Oakwood School

www.oakwood.walsall.sch.uk

Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures | September 2026

Item	Detail
Policy owner	Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved by	The Mercian Trust Board and the Local Governing Body
Applies to	All staff and volunteers
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review cycle	Annual, or earlier where statutory guidance, local arrangements or the Mercian Trust risk profile changes
Status	Final
Linked policies and protocols	Behaviour, Attendance, SEND, Online Safety, Staff Code of Conduct, Safer Recruitment, Whistleblowing, Complaints, Data Protection, Educational Visits, Alternative Provision protocol, Reasonable Force/Restrictive Interventions, Suspensions, Permanent Exclusions and Pupil Movement,

How to use these procedures

These procedures explain how Oakwood School implements The Mercian Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Every member of staff must know who to contact, what to do, how to record and how to escalate.

Staff are expected to maintain professional curiosity at all times.

Safeguarding Quick Reference

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are Nicole Rostron and Lianne Atkins

Our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Dan Garbett, Chante Williamson, Tracey Tolley, Portia Richards (Fri), Nin Sambhi, Aimee Shaylor, Michelle Smith, Ruth Richardson

Our safeguarding reporting system is called My Concern

Speak to a DSL/DDSL if you are concerned.

Our safeguarding office is located next to the Primary Staff Room (FLT Office), or a SG Lead can be contacted via the main office.

The emergency contact numbers for Children's Services are :

Emergency / Out of Hours: 0300 555 2922 (Evenings, weekends, and bank holidays)

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): 0300 555 2866 (Option 2, Monday–Thursday 8:45 AM–5:15 PM)

Immediate Danger: 999

1. The Mercian Trust and Oakwood School vision, identity and safeguarding principles

Safeguarding within The Mercian Trust and our school is a fundamental responsibility and a core strategic priority.

It is integral to the Mercian Trust's mission to improve social mobility and deliver social justice by ensuring that every child and young person is protected from harm, supported to thrive, and enabled to achieve sustained positive outcomes.

The Mercian Trust's approach to safeguarding is shaped by its guiding principle: Life to the full in pursuit of what is good, right and true.' Safeguarding is therefore understood not only as the protection of children from harm, but as the creation of environments in which children feel safe, included, valued and able to realise their potential.

We are committed to securing equitable education for all pupils. Safeguarding plays a central role in this by identifying and addressing barriers to engagement, including those arising from vulnerability, disadvantage, special educational needs, attendance concerns, mental health, online risk, behaviour, exclusion, alternative provision or wider contextual factors.

Safeguarding is delivered through a connected and integrated framework across our and services within the Mercian Trust. It encompasses protection, inclusion, wellbeing, belonging and the promotion of positive outcomes, recognising that these elements are interdependent and must be addressed holistically.

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, with clear accountability at all levels of leadership.
- Safeguarding practice is proactive, responsive and rooted in early identification and intervention.
- Safeguarding systems are continuously evaluated and improved to ensure effectiveness and impact.
- Safeguarding practice is inclusive, recognising that vulnerability is dynamic and may affect any child.
- Safeguarding decisions are informed by professional curiosity, evidence, pupil voice and a thorough understanding of context.
- Safeguarding is delivered through a connected and integrated framework across our schools and services within the Mercian Trust. It encompasses protection, inclusion, wellbeing, belonging, anti-discriminatory practice and the promotion of positive outcomes, recognising that these elements are interdependent and must be addressed holistically.
- Safeguarding is strengthened through partnership with families, communities and multi-agency services.

Leaders evaluate safeguarding not only by the quality of systems and processes, but by the extent to which these result in improved safety, attendance, engagement and outcomes for pupils.

Child/ren includes everyone under the age of 18 years old.

Child protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm (Section 47).

Children in Need refers to a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health and development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services, or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. (Section 17).

References to Parent or Parents means the natural or adoptive Parents of the pupil (irrespective of whether they are or have ever been married, with whom the pupil lives, or whether they have contact with the pupil) as well as any person who is not the natural or adoptive Parent of the pupil, but who has care of, or Parental responsibility for, the pupil (e.g. foster carer / legal guardian).

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, trustees, governors, volunteers, visitors, supply staff, contractors, third-party providers and adults working with or on behalf of the Mercian Trust. It applies during the school day, during extended provision, on school visits and residentials, during online or remote activity linked to school, and wherever the Mercian Trust has safeguarding responsibilities for pupils placed in alternative or off-site provision.

2. Oakwood School Safeguarding leadership, contacts and systems

For contact details, please see directory sheet located by phones in each room or contact main school office.

Role	**Name**
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Nicole Rostron/Lianne Atkins
Deputy DSLs	Dan Garbett, Chante Williamson, Tracey Tolley, Portia Richards (Fri), Nin Sambhi, Aimee Shaylor, Michelle Smith, Ruth Richardson
Headteacher	Michelle Smith, Head of Primary Ruth Richardson, Head of Secondary
Attendance Lead	Nicole Rostron/Michelle Smith/Ruth Richardson
Behaviour Lead	Lorna Meredith-Jones
Family Liaison Team	Pelsall Lane Campus: Dan Garbett (FT), Chante Williamson (FT), Tracey Tolley (M-Th), Portia Richards (Fri), Walsall Wood Campus: Nin Sambhi (Mon-Weds), Aimee Shaylor (Weds-Fri)
Online Safety / IT Lead	Kelvin Stephens/Nicole Rostron
Mental Health Lead	Nicole Rostron

	MHFA: Nicole Rostron, Lianne Atkins
Young Carers Lead	Aimee Shaylor
Designated Teacher for looked-after children	Michelle Smith/Ruth Richardson
Alternative Provision Lead	Ruth Richardson
Medical Needs / Allergy Lead	Sadie Chapman
Chair of Local Governing Body	Paul Labrum
System / route	**Oakwood School arrangements**
Safeguarding recording system	My Concern
Attendance system	Tracked and monitored through use of Bromcom and Power BI. School currently working with Inclusive Attendance to further strengthen and develop attendance procedure, Bronze Level attained in Summer 2026.
Behaviour system	Tracked and monitored through use of internal Serious Incident Forms, alongside Bromcom data.
Educational visits system	Evolve
Medical information system	Medical Tracker
Filtering and monitoring system	Smoothwall and Fortigate
Emergency / out-of-hours contact route	Kate Bargh (First Contact) - k.bargh@merciantrust.org.uk Michelle Smith (Head of School, Primary) m.smith@oak.merciantrust.org.uk Ruth Richardson (Head of School, Secondary) - r.richardson@oak.merciantrust.org.uk

3. Keeping Children Safe in Education, staff training and ongoing safeguarding assurance

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

All staff (including staff who do not work directly with children on a day-to-day basis) including temporary staff, volunteers and governors as appropriate to their role, must read and understand Part One of KCSIE 2026 and any additional sections directed by the school.

Staff must confirm in writing that they have read, understood and will comply with these requirements.

Training and assurance

All staff receive safeguarding training at induction, annual safeguarding and child protection training, and updates throughout the year. This includes online safety, child-on-child abuse, attendance as safeguarding, low-level concerns, professional boundaries and local risks.

- Staff will receive safeguarding briefings, updates and scenario-based discussions throughout the academic year.
- DSL's will receive professional dialogue, supervision and reflective conversations.
- School leaders will assess understanding of safeguarding via staff safeguarding surveys and confidence checks.
- The Mercian Trust central team will complete reviews of safeguarding practice and recording.
- The Mercian Trust central team will complete compliance, quality assurance and learning reviews.
- Staff will receive additional coaching, guidance or training where development is identified.

Safeguarding understanding is not assumed following reading or attendance. Leaders seek proportionate assurance that knowledge is retained and applied in practice. Where mandatory requirements are not completed, leaders act promptly to secure compliance and pupil safety, using the Mercian Trust employment procedures where required.

4. What every member of staff must do

If you have a concern

Act immediately. Inform the DSL or Deputy DSL. Record the concern promptly and factually. Do not investigate. Do not promise confidentiality. If a child is in immediate danger, contact emergency services and inform the DSL as soon as possible.

Recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation

Category	Definition
Physical abuse	A form of abuse that may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm.
Emotional abuse	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on emotional development.
Sexual abuse	Forcing, causing or inciting a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child understands what is happening.
Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health or development.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation may overlap and rarely present in isolation. Concerns may also arise through online harm, peer relationships, behaviour, attendance, appearance, family information or patterns over time.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means 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; providing help and support to meet children's needs as soon as problems emerge; ensuring that

children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The Mercian Trust uses the term abuse, neglect and exploitation to reflect the breadth of harm that children may experience. Harm may be physical, emotional, domestic, sexual, criminal, online, contextual or associated with neglect, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, harassment, peer relationships, radicalisation, coercion or abuse of power.

Prejudice-based harm, Faith-targeted abuse and discrimination

All staff should recognise that children may experience prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice, faith-targeted abuse and other forms of discriminatory behaviour. Such experiences may significantly affect a child's welfare, wellbeing, mental health, sense of safety, sense of belonging and willingness to seek help. Staff should be alert to the indicators and impact of prejudice-based harm and ensure that concerns are recorded appropriately and considered within safeguarding practice, assessments, decision-making and support arrangements, with appropriate action taken through safeguarding, pastoral, behaviour and inclusion systems where required.

Raising, recording and escalating a concern

- Report concerns to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.
- Record the facts, context, date, time, location, people present and the child's words where relevant.
- Do not add assumptions or undertake your own investigation.
- Escalate if risk remains or the response does not safeguard the child.
- Never allow hierarchy, role or organisational structure to prevent safeguarding action.

The normal route is through the DSL team. However, any member of staff may make a direct referral to children's social care if they believe a child is at risk or appropriate action has not been taken. Inform the DSL unless doing so would increase risk or compromise protective action.

Safeguarding information must be treated with appropriate confidentiality but must never be withheld where sharing is necessary to keep a child safe. Staff must not promise confidentiality to children. Staff should explain that information may need to be shared with those who can help.

Safeguarding records must be factual, timely, accurate, secure and capable of evidencing decision-making. Records should distinguish between fact, professional judgement and third-party information.

Child protection files will be transferred securely and promptly when pupils move schools.

5. Local safeguarding partnership and multi-agency routes

Oakwood School works with the local safeguarding partnership, children's social care, police, health, education and other agencies. The DSL seeks advice, makes referrals, contributes to early help and statutory planning, shares information lawfully and escalates where risk remains or thresholds are disputed.

Local safeguarding partnership procedures and threshold guidance are available to all DSLs and deputy DSLs and are used when considering referrals and escalation.

Service	**Contact / access route**

Children's Social Care / front door	MASH/Initial Response- **0300 555 2866** (option 2) **Hours:** Monday to Thursday, 8:45 AM – 5:15 PM; Friday, 8:45 AM – 4:45 PM Out of hours urgent queries – see emergency duty team.
Emergency Duty Team	**(out of hours)** 0300 555 2922 – or 999 in an emergency
Early Help	**Office Hours (Early Help):** 0300 555 2866 (Option 1) **Hours:** Monday to Thursday, 8:45 AM – 5:15 PM; Friday, 8:45 AM – 4:45 PM Out of hours urgent queries – see emergency duty team.
Local Authority Designated Officer	**Email:** lado@walsall.gov.uk **Office Phone:** 01922 652322 or 01922 654040 **Alternative Mobile:** 07432 422205 [1, 2]
Local Safeguarding Partnership website / procedures	Walsall Safeguarding Partnership
Prevent / Channel route	**Local Prevent Co-ordinator**: Niall Markham **Direct Email**: niall.markham@walsall.gov.uk **General Team Email:** prevent@walsall.gov.uk **Police Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) Gateway:** CTU_gateway@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk
Police safeguarding route	Police updates shared through Esther Cotton (Safeguarding Co-ordinator for Education and Early Years, Walsall) https://www.police.uk/ - View 'Your area' crime data for reference. 999 Emergency/101 non emergency MASH advice through routes above.
Operation Encompass school contact	Encompass Notifications received by Kate Bargh, Nicole Rostron and Lianne Atkins

6. Operation Encompass

Oakwood School participates in Operation Encompass. Notifications concerning domestic abuse are reviewed by the DSL or appropriately trained Deputy DSL. The school considers welfare checks, pastoral support and wider safeguarding action, records and stores information securely, and recognises that attendance, engagement, behaviour or emotional wellbeing may be affected even without a direct disclosure.

7. Pupils who may be more vulnerable to harm

Vulnerability is dynamic and may arise from individual needs, family circumstances, lived experience, attendance, behaviour, health, SEND, peer relationships, online activity, education history, community context or combined factors.

Area	Indicators requiring additional vigilance
SEND, disability, health and communication	SEND, EHCP, disability, communication or sensory needs, medical conditions, allergies and dependence on adults.
Attendance and educational engagement	Persistent or severe absence, missing education or lessons, repeated lateness, emotional avoidance, part-time timetable, exclusion risk, suspension or pupil movement.
Social care, care experience and family context	Current or previous social worker, child in need or protection plan, looked-after or previously looked-after status, kinship care, private fostering, young caring, domestic abuse, homelessness, bereavement or parental difficulty.
Exploitation and contextual harm	Criminal or sexual exploitation, county lines, serious violence, gang association, coercion, radicalisation, harmful sexual behaviour, discrimination, misogyny or unsafe peer culture.
Online and digital risk	Harmful content, image sharing, grooming, coercion, cyberbullying, blocked-content attempts, Smoothwall alerts, AI-generated harm and emerging technology.
Mental health and wellbeing	Anxiety, low mood, self-harm, suicidal ideation, trauma, dysregulation, isolation or eating concerns.
Identity, inclusion and protected characteristics	Discrimination, identity-related bullying, barriers to disclosure or participation, and additional support required to feel safe and included.
Mobility and off-site education	In-year transfer, return from suspension or exclusion, alternative provision, work experience, off-site placement, dual registration or reintegration.
Local contextual risk	Risks identified through school and Mercian Trust information, police or partnership intelligence, pupil voice, pastoral data and community context.

Prejudice-based harm, Faith-targeted abuse and discrimination

All staff should recognise that children may experience prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice, faith-targeted abuse and other forms of discriminatory behaviour. Such experiences may significantly affect a child's welfare, wellbeing, mental health, sense of safety, sense of belonging and willingness to seek help. Staff should be alert to the indicators and impact of prejudice-based harm and ensure that concerns are recorded appropriately and considered within safeguarding practice, assessments, decision-making and support arrangements, with appropriate action taken through safeguarding, pastoral, behaviour and inclusion systems where required.

8. Further information for pupils with SEND, disabilities, health or communication needs

Children with SEND, disabilities, health conditions or communication needs may face additional safeguarding barriers. These may include assumptions that indicators of abuse relate to disability or need, communication barriers, isolation, dependence on adults, increased vulnerability to bullying or exploitation, or difficulty expressing concerns.

The DSL and class teachers must work together to ensure safeguarding and SEND systems are connected. Staff must be alert to changes in presentation and must not allow diagnostic overshadowing to prevent safeguarding action.

9. Further information about mental health and wellbeing

Mental health concerns may be indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma, discrimination, peer harm, family stress or unmet need. Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions, but must report concerns where a pupil's presentation, behaviour, attendance or disclosure indicates possible risk or need.

Mental health support must be connected to safeguarding, attendance, SEND and pastoral systems. Where pupils are at risk of harm to themselves or others, schools must follow emergency and safeguarding procedures without delay.

10. Further information about child-on-child abuse, bullying, harassment and harmful behaviour

The Mercian Trust adopts an 'it could happen here' approach to child-on-child abuse. Leaders must ensure pupils know how to report concerns, reports are taken seriously, victims are supported, alleged perpetrators are managed safely and fairly, and patterns are analysed to inform prevention and curriculum.

Schools must respond to bullying, discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents, harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, prejudice-related incidents, coercion, online abuse and violence through connected safeguarding, behaviour and pastoral systems.

11. Further information for children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning

We maintain a consistent approach across the Mercian Trust. Our recognises that issues relating to sex, gender and identity may present complex safeguarding considerations. Schools will take a case-by-case approach, led by risk assessment and involving relevant leaders, to ensure decisions are lawful, proportionate and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

Schools must provide a safe, respectful and non-discriminatory environment for all pupils. Staff must be alert to the possibility that some pupils may experience bullying, isolation, mental health difficulties or barriers to disclosure. Schools must act where any pupil is targeted or placed at risk.

Where a child is questioning aspects of identity, schools must respond with care, professional curiosity and safeguarding judgement, taking account of statutory guidance, parental involvement where appropriate and safe, equality duties and the individual child's circumstances.

12. Alternative provision, off-site provision and pupil movement

- Oakwood School retains safeguarding responsibility.
- Suitability, safeguarding, attendance and information-sharing checks are completed before placement.
- A named school lead is identified.
- Attendance, engagement, welfare, progress, incidents and concerns are monitored.
- Relevant safeguarding information is shared securely and proportionately.
- Placements and reintegration are reviewed against need, risk and pupil voice.
- No arrangement may reduce safeguarding oversight or create unclear professional responsibility.

13. Medical needs, allergies and anaphylaxis

Medical needs are considered within wider safeguarding arrangements. Individual Healthcare Plans, medication, allergy management, emergency procedures, staff training and risk assessment are managed under the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy. Staff must raise safeguarding concerns where health, safety, attendance or wellbeing indicate possible risk. The DSL and Headteacher review medical vulnerability where required.

Our school maintains an Allergy Safety Policy and has regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Allergy Safety in Schools'. The school reviews its arrangements for allergy management, staff awareness, emergency response and access to prescribed and emergency medication.

14. Restrictive interventions and reasonable force

The Mercian Trust expects all schools to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through inclusive practice, early support, risk assessment, de-escalation, reasonable adjustments and positive relationships. Any use of force or restrictive intervention must be lawful, necessary, reasonable, proportionate and in the best interests of safety.

Incidents involving significant use of force must be recorded and reported in line with statutory guidance. Schools must consider support for the pupil and staff involved, review risk assessments or support plans, consider SEND and medical factors, and identify whether wider safeguarding action is required. Restrictive intervention must never be used as punishment or for convenience.

15. Online safety and Smoothwall

Our staff recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, our school:

- Has robust processes in place (including filtering and monitoring) to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers and governors
- Protects and educates the whole school community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole school community
- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

Adult involvement in the creation, possession, distribution or coercion of nude or semi-nude images is child sexual abuse and will be treated as such. Concerns regarding grooming, coercion, sextortion, blackmail, AI-generated imagery or adult involvement must be referred immediately to the DSL and managed in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Smoothwall

Smoothwall is treated as a safeguarding system, not only an IT system. Alerts are triaged according to risk, recorded where safeguarding-relevant, considered alongside wider information and used to inform prevention, curriculum and pastoral support.

Operational control	**Oakwood School arrangement**
Team checking alerts during the school day	Nicole Rostron, Kelvin Stephens, Michelle Smith and Ruth Richardson
Review frequency	Termly- figures noted in Safeguarding Metrics
High-risk / urgent alert recipients	Nicole Rostron, Kelvin Stephens, Michelle Smith and Ruth Richardson
Safeguarding recording route	Added to My Concern if learner related, follow staff whistle-blowing/low level concerns procedure should alerts be against code of conduct.
Out-of-hours / holiday arrangement	No devices are taken home with pupils. Urgent alert recipient contact details are for Seona Baker (Trust SG Lead) and Nicole Rostron (DSL and SG Lead).
Frequency of effectiveness review	Termly – completed by Joe Beddows (IT and Data Support)

Alert level	**Typical indicator**	**Response**
Low / contextual	Isolated low-level search or alert without immediate risk.	Monitor pattern; record if relevant; consider curriculum or pastoral response.
Medium / concerning	Repeated searches, concerning language, bullying, harmful content or blocked-content attempts.	DSL/DDSL review; record; consider pupil discussion, safe parent contact and intervention.
High / safeguarding	Self-harm, suicide, exploitation, violence, coercion, grooming, hate or radicalisation, or repeated significant alerts.	Immediate DSL/DDSL review, risk assessment, recording and consideration of referral or welfare action.
Immediate risk	Information suggests imminent harm to the pupil or others.	Follow emergency procedures, contact relevant statutory services and record all action.

16. Concerns about adults and low-level concerns

A low-level concern is behaviour towards a child that may not meet the harm threshold but may be inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, professional boundaries or safer culture expectations. All such concerns must be reported promptly to the Headteacher. A concern about the Headteacher must be reported through the Mercian Trust's specified route to the appropriate governance or executive lead. The detailed management process sits within the Mercian Trust Human Resources and safeguarding procedures.

- Reporting protects children and supports early identification of risk.
- Concerns are recorded and reviewed for patterns.
- The LADO is consulted where the harm threshold may be met.
- Staff will not be criticised for raising a genuine concern in good faith.
- Whistleblowing routes apply where the concern is not addressed or relates to unsafe organisational practice.

Further information is within appendix 2 of the Mercian Trust September 2026 Child Protection and Safeguarding policy

17. Notifying parents and carers

Parents and carers will usually be informed about safeguarding concerns where appropriate and safe. However, schools must not inform parents or carers where doing so may place a child at increased risk, compromise a police or children's social care investigation, or undermine protective action.

18. How vulnerability is identified, reviewed and supported

Oakwood School brings together safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, SEND, pastoral, online safety, pupil voice, family information and agency intelligence. Emerging concerns are recorded and shared so the DSL and connected leaders can understand risk in the round.

Responses may include early help, pastoral or SEND support, attendance intervention, risk assessment, multi-agency work, referral or statutory action. Decisions about removal, suspension, managed moves, off-site direction and alternative provision are informed by safeguarding, inclusion and proportionality.

Safeguarding practice must recognise that some children may be more likely to experience barriers to safety, disclosure, attendance, wellbeing or inclusion. Additional attention must be given to pupils with SEND, health conditions, communication needs, children who have or have previously had a social worker, looked-after or previously looked-after status, kinship care arrangements, caring responsibilities, homelessness, asylum or migration experience, disadvantage, poor attendance, exclusion risk, mental health needs, experience of domestic abuse, exploitation risk, or children who are questioning aspects of identity.

These categories are not fixed and should be understood alongside local context and emerging risk

Additional vulnerability must never result in lower expectations. Leaders must remove barriers, make reasonable adjustments, listen to pupils, seek specialist advice and evaluate whether support is improving safety, belonging, attendance, engagement and outcomes.

19. DSL safeguarding triage

Level	Typical threshold	Expected action
1 Information / monitor	Information contributes to the wider picture without immediate intervention.	Record, link to chronology and monitor.
2 Pastoral / early support	Support may be required through pastoral, attendance, SEND or online safety systems.	Allocate action, named lead and review point.
3 DSL active management	Risk is emerging, repeated, complex or linked to vulnerability.	DSL oversight, recorded plan, actions and review date.
4 Early help / multi-agency	Coordinated family or agency support may be required.	Consider early help, consultation and multi-agency planning.
5 Statutory / immediate risk	Significant harm, serious exploitation, serious self-harm or immediate danger may be present.	Refer or consult urgently with statutory agencies; record decisions and timing.

Documented safeguarding review

The DSL considers a documented review where a vulnerable pupil is repeatedly absent or removed from learning, considered for suspension or exclusion, attending off-site provision, triggering repeated online alerts or involved in significant child-on-child concerns.

20. Local contextual safeguarding risks

The school identifies and reviews its principal local risks through safeguarding information, attendance and behaviour data, Smoothwall themes, pupil and staff voice, police and partnership intelligence, community information and curriculum review.

Current local risk	How risk is monitored and addressed
Online Safety	Reflected within work around communication within the curriculum and STEM curriculum opportunities. External involvement from Street Teams to support learners and parents recognising dangers. Further detail in Safeguarding Action Plan. Metrics gathered and reflected upon termly.
Sexualised Behaviour	Plan for Sexualised and harmful sexualised behaviours in flow chart. Please see guidance for further details. Active records kept within Safeguarding group. Targeted training given to Secondary Staff as part of CPD profile 25/6. General training to be given to all staff as part of 26/7 SG training.

	Further detail in Safeguarding Action Plan. Metrics gathered and reflected upon termly.
Neglect	FLT member named lead for neglect. Trained in GCP2. Additional neglect training and groups attended where relevant. Included as part of SG training 26/7. Areas of neglect to be picked up regularly with examples in analysis of understanding. Further detail in Safeguarding Action Plan. Metrics gathered and reflected upon termly.
Health and Wellbeing	Health and Wellbeing of Staff and Learners supported through Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan. Alongside measures taken to ensure medical procedures are accurate and effective. These are regularly reviewed and SLT as well as those administering medication attend regular 'Administering Medication' training. FLT offer supports wellbeing of families which is a key pillar in the wellbeing of learners. Curriculum support in regulation, communication and sensory regulation all supports Health and Wellbeing. Further detail in Safeguarding Action Plan. Metrics gathered and reflected upon termly.

21. Inclusion oversight

A regular safeguarding and inclusion review brings together safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, SEND, pastoral, mental health, online safety and alternative provision information. Pupils remain visible through named responsibility, recorded actions, review dates and escalation where risk does not reduce.

Area	**Oakwood School arrangement**
Frequency	Half Termly
Chair	Lorna Meredith-Jones
Core attendees	Executive Head of School (Kate Bargh), relevant Head of School (Michelle Smith/Ruth Richardson), relevant FLT members and DSL.
Recording route	Minutes from teams meeting.

Escalation route	Concerns highlighted within team and relevant referrals or actions agreed on and taken by assigned team members. Reviewed at agreed next point.
How impact is reviewed	Reviewed in terms of reduction of SIF's or reduction in safeguarding concern as relevant to learner on a case by case basis.

Oakwood School participates in structured school and Mercian Trust review arrangements, including solutions-focused discussion and Most At Risk Panel where applicable, so that significant vulnerability, alternative provision and complex need receive timely challenge and oversight.

22. Safeguarding curriculum and preventative education

Oakwood School promotes safeguarding through a planned programme delivered through curriculum, tutor time, assemblies, targeted intervention, pastoral support and enrichment.

The school's Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education programmes are delivered in accordance with current statutory guidance. The curriculum includes teaching about healthy and respectful relationships, consent, personal safety, violence against women and girls, online harms, biological sex, equality duties, protected characteristics, safeguarding and how pupils can seek help and support.

- Abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Healthy and respectful relationships, consent and boundaries.
- Child-on-child abuse, bullying and discrimination, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents.
- Online safety, social media, artificial intelligence and emerging technology.
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Attendance and personal responsibility.
- Criminal and sexual exploitation.
- Extremism, radicalisation and the Prevent duty.
- Diversity, equality, inclusion, community safety and how to seek help.

Education is adapted where necessary for pupils with SEND, communication needs, neurodiversity, medical vulnerability, low attendance, trauma or other barriers. Adaptations may include differentiated materials, visual aids, social stories, repetition, small-group work, targeted pastoral or SEND support, personalised discussion and partnership with families or professionals.

Leaders evaluate curriculum relevance, accessibility and impact through pupil voice, safeguarding information, attendance and behaviour, Smoothwall themes, SEND review and local contextual risk. Particular attention is given to whether vulnerable pupils can identify trusted adults, recognise unsafe situations, report concerns and access support.

23. Governance, reporting, roles and responsibilities

The Mercian Trust Board

The Mercian Trust Board holds ultimate strategic responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements across the Mercian Trust are compliant, effective and embedded.

Trustees receive safeguarding assurance through the Mercian Trust's governance framework, including Mercian Trust safeguarding reports, quality assurance findings, compliance monitoring, risk and assurance reporting,

safeguarding culture and lived-experience intelligence from schools, and the escalation of significant safeguarding themes, risks and incidents.

Safeguarding Link Trustee and governance

The Safeguarding Link Trustee provides strategic oversight and professional challenge, supporting the Board in gaining assurance that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

CEO and executive leaders

The CEO and executive leaders ensure that safeguarding remains a visible organisational priority and that the Mercian Trust has sufficient leadership, capacity, training, resources, systems and accountability to maintain effective safeguarding practice.

Director of Compliance / Risk & Assurance

The Director of Compliance / Risk and Assurance leads the Mercian Trust's systems for safeguarding compliance, risk and quality assurance, ensuring that practice is consistently tested, risks are clearly identified, and reporting to leaders and Trustees is accurate and timely.

The role strengthens governance by aligning quality assurance, risk and inspection readiness with the Mercian Trust's governance framework, ensuring safeguarding remains a clear and evidenced priority across all schools.

Director for Safeguarding

The Director for Safeguarding provides strategic leadership, oversight, quality assurance, professional challenge and support across the Mercian Trust. This includes policy development, DSL strategic network leadership, safeguarding reviews, analysis of Mercian Trust-wide trends, support for complex cases, governance reporting and coordination of Mercian Trust safeguarding improvement priorities.

Headteacher

Headteachers are responsible for the implementation and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements within their school. They must ensure that safeguarding is understood as a whole-school leadership responsibility and that attendance, behaviour, SEND, pastoral, online safety and curriculum systems connect with safeguarding practice.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL is the lead professional for safeguarding and child protection. The DSL must have the authority, status, time, training, supervision, funding and resources required to carry out the role effectively. Deputy DSLs must be trained to the same standard and have clearly defined responsibilities.

All staff

All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment, promote an inclusive and anti-discriminatory culture, and recognise that racism, faith-targeted abuse and other forms of discriminatory behaviour may significantly affect a child's welfare, wellbeing and sense of safety. Such concerns should be recognised, challenged, addressed and considered within safeguarding practice where appropriate. All staff must be alert to indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, act on concerns, record information accurately, maintain professional boundaries and understand that safeguarding includes online safety, attendance, behaviour, inclusion and wellbeing.

Visitors, volunteers, supply staff and contractors

All adults working in or with schools must understand the safeguarding expectations relevant to their role. Schools must ensure appropriate induction, supervision, monitoring and routes for reporting concerns.

Volunteers must not be permitted to begin working within the settings covered by the EYFS framework until the school or maintained nursery school has received the volunteer's enhanced DBS certificate including barred list information.

24. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy and procedures have been created with regard to statutory and non-statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Education Act 2002 and related safeguarding duties for academies and governing bodies.
- The Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and Prevent duty guidance.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, including information sharing duties in safeguarding contexts.
- Statutory guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and PRUs in England, including pupil movement, effective from 26 July 2026.
- Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026.
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and State-funded Schools Inspection Toolkit applicable from 2026
- Academy Trust Handbook (effective 1st October 2026)
- Statutory Guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (effective September 2026).
- Allergy Safety in Schools Statutory Guidance (effective September 2026).
- EYFS Statutory Framework 2026 (where applicable).

Our safeguarding arrangements comply with the current EYFS Statutory Framework, including requirements relating to safer sleep practices, appropriate screen use and other safeguarding duties applicable to early years settings.

25. Review and approval

These procedures are reviewed at least annually and whenever contacts, systems, referral pathways, local risks or statutory requirements change. Changes are communicated to staff and reflected in induction and updates.

Approval	**Name / date**
DSL	Nicole Rostron – 22.08.26, updated 11.09.26
Headteacher	Kate Bargh (date to be added)
Local Governing Body	Paul Labrum (date to be added)
Next review	January 2027, August 2027

Appendix 2 - Key Safeguarding Vulnerabilities and Risk Indicators

This appendix provides a brief reference guide to some of the safeguarding vulnerabilities, risks and forms of abuse that staff may encounter in their work with children and young people.

It should be read alongside:

- Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- The Mercian Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Oakwood School Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures; and
- Local safeguarding partnership procedures and guidance.

The summaries below are not intended to replace statutory guidance or professional judgement. They are designed to support staff in recognising possible indicators of harm, exploitation, abuse or vulnerability and understanding when safeguarding concerns should be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

Staff should remember that safeguarding concerns rarely present in isolation. Vulnerability may arise from a combination of factors including attendance, behaviour, SEND, health, mental health, family circumstances, online activity, exploitation, peer relationships and wider contextual risks.

Where staff have any concern about a child, however small, they must act immediately and follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Sexual abuse involves forcing, causing or inciting 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
- 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 (including via the internet)

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

Children can be sexually abused within the family, an institution or a community setting, and are more likely to know their abuser than not.

There are specific offences for children under 13, who can never provide valid consent to sexual activity and there are specific offences which make clear that sexual activity with a child under 16 is an offence, regardless of whether they agreed to that activity

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

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

- Provide adequate food, 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.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children missing education, including those who are persistently absent, severely absent or frequently missing lessons, may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health difficulties, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), radicalisation, criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation. Staff should report concerns to the DSL and be particularly alert to patterns of absence, sudden withdrawal from education or unexplained movement between settings.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE occurs when an individual or group exploits an imbalance of power to coerce, control or manipulate a child into criminal activity. Indicators may include unexplained gifts, association with older individuals, missing episodes, substance misuse, changes in behaviour, carrying unexplained money or regularly missing education. Concerns should be shared immediately with the DSL.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse where a child is manipulated, coerced or deceived into sexual activity. Indicators may include older relationships, unexplained gifts, sexualised behaviour, missing episodes, online exploitation, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. Children may not recognise that they are being exploited.

Nude and Semi-Nude Image Sharing and Sextortion

Adult involvement in the creation, possession, distribution or coercion of nude or semi-nude images constitutes child sexual abuse and must be treated as such. Staff should be alert to grooming, coercion, online blackmail, sextortion, financially motivated sexual extortion and the use of AI-generated imagery. Any concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL who will consider referral to children's social care and police where appropriate.

Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse can occur both online and offline and may include bullying, discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice-based incidents, relationship abuse, physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, image sharing, upskirting and initiation or hazing behaviours. Oakwood School adopts an "it could happen here" approach and takes all reports seriously.

Domestic Abuse

Children who see, hear or experience domestic abuse are victims in their own right. Domestic abuse can have a significant impact on a child's safety, attendance, learning, behaviour and emotional wellbeing. The school works closely with Operation Encompass and other safeguarding partners to provide appropriate support.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health concerns may be an indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma, discrimination, peer harm, family stress or unmet need. Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions but must report concerns to the DSL where a pupil's behaviour, attendance, presentation or disclosure suggests possible risk.

Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation refers to the process through which a person comes to support or legitimise extremist views or terrorism. Staff should be alert to significant changes in behaviour, isolation, extremist narratives, exposure to harmful online content or expressions of support for extremist ideologies. All concerns must be reported to the DSL.

Serious Violence

Indicators of involvement in serious violence may include unexplained injuries, changes in friendships, increased absence, declining performance, possession of unexplained items or evidence of exploitation. Staff should report concerns promptly.

So-Called Honour-Based Abuse, FGM and Forced Marriage

So-called honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage are forms of abuse and must always be treated as safeguarding concerns. Staff should be alert to warning signs such as extended absences, family pressure, discussions of overseas travel, significant behavioural changes or direct disclosures.

Homelessness

Children experiencing homelessness or housing instability may face additional safeguarding risks and barriers to education. Concerns should be shared with the DSL so appropriate support and referrals can be considered.

Prejudice-Based Harm and Discrimination

Experiences of racism, faith-based prejudice and other forms of discrimination may impact a child's welfare,

wellbeing and ability to seek support. Staff should recognise and respond appropriately to prejudice-based harm within safeguarding practice.