

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Policy created by: Birchwood Education Ltd.

Date of policy: September 2025

Policy review date: September 2026

1.0 Introduction and Policy Statement

Birchwood Education Ltd. ("the Company") is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people we work with. We believe that all children have a right to be protected from harm, abuse, and neglect. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children, and this requires a child-centred approach at all times.¹

This policy provides a framework for all staff and self-employed tutors engaged by the Company to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students is at the centre of everything we do. We will provide a safe and trusted learning environment, both online and in-person.

This policy applies to all staff, directors, volunteers, and self-employed tutors associated with the Company. It is provided to and contractually agreed upon by all tutors before they commence any work. It is also made available to parents/guardians of all prospective students.

2.0 Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy has been developed and will be reviewed in accordance with the principles and statutory guidance of key UK legislation and official documents, including:

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) ³

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (2025) ⁵
- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ("Prevent" duty) ⁷
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR ⁹
- Online Safety Act (2025) ¹⁰
- Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (2025) ¹¹

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The Company Directors will:

- Ensure this policy is implemented, reviewed annually, and readily accessible.
- Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy DSL.
- Ensure all tutors and staff have undergone safer recruitment checks and appropriate training.
- Be responsible for handling allegations against a tutor.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL are:

- **DSL Name:** Danielle Honeyands
- **DDSL Name:** Joe Honeyands
- **Email:** admin@birchwood-ed.co.uk
- **Telephone:** 07740354217

The DSL is the first point of contact for all safeguarding concerns. Their responsibilities include:

- Receiving and acting upon any safeguarding concerns.
- Providing support and guidance to tutors.
- Liaising with local authorities, the police, and other agencies as required.⁴
- Ensuring all concerns are logged accurately and confidentially.¹²
- Undergoing formal DSL training, refreshed at least every two years.¹²

All Tutors engaged by the Company will:

- Read, understand, and adhere to this Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct.
- Complete safeguarding training as required by the Company, including the Prevent training where appropriate.⁸
- Report any safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL.
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times.¹³
- Tutors may record sessions, whether online or face-to-face, provided that consent is obtained at registration. Where consent is not obtained, a parent or guardian must be

present. All recordings must be kept securely and only stored until the term is over.

- Cooperate fully with any safeguarding investigation.

Parents/Guardians will:

- Be the primary point of contact for all communication regarding their child.
- Provide a safe and appropriate learning environment for tuition. For online sessions, this means ensuring the student is in a shared place (not their bedroom) and is appropriately clothed.
- Give consent to video recording if the tutor chooses to record the session, or be present during sessions where consent is not given.
- Report any concerns they may have about a tutor's conduct to the DSL.

4.0 Safer Recruitment and Vetting

The Company is committed to safer recruitment practices to ensure all tutors are suitable to work with children. We will follow guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025).⁵

- **Application Process:** All potential tutors must complete an application form detailing their qualifications and experience. Gaps in employment history must be explained.
- **Interviews:** Candidates are assessed for their suitability to work with children. Interviews include scenario-based safeguarding questions.¹⁴
- **Identity and Qualification Checks:** Original documents, including photographic ID and relevant qualifications, are verified. Right to work in the UK is confirmed.
- **DBS Checks:** All tutors must have an Enhanced DBS Certificate with a check of the Children's Barred List.¹³ The Company will verify the original certificate. Tutors are strongly encouraged to be subscribed to the DBS Update Service, which is free for volunteers and costs £16 annually for paid employment.⁵ This allows employers to perform instant status checks online.⁵ A new check will be required if the tutor is not subscribed to the Update Service and their certificate is more than 12 months old.⁵
- **References:** A minimum of two professional references are required and verified. One reference should be from the candidate's most recent employer working with children.¹⁴
- **Online Searches:** In line with KCSIE guidance, an online search may be considered as part of due diligence on shortlisted candidates.¹⁵ This can help identify any publicly available issues that may need to be explored during the interview.¹⁵ Candidates will be informed that these searches may be carried out.¹⁵
- **Induction:** All new tutors receive a comprehensive induction which includes a thorough review of this Safeguarding Policy, the Code of Conduct, and reporting procedures.¹⁴

5.0 Code of Conduct for Tutors

This code of conduct ensures a safe, professional, and positive learning environment.

- **Professionalism:** Tutors must act as positive role models and treat students with respect, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- **Communication:** All communication with students under 18 must be via their parent/guardian or through the Company's approved web app. Tutors must not contact students directly via personal email, text, social media, or any other private channel. Professional and appropriate language must be used at all times.
- **In-Person Tutoring:** Sessions will take place at the Director's home in the dining room. Sessions may be videoed if consent is provided at registration; in this case, a parent or other responsible adult is not required to be present on the premises. If consent for recording is not given, a parent or guardian must be present on the premises for the duration of the lesson. Physical contact with students should be avoided.
- **Online Tutoring:** Sessions must be conducted via the Company's approved platform. Tutors should ensure their teaching environment is neutral and professional, with a neutral background.¹³ They should be dressed appropriately. Tutors must not share personal contact details with students or parents.
- **Gifts and Favours:** Tutors must not give personal gifts to students. Tutors may receive gifts from students, such as Christmas or thank you gifts.
- **Social Media:** Tutors must not connect with or accept 'friend requests' from current students under 18 on any personal social media platforms.

6.0 Types of Abuse and Specific Safeguarding Issues

The guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) defines safeguarding as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online.
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.¹

The guidance refers to four main categories of abuse:

- **Physical:** A form of abuse causing physical harm to a child.
- **Emotional:** The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child to cause severe and adverse effects on their emotional development.

- **Sexual:** Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities (through actual physical or online contact).
- **Neglect:** 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.

In addition, we recognise the importance of understanding specific forms of abuse and contemporary safeguarding issues.

- **Contextual Safeguarding and Extra-Familial Harm:** This refers to the exploitation and abuse of children and young people that occurs outside the home, such as in peer groups or online. This includes risks like child sexual and criminal exploitation, gangs, county lines, and modern slavery.¹⁶ We recognise that these risks can affect a child's mental well-being and ability to engage with education and services.¹⁶
- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity.¹⁶ The definition of abuse has been expanded to highlight that witnessing ill-treatment of others is harmful to children.¹²
- **Domestic Abuse:** We recognise that exposure to domestic abuse can have a serious, long-term emotional and psychological impact on children.¹² Tutors must be alert to what they see and hear and notify the DSL of any concerns.
- **Online Safety:** The rise of AI tools, such as deepfakes and generative AI, has added a new layer of complexity to online safeguarding.¹⁷ We recognise our children are growing up in a world with online risks, and we are mindful of risks relating to content, contact, conduct, and commerce.¹ We require that online sessions take place in a shared space where an adult can hear and, if they wish, see what is happening.¹³
- **Mental Health:** We understand that a child's mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that they are suffering from or are at risk of suffering abuse or exploitation.¹² Tutors are reminded to be aware of the impact of their words on a student's mental health.
- **Prevention of Radicalisation (The "Prevent" Duty):** As of July 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act placed a duty on education providers to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".⁷ Tutors are asked to take the Prevent training, which is available at this link: <https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal>, to identify and report concerns related to radicalisation and extremism.⁸

7.0 Procedure for Reporting Concerns

If a tutor has a concern or a child makes a disclosure:

1. **Listen and Do Not Question:** Listen carefully and calmly, without showing shock or disbelief. Do not ask leading questions.
2. **Do Not Promise Confidentiality:** Never promise to keep what a child tells you a secret. Explain that you must pass the information on to the DSL to keep them safe.
3. **Take Notes:** Make a factual, accurate, written record of what was said, using the child's own words, as soon as possible.
4. **Contact the DSL:** Report the concern to the DSL immediately and no later than the end of that day.

DSL Action:

The DSL will log the concern and decide on the appropriate action. This may involve:

- Seeking further information.
- Speaking with the parents/guardians (if this does not place the child at further risk).
- Making a referral to the local authority children's services or the police.

External Agencies:

- **Immediate Risk of Significant Harm:** If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on **999**. For urgent concerns during business hours, call the Essex Children & Families Hub on **0345 603 7627** and ask for the priority line.¹⁸ For out-of-hours or bank holidays, contact the Emergency Duty Team on **0345 606 1212**.¹⁸
- **Less Urgent Concerns:** For less urgent concerns or for advice and guidance, contact the Essex Children & Families Hub consultation line on **0345 603 7627** during business hours.¹⁸
- **Out of County:** The DSL will refer to the child's local authority in cases when the child lives outside of Essex.
- **If the tutor remains concerned:** Tutors are advised that if they continue to have concerns, feel a concern is not being addressed, or that a situation does not appear to be improving for a child, they should raise this with the DSL.

8.0 Managing Allegations Against a Tutor

Any allegation made against a tutor will be taken seriously and dealt with immediately.

- The DSL will be informed immediately.
- The Company will report the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day.²⁰ The Essex LADO can be contacted at **03330 139 797** or **LADO@essex.gov.uk**.²⁰
- The tutor in question may be suspended from all duties pending the outcome of an

investigation.

- The Company will cooperate fully with any external investigation by the police or children's services.
- An internal investigation will be conducted to determine if the tutor has breached the Code of Conduct and whether disciplinary action is required.

9.0 GDPR and Data Protection

The Company is committed to protecting the personal data of its clients and tutors in line with UK GDPR.⁹

- **Data Collection:** We only collect data that is necessary for the provision of our tutoring services. This includes student's name, age, and educational needs, alongside parent/guardian contact details.
- **Lawful Basis:** Data is processed on the basis of contract (to provide tutoring) and legitimate interest (for safeguarding). Safeguarding records are stored separately and confidentially, accessible only by the DSL and Company Directors.
- **Data Protection Principles:** As required by UK GDPR, we will ensure that personal data is used fairly, lawfully, and transparently; used for specified, explicit purposes; and is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary. It will be accurate, kept for no longer than is necessary, and handled securely.⁹
- **Data Sharing:** Personal data is not shared with third parties without explicit consent, unless there is a legal obligation or a serious safeguarding concern that requires us to do so in the child's best interests. Fears about sharing information will not stand in the way of the need to safeguard a child at risk of abuse or neglect.⁹ All decisions to share safeguarding information are recorded.
- **Data Retention:** Personal data is retained only for as long as is necessary and in accordance with our Data Retention Policy. Safeguarding records are kept for a longer period as required by law.

10.0 Training and Awareness

The policy is the blueprint, but training is the mechanism by which it is embedded into the organisation's operational DNA.¹⁴

- The DSL and Deputy DSL undertake Level 2 child protection training and Prevent training (available at <https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal>) at least every two years.

- All staff and tutors receive training upon induction and at regular intervals. This training will be tailored to specific roles and will cover all forms of abuse, online risks (including AI exploitation) ¹⁷, the Prevent duty ⁸, and the specific reporting procedures outlined in this policy.
- We will invest in training for all staff on mental health awareness to ensure the entire team understands how to identify and support vulnerable pupils.¹⁷

11.0 Policy Review

This policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed and updated annually, or earlier if there are changes in legislation or guidance, such as the Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) guidance.

Appendices

Appendix A: Tutor Procedure for Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

A tutor must immediately report any concern they have about a child's welfare to the DSL.

1. Listen and Take Notes

- Listen calmly without shock.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Record everything accurately, using the child's own words.

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2. Contact the DSL

- Phone the DSL on **07740354217** or email them at **admin@birchwood-ed.co.uk**.
- **If DSL is unavailable, call the DDSL on 07730587462.**
- Report the concern immediately and no later than the end of the day.
- Share the notes you have taken.

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3. DSL Action

- The DSL logs the concern.
- The DSL decides on the appropriate action, which may include:
 - Making a referral to the local authority children's services or the police.

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4. **External Agency Contact**

- The DSL or DDSL will make the appropriate contact with external agencies.

Appendix B: Safeguarding Concern Reporting Form

Tutor Details	
Tutor Name	
Date of Report	
Contact Number	

Student Details	
Student Name	
Date of Birth	
Parent/Guardian Name	

Incident Details	
Date of Incident	
Time of Incident	
Location of Incident	In-person (at Director's home) / Online (via approved platform) / Other (please specify)
Witnesses (if any)	

Description of Concern	
What was observed or disclosed?	<i>(Use the child's own words where possible. Be factual and objective. Do not add your own interpretations.)</i>
Initial actions taken	
Was the DSL contacted?	Yes / No
If yes, date and time of contact:	

Any follow-up advice received from the DSL:	
Is the child at immediate risk of harm?	Yes / No
Has a referral been made to an external agency?	Yes / No
If yes, to which agency?	

Appendix C: Key External Contact Details

- **Essex Children & Families Hub (Urgent Concerns):** 0345 603 7627 (ask for the priority line)
- **Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours/Bank Holidays):** 0345 606 1212
- **Police (Immediate Risk of Significant Harm):** 999
- **Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 03330 139 797 or LADO@essex.gov.uk
- **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000

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