

Quest for Learning
Thameside Primary School
Cotman Close
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 5NL

Email: info@questforlearning.org.uk
Website: www.questforlearning.org.uk



Quest for Learning Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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This policy has been written in accordance with guidelines published by:



1. Introduction and Statement

Quest for Learning recognises its duty of care to safeguard children as detailed under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

Quest for Learning is fully committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all children and taking all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and protect children from harm, abuse and neglect.

Quest for Learning acknowledges its duty to act appropriately with regard to any allegations towards anyone working on its behalf, or towards any disclosures or suspicion of abuse.

Quest for Learning believes that:

- The welfare of all children and young people is paramount;
- All children, regardless of age, ability, gender, racial heritage, religious or spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation and /or identity, have the right to equal protection from harm or abuse;
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues;
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

2. Legal Framework

This policy and the accompanying procedure have been developed in accordance with the principles established by the following legislation and guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines
- The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- The Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners 2015.

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers, committee members/board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students, or anyone in a position of trust.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children Act 1989).

3. Organisational Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside the following organisational policies and guidance:

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Allegations Policy
- Code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Home Working Guidelines
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Privacy Notices for: Workforce, Pupils and Online

- Data Protection Policy
- Data Retention and Disposal Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy

This policy has been written in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSiE 2026) and should be used in conjunction with KCSiE 2026, which comes into force on 1 September 2026 and replaces KCSiE 2025.

All staff (including trustees and volunteers) will sign to confirm they have read and understood this policy along with KCSiE 2026: Part One. From KCSiE 2026 there is no separate condensed version of Part One; all staff, including tutors and volunteers, read the same full Part One document.

4. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and young people who receive *Quest for Learning* services. This includes children of adults who use our services.
- Provide all those in a position of trust with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

To keep children safe, *Quest for Learning* will:

- Provide a setting where children feel listened to, safe, secure, valued and respected.
- Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead for children and ensure a clear line of accountability with regard to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure all those in a position of trust have been provided with up to date and relevant information, training, support, and supervision to enable them to fulfil their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and child protection.
- Provide a clear procedure to follow when safeguarding and child protection concerns arise.
- Take allegations against staff seriously and follow the relevant procedures.
- Ensure effective and appropriate communication between all individuals in a position of trust.
- Build strong partnerships with other agencies to promote effective and appropriate multi-agency working, information sharing and good practice.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Quest for Learning recognises the importance of multi-agency working and is committed to its responsibility to work with other professionals and agencies in line with statutory guidance.

All individuals in a position of trust must:

- Understand the different types of abuse and recognise the possible risks and indicators.
- Understand their responsibility to report any concerns that a child is being, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected. This includes reporting any concern they may have regarding another person's behaviour towards a child or children.
- If appropriate; liaise with other agencies, contribute to safeguarding assessments and attend child protection meetings / core groups / conferences.
- Record and store information legally, professionally and securely in line with organisational policies and procedures.
- Undertake the required level of training for their role in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership standards, every 3 years for Generalist and Advanced Safeguarding and every 2 years for Designated Leads.
- Understand the line of accountability for reporting safeguarding concerns and be fully aware of the organisation's safeguarding lead and their role within the organisation.

Name of Deputy Safeguarding Lead: **Chris Higgins** Email: heather.richards@questforlearning.org.uk
 Telephone Number: 01235 527600
 Email: chris.higgins@questforlearning.org.uk

All individuals working in a position of trust at *Quest for Learning* will follow the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Multi-Agency Procedures/Local Authority guidance in all cases of abuse or suspected abuse (these can be found at <https://oscb.trixonline.co.uk/>).

Quest for Learning acknowledges the need to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity, and respect. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged, and children are supported to understand how to treat others with respect.

It is a mandatory requirement that all individuals working for *Quest for Learning* undertake the required level of training for their role in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership standards. It is the responsibility of the Administrator to keep an up-to-date record of training completed. This record is kept along with the Single Central Record of Recruitment and Vetting Checks, further details of which can be found in the charity's Safer Recruitment Policy.

Due to the nature of the work carried out by *Quest for Learning*, tutors are required to familiarise themselves with the safeguarding procedures, including a clear understanding of who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, within each school they are contracted to work.

This policy, along with the Safer Recruitment Policy, is available to all and can be viewed on our website: <https://questforlearning.org.uk/policies>

6. Safer Recruitment

Safer recruitment is central to the safeguarding of children and young people. All organisations which employ people to work with children in a position of trust have a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. This includes ensuring that the organisation adopts safer recruitment and selection procedures which prevent unsuitable persons from gaining access to children.

As an employer *Quest for Learning* follows safer recruitment guidance as set out in KCSiE 2026, including the changes to regulated activity introduced by the Crime and Policing Act 2026, under which enhanced DBS and barred list checks now apply to all volunteers who teach, train, instruct or supervise children regularly (three or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight work), regardless of whether they are supervised. Further details can be found in the *Quest for Learning* Safer Recruitment Policy.

7. Monitoring and Review

The policy will be reviewed annually. Additional updates to the safeguarding policy and appendix will take place when needed. All individuals working in a position of trust at *Quest for Learning* have access to this policy and sign to the effect that they have read and understood its contents.

Quest for Learning will complete an annual self-assessment to appraise their safeguarding practice against OSCP standards, please see <http://www.oscp.org.uk/> for further information. oscp@oxfordshire.gov.uk

8. Document Version History

Document Name:		Quest for Learning Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	
Owner:		<i>Heather Richards – Designated Safeguarding Lead</i>	
Author:		Heather Richards heather.richards@questforlearning.org.uk 01235 527600	
Version	Date	Amendments made	By whom (name/job title)
2	18/12/2018	Update Dep Safeguarding Lead and Charity Director	Andrea McGrath Administrator
3	04/09/2019	Annual policy review. Amendments made to Section 3 – policy documents to be referred to.	Tamzin Einon Head of Operations/DSL
4	01/09/2020	Annual policy review and update – changes made to procedures and definitions.	Tamzin Einon Head of Operations/DSL
5	11/03/2021	Amendments to Appendix A: Guiding Principles to reflect introduction of QfL Safeguarding Alert Form for tutors.	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
6	01/09/2021	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2021)	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
7	23/09/2021	Updated LADO contact details.	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
8	01/09/2022	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2022)	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
9	10/11/2022	Updated OSCB procedures link from www.oscb.org.uk to http://oxfordshirescb.proceduresonline.com/	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
10	01/09/2023	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2023) and updates to OSCB voluntary and community services guidance.	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
11	23/10/2023	Updated to include 'prejudice based and discriminatory bullying' where bullying is defined.	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
12	05/03/2024	Removed Siân Renwick as DDSL/Executive Director. Added Julia Edwards as DDSL, and Chris Higgins as Chief Executive. Updated 'Working Together' from 2018 to 2023	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
13	02/09/2024	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2024) and OSCB revisions	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
14	01/11/2024	Updated key staff details – Chris Higgins to replace Julia Edwards as DDSL.	Tamzin Einon Head of Teaching/DSL
15	09/09/2025	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2025) and OSCB revisions Updated key staff details – Heather Richards to replace Tamzin Einon as DSL/ Education and Programme Manager.	Heather Richards Education and Programme Manager/DSL
16	01/09/2026	Annual policy review to include updates to statutory guidance (KCSiE 2026), effective 1 September 2026, including new provisions on children questioning their gender, safer recruitment/regulated activity (Crime and Policing Act 2026), and online safety. No change to key staff.	Heather Richards Education and Programme Manager/DSL

Signed:



Heather Richards

Date: 20th August 2026

Role: Education and Programme Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead for Quest for Learning

Date agreed and ratified by the Trustee Board: TBC

Appendix A: Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures

1. Introduction

All professionals have a responsibility to report concerns to children's social care under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, if they believe or suspect that the child;

- Has suffered significant harm;
- Is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Has a disability, developmental and welfare needs which are likely only to be met through provision of family support services (with agreement of the child's parent) under the Children Act 1989;
- Is a Child in Need whose development would be likely to be impaired without provision of service.

2. What to do if you are concerned about a child

If a member of *Quest for Learning* staff has a concern about a child or if a child tells them they are being, or at risk of being, abused, exploited or neglected, staff will appropriately respond by listening and offering reassurance. Staff should:

- a. Make an accurate factual record as soon as possible including details of:
 - Dates and times of their observations
 - Dates and times of any discussions in which they were involved
 - Any injuries
 - Explanations given by the child / adult
 - What action was taken
 - Any actual words or phrases used by the child
 - Any questions the staff member asked (remembering not to ask any leading questions)

The records must be signed and dated by the author (or equivalent on electronic based records).

- b. Listen to the wishes and feelings of the child, but not to promise confidentiality.
- c. Report it to the **school** DSL/DDSL immediately.
 - The school DSL/DDSL will consider appropriate next steps, including contacting relevant outside agencies and parents if appropriate, and will ensure any decisions and justifications for those decisions will be recorded in writing with clear outcomes documented following any action taken.
- d. Inform the ***Quest for Learning*** DSL that a referral has been made. This should be done via the *QfL Safeguarding Alert Form*.
 - The *Quest for Learning* DSL will then liaise with the school to ensure effective information sharing and collaboration takes place where necessary.
- e. In the absence of the school and *Quest for Learning* DSL or DDSL, *Quest for Learning* staff will refer directly to MASH and/or the police (where appropriate) if there is a significant concern.

All staff should know who the *Quest for Learning* DSL is and who to approach if the DSL is unavailable, in addition tutors must familiarise themselves with this information for each school they are contracted to work in for *Quest for Learning*.

All staff have the right to make a referral to the police or social care directly and should do this if, for whatever reason, there are difficulties following the agreed protocol, e.g., they are the only adult on the premises at the time and have concerns about sending a child home.

In this instance, the member of staff should follow the procedures below.

Immediate concerns about a child

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the front door to Children's Social Care for all child protection and immediate safeguarding concerns. If there is an immediate safeguarding concern, for example:

- Allegations/concerns that the child has been sexually/physically abused
- Concerns that the child is suffering from severe neglect or other severe health risks
- Concern that a child is living in or will be returned to a situation that may place them at immediate risk
- The child is frightened to return home
- The child has been abandoned or parent is absent.

You should call the MASH team immediately. Tel: 0345 050 7666 - Available 8.30am-5pm (Mon-Thu), 8.30am – 4pm (Fri).

Professionals may use the [Oxfordshire MASH Referral Form](#) to refer children to social services. Alternatively, members of the public can also log their concerns with the MASH team via [this link](#).

If you have a concern out of office hours call Emergency Duty Team on 0800 833 408.

Record keeping

An anonymised Safeguarding Log is kept and maintained separately from all other records relating to children taught by *Quest for Learning*. Safeguarding records are kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the charity's own Data Protection and Data Retention & Disposal policies.

3. Allegations against others working with children, including Quest for Learning staff and volunteers

All allegations of abuse by those who work with children must be taken seriously, whether they are in a paid or unpaid capacity. This procedure should be applied when there is an allegation or concern that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm to children;
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children. This includes behaviour that may have happened outside of the school setting, that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children and is known as transferable risk. Where appropriate an assessment of transferable risk to children with whom the person works should be undertaken. If in doubt seek advice from the local authority designated officer (LADO)

There are two levels of allegation/concern:

- allegations that may meet the harms threshold (see definition above)
- allegation/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold – referred to in KCSiE 2026 guidance as 'low level concerns'

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working on behalf of *Quest for Learning* may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work; and does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children

- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- 'humiliating' pupils

Such concerns should always be recorded and reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Quest for Learning policy and procedures for managing 'low-level concerns' are detailed in the Allegations Policy.

In dealing with allegations or concerns against an adult, staff must:

- Report any concerns about the conduct of any member of staff or volunteer to the DSL as soon as possible;
- If an allegation is made against the DSL, the concerns need to be raised with the Chief Executive as soon as possible at chris.higgins@questforlearning.org.uk;
- If an allegation is made against the Chief Executive, the concerns need to be raised with the Chair of Trustees as soon as possible at chair@questforlearning.org.uk. If the Chair of Trustees is not available, then the Designated Officer for Oxfordshire (LADO) should be contacted directly;
- There may be situations when the DSL or Chair of Trustees will want to involve the police immediately, for example, if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence;
- Once an allegation has been received by the DSL or Chair of Trustees, and it has been deemed to meet the harms threshold (see definition above), they will contact the LADO on 01865 810603 or lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk within 24 hours and before carrying out any investigation into the allegation other than preliminary enquiries.

In liaison with the LADO, the charity will determine how to proceed and if necessary, a referral will be made to the MASH and/or the police.

The Designated Officer or a member of the team, will assess the information provided and advise on next steps, in line with KCSiE 2026 part 4 and Oxfordshire County Council's Designated Officers' local procedures.

Further details can be found in the *Quest for Learning* Allegations Policy.

4. Supporting children

If/when a child reports they are suffering or have suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect, or have caused or are causing physical or sexual harm to others, the initial response from all professionals should be to listen carefully to what the child says and to observe the child's behaviour and circumstances to:

- Clarify the concerns;
- Offer re-assurance about how the child will be kept safe;
- Explain what action will be taken and within what timeframe.

It is important to recognise that the child may not disclose the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged.

It is essential that the child is reassured they are being taken seriously and will be supported. Children and young people should never be made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment.

The child must not be pressed for information, led or cross-examined or given false assurances of absolute confidentiality, as this could prejudice police investigations, especially in cases of sexual abuse.

Additional consideration needs to be given to children with communication difficulties and for those whose preferred language is not English. It is important to communicate with them in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference.

If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to children's social care, they should be asked for their views.

It should be explained to the child that, whilst their view will be taken into account, the professional has a responsibility to take whatever action is required to ensure the child's safety and the safety of other children.

Confidentiality

Children have a right to confidentiality under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It's important to respect the wishes of a child or any person who doesn't consent to share confidential information. Children and young person's data should be recorded in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR).

If you're not given consent to share information, you may still lawfully go ahead if the child is experiencing, or is at risk of, significant harm.

Child protection concerns, disclosures from children, or safeguarding allegations made against a person in a position of trust must not be discussed across the workforce as a whole. This information should be shared solely with Designated Safeguarding Leads, Children's Social Care, and/or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate.

Personal information which is shared by the child or young person on a 1:1 level, such as sexual orientation or gender identification, should not be disclosed to the workforce as a whole.

If staff and volunteers wish to discuss situations with colleagues to gain a wider perspective, this should be done on an anonymous basis with names and other identifying information relating to the child and their family remaining strictly confidential.

Seven golden rules for information sharing

1. Remember that the Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how, and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.
4. Share with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
5. Consider safety and well-being: base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.

6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

5. Supporting those working with children

Quest for Learning recognises that staff who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting. It is important that all staff supporting children are able to discuss safeguarding concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and with their line manager in regular supervision. *Quest for Learning* also recognise that our Designated Person(s) should have access to support and appropriate workshops, courses or meetings as organised by the Local Authority.

6. Whistleblowing in a safeguarding context

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where those in a position of trust fail to do so. All those in a position of trust should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about dangerous or illegal activity, or any wrongdoing within their organisation.

While *Quest for Learning* has a separate Whistleblowing Policy, this is a summary that outlines the process when there is a concern that safeguarding issues have not been reported or followed correctly.

This does not replace the Whistleblowing Policy and should be read in conjunction with the charity's policy which is available to all and can be accessed at <https://questforlearning.org.uk/policies>

Whistleblowing is a term that is used when staff want to report a concern within their organisation that involves their manager or a person senior to them in the organisation which may prevent them from following the normal reporting systems.

There are a limited number of areas that can be called whistleblowing, and the policy protects staff from being punished for raising concerns.

Within *Quest for Learning*, the Chief Executive is the senior manager and responsible for all staff. If you are concerned that any member of staff within the charity is not following safeguarding processes or behaving in a way that is placing children at risk, you should, in the first place, make the Chief Executive aware.

If your concern is about the Chief Executive, you should raise this with our Chair of the Board of Trustees at chair@questforlearning.org.uk

If you would prefer to raise your concerns outside of the charity, then you are able to contact the NSPCC whistleblowing line on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk for national organisations or make contact with Oxfordshire County Council.

If you believe that a member of staff is harming a child (an allegation) and this has been reported to the Chief Executive and no / insufficient action has been taken, or the member of staff you have concerns about is the Chief Executive, then you can contact the Local Authority Designated Officer's (LADO) team on 01865 810603 or email lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Further guidance for staff can be accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2> and through the NSPCC website <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/>

7. Preventing radicalisation

All *Quest for Learning* staff have undertaken Prevent Awareness training as part of their wider safeguarding duties to support them in identifying radicalisation and in understanding what steps they need to take to protect the children and families *Quest for Learning* works with.

Further information and guidance are available on the OSCB website: [Radicalisation - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership\(oscp.org.uk\)](https://www.oscb.org.uk/). The Department for Education has also published advice for schools on the Prevent duty and is intended to complement the Prevent guidance and signposts other sources of advice and support: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>

Appendix B: Definitions and Indicators of Abuse

Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. **All** staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. If staff are unsure, they should **always** speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy DSL).

All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-alone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Definitions and indicators of abuse and neglect

- **Abuse:** a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.
- **Children** are any people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday; a 16-year-old, whether living independently, in further education, in the armed forces, or in hospital, is a child and is entitled to the same protection and services as anyone younger. KCSiE now applies to providers of post-16 education as set out Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021.
- **Child protection** is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and refers to activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, or significant harm is suggested.
- **Early help** is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children rather than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent HSB and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. It is particularly important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) know what the local early help process is and how and where to access support.
- **Harm** is ill treatment or impairment of health and development, including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.
- **Safeguarding children** is the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.
- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** is defined 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
 - promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the child.
 - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

School staff are particularly important, as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare, and prevent concerns from escalating (KCSiE 2026).

A bespoke helpline for children and young people who've experienced abuse at school, and for worried adults and professionals that need support and guidance. If you are concerned about something, you can contact the NSPCC helpline Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

- **Significant harm** is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in the family in the best interests of the child. Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 states 'where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant turns on the child's health or development, his health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.'
- **Vulnerable children:** Any child may benefit from Early Help, but all school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:
 - is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
 - has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care plan)
 - has a mental health need
 - is a young carer
 - is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
 - is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home, or care,
 - has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit.
 - is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
 - is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
 - has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending
 - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
 - is misusing alcohol and other drugs themselves
 - is at risk of so-called 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
 - is a privately fostered child; is affected by child-to-parent abuse; or is repeatedly removed from the classroom, which KCSiE 2026 notes may itself be a trigger for an Early Help referral.

[Early Help and the Locality Community Support Service \(LCSS\) - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(oscb.org.uk\)](https://www.oscb.org.uk)

Categories of abuse:

- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such that it causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development and conveying that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include:

- not giving the child opportunities to express their views
- deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate

It may feature:

- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children
- interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability
- overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning
- preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- serious bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice based and discriminatory bullying)
- causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, it may involve a parent failing to:
 - provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger

- ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care givers
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. Educational neglect is also considered: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect/>

- **Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- **Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education (KCSiE 2026).

Bullying:

The Anti-Bullying Alliance define bullying as: **“The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or a group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face or online.”**

The following are some examples of types of bullying; however, this is not an exhaustive list:

- **Physical** - For example, kicking, hitting, spitting, pushing, taking and damaging belongings, or threatening to do any of these things.
- **Verbal** - For example name calling, taunting, threats, offensive or discriminatory remarks, whether about people or objects.
- **Indirect, emotional or relational** - For example, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours or nasty stories, gossiping, excluding from social groups, forcing someone to do something against their will, tormenting, “dirty looks”, or producing offensive graffiti.
- **Cyber** - For example, sending offensive text messages, using pictures or video clips, Instant Messaging, emails, social networking sites or other electronic contact to cause harm, embarrassment or discredit to students or staff.
- **Prejudice-based and discriminatory** - For example, bullying or harassment that is homophobic, gender based, sexist, sexual or transphobic, racist or discriminating against religion, Special Educational Needs, disabilities, health conditions or a person's home circumstances, such as being looked after, or caring for a family member. This includes actions or language that discriminates against people for any of these reasons, or other reasons relating to a person's actual or perceived identity.
- **Sexual** - For example inappropriate or unwanted physical contact, verbal comments or cyber messages of a sexual nature.

All *Quest for Learning* staff understand that bullying is a serious form of emotional abuse and will report any concerns via the child protection and safeguarding procedures detailed in Annex A of this policy and will follow relevant guidance set out in the Safeguarding, Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies of their partner school(s) where appropriate.

Mental Health:

- All staff should also be 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
- Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. KCSiE 2026 recognises self-harm and suicidal ideation or risk of suicide as safeguarding concerns in their own right; staff should be alert to changes in behaviour, sleep or social withdrawal and report any concern to the DSL
- Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, and education
- If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following their child protection policy, and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>

The department has published advice and guidance on [Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#), and [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) (which may also be useful for colleges). In addition, Public Health England has produced a range of resources to support secondary school teachers to promote positive health, wellbeing and resilience among young people including its guidance [Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#). Its resources include social media, forming positive relationships, smoking and alcohol. See [Every Mind Matters](#) for links to all materials and lesson plans.

Children questioning their gender:

KCSiE 2026 includes new statutory guidance on children questioning their gender, developed following public consultation and the Cass Review. It is not for Quest for Learning or its partner schools to initiate any social transition; QfL will respond only where a child or their parent/carer raises the issue, and any tutor or volunteer who receives such a disclosure must inform the QfL DSL and the school's DSL without delay, without giving any assurance of confidentiality.

Parents and carers should be involved and their views given great weight, except in the rare circumstances where doing so would place the child at risk; any decision not to involve parents rests with the school DSL. Facilities such as toilets and changing rooms continue to be organised on the basis of biological sex, and single-sex sports must be organised by biological sex where there is a safety consideration.

Full guidance is set out in KCSiE 2026, paragraphs 252–282. Quest for Learning will follow the process agreed with each partner school and keep a record of decisions made and the reasons for them.

Appendix C: Further information

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM:

[Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board](#)

- **Indicators** – There is a range of potential indicators that a girl may be at risk of FGM. Warning signs that FGM may be about to take place, or may have already taken place, can be found on pages 16-17 of the Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines, and Chapter 9 of those Guidelines (pp 42-44) focuses on the role of schools and colleges. Section 5C of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 75 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) gives the government powers to issue statutory guidance on FGM to relevant persons. Once the government issues any statutory multi-agency guidance this will apply to schools and colleges.
- **Actions** – If staff have a concern, they should activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care. Mandatory reporting commenced in October 2015. These procedures remain when dealing with concerns regarding the potential for FGM to take place. Where a teacher discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18, there will be a statutory duty upon that individual to report it to the police.
- **Mandatory Reporting Duty** – From October 2015, Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) placed a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and involve the Integrated Front Door as appropriate.

Fabricated or Induced Illness / Perplexing Presentation

Staff must be aware of the risk of children being abused through fabricated or induced illness (FII). There are three main ways of the carer fabricating or inducing illness in a child.

These are not mutually exclusive and include:

- fabrication of signs and symptoms. This may include fabrication of past medical history.
- fabrication of signs and symptoms and falsification of hospital charts and records, and specimens of bodily fluids. This may also include falsification of letters and documents.

- induction of illness by a variety of means.

Where this is identified and considered a risk a referral will be made to the MASH for support and guidance. School may involve other agencies in making their assessments. That could include school nurse, community paediatrician, occupational therapists for example.

Gang and Youth / Serious Violence

Children and Young People who become involved in gangs are at risk of violent crime and as a result of this involvement are deemed vulnerable. Agencies and professionals have a responsibility to safeguard these children and young people and to prevent further harm both to the young person and their potential victims. Risks associated with gang activity include access to weapons (including firearms), retaliatory violence and territorial violence with other gangs, knife crime, sexual violence, and substance misuse

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

Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home.
- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g., knife crime).

Faith Based Abuse

Our policy recognises the 'National Action Plan to Tackle Abuse linked to faith or belief' which describes this abuse as:

'not about challenging people's beliefs, but where beliefs lead to abuse that must not be tolerated. This includes belief in witchcraft, spirit possession, demons or the devil, the evil eye, or djinns, dakini, kindoki, ritual or muti murders and use of fear of the supernatural to make children comply with being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation. The beliefs which are not confined to one faith, nationality or ethnic community.'

When this type of abuse is suspected staff will make a referral to the MASH Team for support and guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-action-plan-to-tackle-child-abuse-linked-to-faith-or-belief>

Risk of Trafficking

Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime to the UN Convention (2000) (ratified by the UK on 6 February 2006) defines trafficking as:

- "Trafficking of persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.
- The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.
- The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article

- “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

Children trafficked into the country may be registered at a school for a term or longer, before being moved to another part of the UK or abroad. This pattern of registration and de-registration may be an indicator that a child has been trafficked. It has been identified as a particular concern in schools which are situated near ports of entry, but practitioners should be alert to this possibility in all schools. However, practitioners should always bear in mind that not all children who go missing from education have been victims of trafficking. For example, there may be instances of children from communities that move around – Gypsy, Roma, traveller, or migrant families – who collectively go missing from school.

If a member of the school staff suspects that a child may have been trafficked, they should act immediately to inform the senior member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection and ensure that police or local authority children’s social care are contacted immediately.

Risks Associated with Parent/Carer Mental Health

The majority of parents who suffer mental ill-health can care for and safeguard their children and/or unborn child. Some parents, however, will be unable to meet the needs and ensure the safety of their children.

Our approach is to recognise; seek support; instil preventive factors and monitor. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should seek support through the Early Help team but escalate to the MASH Team if they are concerned that the child involved is being placed at immediate risk of harm.

Drugs and Alcohol

Children can be at risk from drugs and alcohol directly and indirectly. They may be at direct risk of having access to these substances (see guidance on gangs) or indirectly because they affect family life at home through use by parents/carers, siblings, child-minders etc.

More details can be found at: [Substance Misuse - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriages

Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage refers to a collection of practices used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural or religious beliefs and honour. Violence can occur when offenders perceive that a relative has shamed the family or community by breaking their ‘code of honour’. Honour Based Violence cuts across all cultures and communities: Turkish, Kurdish, Afghani, South Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and South and Eastern European for example. This is not an exhaustive list. Where a culture is heavily male dominated, HBV may exist.

‘A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some vulnerable adults, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure.’ In addition, since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial ‘marriages’ as well as legal marriages.

For more information see:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/forced-marriage/>

<http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Children who are absent from education

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are absent for prolonged periods or missing from education in their area.

Children who have unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child becoming absent from education in the future.

Child Sexual Exploitation & Child Criminal Exploitation

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults.

The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual, and it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child 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. CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. CSE can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. It can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity and may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g., through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media).

CCE indicators can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends; and
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant.

The Department for Education provides: [Child sexual exploitation: guide for practitioners](#)

A full list of indicators can be found here: [Child Sexual Exploitation - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

While there is still no legal definition of 'Child Criminal Exploitation' or CCE, it is increasingly being recognised as a major factor behind crime in communities across the UK, while also simultaneously victimising vulnerable young people and leaving them at risk of harm. A simple definition of CCE is: CCE often occurs without the victim being aware that they are being exploited and involves young people being encouraged, cajoled, or threatened to carry out crime for the benefit of others. In return they are offered friendship or peer acceptance, but also cigarettes, drugs (especially cannabis), alcohol or even food and accommodation.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs, groups or drug networks that supply drugs from urban to suburban areas across the country, including market and coastal towns, using dedicated mobile phone lines or 'deal lines'. They exploit children and vulnerable adults to move the drugs and money to and from the urban area, and to store the drugs in local markets. They will often use intimidation, violence, and weapons, including knives, corrosives, and firearms. County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing, and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults, and local communities. Further information can be found here: [Child Criminal Exploitation - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Sexual harassment, violence, harmful sexual behaviours (including child-on-child abuse and ‘upskirting’)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, and sexual assault.

It is important that schools and colleges are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual harassment we mean ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child on child, sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated, and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Staff must challenge any form of derogatory and sexualised language or behaviour. Staff should be vigilant to sexualised/aggressive touching/grabbing. DfE guidance situates sexual violence, sexual harassment, and harmful sexual behaviour in the context of developing a whole-school safeguarding culture, where sexual misconduct is seen as unacceptable, and not ‘banter’ or an inevitable part of growing up. Advice about tackling and reporting sexual harassment in schools and colleges is available in the DfE guidance KCSiE 2026, which also addresses how misogyny can escalate into harmful sexual behaviour.

It should be recognised that these issues are likely to occur, and so schools should have procedures in place to deal with them. Groups at particular risk include girls, students who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender+ (LGBT+), or are perceived by peers to be LGBT+, and pupils with SEND. We recognise that these children can be targeted by other children, so it is vital your school provide a safe space for these children to speak out and share their concerns with members of staff. Pupils are protected from ‘upskirting’, bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice based and discriminatory bullying), homophobic, biphobic and transphobic behaviour, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. Staff have familiarity with the [Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED), the Human Rights Act 1998 and recent reforms to the Act and how they apply to safeguarding.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights/outcome/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights-consultation-response>

Quest for Learning acknowledges the need to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity, and respect. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged, and children are supported to understand how to treat others with respect. We also have a statutory duty to report and record any of the above incidents.

Schools must record incidents across the whole spectrum of sexual violence, sexual harassment, and harmful sexualised behaviours so that they can understand the scale of the problem in their own schools and make appropriate plans to reduce it.

All such incidents should be immediately reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or equivalent and managed in line with your setting’s child protection policies. Victims of harm should be supported by the school’s pastoral system and, and their wishes and feelings considered and that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them.

The appropriate safeguarding lead person should be familiar with the full guidance from the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS), Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Upskirting

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

gender, can be a victim. The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019.

Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal, or oral penetration only if they agree by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Further information about consent can be found here: [Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)

Sexual consent

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- the age of consent is 16

Digital safety, remote learning, and filtering & monitoring

It is recognised by *Quest for Learning* that the use of technology presents challenges and risks to children and adults both inside and outside of the school setting.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism.
- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes, and the use of generative AI to facilitate this.
- **Conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, including digitally altered or AI-generated images, and sharing other explicit images), and online bullying.
- **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>)

The DSL has overall responsibility for online safeguarding within the charity. The DSL and Chief Executive have read the Online Safety section of Part Two of KCSiE 2026 (page 44), which sets out the approach to online safety and filtering and monitoring.

As schools and other organisations increasingly work online, it is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. *Quest for Learning* understands that where children are being asked to learn online at home the Department for Education has provided advice to support schools and colleges do so safely and will follow this advice where appropriate.

Further information about the charity's specific approaches to this can be found in the Acceptable Use Policy for Staff and Remote Learning Guidelines for Parents/Carers.

Due to the technology-free format of the *Quest for Learning* programmes, tutors and children do not have access to the school's IT systems during sessions and tutors will not access the internet at any time whilst working with the children. Whilst on school premises, all *Quest for Learning* staff will adhere to the school's Online Safety Policy and related procedures, and understand they have a duty of care to raise any concerns they may have regarding the online safety of the children with whom they are working with the school DSL.

Pre-appointment checks and safer recruitment

Any offer of appointment made to a successful candidate, including one who has lived or worked abroad, must be

conditional on satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks.

When appointing new staff, *Quest for Learning* will:

- verify a candidate's identity. Identification checking guidelines can be found on the GOV.UK website
- obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate (including barred list information, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity)
- obtain a separate barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
- verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role
- verify the person's right to work in the UK, including EU nationals. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, follow advice on the GOV.UK website
- if the person has lived or worked outside the UK, make any further checks *Quest for Learning* considers appropriate
- verify professional qualifications, as appropriate, including carrying out a DfE prohibition check for all staff with QTS where possible
- carry out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any issues that are publicly available online. Shortlisted candidates will be informed before online searches are carried out. Ensure evidence of these checks has been retained.

The Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021 extended safeguarding provisions to providers of post 16 Education: 16-19 Academies, Special Post-16 institutions and Independent Training Providers.

Single Central Record

Quest for Learning maintains a single central record (SCR).

Guidance states that the single central record must cover the following people:

- all staff (including supply staff, and teacher trainees on salaried routes) who work at the school: in colleges, this means those providing education to children; and
- The information that must be recorded in respect of staff members (including teacher trainees on salaried route) is whether the following checks have been carried out or certificates obtained, and the date on which each check was completed/certificate obtained
- an identity check / a barred list check / an enhanced DBS check/certificate / a prohibition from teaching check.
- further checks on people who have lived or worked outside the UK – overseas checks/right to work
- a check of professional qualifications; and a check to establish the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.

The details of an individual should be removed from the single central record once they no longer work at the school/organisation.

The SCR shall be updated in the light of any further legislation.

Appendix D: Staff Induction, Awareness and Training

- All members of the *Quest for Learning* teaching team have been provided with a copy of Part One of "*Keeping Children Safe in Education*" (2026) which covers safeguarding information for all staff. From 2026 there is no shorter, condensed version of Part One (previously Annex A); all staff, including tutors and volunteers, read the same full document. The DSL and DDSL (Senior Leaders) will read the entire document. Members of staff have signed to confirm that they have read and understood Part One – this record is kept with all other safeguarding documentation in the secure online document cloud.
- The DSL will ensure that all new staff and volunteers (including temporary staff) are aware of the charity's internal safeguarding processes.

- All staff members (including temporary staff) will receive training to ensure they are aware of a range of safeguarding issues.
- All staff members (including temporary staff) will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually.
- All staff members (including temporary staff) will be made aware of the charity's expectations regarding safe and professional practice via the staff behaviour policy (or code of conduct) and Acceptable Use Policy.
- The DSL and Chief Executive will provide an annual report to the Board of Trustees detailing safeguarding training undertaken by all staff and will maintain up to date register of who has been trained.
- Although the Board of Trustees has a nominated lead for safeguarding, all members of the Board will familiarise themselves with the safeguarding policy and procedures at least annually and Safeguarding will be a standing agenda item at meetings of the Board.

Appendix E: Contacts

QfL DSL	Heather Richards	heather.richards@questforlearning.org.uk
QfL DDSL	Chris Higgins	chris.higgins@questforlearning.org.uk
QfL Nominated Safeguarding Trustee	James Veness	SafeguardingTeam@questforlearning.org.uk
MASH	0345 050 7666	http://www.oscb.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child/
Out Of Hours Emergency Duty Team (EDT)	0800 833 408	
Designated Officer (LADO)	01865 810603	Lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Education Safeguarding Advisory Team (ESAT)	01865 810603	ESAT.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Kingfisher Team (CSE)	01865 309196	
Police: Emergency Non-emergency	999 101	
OSCP		oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk