



Birchwood School Safeguarding Policy

Updated: September 2024

Reviewed: January 2025

Reviewed: August 2025

Reviewed: April 2026

Our schools are rights respecting schools. Throughout this policy all pupils are to be regarded as 'Rights holders', and all adults are to be regarded as 'duty bearers'.

This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.



Careers Wales Mark

Introduction

1.1 This policy complies with national statutory guidance from:

- Keeping Learners Safe Guidance Document no: 283/2022 (March 2022)
- Working Together to Safeguard People (2019)
- Social services and well-being in Wales act 2014
- Well-being of future generations (Wales) act 2015
- Rights of Children and young persons (Wales) measures 2011
- Wales safeguarding procedures <https://safeguarding.wales>
- Safeguarding children in education: handling allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff. Welsh Gov Circular 009/2014
- Counter terrorism and security act 2015
- Revised prevent duty guidance for England and Wales (home office)

Safeguarding statement

We recognize our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children/young people. We endeavor to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children/young people are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children/young people receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors and are consistent with those of the local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) involved with our children and young people.

Policy aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their safeguarding and safeguarding responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice
- To demonstrate the company's commitment regarding safeguarding to children/young people, parents and other partners
- To contribute to the service's safeguarding portfolio

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Procedures

We will follow the Wales Child Protection Procedures that has been endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The school will:

- Ensure it has a designated senior person for child protection who has undertaken the appropriate training
- All staff and governors are to undertake yearly safeguarding refresher training
- All records in respect to safeguarding will be held in a secure electronic location with access permissions set.

Key personnel

The designated safeguarding persons (DSP) are as follows:



Danielle Coakley Head of Schools and Safeguarding Officer (Level 4 DSP trained)



Laura Collins Deputy Head of Schools and Safeguarding Officer (Level 4 DSP trained)



Morgan Seaton, Assistant Head and deputy Safeguarding officer (Level 4 DSP trained)

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If the concern raised relates to the DSP or deputy then issues should be reported to the Director of Education and Chair of Governors,

Lucy Pottinger

Contact details: 02920029922

Lucy.pottinger@orbis-group.co.uk

Who to contact if you have to report a safeguarding concern:

Cardiff Safeguarding (Birchwood)
Children's Access Point
Social Care & Health, PO Box 97, Cardiff, CF11
1BP Tel: 029 20536490 Linda Gallagher Out of
hours contact: 029 20788570.

Welsh Government (Orbis schools)
Cathays Park, Cardiff, Cf10 3NQ
Tel: English: 0300 0603300
Tel: Welsh: 0300 0604400

How to report:

If you have concerns about a young person or a colleague

- Report to the DSP or deputy DSP immediately
- Log your concern on the 'My Concern' platform available at the school.
- *The organisation also uses a third-party independent safeguarding service called AAB People*
- Email <https://fileaconcern.org/orbiseducation>
- Telephone: 0800 026 0477

Current guidance from Cardiff Local Authority (July 2024) states:

When and How to report child protection concerns to police:

If a practitioner has reasonable cause to suspect that a child, including an unborn child, is at risk the report must be made to the local authority.

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PLEASE NOTE If there are immediate concerns about a child's safety or a criminal offence against a child, the practitioner **MUST ALSO** contact emergency services (police) without delay, to protect to protect the child/children from the risk of serious harm.

This would be reported to the police via 999

PLEASE NOTE Where Practitioners have information from another source e.g. 3rd hand information i.e. no direct observation of risk or direct disclosure, then this **must still** be reported to police

This would be reported via 101

If in doubt, advice can be sought from police either via 999 DEPENDENT ON THE URGENCY or 101 or school liaison police officer

Complaints about the Executive Head of Education should be reported to the Director of Education.

Lucy.pottinger@orbis-group.co.uk 02920029922

Roles and responsibilities It is essential that the DSP:

- Is appropriately trained
- Acts as a source of support and expertise to the service's community
- Understands LSCB procedures
- Keeps electronic records of all concerns about children (noting the date, event and action taken), ensuring that such records are stored securely and in line with data protection law
- Refers cases of suspected abuse to children's social care, Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA (if over 18 years of age)) or police as appropriate
- Notifies the local social services team if a pupil on the child protection register is excluded either for a fixed term or permanently or if there is an unexplained absence of a pupil on the child protection register or more than two days duration from schools (or one day following a weekend)
- Ensures that when a child/young person with a safeguarding plan leaves the school, their information is passed to their new school and the child/young person's social worker is informed
- Attends and/or contributes to safeguarding conferences
- Coordinates the service's contribution to safeguarding plans
- Develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies
- Ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the safeguarding policy
- Ensures that the safeguarding policy is reviewed annually

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Has access to records of staff attendance at safeguarding training and is alerted when their staff members have not completed training or are due a refresher training by the organisations learning and development department

- Liaises with the Responsible Individual and the Director for Education as appropriate •
- Ensures that members of staff are aware of the need to be alert to signs of abuse and know how to respond to a pupil who may disclose abuse
- **Makes the safeguarding policy available to all stakeholders via the website**
- Ensures that every member of staff is aware of the DSP's name and role, and the need to be alert of signs of abuse and know how to respond to a pupil who may disclose abuse

The organisation ensures that:

- The service has a DSP for safeguarding who is a member of the senior leadership team and who has undertaken training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic safeguarding training.
- There is a safeguarding policy and procedures that are consistent with LSCB requirements, reviewed annually and made available to parents on request.
- There are procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff including allegations made against the members of the senior leadership team.
- Adheres to the procedures set out in the Welsh Government circular 002/2013: 'Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures for School Staff.'
- Ensures that recruitment and selection procedures are made in accordance with Welsh Government guidance Keeping Learners Safe Guidance Document no: 283/2022 (March 2022) and safer recruitment.
- There is a training strategy that ensures all staff, including the Heads of Service, receive safeguarding training, with refresher training at yearly intervals and is supplemented by the organisations e-learning programme. Arrangements to ensure that all temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the services' arrangements for safeguarding.
- There is a management information system to log safeguarding instances, or low-level concerns or order to be able to track these per child/staff member/location and identify patterns or concern and report. The organisation currently uses 'My Concern' platform.

The Director of Education is responsible for liaising with the local authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the Head of Education or Deputy Head of Education.

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The senior management team:

- Ensures that the safeguarding policy and other related policies and procedures are shared (including any updates), implemented and adhered to. Formal monitoring to take place to ensure good practice.
- Allocates sufficient time and resources to enable the DSP to carry out the role effectively, including the assessment of children/young people and attendance at strategy discussions and other necessary meetings
- Ensures that all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistleblowing procedures
- Ensures that children/young people's safety and welfare is addressed through the curriculum.

Education Safeguarding Training:

Our annual safeguarding training attended by all staff ensures that it sets out particulars to staff so that they know:

- Their personal responsibility
- The agreed local procedures
- The need to be vigilant in identifying cases of abuse
- How to support a child who discloses abuse
- Recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a concern.
- Effective reporting and recording
- Staff are then issued with appropriate legislative guidance following their training

Good practice includes:

- All education staff have completed the Keeping Learners Safe Training and are aware of new guidance posted March 2022
- All staff complete PREVENT training
- Treating all children/young people with respect
- Setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- Involving children/young people in decisions that affect them
- Encouraging positive and safe behaviour among children/young people
- Being a good listener
- Being alert to changes in children/young people's behaviour
- Recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- Reading and understanding the company's safeguarding policy and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, physical contact and information-sharing, code of conduct, photography & videos at school policy and traffic management and adhering to guidelines within such policies & procedures.

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- Asking the child/young person's permission (where applicable and possible) before doing anything for them of a physical nature, such as assisting with toileting, dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid
- Maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between children/young people and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- Being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some children/young people lead to an increased risk of abuse.

Abuse of trust

All staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards children/young people is unacceptable and that their conduct towards children/young people must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the company and a child/young person using the services of the company may be a criminal offence, even if that child/young person is over the age of consent.

Supporting the pupil at risk

We recognise that children who are at risk, suffer abuse or witness violence may be deeply affected by this. This school and care home may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. Nevertheless, when at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. We will support children/young people and their families by:

- Ensuring the school curriculum has a context to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation
- The school ethos promotes a positive, supportive, and secure environment whilst giving pupils a sense of being valued

***Ethos:** Our primary aim is to provide a safe and secure school environment that encourages individuality, confidence, and self-esteem. We aim to optimise Quality of Life for our pupils by developing, nurturing, and promoting independence. Our service model is Positive Behavioural Support, which directs us to focus on improving quality of life, thus rendering challenging behaviour less necessary. We will ensure that everyone in our school is supported to develop a positive image, overcome barriers to learning and have valued roles in society.*

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- The school's behaviour policy is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupil in the school (Please refer to 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' policy)
- Taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- Nominating a link person who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact. Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a child/young person, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest
- Responding sympathetically to any request from children/young people or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety
- Maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- Keeping electronic records and notifying social services as soon as there is a recurrence of a concern • Storing records securely
- Offering details of helplines, counselling, or other avenues of external support
- following the procedures laid down in our whistleblowing, complaints, and disciplinary procedures
- Co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

Safeguarding responsibilities in specific circumstances

Everyone working in an education setting should be familiar with the signs of a child at risk of harm, neglect and abuse so they can raise their concerns and safeguard children. This will be provided through safeguarding training and experience of working with children and young people.

This section provides advice and signposting for those working in education settings to manage specific circumstances. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list and will change as emerging risks and circumstances develop with societal change; there may be other specific circumstances that those in education settings will need to consider. SCB can offer advice and support in relation to resources to support practitioners in identifying the signs of neglect, abuse and other kinds of harm. They will also have an understanding of more localised risks and concerns in the region.

A number of Wales Practice Guides accompany the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. The Procedures helps practitioners apply the legislation [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12) and statutory safeguarding guidance [Safeguarding guidance | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/safeguarding-guidance) Working Together to Safeguard People.

Wales Practice Guides

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- Safeguarding children from Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)' - this includes information about abuse related to county lines and other forms of criminal exploitation. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children from neglect – this includes information about the different forms of child neglect and ways in which these might be hidden. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children from child sexual exploitation (CSE)' – this includes information about spotting the signs that a child is being sexually abused through exploitation. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children affected by domestic abuse – this includes information about harm to children, the need to support non-abusing parents/carers, child/adolescent-on-parent violence and abuse, and peer relationship abuse. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children from harmful practices related to tradition, culture, religion, or superstition' – this includes honour-based abuse such as FGM and forced marriage for children (up to 18), as well as child abuse linked to faith or belief. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour – this includes information about how to understand what constitutes harmful sexual behaviour in children, including online harmful sexual behaviour. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care – this includes information about how to decide if a child should be reported as missing, and how to respond. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children from online abuse' – this includes information on online grooming, online sexual abuse, online harmful sexual behaviour, and online radicalisation. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children who may be trafficked – this includes information about the different reasons why children might be trafficked, as well as specific reporting duties and support related to this form of abuse. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Safeguarding children in relation to the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020' – this provides additional information about safeguarding responses where a child is affected by physical punishment. [Safeguarding Wales](#)
- Children with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) status – there is Welsh Government information, advice, and guidance for practitioners on supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, which is available here. [Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: guidance for professionals | GOV.WALES](#)
- Independent Child Trafficking Guardians service – offers a 24/7 support line where practitioners can seek advice, guidance and resources for all exploitation types defined within Modern Slavery Act 2015 (criminal, sexual, labour, domestic servitude and organ harvesting). Telephone: 0800 043 4303
- Guidance for the further education sector on trauma and ACE informed practice is available on Hwb.

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Indicators of abuse – which you might see

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding, or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child/young person has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children/young people may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated person.

Remember, it is your responsibility to report your concerns. It is not your responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child/young person has been abused.

A child/young person who is being abused or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures, or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless regarding their own, or others' safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss school or arrive late
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn • challenge authority
- become disinterested in their schoolwork or other activities
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

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Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the DSP to decide how to proceed. It is very important that you report your concerns – you do not need ‘absolute proof’ that the child/young person is at risk.

What to do when a young person makes a disclosure/allegation

Initial considerations: The procedures for dealing with allegations need to be applied with common sense and judgement. The Local Authority Designated officer for Child protection (LADO) should be informed of ALL allegations that come to a school’s attention so that they can consult children’s social services and the police as appropriate. The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations: **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegations

False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation

Malicious: there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.

Uninformed: there is no evidence or proper basis to support the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all circumstances.

Unsubstantiated: this is not the same as a false allegation. It means there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term does not imply guilt or innocence.

Receipt of an allegation

Allegations should be brought immediately to the attention of the lead or deputy DSL. They inform the responsible individual of ALL allegations of abuse that come to their attention. The case manager should immediately discuss the allegation with the Local Authority safeguarding officer on the purpose of which is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action. The initial enquiries should establish:

- that an allegation has been made

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- what is alleged to have occurred
- when and where the episode is/are alleged to have occurred
- who was involved?
- any other persons present

The Local authority safeguarding officer may request relevant additional information such as previous history, whether the child of their family have made similar allegations and the member of staff's current contact with children.

Staff who are the subject of an allegation

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. It is rare for a child/young person to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events can, and do, happen. A child/young person may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some professionals do pose a serious risk to children/young people, and we must act on every allegation.

Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Suspension is not mandatory, nor is it automatic but, in some cases, staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that children are protected.

Sharing information

Section 1.13 of Keeping Learners safe (December 2021) states that:

'Schools and colleges are required to cooperate and provide information to local authorities. Safeguarding boards have the power to request specified information from a qualifying person or body provided that the purpose of the request is to enable or assist the board to perform its functions under the Act. Each SCB will have a subgroup to lead multi- agency practice reviews of a significant incident where abuse or neglect of the child is known or suspected. Wherever necessary there will be an education representative in such reviews. This representative will be responsible for liaising with the school where additional information is required'

Informing Parents/ Carers

Parents/carers should be made aware of the allegation as soon as possible, where appropriate, and where sharing information would not pose further risk of harm. The school will take advice from the local

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safeguarding board on whether this is appropriate. Where a strategy discussion is required, or police or children's services need to be involved the head of education/registered manager should consult those agencies and agree what information can be disclosed to the parents/carers. Parents/carers should be kept informed about the progress of the case and be and be made aware of the prohibition on reporting or publishing allegations about teachers in section 141F of the Education Act 2002.

Informing the accused person

The school will take guidance from the Local Authority as to when it is the appropriate time to inform the accused. If the employee is a member of a trade union, they should be advised to contact them at the appropriate point.

Supporting those involved

Employers have a duty of care to their employees. They should act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegation process. Support for the individual is key to fulfilling this duty. Employees should be given access to welfare counselling or medical advice.

Confidentiality

It is important that the school and home make every effort to maintain confidentiality to guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The full procedures for dealing with allegations against staff can be found in Keeping Learners Safe 283/2022, [Keeping Learners Safe \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/government/keeping-learners-safe) (March 2022 update)

Safer recruitment

Our organisation endeavors to ensure that we do our utmost to employ 'safe' staff by following the guidance in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (pp20-54) together with the company's individual procedures.

Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

We adhere to safer recruitment guidelines. Please see safer recruitment policy for full details.

All staff, and visiting staff must have a current DBS, and this must be checked and verified, along with an identity verification, prior to visiting.

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Extended school and off-site arrangements

Where extended school activities are provided by and managed by the school, our own safeguarding policy and procedures apply. If other organisation's provide services or activities on our site, we will check that they have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures.

When our children/young people attend off-site activities, we will check that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. The same applies for all activities that are carried out by the children's home part of the service.

Photography and images

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

To protect children/young people we will:

- seek their consent (or those who hold parental responsibility where they are unable to give consent) for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- seek parental consent when under the age of 18
- If over 18 this will need to be decided through mental capacity and Dols if this cannot be established pupils are not to be shared on social media
- use only the child/young person's first name with an image
- ensure children/young people are appropriately dressed
- encourage children/young people to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

The use of mobile phones

As of September 2023, Orbis Education and care took the decision to issue all staff members with a mobile phone to enable staff member to keep detailed records of pupils, capture essential progress data via the Seesaw app and ensure both their own, and the pupils' safety during offsite trips. All Orbis handsets are secured using a Mobile Device Management (MDM) product called SOTI MobiControl. This enforces several policies that safeguard access to confidential information, including:

- Enforced encryption of the device. All handsets are encrypted using Android's built-in device encryption.
- Geofencing. System access, specifically information that relates to a person in Orbis' care, can only be performed when inside Orbis locations. Device functions, specifically the camera, will be disabled when inside certain Orbis locations.

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- The applications installed on the device is managed and controlled. The user is prevented from installing any unauthorised applications.
- If a device is lost or stolen, the device will be remotely wiped of all data and all accounts will be removed. This prevents the contents of the device from being accessed by unauthorised parties.

For further information on the use of mobile phones at Orbis, please see the mobile phone policy.

Radicalisation and child exploitation

In 2012 the Government launched a refocused Prevent strategy. In December 2023 the following guidance was published. [Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115442/prevent-duty-guidance-guidance-for-specified-authorities-in-england-and-wales.pdf). This is covered in staff's initial safeguarding training and all staff complete further training in relation to this.

Child exploitation

<https://gov.wales/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe.html>

E-Safety

Please refer to our e-safety policy for further information and guidance on this matter.

Whistle blowing

All staff are reminded of their right to whistle blow. Please see the whistleblowing policy for further details.

Bullying

While bullying between children/young people is not a separate category of abuse it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying is thought to result in up to 12 child suicides each year.

Our policy on bullying is set out in a separate document and is a pupil friendly format so that pupils can understand rights surrounding bullying reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team

Physical Intervention

Our Policy on physical intervention is set out in a separate document and is reviewed annually by the governing body and is consistent with the Welsh Government guidance on Safe and effective intervention – use of reasonable force and searching for weapons 097/2013

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UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18. There are 54 articles in the UNCRC. Articles 1–42 set out the rights to which each child is entitled. Articles 43–54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure all children are entitled to their rights. In 1991 it was ratified by the UK Government, which formally agreed to ensure that every child in the UK has all the rights listed in the UNCRC.

All pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their rights in daily lessons, committees and during pupil voice, this is also linked with safeguarding as pupils are given the opportunity to discuss how they are feeling and ensuring they are aware of the people they can approach with any concerns or worries. The main articles which relate to safeguarding are:

- article 12 – have their voice heard in decisions that affect them
- article 19 – be protected from violence, abuse, and neglect
- article 28 – an education
- article 29 – an education that is directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities
- article 33 – to be protected from dangerous drugs
- article 34 – to be kept safe from sexual abuse
- article 36 – to be kept safe from harm to their development.

Policy Review Date: August 2026

Signature:  **Director of Education**

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