SEN Trust Southend

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SEN Trust Southend

SEN Trust Southend
Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

SEN TRUST SOUTHEND
KINGSDOWN SCHOOL
LANCASTER SCHOOL
ST. NICHOLAS SCHOOL
THE ST. CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

CREATED:	SEPTEMBER 2019
LATEST REVISION:	SEPTEMBER 2026
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	SEPTEMBER 2027

SEN TRUST SOUTHEND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(This policy has been adopted by all schools in SEN Trust Southend
Lancaster School, St. Nicholas School, Kingsdown School, The St. Christopher School)

KEY CONTACTS WITHIN THE SCHOOLS

SCHOOL NAME:	The St. Christopher School	Lancaster School	Kingsdown School	St. Nicholas School
DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD:	Tracy Coster	Tom Jackson-Owens	Lisa Stroud	Laura Fox
DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD:	Lisa Langley Elspeth Kirk	Sarah Olley Leanne Hawker	Donna Slattery Dee Hensey Kirsty Spencer	Samantha Nash Sue Johnson
DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING GOVERNOR:	David Gribbon	Paul Mardon	Alison Crowe	Barry Levitt

KEY CONTACTS WITHIN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

Children's Social Care, **Southend City Council** **C-SPOC:** Where schools have concerns for the safety and welfare of a child or young person. **OUT OF OFFICE HOURS:** To make URGENT referrals	01702 215007 9.00am – 5.30pm Monday to Thursday 9:00am – 4.30pm Friday C-SPOC@southend.gov.uk 0345 606 1212
Local Authority Designated Office (LADO):	01702 534539 (Direct) 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Thursday 9:00am – 4.00pm Friday LADO@southend.gov.uk

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Summary of changes in this draft revision (September 2026)

This draft has been prepared to update the Trust's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy to reflect Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, which came into force on 1 September 2026, and other statutory guidance updated since the last approved version (September 2025). Substantive additions include: the expansion of child-on-child abuse to cover harassment and violence; a new section on gender questioning children; new requirements on serious violence and weapons; an emergency (999/A&E) response requirement for mental health crises; new provisions on AI-related online risks and the annual review of filtering and monitoring; the removal of Annex A and the requirement for all staff to read Part One of KCSIE in full; inclusion of trainee teachers within the definition of 'staff' for allegations purposes; online pre-recruitment checks; safeguarding responsibility for pupils placed with alternative provision; and allegations concerning organisations or individuals using school premises.

Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers, visitors to our Trust and the wider school communities. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our Trust and should be read in conjunction with the following:

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, March 2026).

- the schools' Behaviour policies;
- the schools' Staff Code of Conduct;
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- the Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Annex C of KCSIE)

The Policy should also be read in conjunction with other related policies, including:

Anti-Bullying, Disability and Equality Duty Statement, Educating Children with Medical Needs, E-Safety, Health & Safety, Looked After Children, PSHE Curriculum, Sex & Relationships Education, PSHCE Policy, Staff Handbook, Staff Code of Conduct, Safe Touch policies, Intimate Care, Attendance and Whistleblowing.

Two schools within the Trust provide for pupils within the Early Years Foundation Stage. In accordance with paragraph 3.5 of the EYFS statutory framework, the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS are met through this policy and in conjunction with the policies listed above.

SEN Trust Southend takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. "The welfare of the child is paramount" (Children Act 1989 as amended 2004).

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children *(everyone under the age of 18)* is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Our Trust has a whole-trust approach to safeguarding, which ensures that keeping children safe is at the heart of everything we do and underpins all systems, processes and policies. It is important that our values are understood and shared by all children, staff, parents / carers, governors, trustees and the wider school communities. Only by working in partnership, can we truly keep children safe.

There are three main elements to our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy:

Prevention

- By ensuring that we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of all staff and volunteers who work with children
- Through establishing and maintaining a safe and positive environment and the teaching and pastoral support offered to pupils
- By raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe

Protection by following agreed procedures and ensuring all staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.

Support to pupils who have/may have been abused or neglected (in line with his/her Child Protection Plan, if appropriate).

This Trust recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation.

TRUST COMMITMENT

Our Trust is committed to keeping children safe and aims to:

- Create a culture of vigilance where the welfare of our pupils is promoted and where timely and appropriate safeguarding action is taken.
- Establish and maintain an environment where pupils feel safe and secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- Ensure that pupils know that there are adults within the schools who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty.
- Ensure pupils receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. This includes identifying emerging problems and those children who may benefit from early help.
- Include in the curriculum activities and opportunities which equip pupils with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse and to develop healthy and safe relationships.
- Include in the curriculum material which will help pupils develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life, particularly with regard to childcare and parenting skills.
- Protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values and to promote respect for all others.
- Facilitate understanding of wider issues within the context of learning about the values on which our society is founded and our system of democratic government.
- Provide a curriculum which actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Promote tolerance of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations.

- Make parents/carers aware of the schools' policies and practice for safeguarding and ensure that, wherever possible, every effort will be made to establish open and honest effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from partner agencies.

1. Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, March 2026) on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Police and Health) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the Southend Safeguarding Partnership.

In Southend, the statutory partners are Southend-on-Sea City Council, Essex Police and one of the three Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) covering the county of Essex; Mid & South Essex ICB.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the schools.

In Southend, all professionals must work in accordance with the SET Procedures. Our Trust also works in accordance with the following legislation and guidance *(this is not an exhaustive list)*:

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026)
Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, March 2026)
Education Act 2002
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)
Serious Crime Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015)
Children and Social Work Act (2017)
Children Missing Education - statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (DfE, updated 8 September 2025)
Sexual Offences Act (2003)
Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026)
Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (DfE 2026)
Data Protection Act (2018)
What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (HMG, 2015)
Searching, screening and confiscation (DfE, 2022)
Children Act (2004)
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (S. 74 - Serious Crime Act 2015)
Preventing youth violence and gang involvement (Home Office, 2015)
Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adult - county lines guidance (Home Office, 2018)
Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2024)
School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK
Searching, screening and confiscation (DfE 2022)
Use of reasonable force Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE July 2013)
The Prevent Duty - Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers (DfE 2023)
Teaching online safety in schools – Guidance 2023
Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges (DfE 2026)

2. Roles and responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within schools and the Local Authority and other agencies who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names of those in our Trust with these specific responsibilities (the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead) are shown on Page 2 of this document. However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play.

The Trust Board & Local Governing Bodies

The Trust Board & Local Governing Bodies ensure that the policies, procedures and training in our schools are effective and comply with the law at all times. They ensure that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.

The governor for safeguarding arrangements for each school is named on Page 2 of this document. This governor takes strategic responsibility at governing body level for safeguarding arrangements in our schools. The governing bodies ensure there is a named Designated Safeguarding Lead and at least one Deputy Safeguarding Lead in place (also named on Page 2).

The governing bodies ensure the schools contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. They ensure that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The governing bodies ensure that all adults in our schools who work with children undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction as appropriate and that it is regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The governing bodies ensure our pupils are taught about safeguarding (including online safety) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. We work in accordance with government regulations which make the subjects of Relationships & Health Education (for primary age pupils) and Relationships, Sex & Health Education (for secondary age pupils) mandatory.

The governing bodies and school leadership teams are responsible for ensuring the schools follow recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. They adhere to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and have recruitment and selection procedures in place (see the Trust's 'Safer Recruitment' policy for further information). They ensure that volunteers are appropriately supervised in the schools. The governing body and school leadership are also responsible for online safety including strategic oversight of filtering and monitoring systems to support this. The DfE has produced a set of guidelines to assist schools to self-assess against the filtering and monitoring standards called "Plan technology for your school" and the "Generative AI: product safety expectations" for an explanation of how filtering and monitoring requirements apply to the use of generative AI in education.
In line with KCSIE 2026, our recruitment procedures include appropriate online pre-recruitment checks on shortlisted candidates as part of safer recruitment practice, in addition to the statutory pre-employment checks. This is set out in more detail in the Trust's 'Safer Recruitment' policy.

The headteachers

The Teachers' Standards 2012 state that teachers (which includes headteachers) should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. The headteachers work in accordance with all statutory requirements for safeguarding and are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the governing bodies are followed by all staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads (and Deputy / Deputies)

The Designated Safeguarding Leads in each school have ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Their role includes managing child protection referrals, working with other agencies, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained, leading on online safety including filtering and monitoring standards and raising awareness of all safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. They ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of these procedures and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for other staff (on child protection matters) and ensure that timely referrals to Southend Children's Social Care (C-SPOC (Children's Single Point of Contact)) are made in accordance with current SET Procedures. They work with the local authority and other agencies as required and ensure that information is shared appropriately.

Further guidance on the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead can be found in Annex C of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026).

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) is/are trained to the same standard as the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If for any reason the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) will act in their absence.

All school staff

Everyone in our schools has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our children can learn. Any child may benefit from early help and all staff members are aware of the local early help process and our role in it. They are aware of signs of abuse and neglect so they are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. All staff members are aware of and follow school safeguarding processes (as set out in this policy) and are aware of how to make a referral to Social Care if there is a need to do so. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) – they do not assume that others have taken action.
For the purposes of this policy and any allegations made against staff, 'staff' includes trainee teachers on placement. Where a safeguarding concern or allegation is raised about a trainee teacher, the school will also inform the trainee's initial teacher training (ITT) provider, in accordance with KCSIE 2026.

Our staff understand that children may not always feel able or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. This may be because they are embarrassed, scared or do not recognise they are experiencing abuse, either at home or out in the community. We understand there are many factors which may impact on our children's welfare and safety and we also understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We recognise that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues rarely occur in isolation and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Our staff will always reassure children who report abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

The Trust publishes its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on the its website. Each school publishes its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on its website alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026)

3. Types of abuse / specific safeguarding issues

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026) describes abuse in the following way:

"Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children"

Keeping Children Safe in Education refers to four categories of abuse:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

Our staff will always reassure children who report abuse / victims of abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

All staff in our Trust are aware of the signs of abuse and neglect so we are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. All staff are aware of environmental factors which may impact on a child's welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We understand that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely 'stand-alone' events and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

In addition, staff are aware of other types of abuse and safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. We understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and / or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education and consensual / non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images can be signs that children are at risk.

Our Trust recognises that there are a number of specific safeguarding issues about which staff need to be aware, including: children missing from education, children missing from home or care, child sexual exploitation (CSE), domestic violence, drugs, E safety (including), fabricated/induced illness, faith abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, gangs and youth violence, violence against women and girls (VAWG), mental health, children with special educational needs and disabilities, private fostering, prevention of radicalisation, teenage relationship abuse, trafficking, child on child abuse (including harassment and violence between children), gender questioning children, prejudice-based harm (including racism and faith-based prejudice), serious violence and weapons, on-line abuse and the use of artificial intelligence, gender-based abuse, sexting or sexually harmful behaviour. All staff are required to read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026)

Whilst each school will ensure that staff avail themselves of opportunities to raise their awareness and gain knowledge regarding these areas, we recognise that expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support in relation to these issues. Government guidance is available on the GOV.UK website and links are provided from Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026). Other organisations also provide specialist information such as:

NSPCC	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/
TES	https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources
MindEd	https://www.minded.org.uk/course/view.php?id=402

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

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community. It may occur over time, or be a one-off occurrence. In Southend, the definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) from the Department of Education (DfE, 2017) has been adopted:

"Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when 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".

It is understood that a significant number of children who are victims of CSE go missing from home, care and education at some point. Our Trust is alert to the signs and indicators of a child becoming at risk of, or subject to, CSE and will take appropriate action to respond to any concerns. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

Child on Child abuse (including sexualised behaviours)

Our schools may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children, particularly those who have experienced harm or trauma. Whilst at school, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant, or they may instead be withdrawn, or display abusive behaviours towards other children. Our Trust recognises that some children may abuse their peers and that this may happen in school, or outside of it. We understand there are many factors which may lead a child to display abusive behaviours towards other children, and that these matters are sensitive and often complex

Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, sexual violence / sexual harassment, 'up-skirting', sharing nudes and semi-nudes, or initiation / hazing type violence and rituals. We have a duty to safeguard all children and, whilst inappropriate behaviours will be challenged and addressed, it is in the context of providing appropriate support to all children in our schools where harmful behaviour has occurred. Our culture is very much one of kindness, compassion, connection and belonging and we take a balanced and proportionate approach to risky or harmful behaviour.

Our Trust recognises that, even though child on child abuse / harmful sexual abuse may not be reported, it is likely that it is occurring and we are vigilant to signs of abuse and promote a culture of safety and

understanding. We understand the barriers which may prevent a child from reporting abuse and work actively to remove these.

We use lessons and assemblies to teach children about healthy, positive relationships, how to report concerns, and to help them understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is. We aim to provide children with the language to report abuse and to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Our Trust understands the different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with child on child abuse. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor that they are creating a problem by doing so.

Any incidents of child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence) will be managed in the same way as any other child protection concern and will follow the same procedures. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as necessary and ensure that appropriate agencies are involved when required.
KCSIE 2026 expands the definition of child-on-child abuse to give greater clarity on harassment and violence between children, in addition to sexual violence and sexual harassment. Our Trust treats harassment and violence between children (whether in person or online) with the same seriousness as other forms of child-on-child abuse and will not dismiss such behaviour as normal 'banter', 'part of growing up' or a 'rite of passage'.

If a member of staff is made aware of any child on child abuse then school procedures are followed.

The Trust will use the guidance set out in:

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes:how to respond to an incident (2024)

Children missing from education

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. Our schools recognises that a child with unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and will follow the school procedures for unauthorised absence and for children missing education. It is also recognised that, when not in school, children may be vulnerable to or exposed to other risks, so we work with parents and other partners to keep children in school whenever possible.
In line with KCSIE 2026, our Trust recognises that being absent from education – not only being missing from education – can itself be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and other forms of harm. Attendance and safeguarding staff work closely together so that patterns of absence trigger a safeguarding response, not only an attendance one.
Where a pupil is placed with an alternative provision (AP) provider, our Trust remains responsible for safeguarding that pupil. Before placing a pupil with an AP provider, the school will assure itself of the provider's safeguarding arrangements, and will maintain oversight of the pupil's attendance, welfare and safety for the duration of the placement.

Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency. Parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, to enable us to communicate with someone if we need to.

Our school complies with the DfE Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026) statutory guidance.

Our schools must inform the Local Authority of any pupil who has been absent for a continuous period of 10 days or more without a good reason, and the school has satisfied all avenues of enquiry and is unsuccessful tracing the pupil.

We work in accordance with the Southend City Council's Children Missing from Education Guidance and our own schools' attendance policies.

Our Trust also complies with the regulations regarding Elective Home Education (Regulation 12 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended 2016) and Southend's guidance http://www.southendlearningnetwork.co.uk/Services/4834. Our schools notify the Elective Home Education Team via secure email to ehe@southend.gov.uk at the earliest opportunity and, when relevant, immediately provides a copy of the parents written notification to home educate and the date they came off roll.

Children removed from school admission register

The school/academy will notify the Local Authority when it is about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the grounds set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, July 2026).

When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the Local Authority will include:

a) the full name of the pupil,
b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides,
c) at least one telephone number of the parent,
d) the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and
e) the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register.

The school/academy will make all reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the Local Authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register, if the deletion is under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii)

Contextual safeguarding

Safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside our school. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding and the fact they should consider whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and / or welfare. To this end, we will consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and share it with other agencies to support better understanding of a child and their family.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical acts of violence or threatening behaviour, and can include emotional, psychological, controlling or coercive behaviour, sexual and/or economic abuse. Our Trust recognises that exposure to domestic abuse can have a serious, long-term emotional and psychological impact on children. We work with other key partners and will share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue for a child or family or be placing a child at risk of harm.

So-called 'honour-based violence' (including Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage)
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse.

As of October 2015, the Serious Crime Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015) introduced a duty on teachers (and other professionals) to notify the police of known cases of female genital mutilation where it appears to have

been carried out on a girl under the age of 18. Our Trust will operate in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to this issue, and in line with local safeguarding procedures.

A *forced marriage* is one entered into without the full consent of one or both parties. It is where violence, threats or other forms of coercion is used and is a crime. Our staff understand how to report concerns where this may be an issue.

Gender questioning children

Our Trust recognises that some children may be questioning their gender identity, and that this group of children can be vulnerable and need additional care and consideration. Staff will treat every child as an individual, will not make assumptions, and will be alert to signs of bullying or isolation. Where a child does not wish to use the toilet, changing room or shower facilities provided for their biological sex, the school will consider whether an alternative facility can be provided without compromising the provision of single-sex facilities, or the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of that child or of other children. A clear record will be kept of any such arrangements. Any decisions affecting a gender-questioning child will be made in consultation with the child, their parents/carers (save in exceptional circumstances where this would compromise the child's safety) and, where appropriate, external agencies, and will have regard to the DfE's guidance and the school's legal duties, including under the Equality Act 2010

Mental health

Our staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. We understand that, where children have suffered abuse or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Where we have concerns this may impact on mental health, we will seek advice and work with other agencies as appropriate to support a child and ensure they receive the help they need.

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that schools play a key part in this. Our Trust aims to develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of all pupils and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors which increase someone's vulnerability and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency. The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counter-balance and promote further growth of resilience.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with the individual school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.
In line with KCSIE 2026, where a member of staff believes a child is in immediate danger as a result of a mental health crisis, they must call 999 or take the child to A&E immediately; where the situation is not an emergency but urgent mental health advice is needed, staff should call NHS 111. Staff must also inform the DSL (or a deputy) as soon as possible so that the school's response can be coordinated and recorded.

Online safety

We recognise that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but we recognise it also presents challenges and risks. Any pupil can be vulnerable online, and their vulnerability can fluctuate depending on their age, developmental stage and personal circumstance. We want to equip our pupils with the knowledge needed to make the best use of the internet and technology in a safe, considered and respectful way, so they are able to reap the benefits of the online world.

The range of online risks could be categorised as:

content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories;

contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example; peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes;

conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example; making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images or online bullying;

commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and / or financial scams.

Further guidance can be found on the Southend Children's Safeguarding Partnership website.

All staff in our Trust are aware of the risks to children online and we seek to help children keep themselves safe online in a range of ways - further information about our approach to online safety is available in the schools' E-Safety Policies.

We have systems in school to filter information and block internet access to harmful sites and inappropriate content. These systems are monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective, and all staff are trained in online safety and how to report concerns.
Our Trust recognises the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in children's online lives, including generative AI, and the new and evolving risks this presents (for example AI-generated or 'deepfake' sexual imagery, AI chatbots, and AI-facilitated bullying or grooming). Staff will treat AI-related concerns with the same seriousness as other online safety concerns and report them to the DSL. In line with KCSIE 2026 and the DfE's guidance on Generative artificial intelligence in education, each school will review the effectiveness of its filtering and monitoring systems at least once every academic year, as well as when a safeguarding concern is identified, and will document that review.

Prevention of radicalisation

As of July 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015) placed a new duty on schools and other education providers. Under section 26 of the Act, schools are required, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent Duty.

It requires schools to:

- teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and must promote community cohesion
- be safe spaces in which children / young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and the extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology, and learn how to challenge these ideas
- be mindful of their existing duties to forbid political indoctrination and secure a balanced presentation of political issues

CHANNEL is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
Our Trust operates in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate. Where we have concerns about extremism or radicalisation, we

will seek advice from appropriate agencies and, if necessary, refer to the police, Social Care and / or the Channel Panel.

Serious violence

All staff are aware of the risk factors and indicators which may signal that children are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. These 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 well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that a child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.
Any member of staff who becomes aware that a child is using, carrying, or has expressed an intent to carry, a weapon must report this to the DSL (or a deputy) immediately. The DSL will assess the level of risk and take appropriate action without delay, which may include contacting the police. Where a child appears to be in immediate danger, staff must call 999.

Looked After Children (LAC)

Each school in our Trust has a Designated Teacher/Representative for pupils who are LAC. The Designated Teacher/Representative attends LAC Reviews, PEP meetings and liaises with the child's Social Worker and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and with the Local Authority Virtual School Headteacher, who is responsible for the progress of children looked after. A previously looked after child remains vulnerable and all staff should have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe.

4. Children potentially at risk of greater harm

We recognise that some children may potentially be at risk of greater harm and require additional help and support. These may be children with a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, those in Care or previously in Care or those requiring mental health support. We work with Social Care and other appropriate agencies to ensure there is a joined-up approach to planning for these children and that they receive the right help at the right time.

Our Trust understands that children with special educational needs (SEN) and / or disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability, without further exploration
- That they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others
- The potential to be disproportionally impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs
- Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers

Our Trust is committed to ensuring that our pupils receive the right help at the right time. Staff are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children and prevent concerns from escalating

Our Trust will endeavour to support all pupils through:

- The curriculum; to encourage our pupils to stay safe and to develop healthy relationships, self-esteem and self-motivation.
- The schools' ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all pupils and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
- The implementation of the schools' behaviour management policies.

- A consistent approach from all staff which will endeavour to ensure that our pupils know that some behaviour is unacceptable, but that s/he is valued.
- Regular liaison with other professionals and agencies that support the pupils and their families.
- A commitment to develop open, honest and supportive relationships with parents, always with the child's best interest as paramount.
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group, trained to respond appropriately in child protection situations.
- Recognition that children with behavioural difficulties and special educational needs and/or disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse. Therefore, staff who work in any capacity with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and/or emotional and behavioural problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse.
- Recognition that, in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children are vulnerable and may be in need of support or protection.

5. Procedures

Our Trust works with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans which provide additional support (through a Child in Need or a Child Protection Plan).

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the schools who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or, in their absence, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead), so that discussion can take place regarding whether any support for the child can be managed internally via the school's own pastoral support process, or if an early help assessment is indicated, or a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

The contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/s are prominently displayed in the schools to ensure that all members of the school community have unfettered access to safeguarding support.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- Southend Children's Safeguarding Partnership guidelines -the SET Procedures (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (DfE, 2026)
- Working Together (DfE 2023)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (HMG, 2015)
- The Prevent duty Departmental advice for schools and childcare providers (DfE, Aug 2015)
- Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation (HMG, Oct 2018)
- Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (HMG, September 2026)

Any staff member or visitor to the schools must refer any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead for that school.

If the child is in immediate danger, or at risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to Children's Social Care and/or the Police. A telephone referral to Children's Social Care must be confirmed in writing within 48 hours, using the Children's Single Point of Contact (C-SPOC) Request for Service form to

provide the information necessary. See Appendix A for The Children's needs diagram and Appendix B for the Threshold Guidance from Southend City Council and Southend Safeguarding Partnership.

The Children's Single Point of Contact Request for Service (C-SPOC) form should be used to request a family assessment of need. The completed form contains all the information required for a child protection referral and should be sent to C-SPOC. Essential information will include the pupil's name, address, date of birth, family composition, the reason for the referral, whether the child's parents are aware of the referral, the name of person who initially received the disclosure, plus any advice given. This written confirmation must be signed and dated by the referrer.

Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to C-SPOC. The schools may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place a child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. If it is necessary for another agency to meet with a child in school, we will always seek to inform parents or carers, unless we are advised not to by that agency. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with C-SPOC and / or Southend Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

If a member of staff continues to have concerns about a child and feels the situation is not being addressed or does not appear to be improving, all staff understand they should press for re-consideration of the case with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If, for any reason, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) is not available, this will not delay appropriate action being taken. Safeguarding contact details are displayed in each school to ensure that all staff members have unfettered access to safeguarding support, should it be required. Any individual may refer to Social Care where there is suspected or actual risk of harm to a child.

When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our Trust they are informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in their school (and deputy/deputies) and how to share concerns with them.

7. Training

In line with statutory requirements, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy/deputies) undertake child protection training specifically for Designated Safeguarding Leads at least every two years. The Headteachers, all staff members and governors receive appropriate child protection training which is regularly updated and in line with advice from the Southend Children's Safeguarding Partnership. In addition, all staff members and other adults working with children in our schools receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Records of any safeguarding/child protection training undertaken are kept by each school for all staff and governors.

The schools ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputy) also undertakes training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate.
Following the removal of the condensed Annex A summary from KCSIE 2026, all staff (not only teaching staff) are required to read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 in full, in addition to this policy, as part of induction and annual refresher training.

8. Professional confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents / carers or pupils) or promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities.

Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

9. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our Trust is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our schools using MyConcern and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act (2018) places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.
Staff, governors and trustees should also refer to the DfE's Data Protection: a toolkit for schools / Data protection guidance for schools for practical guidance on applying data protection law correctly alongside safeguarding duties.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the Designated Safeguarding lead (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records relating to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

In line with statutory guidance, where a pupil transfers from our school within our Trust to another school / educational setting (including colleges), their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting without delay, separate from their main pupil file. These will be marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's Designated Safeguarding Lead. Care will be taken to ensure confidentiality is maintained and the transfer process is as safe as possible. The school will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school and then destroy any remaining copies held, other than copies of the specific records that are pertinent to the school (i.e., not CP Conference reports that are held elsewhere), unless there is a specific reason for us to keep it, which will be recorded (for example, we still have siblings in the school and the records relate to them too, or there is an ongoing complaint or request

for access to records). We will also keep a record of having received confirmation from the receiving school and of the date when we destroyed our copy.

Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead may also make contact with the new educational setting in advance of the child's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the child arrives.

Where a pupil joins a school in our Trust, we will request child protection records from the previous educational establishment (if none are received).

10. Interagency working

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead within the individual school to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). A report will be made available to a Child Protection Conference Chair, 48 working hours in advance of the Conference, and shared with the parents/carers before the day of the Conference.
The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions and, in the case of a Conference, to express a view, at the end of the meeting, as to whether the child(ren) should be made subject to a Child Protection Plan.

If a child is subject to a Care, Child Protection or a Child in Need Plan, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure the child is monitored regarding their school attendance, emotional well-being, academic progress, welfare and presentation. If the school is part of the core group, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure the school is represented, provides appropriate information and contributes to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the Child Protection Plan and / or the child's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of significant harm. In this case the Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the child's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed. If there is an unexplained absence of, or injury to a child subject to a Child Protection Plan, the child's Key Worker must be notified immediately.

11. Allegations or concerns about people working with children

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the schools' Staff Behaviour Policy / Code of Conduct. The schools works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET Procedures in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity). Section 7 of the current SET Procedures provides detailed information regarding this.

The Trust has processes in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff (or any adult working with children). Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff must be referred to the Headteacher (or the Deputy Headteacher in their absence), as they have responsibility for managing employment issues. Where the allegation concerns an agency member of staff, the Headteacher (or Deputy) will liaise with the agency, while following due process.

Where the concern involves the Headteacher, it should be reported direct to the CEO/Chair of Local Governing Body who will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

It is essential that the high standards of concern and professional responsibility adopted with regard to alleged child abuse by parents are similarly displayed when allegations are made about members of staff.

The SET Procedures require that, where an allegation against a member of staff is received, the Headteacher, senior named person, or the Chair of Local Governing Body must inform the Local Authority Designated

Officer (LADO) at LADO@southend.gov.uk using the LADO referral form, within one working day. However, wherever possible, contact with the LADO will be made immediately via email as they will then advise on how to proceed and whether the matter requires Police involvement. This will include advice on speaking to pupils and parents and HR. The school does not carry out any investigation before speaking to the LADO. The school will manage these procedures alongside the Trust's disciplinary process, if appropriate, in liaison with the Trust's HR Advisor.

Staffing matters are confidential and the Trust operates within a statutory framework around Data Protection.

In line with KCSIE 2026, where a safeguarding concern or allegation relates to an organisation or individual using our school premises (for example a lettings user, a community group or a before/after-school provider), the Headteacher (or Deputy) will follow the same reporting route – including referral to the LADO where the threshold is met – and will review the hiring arrangements and any safeguarding checks in place for that organisation or individual.

12. Use of reasonable force

The term 'reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people, such as guiding a child to safety or breaking up a fight. 'Reasonable' means using no more force than is needed. Our schools work in accordance with statutory and local guidance on the use of reasonable force *(see section 2)* and recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context.

13. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is 'making a disclosure in the public interest' and occurs when a worker (or member of the wider school community) raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others, for example pupils in the school or members of the public.

All members of staff and the wider school community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the school leadership team. We have 'whistleblowing' procedures in place and these are available in the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy. However, for any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, or where they feel their concerns have not been addressed, they may contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email at: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline on: 0808 800 5000 (24 hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

The Trust recognise there are a number of policies that are relevant to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare. These include the following:

Policy or Procedure:

- Anti-Bullying
- Disability and Equality Duty Statement
- Educating Children with Medical Needs
- E-Safety
- Health and Safety
- Looked After Children
- PSHCE Policy
- Behaviour Management
- Staff Handbook
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Safe Touch Policy
- Personal Use of Social Media
- Whistleblowing
- Vocational Education, College Link and Work Related Learning Policy