Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026–2027

Policy owner	Director of Safeguarding
Approval level	Trust Board
Applies to	All WeST schools and business units
Date of approval	13/7/2026 (For use from 1/9/2026)
Review cycle	Annual review, or earlier if statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or Trust assurance activity require amendment
Status	Statutory

WeST Vision, Mission and Values

Westcountry Schools Trust - Our Vision, Mission and Values

Providing Accessible Formats

If you are unable to use this document and require it in a different format, please contact admin@weststst.org.uk who can provide alternative accessible formats by request.

Policy intent

This policy intentionally sets out the strategic safeguarding framework for WeST. It does not reproduce detailed descriptions of abuse types, exhaustive procedural flowcharts or local authority contact routes. Staff must refer to the current statutory guidance, academy procedures, local safeguarding partnership arrangements and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for operational detail.

Safeguarding Policy on a Page

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who works in or with WeST schools and business units must maintain an attitude of "it could happen here", act in the best interests of the child and report concerns without delay.

- **Recognise concern:** staff must be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm, including risks that arise online, within peer groups, in families, in the community or through adults in positions of trust.

- **Know the guidance:** all staff must read and understand part one of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) which explains how staff should identify and respond to safeguarding concerns in more detail

- **Report child concerns internally:** any concern about a child, however small, must be reported to the school Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) as soon as possible and recorded using the school's agreed safeguarding recording system. WeST core staff should report concerns about a child to the Director of Safeguarding (DoS): Richard Woodland, rwoodland@weststst.org.uk or on 07736 938677.

Role	Name	Email	Phone Number
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Ryan Howe	rhowe@man.weststst.org.uk	01752 893182
Deputy DSL	Kim Hannaford	khannaford@man.weststst.org.uk	01752 893182

- **Act in an emergency:** where a child is at immediate risk of harm, staff must take immediate action, including calling emergency services and/or contacting local authority children's social care. Contact details are provided in Appendix A.

- **Refer directly if needed:** any person may contact local authority children's social care directly if they are worried that a child is being abused, neglected or exploited, particularly if they believe action has not been taken quickly enough (LA contact details are provided in Appendix A.

- **Concerns about staff conduct:** concerns about the conduct of a member of staff, supply staff, volunteer, contractor or other adult working in or on behalf of a school must be reported to the Headteacher, Ryan Howe on 01752 893182.

- **Concerns about WeST central team staff:** concerns about the conduct of a member of the WeST central team must be reported to the chief executive officer (CEO). Nat Parnell: nparnell@weststst.org.uk

- **Concerns about the Headteacher/Principal:** concerns must be reported to the:
- CEO, Nat Parnell: nparnell@weststst.org.uk, or if unavailable to;
- Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO), Naveed Khan: nkhan@weststst.org.uk, or if unavailable to;
- Director of Education (DoE), Kate Patrick: kpatrick@weststst.org.uk

- **Concerns about the CEO:** concerns must be reported to the Chair of the Trust Board, Carl Atkinson: catkinson@weststst.org.uk

- **Trust safeguarding support:** the Director of Safeguarding (DoS), Richard Woodland, is available to all staff for advice and support and can be contacted at rwoodland@weststst.org.uk or on 07736 938677.

1. Purpose and Scope

- Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child across all settings. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and is central to Trust culture, governance, leadership and daily practice.
- This policy establishes the strategic safeguarding framework for WeST. It applies to all schools and business units.
- Each school must maintain local safeguarding procedures that reflect this policy, current statutory guidance, local safeguarding partnership arrangements and the needs of its pupils and community.
- WeST expects every school to promote a culture of vigilance, professional curiosity, timely recording, effective information sharing, respectful challenge and child-centred decision-making.
- Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, staff must act without delay by following procedures and contacting emergency services or local children's social care as appropriate.

2. Important Definitions

Child: anyone under the age of 18. Where relevant, duties and support may extend to young people in post-16 settings, care leavers and learners with additional statutory entitlements.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children: the statutory definition set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children, including: providing help and support as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of health or development; ensuring children grow up with safe and effective care; promoting family network care where appropriate; and taking action to enable the best outcomes.

Child protection: the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm, including harm within or outside the home and online.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): the senior member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety, as set out in KCSIE. Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) must be trained to the same standard and support delivery of the safeguarding function.

Headteacher: in this policy Headteacher also covers the role of Principal

Low-level concern: any concern, no matter how small, that an adult working in, or on behalf of ,an academy may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct or may not meet the LADO allegation threshold.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): the local authority officer or team with responsibility for managing allegations that may meet the harm threshold in relation to adults who work with children.

Local safeguarding partnership: the statutory multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the area in which a school is located.

Parent: The definition of a parent can be found in the Education Act 1996, and this applies to the legislation to which this policy relates. In addition to the child's birth parents, references to parents in this policy include any person who has parental responsibility (which includes the local authority where it has a care order in respect of the child) and any person (for example, a foster carer) who has care of the child. To reflect this, this policy uses 'parent' to refer to both parents and carers.

3. Key Sources of Statutory Information

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE): statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children and safer recruitment. All staff must read the sections required by the Trust and academy, with governors and trustees receiving role-appropriate training and information.

Working Together to Safeguard Children: statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children. This policy reflects the 2026 emphasis on integrated Family Help, multi-disciplinary working, antidiscriminatory practice, family networks and robust child protection practice.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework: applies to academy, nursery and reception provision, including safeguarding and welfare requirements.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance: statutory guidance, recognising that absence from education can be a safeguarding indicator and that attendance is everyone's business.

Department for Education (DfE) filtering and monitoring standards: expectations for online safety, filtering, monitoring, leadership and assurance.

Prevent Duty: statutory guidance for specified authorities, including schools, on the duty to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Data protection and information sharing guidance: safeguarding information must be shared lawfully, proportionately and in a timely way. Data protection legislation is not a barrier to sharing information where this is necessary to keep a child safe.

Local safeguarding partnership procedures and local threshold / levels of need documents: schools must follow the arrangements relevant to the child's home area and the academy's local area.

4. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Trust and school policies, guidance and procedures as applicable:

- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Filtering and Monitoring procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Visiting Speakers Policy
- Lettings / Hire of Premises Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Suicide Prevention Policy

- Managing Self-Harm Policy
- School emergency procedures

5. How to Recognise and Report a Safeguarding Concern

- All staff must maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" and understand that abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm may occur inside or outside the home, online, within peer groups or in the wider community.
- Staff must refer to KCSIE for detailed identification guidance, including specific safeguarding issues, indicators of abuse, exploitation, child-on-child abuse, online harms and children who may be particularly vulnerable.
- Staff must not investigate concerns themselves. Their responsibility is to listen, reassure, record factually and report without delay.
- Any safeguarding concern, however small, must be shared with the DSL or DDSL as soon as possible and recorded using the school's agreed safeguarding recording system and procedures.
- If a child is in immediate danger, staff must take immediate action in line with school procedures, including contacting emergency services and/or local children's social care where necessary.
- If a member of staff believes appropriate action has not been taken, they must escalate their concern through the school safeguarding escalation process, the Headteacher, the WeST Director of Safeguarding, whistleblowing routes or directly to statutory agencies where required.
- Staff must never promise confidentiality to a child. Information must be shared on a need-to-know basis to safeguard the child and others.

6. Local Authority Levels of Need & Multi-Agency Working

- WeST schools will work within the local threshold / levels of need framework for the child's area. References to local children's social care, safeguarding partners and consultation routes should be read generically in this policy; school procedures must contain the correct local contacts.
- The Trust recognises a continuum of need, typically including universal support, integrated Family Help, targeted support and specialist statutory provision:
    - **Universal support:** all children benefit from safe, inclusive education, trusted relationships, high-quality pastoral support, effective attendance practice and a curriculum that teaches children how to stay safe.
    - **Integrated Family Help:** in line with Working Together 2026, targeted early help and support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 are increasingly brought together through a more seamless Family Help offer, with a family help plan and consistent practitioner relationships led through multi-disciplinary structures. Schools will contribute to identification, assessment, planning, delivery and review where they are part of this support.
    - **Targeted support:** where a child or family needs additional coordinated support, academies will work with parents and carers wherever safe to do so and contribute to multi-agency plans, meetings and information sharing.
    - **Specialist provision and child protection:** where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm, schools will make timely referrals, contribute to strategy discussions, child protection enquiries and child protection plans, and continue to promote the child's welfare in school.
- WeST expects constructive professional challenge where thresholds, responses or plans do not appear to meet the child's needs. Escalation should be respectful, evidence-informed and focused on improving outcomes for the child. Support for case resolution is available from the Director of Safeguarding.
- Children may live, learn and receive services across different local authority areas. Schools must ensure that referrals, information sharing and attendance at meetings follow the correct local arrangements for the child.

•

7. Making Referrals

- In most situations where staff report a safeguarding concern, the decision about whether to refer to local authority children's social care will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), drawing on statutory guidance, local thresholds and the information available.
- Any member of staff may make a direct referral to local authority children's social care if they consider this necessary to safeguard a child, particularly where there is immediate risk, delay would place the child at further risk, or they believe appropriate action has not been taken.
- All referrals must be made in line with the relevant local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), local threshold or levels of need guidance, and the procedures for the child's home local authority where this differs from the school's local area.
- Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, staff making a referral must discuss the concern with parents and seek their consent before referring to local authority children's social care. Consent should not be sought where doing so may place the child at increased risk of harm, compromise a police or statutory enquiry, or place another person at risk.
- Where a referral is made without parental knowledge or consent, the reasons for this decision must be clearly recorded and, where appropriate, discussed with the DSL or DDSL and the receiving statutory agency.
- Referrals must be timely, evidence-informed and child-centred. They should include relevant factual information, the voice and lived experience of the child where known, previous concerns or patterns, protective factors, actions already taken, and the outcome sought.
- Concerns about radicalisation, extremism or susceptibility to being drawn into terrorism must be treated as safeguarding concerns and referred through the local Prevent pathway[1].
- Staff must understand that some safeguarding issues carry specific mandatory reporting duties. These include the duty on teachers to report known cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in girls under 18, and, from September 2026, the new statutory duty to report child sexual abuse in line with national guidance.
- Mandatory reporting arrangements, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Prevent and the child sexual abuse reporting duty, must be covered through induction, annual safeguarding refresher training and ongoing safeguarding updates so that staff understand when and how to act.
- All referrals, decisions, advice received, parental discussions, consent decisions and follow-up actions must be recorded promptly on the school's safeguarding recording system. Schools must follow up referrals where there has been no response within expected timescales and escalate professionally where the response does not appear to safeguard the child effectively.

8. Low-Level Concerns and Managing Allegations Against Staff

- WeST promotes a culture in which adults understand professional boundaries, feel confident to self-report, and know that concerns about adult conduct must be shared early.
- Low-level concerns must be recorded and managed in line with the Trust Low-Level Concerns Policy and Staff Code of Conduct. Patterns of low-level concerns, repeated behaviours or emerging contextual information may collectively indicate a safeguarding risk or a concern that meets the harm threshold and must therefore be reviewed, recorded and escalated where appropriate.
- Concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold must be referred promptly to the Headteacher. Where the concern relates to the Headteacher, it must be referred to (in order of availability) the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Deputy Chief Executive officer (DCEO) or the Director of Education (DEO). Concerns about trust core team members must be referred to the CEO. Concerns about the CEO must be referred to the Chair of the Trust.

[1] https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/t/prevent/prevent/

-
- The LADO must be consulted where the allegation may meet the harm threshold set out in KCSIE. The Trust and school must not take internal action that could compromise statutory enquiries.

Where a person is removed from regulated activity because they have harmed, or pose a risk of harm to, a child, the Trust will fulfil its statutory referral duties to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other relevant bodies such as the Teaching Regulation Agency.

- Whistleblowing routes must be clear and accessible. Staff must be able to raise concerns about safeguarding practice, leadership decisions or organisational culture without fear of reprisal.
- Where concerns about an adult's conduct amount to potential misconduct, disciplinary action may be considered and managed in accordance with the trust Disciplinary Policy and procedures. Safeguarding, disciplinary and statutory processes will be appropriately aligned and coordinated.

9. Online Safety, Filtering, and Monitoring

- Online safety is part of safeguarding and must be embedded in policy, curriculum, staff training, technical controls and governance assurance.
- WeST and it's schools conceptualise online safety under the 4 Cs as set out in KCSIE: content, contact, conduct and commerce.
- WeST will maintain strategic oversight of filtering and monitoring arrangements, supported by school-level DSL leadership and appropriate technical expertise.
- Schools must have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, review their effectiveness, respond promptly to alerts or concerns, and record actions taken.
- The DSL has lead responsibility for safeguarding, including online safety. Technical staff and providers support implementation but do not replace safeguarding leadership accountability.
- Filtering and monitoring assurance will include: clear roles; documented standards; checks of effectiveness; reporting routes; response to breaches; consideration of groups with additional vulnerability; and governance oversight.
- Pupils must be taught how to stay safe online through a planned curriculum, including issues such as online exploitation, grooming, harmful content, misinformation and disinformation, bullying, harassment, image sharing, artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled harms and reporting routes.

10. Staff Training

- All staff must receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including reporting procedures, behaviour expectations, staff code of conduct, low-level concerns, whistleblowing, online safety and the identity of the DSL and DDSLs.
- All staff must receive regular safeguarding updates and at least annual safeguarding training, with content adapted to the academy's context, local risks and Trust priorities.
- DSLs and DDSLs must receive role-specific training at least every two years and keep their knowledge and skills updated regularly, including through local safeguarding partnership updates, Trust DSL forums, supervision, briefings and case learning.
- Those in governance must receive safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, which equips them to provide strategic challenge and assure themselves that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

-
- Safer recruitment training must be maintained for those involved in recruitment, in line with Trust expectations and statutory guidance.
- Training records must be maintained locally and be available for Trust assurance, audit and inspection.

11. Site Safety and Third-Party Lettings

- Schools must ensure that site security, visitor management, supervision arrangements and emergency procedures support the safety of children and adults.

  All visitors must follow school signing-in, identification and supervision requirements. Unsupervised access to children must only occur where appropriate checks and arrangements are in place.
- Lettings and third-party use of premises must include clear safeguarding conditions. Hirers working with children must confirm that they have appropriate safeguarding policies, safer recruitment arrangements, supervision, insurance and reporting procedures.
- Where an allegation or safeguarding incident relates to a third-party user of academy premises, the school must follow KCSIE expectations, including considering referral to the LADO where the harm threshold may be met.
- Schools must retain the right to refuse, suspend or terminate lettings where safeguarding arrangements are inadequate or where use of the premises may present risk to children, staff or the wider community.
- External speakers, clubs, tutors, contractors and community users must be managed through the relevant Trust or academy visitor, volunteer, procurement, lettings and visiting speaker procedures.

12. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- Where WeST schools provide EYFS provision, the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS statutory framework apply alongside KCSIE and this policy.
- EYFS leaders must ensure that safeguarding arrangements are age-appropriate and include supervision, ratios, suitability checks, intimate care, medication, accidents, first aid, safe sleep where relevant, collection arrangements and management of allegations.
- EYFS staff must understand signs that may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation or developmental concern in babies and young children, and must follow academy safeguarding reporting routes without delay.
- Information sharing with parents and carers should be open and supportive unless doing so may increase risk to the child or compromise statutory enquiries.
- Transitions into, within and from EYFS must include appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

13. Post-16 Provision

- Where WeST schools provide post-16 education, safeguarding duties remain fully applicable. Learners aged under 18 are children in law; some learners aged 18 or over may also require support through adult safeguarding, care leaver, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), mental health or other statutory frameworks.
- Post-16 learners should know how to seek help, report concerns and access trusted adults, including where concerns relate to peers, adults, online activity, relationships or risks outside the academy.
- Post-16 safeguarding practice must consider increased independence, travel, work experience, apprenticeships, relationships, online activity, employment, financial exploitation, domestic abuse, criminal exploitation, sexual harassment, mental health, substance misuse and transition to adulthood.

-
- Post-16 teams must maintain clear links with the DSL, attendance leads, pastoral teams, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), careers leads, work experience coordinators and external providers to ensure a strong culture of safeguarding across the breadth of Post-16 provision.
- Alternative provision, work placements and external learning must be subject to proportionate safeguarding checks, risk assessment, attendance monitoring, information sharing and review.

14. Prevent Duty

- WeST recognises the Prevent Duty as part of its wider safeguarding responsibilities. Schools must have due regard to the need to prevent children and young people from being drawn into terrorism, while maintaining a proportionate, balanced and child-centred safeguarding response.

  Prevent concerns must be understood as safeguarding concerns. Staff should remain professionally curious about changes in behaviour, expressed views, online activity, peer influence, isolation, exploitation, grievance, identity-based vulnerability or exposure to extremist narratives.
- Schools must maintain a Prevent risk assessment that reflects local context, online risk, curriculum provision, visitor and speaker arrangements, lettings, community factors and any intelligence shared through local safeguarding or community safety partnerships.
- All staff must receive Prevent training that is proportionate to their role and enables them to recognise concern, record appropriately and report without delay to the DSL or DDSL. DSLs and DDSLs must maintain sufficient knowledge to advise staff, assess concern and make informed referrals.
- The curriculum should support pupils to develop critical thinking, respectful debate, digital literacy, resilience to manipulation and an understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance.
- Where there is concern that a child may be susceptible to radicalisation, schools must follow local Prevent referral routes, seek advice where appropriate and continue to provide pastoral and safeguarding support. Referrals should be evidence-informed, proportionate and not based on stereotypes or protected characteristics.
- Prevent practice must be reviewed through safeguarding governance, DSL supervision, training records, curriculum review, online safety assurance and local safeguarding partnership updates.

15. Vulnerable Children

- Some children may experience increased vulnerability because of their lived experience, additional needs, family circumstances, previous harm, social context or barriers to communication. Vulnerability is not fixed and must be understood dynamically.
- This includes, but is not limited to, children who are looked after, previously looked after, subject to child protection or child in need arrangements, known or previously known to children's social care, living in kinship care, privately fostered, young carers, care leavers, children missing or absent from education, and children affected by domestic abuse, exploitation, homelessness, poverty, parental mental ill-health, substance misuse or imprisonment.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical needs, communication needs or mental health difficulties may face additional safeguarding barriers. These can include assumptions that indicators of harm relate only to need or disability, reduced opportunities to disclose, dependency on adults, peer isolation, bullying, intimate care risks, online vulnerability and challenges in being heard.
- Schools must ensure that vulnerable children are known to the DSL and relevant pastoral, attendance, SEND and inclusion staff, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. Safeguarding information must be shared on a need-to-know basis so that adults understand risk, protective factors, reasonable adjustments and agreed actions.

-
- For looked after and previously looked after children, schools must work closely with carers, parents where appropriate, the virtual school, social workers, personal advisers and other professionals. Personal Education Plans, transition planning and attendance monitoring should reflect safeguarding, wellbeing and stability needs.
- For children known or previously known to social care, schools must remain alert to emerging or recurring need, particularly where involvement has ended, circumstances change, attendance deteriorates or new concerns arise. Historical information should inform professional curiosity without leading to assumptions.
- For children with SEND, safeguarding responses must be accessible, trauma-informed and adapted to the child's communication, cognition, sensory profile and support needs. The SENCO, DSL and relevant staff must work together so that support plans, risk assessments and reasonable adjustments promote safety, dignity and inclusion.
- Attendance, behaviour, exclusion, alternative provision, reduced timetables and managed moves must be considered through a safeguarding lens, particularly for children who are already vulnerable or have multiagency involvement.

  The voice of the child must be actively sought and recorded in a way that is meaningful for the child. Schools must avoid adult assumptions, ensure advocacy where needed and escalate concerns where plans are not reducing risk or meeting need.

16. Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	July 2026 for implementation from 1/9/26	New policy written with the intent of replacing the previous 'procedurally heavy' versions with a more streamlined, policy focused document that is more userfriendly, supported by the wider statutory document framework and other WeST policies rather than duplicating their content in this policy

Appendix A: Local Safeguarding Partnerships Contact Details

Cornwall Safeguarding Children Partnership

Main website / procedures	www.ciossafeguarding.org.uk
Levels of need / threshold document	Continuum of Need
Children's social care front door / consultation line	0300 123 1116
Emergency Duty Service / out-of-hours	01208 251300
Online referral form	https://cornwallmosaicchildportal.cornwall.gov.uk/s4s/FormDetails/FillForm?formId=424
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	01872 326536 Lado@cornwall.gov.uk
Police / emergency safeguarding route	999
Escalation / professional disagreement route	Resolving Professional Differences Protocol

Devon Children and Families Partnership

Main website / procedures	www.devonscp.org.uk
Levels of need / threshold document	Levels of Need
Children's social care front door / consultation line	0345 155 1071
Emergency Duty Service / out-of-hours	0345 600 0388
Online referral form	https://www.devonscp.org.uk/make-a-request-for-support/
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	01392 384964 ladosecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk
Police / emergency safeguarding route	999
Escalation / professional disagreement route	Escalation Protocol

Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership

Main website / procedures	www.plymouthscb.co.uk
Levels of need / threshold document	Building Support
Children's social care front door / consultation line	01752 668000 01752 394339 (Professionals Consultation Line, weekdays 09:0016:00)
Online referral form	Download form from https://plymouthscb.co.uk/making-a-referral/ and email to MASH@plymouth.gov.uk
Emergency Duty Service / out-of-hours	01752 346984
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	01752 306758 LADO@plymouth.gov.uk
Police / emergency safeguarding route	999

Escalation / professional disagreement route	Resolving Professional Differences