

Date of Issue	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	Ratified by Governors:-
September 2016		September 2016
Review Date		Policy Owner
August 2017		JHE

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Safeguarding Children at Bedford Free School (BFS)

1. The Policy

Bedford Free School (BFS) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its pupils. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- 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. We believe that all staff and visitors have an important role to play in safeguarding children.

1.1 We believe:

- All children have the *right* to be protected from harm as defined by Article 3 in the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child.
- Children need to be safe and to feel safe in school in order to grow, learn and develop.
- Schools can contribute to the promotion of children's welfare and the prevention of harm.
- Children need support which matches their individual needs, including those who may have experienced abuse.

2. References

Bedford Free School will fulfil local and national responsibilities as laid out in the following documents:-

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE September 2016)
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (DfE Feb 2015 Part 2,6,7,)
- Working together to Safeguard Children (DfE March 2015)
- The Policies & Procedures of Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB)
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Education Act 2002 s175 / s157
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

3. Overall Aims

3.1 This policy will contribute to the prevention of harm by:

Clarifying standards of behaviour for staff and pupils;
Developing staff awareness of the causes of harm;
Encouraging pupils and parental participation in practice and
Providing guidance on addressing concerns at the earliest possible stage

3.2 This policy will contribute to the protection of our pupils by:

- Advising appropriate work within the curriculum;
- Advising on child protection procedures and
- Encouraging working in partnership with pupils, parents and other agencies.

3.3 This policy will contribute to supporting our pupils by giving advice as to how to:

- Identify individual needs where possible and
- Designing plans to meet needs.

4. Key Principles

Key principles of our child protection work are:-

4.1 The safety and wellbeing of our children must, and always, be at the heart of everything we do. Therefore, every adult in our school who comes into contact with any student is responsible for acting in the best interest of and protecting the welfare of every child. If an adult has a concern about a child, then they must act. To say nothing is to do nothing. We will always strive to work together, and do the basic things as well as possible. We will always aim to see the child first. We will always follow procedures robustly and will ensure that dialogue and relationship building are central to securing the best academic and personal outcomes for our pupils.

4.2 We encourage pupils to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in the school and where political issues are brought to the attention of the pupils, reasonably practicable steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to pupils. BFS will promote fundamental British values as part of a broader requirement to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

4.3 All staff will receive appropriate training in safeguarding, in line with statutory guidance; including reading and understanding Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016.

5. Key Processes

- 5.1 All staff will read this policy.
- 5.2 All staff should be aware of the guidance issued by Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (Appendix 1), "A Child Centred System: Understanding Thresholds Information on early help, prevention, and statutory services for everyone working with children and families."
- 5.3 All staff will read all appendices connected with this policy. Staff will also be made aware that when working in a school setting that they are in a 'Position of Trust'. (Sexual Offences Act 2003.)
- 5.4 Bedford Free School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead. In addition to this the Principal and three Pastoral Co-ordinators are fully safeguarding trained. All the designated safeguarding personnel attend regular training at appropriate intervals, at the very least annually.
- 5.5 All staff are familiar with safeguarding and child protection procedures and all concerns regarding child abuse or suspected child abuse are reported immediately to a member of the Designated Safeguarding team who have responsibility for referring suspected child abuse cases to Social Care. This includes concerns regarding a fellow staff member or volunteer's behaviour and all such concerns will be discussed with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- 5.6 There is always at least one person on any interview panel who has had training in Safer Recruitment:- we adhere to all guidelines issued by Keeping children safe in education September 2016 - Part three: Safer Recruitment when recruiting, selecting and vetting potential staff and volunteers – see section 14.
- 5.7 All details of checks are kept on the school's Single Central Record (SCR). Procedures are in place for recording details of all staff and visitors to school.
- 5.8 We follow the guidelines of Keeping children safe in education September 2016, (Part four: Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff) in respect of any member of staff who has received an allegation made against them that may indicate that they would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work with students – see section 15
- 5.9 All staff members are updated annually regarding the systems which operate within the school which support safeguarding and child protection. These messages are reinforced at the start of each academic year.
- 5.10 All new staff to the school (who arrive other than the start of a new academic year) receive Safeguarding Training through the induction programme.
- 5.11 All supply staff are given a copy of the staff handbook and 'an immediate information' sheet which includes information about reporting safeguarding concerns.

- 5.12 Effective working relationships with other agencies are developed and promoted; e.g. the Local Authority, Police, Education Welfare, School Nurse, Social Care and the Early Help Service. The school follows the government guidance issued in Working together to safeguard children (March 2015) in order to act in the best interests of the children in our care.
- 5.13 In general, we will discuss concerns with parents / carers before approaching other agencies, and will seek their consent to making a referral to another agency. Appropriate staff will approach parents / carers after consultation with the Designated Senior Person. However, there may be occasions when the school will contact another agency **before** informing parents/carers because it considers that contacting them may increase the risk of significant harm to the child.
- 5.14 Parents / carers will be informed about our child protection policy through the school website.

6. Expectations

- 6.1 All staff and visitors (for the purpose of this policy visitors are defined as:- individuals contracted by school to work with students unsupervised) will;
- Be familiar with this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (*for visitors working with children a summary of our policies and procedures will be provided together with information on how they should report concerns*);
 - Be alert to signs and indicators of possible harm (See Appendix 3 for current definitions of abuse and examples of harm);
 - Record evidence of potential harm (on the 'Disclosure and Concern Form') and ensure all 'Initial Concerns' are handed to one of the BFS Designated Safeguarding personnel as soon as is safely possible;
 - Deal with a disclosure of abuse from a child in line with the guidance and procedures of the School, Safeguarding Staff Handbook (Appendix 2)
 - Be involved, as required, in the implementation of any individual education, interagency child protection or child in need plans; and
 - Be subject to Safer Recruitment processes and checks whether they are new staff, supply staff, contractors or volunteers etc.

7. Roles and Responsibilities of Staff, including the Designated Senior Person

- 7.1 The Designated Senior Person for Safeguarding delegates regular reviews of vulnerable children. The reviews are evidenced in recorded notes, on a regular basis and during safeguarding update meetings. These meetings between the Designated Senior Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Lead and the Pastoral Co-coordinators also enable the regular review of all children for whom concerns have been raised.

- 7.2 Where a member of BFS has reason to believe a student has, or is likely to be harmed, a Pastoral Leader in conjunction with the Safeguarding Deputy or Lead, will decide what steps should be taken, including referring the matter to the Children's Services and will record this decision in the confidential notes.
- 7.3 Child protection (which refers to a subset of Safeguarding Children practice, namely, abuse and neglect resulting in or likely to result in, significant harm which is attributable to the child's parenting) and other safeguarding information will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Staff will be informed of relevant details only when a Designated Safeguarding Lead feels their having knowledge of a situation will improve their ability to deal with an individual child and / or family. A written record will be made of what action has been taken.
- 7.4 Child protection records will be stored securely in a central place separate from academic records. Electronic and in some cases hard copy files will be kept for at least the period during which the child is attending the school, and beyond that in line with current data legislation.
- 7.5 Access to these records by staff, other than by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead, will be restricted to the Pastoral Administrators and the Principal.
- 7.6 Communications with parents will be in line with any home school policies and give due regard to which adults have parental responsibility.
- 7.7 Will not disclose to a parent any information held on a child if this would put the child at risk of significant harm.
- 7.8 If a pupil moves from BFS, child protection records will be forwarded on to the Designated Senior Person at the new school, with due regard to their confidential nature. We will forward the child protection records to their new destination in their entirety and will ensure receipt is confirmed. We will archive electronic notes and destroy hard copies once receipt is confirmed. Contact between BFS and the receiving school may be necessary. We will record the transfer of any student who is known to be under Child Protection where and to whom the records have been passed and the date. We will adhere to current guidance from the Data Commissioner and seek advice from our lawyers in respect of forwarding files abroad.
- 7.9 If sending by post pupil records will be sent by "Special/Recorded Delivery". For audit purposes a note of all pupil records transferred or received will be kept in either paper or electronic format. This will include the child's name, date of birth, where and to whom the records have been sent and the date sent and/or received.
- 7.10 If a pupil is permanently excluded child protection records will be forwarded on to the relevant organisation.
- 7.11 When a Designated Senior Person or a Designated Safeguarding Lead resigns their post or no longer has safeguarding responsibility, there should be a full face to face

handover/exchange of information with the new post holder. On handover, all permissions to secure files will be terminated.

7.12 In exceptional circumstances when a face to face handover is unfeasible, the Principal will ensure that the new post holder is fully conversant with all procedures and case files.

8. The Governing Body

8.1 There will be a nominated Governor for Safeguarding at BFS who will be responsible for liaising with the Safeguarding Lead over all matters regarding the safeguarding of pupils. The role is strategic rather than operational – they will not be involved in concerns about individual pupils.

8.2 The Safeguarding Lead will liaise with the Nominated Governor and the Principal to produce reports for the Governors at least annually and will ensure that Safeguarding is a regular item on the agenda for Governors' meetings.

8.3 The Governing Body will ensure that the school: Has a Safeguarding Policy in accordance the DfE statutory guidance Keeping children safe in Education, September 2016;

- Operates, “safer recruitment” procedures in line with statutory guidance;
- Has at least one senior member of the school’s leadership team acting as a Designated Senior Person for safeguarding Child Protection;
- Ensures that the Designated Senior Person, and other Safeguarding Staff, attend appropriate refresher training annually;
- Ensures that the Principal and all other staff who work with children undertake training, which will be appropriate to their roles and in line with advice issued by BBSCB;
- Ensures that temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the school’s arrangements for safeguarding children and their responsibilities.
- Remedies any deficiencies or weaknesses brought to its attention without delay and
- Have procedures for dealing with allegations of the abuse of pupils against any staff/volunteers.

8.4 The Governing Body will review this policy annually.

8.5 The Chair of the Governing Body is nominated to be responsible for liaising with the local authority and other partner agencies in the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Principal or member of the Governing Body.

9. Responding to concerns about a child:-

9.1 Cause for concern:

- Record and detail concern on Disclosure Form
- Speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team

9.2 Discuss with:

- Concerned party,
- Safeguarding Personnel
- Parents; where deemed appropriate and safe

Safeguarding personnel follow appropriate steps according to need:-

9.3 Monitor (within school)

- Placed on monitoring list and discussed formally at regular safeguarding update meetings
- Child leaves school – information passes to and future DSL
- Where further concerns are raised go back to 9.2)

9.4 Seek external advice from appropriate agencies

And if assessed as necessary:-

9.5 Refer to Children's Services (MASH)

- Assessment by MASH team (Children Services)
- If no further action clarification for reason why should be sought by school's safeguarding team and then back to 9.3) Monitor (within school)
- Enquiries made under child protection procedures

9.6 Keep all records in line with policy

10. Working with Parents and Carers to Protect Children

10.1 In general we will discuss Safeguarding Children concerns with parents/ carers before approaching other agencies and will seek their consent to making a referral to another agency. However, there may be occasions when the school will contact another agency, before informing the parent/carers, because it considers that contacting them may increase the risk of significant harm to the child.

10.2 Parents/carers will be informed about our Safeguarding Children Policy through the website.

11. Working with Other Agencies to Protect Children: Multi-Agency Work

- 11.1 BFS will work in partnership with other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. The school will, where necessary, liaise with the school nurse and make referrals to Children's Services. Referrals will normally be made by the Designated Safeguarding Personnel to Children's Social Care in the local authority where the child resides, although any member of staff can make such a referral. Where the child already has a safeguarding social worker, the request for service should go immediately to the social worker involved, or in their absence to their team manager.
- 11.2 We will co-operate with any child protection enquiries conducted by Children's Social Care: the school will ensure representation at appropriate inter-agency meetings such as initial and review child protection conferences, core group meetings and integrated support plan meetings.
- 11.3 We will provide reports as required for these meetings. If the school is unable to attend, a written report will be sent. The report will, wherever possible, be shared with parents / carers at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- 11.4 Where a child in school is subject to an inter-agency child protection plan, a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) meeting, or a Multi-Agency Planning meeting for Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation the school will contribute to the preparation, implementation and review of the plan as appropriate.

12. Our Role in the Prevention of Abuse

- 12.1 We will identify and provide opportunities for children to develop skills, concepts, attitudes and knowledge to promote their safety and well-being.

The Curriculum

- 12.2 Relevant issues will be addressed through the wider school pastoral programme. For example, British values, self-esteem, emotional literacy, assertiveness, power, sex and relationship education, teenage relationship abuse, e-safety and bullying.
- 12.3 Relevant issues will be addressed through other areas of the curriculum, for example, through English, History, Drama, Art and for some children through social skills and other specific groups, as appropriate to individual needs.

Other Areas of Work

- 12.4 All our policies which address issues of power and potential harm, for example bullying, equal opportunities, positive handling, positive behaviour, will be linked to ensure a whole school approach.

12.5 Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy cannot be separated from the general ethos of the School, which should ensure that children are treated with respect high expectations; dignity, feel safe, and honesty (are listened to).

13. Our Role in Supporting Children

13.1 Where we are aware, we will offer appropriate support to individual children who have experienced abuse, or who have abused others, as early as possible.

13.2 A record of any safeguarding support plans which are devised, implemented and reviewed regularly will be logged in the confidential Child Protection files. Plans will detail areas of support, who will be involved, and the child's wishes and feelings.

13.3 Children and young people who abuse others will be responded to in a way that meets their needs as well as protecting others within the school community through a multi-agency risk assessment. We will ensure that the needs of children and young people who abuse others will be considered separately from the needs of their victims.

13.4 We will ensure the school works in partnership with parents / carers and other agencies as appropriate.

14. A Safe School Culture

Safer Recruitment and Selection

14.1 All recruitment materials will include reference to the school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of pupils. The school pays full regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2016. Safer recruitment practice includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional and character references, checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews and undertaking appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). A 'Prohibition from teaching' check will also be completed for teaching staff as well as a 'Disqualification by Association' check for all relevant staff as stated in the February 2015 legislation.

14.2 All staff with responsibility for recruitment will have undertaken Safer Recruitment training. A Safer Recruitment trained member of staff will be involved in the recruitment of all staff and volunteers and will sit on the recruitment panel.

Staff Support

14.3 We recognise the stressful and traumatic nature of child protection work. We will support staff by offering them opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the Designated Senior Person or other Designated Safeguarding Lead and will assist them in seeking further support, as appropriate.

15. Responding to an Allegation about a Member of Staff

15.1 This procedure should be used in any case in which it is alleged that a member of staff, governor, visiting professional or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

15.2 Although it is an uncomfortable thought, it needs to be acknowledged that there is the potential for staff in school to abuse children.

15.3 All staff working within our organisation must report any potential safeguarding concerns about an individual's behaviour towards children and young people immediately. Allegations or concerns about colleagues and visitors must be reported directly to the Principal, unless the concern relates to the Principal. If the concern relates to the Principal, it must be reported immediately to the Chair of Governors and Local Authority Designated Officer and they will decide on any action required.

15.4 BFS will follow all advice and guidelines specifically within the DfE documents:-
Keeping children safe in education – September 2016 and Working together to safeguard children March 2015

16. Children with Additional Needs

16.1 BFS recognises that while all children have a right to be safe, some children may be more vulnerable to abuse, for example those in care or with a disability or special educational need, those living with domestic violence or drug / alcohol abusing parents.

16.2 When BFS is considering excluding, either fixed term or permanently, a vulnerable pupil and / or a pupil who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan or about whom there are significant child protection concerns, we will take into account safeguarding. In the event of a one-off serious incident, resulting in an immediate decision to exclude, agencies involved with the pupil will be informed of the decision and a risk assessment will be completed, if necessary. Any Looked After Child or child subject to a Child Protection Plan, will be placed in an educational provision from the first day of any exclusion, in line with DfE Guidelines.

17. Children in Specific Circumstances

17.1 The school may use the guidance on how to support children in specific circumstances from the Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board which can be found on their website:-

<http://bedfordscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/contents.html>

17.2 For specific safeguarding issues, the Statutory Guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' states that 'Expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. BFS will follow the government guidance on the issues listed below (via the TES, NSPCC and GOV.UK websites):-

- *Children missing education*
- *Child missing from home or care*
- *Child sexual exploitation (CSE)*
- *Bullying including cyber-bullying*
- *Domestic violence*
- *Drugs*
- *Fabricated or induced illness*
- *Faith abuse*
- *Female genital mutilation (FGM) – see also below*
- *Forced marriage*
- *Gangs and youth violence*
- *Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)*
- *Mental health*
- *Private fostering*
- *Preventing radicalisation*
- *Sexting*
- *Teenage relationship abuse*
- *trafficking*

18. Specific Safeguarding Issues

18.1 Child missing from Education

BFS staff will work closely with the Educational Welfare Service and will follow Bedford Borough Council's guidelines for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

It is essential that all staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

18.2 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

Child sexual exploitation occurs when a child or young person, or another person, receives “something” (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of the child/young person as a result of engaging in sexual activities. The presence of any significant indicator for child sexual exploitation should trigger a referral to Children’s Social Care. The significant indicators are:

- Having a relationship of concern with a controlling adult or young person (this may involve physical and/or emotional abuse and/or gang activity).
- Entering and/or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Possessing unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothes or other items;
- Frequenting areas known for risky activities;
- Being groomed or abused via the Internet and mobile technology; and
- Having unexplained contact with hotels, taxi companies or fast food outlets

18.3 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

- Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. There is a range of potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, which individually may not indicate risk but if there are two or more indicators present this could signal a risk to the child or young person. Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM. Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject.

18.4 Preventing Radicalisation:

Schools have a duty of care to their pupils and staff which includes safeguarding them from the risk of being drawn into terrorism. BFS is committed to the government’s Prevent Strategy. There are three specific objectives to the Government Prevent strategy:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat the UK faces from those who promote it;
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address.

BFS will be duly mindful of the Government’s Prevent Duty statutory guidance document (link below):

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, which received Royal Assent on 12 February 2015, places a duty on specified authorities, including local authorities and childcare, education and other children's services providers BFS has due regard of the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism ("the Prevent duty") and will be aware of the signs and symptoms of a young person being at risk of becoming radicalised:-

- spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists;
- changing their style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group;
- their day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause;
- loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause;
- possession of material or symbols associated with an extremist cause (e.g. the swastika for far right groups);
- attempts to recruit others to the group/cause/ideology;
- communications with others that suggest identification with a group/cause/ideology.

The examples above are not exhaustive and vulnerability may manifest itself in other ways.

18.5 Private Fostering:

- Where a member of staff or volunteer at BFS becomes aware that a pupil may be in a private fostering arrangement, where a child under the age of 16 is provided with care and accommodation by someone to whom they are not related* in that person's home, they should raise this in the first instance with the designated senior person for child protection. BFS will then notify the local authority of the circumstances, and the local authority should check that the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child.
- Should BFS become aware of such an arrangement we will follow the guide for professionals and will encourage the parent or carer to notify Bedford Local Authority Children's Services in addition to the school also doing so.

**The Children Act defines 'relatives' in relation to a child as grandparent, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be full or half relation and could be related by marriage. The term also includes a step parent. Cohabitee of the mother or father would not qualify as a relative; neither would extended family such as a great aunt, great uncle or parent's cousins.)*

19. Appendices – (available upon request)

- i. Appendix 1 A Child Centred System: Understanding Thresholds Information on early help, prevention, and statutory services for everyone working with children and families (Bedford Borough Children’s Safeguarding Board) – available to BFS staff only
- ii. Appendix 2 Bedford Free School Safeguarding Staff Handbook
- iii. Appendix 3 Department for Education (DfE): Keeping Children Safe in Education:

Physical restraint

There may be times when adults, in the course of their school duties, have to intervene physically in order to restrain children and prevent them from coming to harm. Such intervention will always be the minimum necessary to resolve the situation. We follow the guidance given in the DfE document “Use of reasonable force”. The Headteacher will require the adult(s) involved in any such incident to report the matter to him or her immediately, and to record it in the Interventions Book.