
- Don't be afraid to voice your concerns, the child may need urgent protection and help

Appendix F – Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

The SSCP

The Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) is the statutory, multi-agency partnership with responsibility for coordinating, monitoring and challenging all activity relating to safeguarding children and young people living in Somerset. Safeguarding Children Boards were set up as a result of the 2004 Children Act and are regulated by that law.

The work of the SSCP is broad and varied but includes:

- Developing multi-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding.
- Participating in the strategic planning of children's services.
- Communicating the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children to professionals and the public.
- Conducting Serious Case Reviews when a child dies or is seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Ensuring procedures to ensure a coordinated response to unexpected child deaths.
- Collecting and analysing information about all child deaths that occur in the area to identify issues of concern.
- Providing multi-agency training and development to staff on safeguarding children.

The SSCP have developed a range of learning opportunities that have been informed by the Board's priorities, quality assurance activities and learning reviews, which aim to equip you in your tasks and enable you to work confidently alone and alongside others to keep children safe and promote their wellbeing. These training opportunities and a wide variety of information, advice, tools and resources is located on the website: http://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/.

Appendix G – Prevent Duty

Prevent – Extremism and Radicalisation

Radicalisation is defined as the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist groups. "Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas" (HM Government Prevent Strategy 2011). Prevent is one part of the United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) and aims to stop people from being exposed to extreme ideologies and becoming radicalised.

The CONTEST strategy is divided up into four priority objectives:

- Pursue – stop terrorist attacks.
- Prepare – where we cannot stop an attack, mitigate its impact.
- Protect – strengthen overall protection against terrorist attacks.
- Prevent – stop people becoming terrorists and supporting violent extremism.

It is an approach that involves many agencies and communities, to safeguard people who may be at risk of radicalisation. Since the publication of the Prevent Strategy, there has been an awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people and families from violent extremism. There have been attempts to radicalise vulnerable children and young people to develop extreme views including views justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

Keeping children safe from these risks is a safeguarding matter and will be approached in the same way as safeguarding children from other risks. Children to be protected from messages of all violent extremism. To report concerns, contact the Regional Police Prevent Team:

- Phone: 01179 455 536.
- Email: channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk
- SWCPP (Safeguarding Children and Young people against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism).
- http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/p_sg_ch_extremism.html?zoom_highlight=prevent
- Revised Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

Appendix H – Dangerous Drugs

As part of the statutory duty on education providers to promote students' wellbeing, School has a clear role to play in preventing drug misuse as part of our pastoral responsibilities. To support this, the Government's Drug Strategy 2017 ensures that education staff have the information, advice and power to:

- Provide accurate information on drugs and alcohol through the PSHE curriculum and targeted information, including via the FRANK service
- Tackle problem behaviour in schools, with wider powers of search and confiscation
- Work with local voluntary organisations, health partners, the police and others to prevent drug or alcohol misuse
- Have a designated, senior member of staff with responsibility for the **Smoking, Alcohol and Misuse of Drugs** policy and all drug issues within the setting
- Establish relationships with local children and young people's services, health services and voluntary sector organisations to ensure support is available to students affected by drug misuse (including parental drug or alcohol problems).

Further advice on searching, screening and confiscation can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation

Appendix I - Reasonable Force and 'Positive Handling'

There is much evidence available on how to effectively support children and young people with learning disabilities who display behaviour described as challenging. Understanding the function, or reason, for a child's behaviour allows effective support to be put in place and their quality of life to be enhanced.

The British Institute of learning Disability (BILD) accreditation framework and Positive and Proactive Care (Dept of Health, 2014), all state that Positive behavioural support (PBS) represents the most effective evidence-based approach to supporting people with learning disabilities whose behaviours challenge services. The NICE guideline and a recent Briefing Paper (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2014) clarify that this applies to children as well as adults. (*'Statement on restrictive physical interventions with children', The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, January 2016*)

The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with students.

At The Levels School we require staff to consider these types of contact as 'Positive Handling'. Our Positive Handling ideology is designed to control a potentially harmful situation with a minimum of direct force. This can range from guiding a student to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student(s) needs to be separated to prevent violence or injury.

As mentioned above, schools generally use force to control student in these cases. Staff at the Levels School are not trained to use physical intervention and it is not used by the school but 'reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed to keep a child safe.

Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between students or blocking a student's path. School staff would always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the student.

Full details on how our staff use Positive Handling is covered in our **Positive Handling Addendum** document. Below is the link to the recent 'reasonable force' guidance from the government.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf

Appendix J – Positive Touch

At the Levels School we recognise that students who attend our provision will at times need a level of support to manage their anxiety that may include staff to student contact through side-holding or hand-holding. We refer to this as "Positive Touch" and more can be read about it in our **Positive Touch Addendum** on the website.

Positive Touch in Prep - Within the Prep school it is recognised that there may be times when the children will seek age appropriate physical support for regulation. Annually, prep parents will be contacted and reminded about the possibility of Positive Touch use with their children. This process is designed to allow parents to provide consent or review need as the child gets older. It will be used as a teaching opportunity for the pupils to discuss consent and understand appropriate touch. Where staff feel uncomfortable, they are directed to self-report to the Head Teacher.

Positive Touch in KS3 & KS4 – We acknowledge that in the early stages of KS3, as pupils transition in to young adults, it is recognised that the expectation for physical contact will reduce, and we work to support them with that. Should it continue to be a requirement as part of their learning need, a conversation will be had with the SENCO. From this point the SENCO will acknowledge with parents, the pupil and the staff body, identifying who the agreed staff member(s) will be for that student to be supported in Positive Touch.

Staff will not initiate physical contact with pupils, nor ask for physical contact with a pupil,

Accidental, or physical interventions with pupils will always require staff to self-refer to the Head Teacher. If staff feel more support or clarification is needed on how to work with these requirements, they will be expected to review it with the SENCO.

Appendix K - Professional Conduct and Safety

Our staff, volunteers and visitors will be provided with clear guidance on professional behaviour and standards in the settings code of conduct, as outlined in the **Staff Code of Conduct** Policy.

As per our **Digital Safety** policy, the use of phones, smart technology, private email address etc should not be used to communicate with parents or children about setting issues, it is advised social networks are protected and used professionally.

Appendix L - Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)

The statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2026 is available online. It is essential that all staff have access to this online document and read Part 1, which provides further information on:

- Children missing from education.
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Honour based' violence.
- FGM mandatory reporting duty.
- Forced marriage.
- Preventing radicalisation.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour.
- Child on child abuse.
- Responsibilities of staff around reporting.
- Responsibilities of Filtering and Monitoring in school

This is to assist staff and volunteers to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in this guidance. Our staff members and regular visitors are asked to sign to say they have read these sections and should subsequently be re-directed to these online documents again should any changes occur. This document is made available for parents on our website.

Reviewed: B.Bridger Sept 26