ZENITH
MULTI ACADEMY
TRUST

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Model MAT Policy

for use in:
All schools in the Trust
Central Team
Zenith Minds

Approved by:	Board of Trustees
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Utilising the Essex Model Policy

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KEY CONTACTS WITHIN EACH SCHOOL/TRUST

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Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead

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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at THE KING JOHN SCHOOL

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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at JAMES HORNSBY SCHOOL

NAME	Dee Sumner
CONTACT NUMBER	01268 582400
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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at CASTLE VIEW SCHOOL

NAME	Lizzie Hobbs
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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at LAINDON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY

NAME	Cristina Portoles
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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at CASTLEDON SCHOOL

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DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION LEAD at ZENITH MINDS

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Please see appendix 1 for a full list of contacts and procedures in each school.

KEY CONTACTS WITHIN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

If you are concerned a child is subject to, or at risk of, being harmed or neglected, you should take action, as set out below, considering **the home address** of the young person/family. To check a local authority, postcodes of the home address can be checked here: https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Essex (see Appendix 4)

Essex Children and Families Hub -0345 603 7627 (out of hours 0345 606 1212)
Ask for Priority (Level 4) or Consultation (Level 2,3,4)
Request for Support Form

❖ Immediate Risk of Significant Harm - Priority

Where a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, please call the Children & Families Hub on 0345 603 7627 and ask for the 'Priority Line', and/or call the Police on 999.
During out of hours (Monday to Thursday 5pm to 8.45am, Friday and Bank Holidays 4:15pm to 8.45am), please call: 0345 606 1212 or email: Emergency.DutyTeamOutOfHours@essex.gov.uk

❖ Request for Support

If you are concerned that a child or young person is being harmed or neglected, or is at risk of this, you should go to the Essex County Council website where you can make a request for support to the Children & Families Hub.

❖ Consultation

The Children and Families Hub offer a consultation line for professionals providing advice and guidance. This can be accessed by calling 0345 603 7627 and asking for the 'Consultation Line'. You can also seek advice on Early Help at the online weekly 'drop-ins' – more information is available on this link.

❖ Request for Information Portal

Enquiries and requests for information from the Children and Families can be made through this online form.

❖ Useful Resources

The Essex County Council website includes the Essex Directory of Services and other guidance and tools to support practitioners in their work with children and families across Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Windscreen of Need (Appendix 4)

Thurrock

If you are concerned that a child living in Thurrock is being harmed or neglected or is at risk of this, you should contact:

Worried about a child?	Contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – Children's Social Care: **01375 652 802** or thurrockmash@thurrock.gov.uk
Out of Hours	Monday to Thursday, 5:30pm to 9am Friday, from 4:30pm through the weekend until 9am on Monday, public holidays: **01375 372 468**
Police Child Abuse Team	101 or Call **999** if you are concerned a child needs immediate protection

https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/childrens-care-professionals-services/thurrock-mash

Southend

If there is a concern that a child living in Southend may be at risk of or may be suffering significant harm, contact C-SPOC 01702 215007 Option 1 (Out of Hours: 0345 606 1212). To report your concerns to Southend Children's Single Point of Contact Team, please complete a referral on their portal.
Requests for information can be made here.
Referrals to MARAC can be made here.

Radicalisation

If there are concerns someone is vulnerable to radicalisation, or there is a concern about organisations that work with children:

If you have a concern that a crime is being committed, planned, or you are aware of any terrorist activity, please contact the police on either 999 (if urgent) or 101 (for all other enquiries). Reports of possible terrorist activity can be made via Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) .

Prevent is a national programme that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It works to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are offered appropriate interventions, and communities are protected against radicalising influences. For learners who may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism, it is recommended that advice is sought before a referral is made. Staff in our schools should speak to the DSL in the first instance, who can then seek advice if required through the Police Prevent team: prevent@essex.police.uk 01245 452196 (Eastern Region) or through the Education Safeguarding Team: EducationSafeguarding@essex.gov.uk

If it is felt a referral is needed to Prevent, the online form, and Essex advice documentation, can be found here: National Prevent referral form, and further advice can be found here from the DfE and on this guidance from the Home Office..

If there are wider safeguarding concerns, a call should be made to the Children and Families Hub/ Social Care to consider whether other support and action is also necessary.

Domestic Abuse – Operation Encompass

Our schools are signed up to Operation Encompass to receive notifications. Operation Encompass aims to reduce the long-term impacts of domestic abuse by providing early intervention and support. When the police attend incidents of domestic violence or abuse where children are directly or indirectly involved, they notify the designated safeguarding lead at the child's school before the start of the next school day. The safeguarding lead then makes sure the child gets the immediate support that they need.

Any queries, or email correspondence relating to Operation Encompass should be sent to operation.encompass@essex.police.uk.

Operation Encompass provides an advice and helpline service for all staff members from educational settings who may be concerned about children who have experienced domestic abuse. The helpline is available 8AM to 1PM, Monday to Friday on 0204 513 9990

Refuge runs the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, which can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which a safe time from the team for a call can be booked.

1. Introduction

Schools and colleges and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children... Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility... Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred *(Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE, 2025).*

Please note that any reference to school/schools also includes our Zenith Minds provision, and apply to the full range of school activities, with adjustments made as necessary through additional documentation e.g. trips and work placements.

This child protection and safeguarding policy applies to all staff, Governors, Trustees, Members, volunteers, and contractors, and the wider school community of all Zenith Multi Academy Trust schools. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our schools, and so the processes outlined in this policy should be followed by all; it should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education – namely parts 1 and 5 - (DfE, 2025);
- Annex C of Keeping Children Safe in Education - the role of the designated safeguarding lead
- the school behaviour policy;
- the Trust's Code of Conduct policy for staff;
- the safeguarding response to children missing from education (Appendix 8 and associated links)
- child on child abuse policy
- health and safety policy
- anti-bullying policy
- online safety policy

The child protection policy will:
- Explain reporting procedures and systems which are in line with government guidance;
- Refer to local agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- Cover specific safeguarding issues that all staff need to be aware of (as outlined in KCSIE 2025).

We are also aware of our obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty).

This policy is available on the school's website for all parents/carers to ensure they are aware of our procedures, and how to seek support should it be required.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children *(everyone under the age of 18)* is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online;
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- 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;
- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.

2. Safeguarding in Zenith Multi Academy Trust

Zenith Multi Academy Trust takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. "The welfare of the child is paramount" (Children Act 1989).

Our approach to safeguarding and welfare includes:

a) Prevention through the creation of a positive school atmosphere and the teaching, and pastoral support offered to students;
b) Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns;
c) Support for students who may have been abused.

The schools recognise that they are an agent of referral and not of investigation.

We recognise that for our students, high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult help to prevent abuse. Our schools will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where students feel safe and secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to;
- Provide reporting mechanisms to support all pupils/students, allowing them to report concerns in a way that they feel comfortable. We will seek to gain student voice on a regular basis to review this;
- Ensure that students know that there are adults within the school they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty;
- Ensure students receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating;
- Include in the curriculum activities and opportunities which equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe from abuse and to develop healthy and safe relationships;
- Protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values and to promote respect for all others;
- Facilitate understanding of wider issues within the context of learning about the values on which our society is founded, and our system of democratic government;
- Provide a curriculum which actively promotes the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- Promote tolerance of and respect for people of with protected characteristics, including all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability, and sexual orientations;
- Make parents/carers aware of the school policies and practice for safeguarding and ensure that, wherever possible, every effort will be made to establish open and honest effective working relationships with parents/carers, and colleagues from partner agencies.

3. Statutory framework

There is Government guidance set out in Working Together (HMG, December 2026) on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Police, and Health) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB).

In Essex, where all our schools are located, the statutory partners are Essex County Council, Essex Police and five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the county. The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice in Essex are the responsibilities of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board. In Southend, Essex and Thurrock, all professionals must work in accordance with the SET Procedures (ESCB, 2022). Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are aware of local threshold documents which includes the processes for local early help assessments and the type and level of early help services; they engage in discussions with statutory safeguarding partners to agree the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered as part of the local arrangements.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students of the school.

Our schools also work in accordance with the following legislation and guidance *(this is not an exhaustive list)*:

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2026)
Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB, 2024)
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015) (PREVENT revised 2021)
The Prevent Duty: guidance for schools (DfE 2024)
Education Act (2002)
Serious Crime Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015)
Children and Social Work Act (2017)
Sexual Offences Act (2003)
Data Protection Act (2018)
Children Act (1989)
Children Act (2004)
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (S. 74 - Serious Crime Act 2015)
Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation (HMG 2020)
Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – procedural information (Home Office, updated Jan 2020)
Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (DfE 2024)
What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (HMG, 2015)
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK
School and College Security Guidance (DfE 2023)
Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE, updated 2018)
Preventing youth violence and gang involvement (Home Office, 2015)
Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adult - county lines guidance (Home Office, 2018)
Searching, screening and confiscation (DfE, Updated 2023)
Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, 2017)
Understanding and Supporting Behaviour - good practice for schools (ECC, 2022)
Use of reasonable force in schools (DfE 2013)
Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE 2024)
Children Missing in Education (DfE, 2024)
Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
Children who run away or go missing from home or care (DfE 2014)
Child Missing Education Policy and Practice Guidance (ECC April 2023)
Essex Elective Home Education Policy and Practice Guidance (ECC)
Elective home education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (DfE 2019)
Let's Talk: Reducing the Risk of Suicide (ECC Feb 2021)
Teaching online safety in schools (DfE, 2023)
Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges (DfE, March 2025)
Harmful online challenges and online hoaxes (Feb 2021)
Safeguarding and Remote Education (DfE Nov 2022)
Emergency planning and responses for education, childcare and children's social care settings (DfE May 2023)
Children Act 1989: private fostering statutory guidance (DfE 2005)
Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children (DfE, updated 2018)
Sharing nude and semi nude images – advice for education settings working with children and young people (2024)
Child Centred Policing – When to Call the Police: Guidance for Schools and Colleges
Keeping Children Safe in Out of School Settings (DfE 2023)

4. Roles and responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within schools and the Local Authority who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names of those in our schools with these specific responsibilities - the DSL and deputy DSL(s) - are shown in Appendix 1 of this document.

The Board of Trustees ensure that each school has an appointed DSL, effective policies, procedures, and training. They have an appointed a Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead to support the schools, and a Trustee safeguarding link. They ensure that all Governors and Trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) at induction. This training equips them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding. Their training should be regularly updated at least annually.

Zenith Multi Academy Trust

Zenith Multi Academy Trust is the proprietor of The James Hornsby School. The Trust has overall responsibility for safeguarding, and has delegated this responsibility to the school's Governing Body.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body for each Zenith school has a strategic leadership responsibility for their school's safeguarding arrangements, ensuring that the policies, procedures and training in their school are effective and comply with the law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance, and that it is reviewed at least annually.

The Governing Body ensures there is a named DSL and deputy DSL(s) in place.

The Governing Body ensures their school contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. It ensures that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

The Governing Body ensures that all staff members undergo safeguarding and child protection training (including Prevent and online safety/ filtering and monitoring) at induction, then annually; all staff members then receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The Governing Body ensures that when children use the school's network to access the internet, they are protected from inappropriate content through appropriate filters and monitoring systems; these arrangements for filtering and monitoring are regularly reviewed, and governors are part of annual reviews. The Governing Body ensures that children are taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and effectiveness is regularly reviewed. The Governing Body ensures schools are working in accordance with government regulations which make the subjects of Relationships Education (for primary age pupils) and Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary age students) and Health Education (for all pupils/students in state-funded schools) mandatory.

The Governing Body and school leadership team of each Zenith school are responsible for ensuring the school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children.

It adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and has recruitment, selection, vetting, and induction procedures in place, alongside regular supervision (see the school's 'Safer Recruitment' policy for further information). It ensures that volunteers and contractors are appropriately supervised in school.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputies

The DSL in each school takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety, and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place). They manage child protection referrals, ensure appropriate safeguarding training is completed by all staff, and provide support and advice to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. They ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) are aware of child protection policies and procedures, and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for other staff on child protection matters and ensure that timely referrals to Essex Children's Social Care (Family Operations Hub), or Southend C-SPOC (Children's Single Point of Contact)/Thurrock MASH teams are made in accordance with current SET procedures, and using the guiding principles outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, updated 2026) They work with the Local Authority and other agencies as required, cooperating with the published arrangements for the local authorities. The DSLs are aware of students who have a social worker, and help promote educational outcomes by sharing the appropriate information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues with teachers and school and college leadership staff.

If for any reason the DSL is unavailable, the deputy designated safeguarding lead will act in their absence.

Zenith Multi Academy Trust has appointed a Trust DSL who adds support and capacity to each school's DSLs.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. In matters of child protection, to safeguard or protect the welfare of a child or young person, the DSL will consider what information needs to be shared, and with whom, in line with statutory guidance, considering the most appropriate lawful basis for information sharing (see section 10 of this policy for more information).

The Trust DSL will work with all school DSLs to learn from complaints, and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, working with wider staff as required.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher of each schoolworks in accordance with the requirements upon all school staff. Headteachers are trained to Level 3 to ensure they are able to provide support and challenge to the DSLs. In addition, they ensure all safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the Governing Body are followed by all staff. In addition, all schools are required to ensure their procedures and expectations around use of contractors are fully compliant with KCSIE 2025. For lettings/premises hire, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure children are safe in accordance with KCSIE 2025 and the guidance Keeping Children Safe in Out of School Settings.

All school staff

Everyone within Zenith Multi Academy Trust has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our children can learn. All staff members are prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help and understand their role in this process. This includes identifying any emerging problems so appropriate support may be provided, and liaising with the DSLs to report any concerns.

All staff are aware of different types of abuse, exploitation and neglect, and indicators of them, as outlined in this policy, including child-on-child abuse. This is reinforced through their induction/annual training and updates. All staff know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused, exploited or neglected – or if they suspect it. All staff members are aware of and follow school procedures as set out in this policy and are aware of how to make a referral to social care if there is a need to do so. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the DSL (or deputy) within their school – they do not assume that others have taken action, and they know to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. They know to reassure victims they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported.

To support staff with these duties, all staff receive rigorous safeguarding and child protection training at induction and annually along with regular updates throughout the year. Specifically, all staff will be aware of the updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education and they will complete child protection training annually, to include Prevent and Online Safety, as well as their roles and responsibilities in regards to filtering and monitoring. They are aware of the associated policies which support safeguarding in our schools and are provided these at induction/ annually (or when they are updated).

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation, or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication. All staff are aware that technology is a component is many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. All staff will ensure they use the recognised online school systems to keep all parties safe, and will work to ensure any online links suggested to students are safe by working within the school filtering and monitoring systems. They will also ensure any photographs taken of students for school purposes do not place any child at risk through their use or publication.

Zenith Staff

All staff employed by Zenith Multi Academy Trust follow the safer recruitment, vetting and selection procedures in line with guidance from the national Disclosure and Barring Service, and have a relevant DBS and appropriate safeguarding training. Staff at each of the Zenith Schools are approved visitors to each school, but must present their school photo ID to be deemed as such. Central Zenith staff are approved staff within each school.

Visitors

All visitors must sign in using the identified systems at each school, which allows us to maintain a record of who is on school site in the case of a fire evacuation, as well as allowing visitors an opportunity to identify the DSLs in each school upon signing in, in case any visitor has concerns about a child. Visitors will be provided additional information about safeguarding upon signing in, in accordance with the nature of their visit. Visitors who do not sign in will not be permitted entry beyond reception. Visitors will be given lanyards to identify that they must remain supervised at all times if they are entering the school building, or if the visitor is approved (i.e. they provide identification, DBS and other have all appropriate checks), and their visit is pre-planned, their lanyard will identify that they may enter the site without continual supervision.

5. Types of abuse / specific safeguarding issues

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) defines abuse as *"a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. by other children or adults, in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more*

rarely, by others… Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult/ adults or by another child/ children"

All staff are aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation from their induction/annual training so we are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. Staff know that multiple issues can overlap.

The four main types of abuse referred to in Keeping Children Safe in Education are:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

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

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it; this is referenced in this policy, as well as our separate Child-on-Child Abuse policy which includes further detail about the procedures for dealing with it.

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

All staff know to consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families, from issues such as criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, radicalisation, county lines, sexual abuse, and domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships.

Staff are aware of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm and understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education and sexting can be signs that children are at risk.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Our schools understand that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability, without further exploration;
- That they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others;
- The potential to be disproportionally impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs;
- Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, our schools should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND particularly when investigating any form of child on child abuse.

Schools understand that positive action might be necessary to meet the specific needs of students with certain protected characteristics. It is understood that there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children.

Children with a social worker

At Zenith Multi Academy Trust we recognise that when a child has a social worker, it is an indicator that the child is more at risk than most students. This may mean that they more vulnerable to further harm, as well as facing educational barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and poor mental health. We take these needs into account when making plans to support students who have a social worker.

Child on child abuse

Our schools may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children at risk of, or who have suffered harm. Nevertheless, whilst at school, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant, or they may instead be withdrawn, or display abusive behaviours towards other children. Our schools recognise that some children may abuse their peers and any incidents of child on child abuse will be managed in the same way as any other child protection concern and will follow the same procedures. We are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child on child abuse. We continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

Our additional policy for Child on Child Abuse includes a clear and comprehensive strategy taking a contextual whole school approach to preventing and responding to child on child abuse, which ensures staff, children and their parents/carers understand everyone's responsibility in identifying possible signs (as we recognise that child on-child abuse may be taking place, even if it is not reported), responding to concerns and managing any child on child abuse incidents. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as appropriate in order to protect children involved, including giving consideration to support siblings in cases on intra familial harm. All staff know to challenge behaviour between children that is abusive in nature.

Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways and can happen both inside and outside of school and online. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying and prejudice-related/discriminatory incidents), physical abuse, sexual violence/sexual harassment, sexualised language, 'sexting' (sharing nudes or semi-nude images or videos), upskirting, abuse in intimate relationships, or initiation/hazing type violence and

rituals. Our schools understand the different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with child on child abuse.

We do not tolerate any harmful behaviour in school and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. We use lessons and assemblies to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is and we encourage them to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Please see the school's anti-bullying and behaviour policies.

Appropriate definitions of sexual offences are outlined below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
Sexual harassment means: 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. In referencing sexual harassment, it is in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment (KCSIE 2025).

Where incidents are of a sexual nature, Zenith schools follow guidance from part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025). When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for an ongoing risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support;
- whether there may have been other victims,
- the alleged perpetrator(s); and
- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult pupils/students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms;
- any previous relevant safeguarding concerns.

Risk assessments should be recorded using the school's recording system, and should be kept under review. At all times, the school should be actively considering the risks posed to all their students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe. Our risk assessment proforma can be found in Appendix 5 which is used to help ensure the safety of all involved parties.

Please see our child on child abuse policy for further information. Our schools have appropriate school-wide policies in place that make it clear that sexual harassment, online abuse and sexual violence (including sexualised language) is unacceptable, with appropriate sanctions in place. We recognise that mobile phones can be an issue and play a role in child -on-child abuse and our school policies outline the use of mobile phones in school.

<u>Sexting</u>

Sexting is defined as the production and/or sharing of sexual photos and videos of and by young people who are under the age of 18. It includes nude or nearly nude images and/or sexual acts. It is also referred to as 'youth produced sexual imagery'. 'Sexting' does not include the sharing of sexual photos and videos of under-

18 year olds with or by adults. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police (UKCCIS "Sexting – How to Respond to an Incident"). *Staff are aware that consensual image sharing is still illegal.*

In regards to sexting, staff must be aware of how to keep themselves safe when dealing with any imagery. Staff are all aware not to look at or open images or forward these to any individual unless specifically requested by the police.

If an incident involving 'sexting' comes to the attention of staff, they are advised to:

- Report it to the DSL immediately;
- Not to view, copy, print, share, store/download the imagery themselves, or ask a child to share or download – **this is illegal**;
- If they have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to them before they could ask them not to), they will report this to the DSL and support will be provided;
- Not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it;
- Not ask the young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL;
- Not share information about the incident to other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents/carers;
- Not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved;
- Explain to the student that they need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL, and that they will be kept informed throughout the process.

DSLs will use the guidance to determine appropriate next steps, particularly whether external agencies need to be informed, or whether the incident can be managed by the school, informing parents for most incidents.

As noted in guidance, in exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for the DSL or equivalent to view the image to identify and fully safeguard the children involved, in line with Searching, Screen and Confiscation guidance.

Sextortion

Cases of Financially motivated sexual extortion (sextortion) have increased globally. Children are being forced into paying money or meeting another financial demand (such as purchasing a pre-paid gift card) after an offender has threatened to release nudes or semi-nudes of them. This is financially motivated sexual extortion, a type of online blackmail often referred to in the media as 'sextortion'. It is a form of child sexual abuse. Financially motivated sexual extortion is usually carried out by organised crime groups (OCGs) based overseas who are typically motivated by money. These groups target all ages and genders however, a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged 14-18. OCGs may target multiple children and young people within an education or wider social setting, as it is more likely that a child or young person will accept a friend request or communicate with someone they don't know if they believe they are a 'mutual friend'.

All staff should report disclosures around incidents of this nature to the DSL who will refer to the relevant local authority/ police.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected, to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent, and therefore developmentally inappropriate. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB).

When considering HSB involving more than one child, both ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-

pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature.

Behaviour from a child could also be considered harmful even if there is no one else involved, for example, if their behaviour is age or developmentally inappropriate.

Children displaying HSB may have experienced their own abuse and trauma. These students will be offered additional support.

DSLs undertake additional training on HSB, either through the local authority, and/or using recognised additional agencies such as Brook's Traffic Light Tool to consider whether behaviour is age and developmentally appropriate. The NSPCC guide is also used as required.

Children are taught about sex and relationships, including healthy relationships and behaviours, through the schools' spiralled RSE curriculums. More details of the curriculum at each school are available in their RSE policies.

Children missing from education

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. Our schools recognise that children being absent for prolonged periods and/ or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation, including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, "honour" based abuse or risk of forced marriages.

Schools are aware that their response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of a child going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging, but also when children are already known to social care and being absent from education may increase the known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

As part of safeguarding and Health and Safety procedures, we take daily registers and follow up on any absences if the child does not attend as expected. This data is used to identify patterns of absence as they emerge, to ensure any concerns are identified and addressed at an early stage.

Parents/carers should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made by the parents/carers, and any contact attempted by the school has been unsuccessful, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency as required (e.g. Social Care, Children Missing Education, Police etc). Parents/carers are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, so we are able to communicate with someone if we need to. It is also recognised that children may be vulnerable to or be exposed to other risks when not in school, so we work with parents/carers and other agencies to keep children in school whenever possible.

Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risk of a child going missing in future. All staff are aware of their school's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures – see appendix 5 of this policy.

Serious violence

All staff are aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant

change in well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that a child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs. Our schools are aware that violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils/students are travelling to and from school. These times can be particularly risky for young people involved in serious violence and so this is a key consideration for any risk assessments the school develop.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in criminal or sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CCE and CSE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025).

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community.

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence, and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited for example they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

It is understood that a significant number of children who are victims of CSE go missing from home, care and education at some point. Our school is alert to the signs and indicators of a child becoming at risk of, or subject to, CSE and will take appropriate action to respond to any concerns. The DSL will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others. Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to. Girls can be criminally exploited too, although indicators may be different.

Child criminal exploitation is a geographically widespread form of harm which is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity (county lines is when drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban areas and seaside towns). Our school works with key partners

locally to prevent and respond to child criminal exploitation. Staff understand those involved in CCE may be more at risk of sexual exploitation.

County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of schools, pupil referral units, children's homes and care homes. Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

If a child is suspected to be at risk of or involved in county lines, a safeguarding referral should be considered alongside consideration of availability of local services/third sector providers who offer support to victims of county lines exploitation. Staff utilise and work in line with the County Lines Toolkit for Professionals. One of the ways of identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes (both from home and school), when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs. Once the victim has been safeguarded, and appropriate referrals made to relevant agencies, these first responder organisations can consider a referral to the National Referral Mechanism.

Contextual safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside our school. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding and the fact they should consider whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. These extra-familial threats might arise at school, from within peer groups, or more from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines, trafficking, online abuse, teenage relationship abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. To this end, we will consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and share it with other agencies to support better understanding of a child and their family.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of 'domestic abuse' (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures will be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators are offered support.

We work with other key partners, including Operation Encompass, and will share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue for a child or family, or be placing a child at risk of harm.

So-called 'honour-based abuse' (including Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage)

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. All forms of so called HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Where staff are concerned that a child might be at risk of HBA, they must contact the DSL as a matter of urgency, taking into account the specific legal duty on teachers around FGM below.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Whilst all staff should speak to the DSL (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about FGM, there is a specific legal duty on teachers (and other professionals); if a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this personally to the police (Serious Crime Act October 2015). Our school will operate in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to this issue, and in line with local safeguarding procedures.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is one entered into without the full consent of one or both parties. It is where violence, threats or other forms of coercion is used and is a crime. Staff are aware that even without threats or other forms of coercion, it is a crime for anyone to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, and this includes non-binding unofficial marriages, as well as legal marriages. Our staff understand how to report concerns where this may be an issue in line with The Right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage., contacting the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information on 020 7008 0151 or fmu@fcdo.gov.uk.

Prevention of radicalisation

Children may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk is part of our schools' safeguarding approach. As of July 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015) placed a new duty on schools and other education providers. Under section 26 of the Act, schools are required, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

Extremism is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve such results (updated definition).

Radicalisation is the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence.

Terrorism is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to

influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

The Prevent duty requires schools to:

- Ensure susceptibility to radicalisation is incorporated into safeguarding training;
- Ensure the process for raising concerns is in policy. Information about how to report concerns of radicalisation is on page 3 of this policy, and appendix 1 highlights the school procedures.
- Ensure staff are alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection;
- Ensure staff use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) making a Prevent referral;
- Take action to limit the potential harm and influence of radicalisers e.g. clear lettings polices, careful use of external speakers;
- Work in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate, and co-operating with Channel Panels;
- Ensure DSLs have sufficient training;
- Engage appropriately with other partners such as the police and Prevent leads in the local authority. As part of the additional training for DSLs, we receive regular updates from the Essex Safeguarding Prevent Lead to inform our school risk assessments and approach;
- Perform a risk assessment, considering how learners or staff may be at risk of being radicalised into terrorism, including online.

The Prevent Duty does not limit discussion of issues. Instead, our schools:

- teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and must promote community cohesion. This includes an active promotion of British Values;
- are safe spaces in which children/young people can understand and discuss controversial issues, helping learners to understand how they can influence and participate in decision making;
- promote democracy through wider school opportunities;
- are mindful of their existing duties on political impartiality.

Channel is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. DSLs are also aware of the documentation, The Prevent duty: an introduction for those with safeguarding responsibilities in regards to best practice.

Online safety

Staff in our schools recognise that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but we recognise it also presents challenges and risks. Any student can be vulnerable online, and their vulnerability can fluctuate depending on their age, developmental stage and personal circumstance. We want to equip our students with the knowledge needed to make the best use of the internet and technology in a safe, considered and respectful way, so they are able to reap the benefits of the online world.

All our schools of mindful of Artificial Intelligence. Please see Appendix 6 for our protocols.

The range of online risks could be categorised as:

content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, suicide, racist or radical and extremist views;
contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes, including sextortion (see section on sextortion);

conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying;
commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and / or financial scams.

All staff in our schools are aware of the risks to children online and we seek to help children keep themselves safe online in a range of ways.

Our schools are aware of the Digital and Technology Standards in School and Colleges Guidance (DfE updated 2025), ensuring that we:

- identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs

Monitoring user activity on school devices is an important part of providing a safe environment for children and staff. All staff should:

- provide effective supervision
- take steps to maintain awareness of how devices are being used by pupils
- report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL

All staff are aware of how to report safeguarding and technical concerns in their school. As part of safeguarding training, staff know that they should report if:

- they witness or suspect unsuitable material has been accessed
- they can access unsuitable material
- they are teaching topics which could create unusual activity on the filtering logs
- there is failure in the software or abuse of the system
- there are perceived unreasonable restrictions that affect teaching and learning or administrative tasks
- they notice abbreviations or misspellings that allow access to restricted material

Our schools will liaise with parents/carers to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. We use ClassCharts and/or the school email system if we need to interact with students online, and through ClassCharts parents/carers can also see any homework that students are being asked to use the internet for; this helps parents/carers monitor the use of certain sites at home. We encourage parents/carers to speak directly to school staff setting any online work if they have any concerns.

Further information about our approach to online safety is available in each school's online safety policy, including information about the systems we use for filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks.

Many students are able to access the internet using their own data plan and via remote online learning. For systems in place such as Teams and Google Classrooms, we have security policies in place that prevent students from making calls, starting meetings without teachers present and posting content into the Teams channels without teacher authorisation. With school provided laptops that students are taking home, we will have the same systems in place as those that are used in school, including monitoring software that triggers and alerts DSLs when a keyword is picked up. The alerts also extend to visual threats to cover students and the bank of keywords comes directly from the UK Safer Internet Centre. School provided laptops will also be filtered to protect students from inappropriate content.

6. Supporting Students through Personal Development/ PSHE

It is vital that staff working with young people understand the above safeguarding issues (and any other relevant contextual issues) to allow them to be alert to and respond to signs and evidence of a concern. Staff also use this knowledge to plan what information needs to be communicated to students and parents/carers; DSLs work with RSE/PSHE coordinators and other relevant staff within each school to ensure students are

taught about issues in a timely and age appropriate manner through personal development/ PSHE lessons and opportunities. Children are supported to obtain and develop the knowledge and skills to keep themselves and others safe. Children are made aware the law is in place to protect them, rather than criminalise them. Staff know that students with Special Educational Needs may require additional support with their understanding during learning opportunities – please see our schools' RSE policies for more details. Various methods are used within each school to communicate to parents/carers how to help keep their child safe linked to current learning and/or emerging trends.

7. Procedures when there is a concern about a child

All staff members are encouraged to have the attitude 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. Where staff have a concern about a child's welfare, **each school's procedures are set out in Appendix 1.**

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected/actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who has a concern about a child, e.g. receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred **must** report it immediately to the DSL (or, in their absence, the deputy DSL). All records of concerns or referrals will be stored securely in compliance with relevant legislation.

Procedures for reporting concerns in each school will be publicised to all staff and visitors. Whilst some schools may ask that all urgent issues are reported to the DSL in person, all concerns must always then be followed up in writing as soon as possible using the relevant school reporting system (please see Appendix 1 for confirmation of the relevant system in each school).

When completing their write up, all staff should ensure records include:
- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up/ resolved/ any action taken/ decisions reached/ outcomes.

The DSL will add further notes to this record.

If, for any reason, the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Safeguarding contact details are displayed in the school to ensure that all staff members have unfettered access to safeguarding support, should it be required. Any individual may refer to social care where there is suspected or actual risk of harm to a child, and details of local key contacts are publicised in schools.

When new staff, volunteers, Governors, Trustees, Members or contractors, or regular visitors join our school they are informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the DSL and deputy DSL(s), and how to share concerns with them.

The DSL will make decisions whether to:
- Manage support for the child internally;
- Undertake an Early Help assessment, or
- Make a referral to statutory services, for example as the child could be in need or is suffering or likely to suffer harm.

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to social care (Essex Children and Families Hub/Thurrock MASH/ Southend C-SPOC), and/or the Police. Following a referral, Local Authorities may undertake statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989 which may result in a Section 17 assessment (Children in Need) or a Section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm). Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be referred as per the processes for the relevant authority. The school may also seek advice from social care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents/carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so

could place the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the social care and/or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents/carers.

Should the police become involved with a child, schools will be alert to the need for a child to have an appropriate adult in line with PACE Code C.

Our schools work with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans which provide additional support (through a 'child in need' or a 'child protection' plan).

With any safeguarding issue that arises, consideration will be given to the concept of significant harm where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and/or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect) which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family. We will work with local partners in our referrals to justify compulsory intervention in family life if we feel this is in the best interests of children.

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2022);
- Essex County Council;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025);
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026);
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2024);
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C

and other relevant guidance depending on the nature of the concern.

If a member of staff continues to have concerns about a child and feels the situation is not being addressed or does not appear to be improving, the staff member concerned should press for re-consideration of the case with the DSL.

Remote Working/Learning

Keeping children and staff safe during any periods of remote education is essential, and so we have additional guidance in our Trust Safe Remote Teaching/Learning/ Working Policy regarding safe practices employed by our schools.

As per the government guidance Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings, should we need to limit people on site, we will determine students who would be considered vulnerable, as these students should be prioritised for continued face-to-face education; this may also be the case for children of critical workers. Schools will ensure a trained DSL (or deputy) is available on site, or is contactable if they cannot attend the school in person. Vulnerable students may also need additional pastoral support if they are unable to attend in person; this would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

All staff should continue to act immediately if they have any concerns about a child or young person's welfare, whether the child or young person is physically in school or learning from home. If staff are working from home, concerns should be raised via (Safeguarding Team email or MyConcern), taking personal action to contact the relevant agencies if there is an immediate risk of harm as per Section 7 of this policy.

8. Training

All staff members receive appropriate Level 2 annual child protection training (including Prevent, Online Safety and Filtering and Monitoring) which is then regularly updated and in line with advice from the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB). This is undertaken at induction, or at the start of the academic year as part of the annual training. Staff also read Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 and 5, as well as being directed to read the Staff Code of Conduct. As part of annual/induction training, all staff are made aware of the local Early Help processes.

All Governors and Trustees receive appropriate online Governor safeguarding training. This is undertaken at induction, or at the start of the academic year as part of the annual training. Governors and Trustees also receive a face to face training session annually with the Trust/School DSL on annual KCSIE updates and local arrangements. The DSL and deputy DSL(s) undertake level 3 child protection training at least every 2 years. At Zenith Multi Academy Trust we have an expectation that each Headteacher, Link Safeguarding Governor and Link Safeguarding Trustee are also level 3 trained – and this is done in line with DSL training. Records of any child protection training undertaken are kept for all staff and Governors. Each school follows an agreed minimal expectations of training.

The schools ensure that the DSL (and deputies) also undertake training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate.

DSLs (and deputies) attend regular update and networking sessions. At Zenith Multi Academy Trust, we also ensure that we provide support from the Trust DSL, and supervision for staff through the use of qualified external staff.

9. Professional confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be discussed and fully understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents/carers or students), or promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities. They must also ensure they only involve those who need to be involved.

Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the DSL (or deputy) with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so. The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

10. Records and information sharing

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our records of processing

activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it as soon as possible in writing, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. All records will be dated, and signed, and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the DSL (or deputy), who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly. Our schools all use electronic systems, and the same information is captured when concerns are raised, and all staff have their own account on the system.

Any records related to child protection are kept in an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the main pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's/student's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school/educational setting.

Where a pupil/student transfers from our school to another school / educational setting (including colleges), their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting, in line with statutory guidance that it is sent **within 5 days** for an in-year transfer or within the **first 5 days** of the start of a new term. These will be marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's designated safeguarding lead, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to us if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school and then destroy any copies held in our school. Where appropriate, the DSL may also make contact with the new educational setting in advance of the child's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the child arrives.

Where a pupil/student joins our school, we will request child protection records from the previous educational establishment (if none are received).

Further guidance is available here: Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners

11. Interagency working

It is the responsibility of the DSL to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any child protection conference called for children on the school roll or previously known to them if requested. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s)/carer(s). The member of staff that attends will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions at the conference.

If a child is subject to a Child Protection or a Child in Need Plan, the DSL will ensure the child is monitored regarding their school attendance, emotional well-being, academic progress, welfare and presentation. If the school is part of the core group, the DSL will ensure the school is represented, provides appropriate information and contributes to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the Child Protection Plan and/or the child's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of significant harm. In this case the DSL will inform the child's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed. Schools also contribute to MARACs as required, and can receive notifications from Operation Encompass regarding Domestic Violence/Abuse.

As necessary, the school will work with Virtual School Heads for any Looked After or Previously Looked After children to promote the educational achievement of previously looked after children. The designated teacher in The James Hornsby School is Mr Harry Hannigan, supported by our Deputy Headteacher. There will be liaison with Personal Advisors for any care leavers.

Private fostering

Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 for children with a disability) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer. Such arrangements may come to the attention of school staff through the normal course of their interaction, and promotion of learning activities, with children. Where the arrangements come to the attention of the school or college (and the school is not involved in the arrangements), the school will notify the Local Authority to allow the local authority to check the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child. Schools who are involved (whether or not directly) in arranging for a child to be fostered privately must notify Local Authorities of the arrangement as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made. Notifications will contain the information specified in Schedule 1 of The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and must be made in writing; the statutory guidance can be found here.

12. Supporting students at risk

Our schools recognise that children are on different journeys and some may need a broad range of support or increased levels of support. Each school has an effective pastoral structure to enable a variety of support opportunities to be accessed.

Zenith Multi Academy schools will endeavour to support students through:

a) The curriculum to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation;
b) The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all students and adults a sense of being respected and valued;
c) The implementation of the school's rewards and behaviour policies;
d) A consistent approach agreed by all staff which will endeavour to ensure the student knows that some behaviour is unacceptable, but s/he is valued;
e) Regular liaison with other professionals and agencies who support the students and their families;
f) A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents/carers wherever possible;
g) The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group, trained to respond appropriately in child protection situations;
h) Recognition that statistically children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are most vulnerable to abuse so staff who work in any capacity with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and / or emotional and behavioural problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse;
i) Recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children may also be vulnerable and in need of support or protection;
j) Support via our Zenith Minds provision giving bespoke and child-centred support.

Please see section 13 of this policy for information around support for mental health.

This policy should be considered alongside other related policies in school.

All children, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. Each school carefully considers how they are supporting their students with regard to particular protected characteristics - including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race. We understand for example that children who are LGBT or who are perceived to be can be targeted by other children. We endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff. We also ensure our PSHE curriculum promotes British Values, and that students understand their rights and responsibilities in regards to protected characteristics.

DSLs support children and families and channels any needs or concerns to appropriate agencies, using the guidance and the capturing of student voice to consider whether a referral to the police is necessary. Staff use student files to look for any concerning trends in terms of problematic behaviour, and SENCOs will provide additional support as necessary where it is recognised students with SEND may face additional challenges with safeguarding issues. We aim to respond swiftly to any issues within our schools and proactively plan the curriculum to manage their needs. We ensure that training for staff, children, families and governors reflects the need and make-up of our community.

We develop a safe and open culture within our schools to ensure and promote students feeling comfortable to talk to staff and have regular opportunities to discuss issues with our pastoral teams.

13. Promoting positive mental health and resilience in school

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that schools play a key part in this. Zenith Multi Academy Trust wants to develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of all students and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors which increase someone's vulnerability and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency. The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counter balance and promote further growth of resilience. Zenith Multi Academy Trust places an important emphasis on supporting mental health across our schools and are committed to supporting students, staff, parents/carers, and communities.

All staff across Zenith Multi Academy Trust are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. Across Zenith Multi Academy Trust schools, we ensure that all staff have training on mental health, with each school having a Senior Mental Health Lead with appropriate training, as well as staff members trained in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). We also use STEER Tracking as an Early Intervention which helps us to monitor how effectively students are able to 'steer' themselves and maintain positive well-being.

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

Where staff have a mental health concern about a child, they should follow the child protection procedures and raise the issue by informing the DSL or a deputy. At The James Hornsby School, this would be done via a referral to our Mental Health Lead, Assistant Headteacher, Mrs Katy Hibben

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents/carers to support the well-being of our students. Parents/carers should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented. As such we have developed our own provision, Zenith Minds, to provide specialist and bespoke support to vulnerable students enabling us to bridge the gap between services available.

At The James Hornsby School we seek to support children with Mental Health issues via the use of The Steer Survey, in-school mentors, counsellors, pastoral key-workers, NELFT and other external services that are available

14. Use of reasonable force

The term 'reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard children, such as guiding a child to safety or breaking up a fight. 'Reasonable' means using no more force than is needed. Our school works in accordance with statutory and local guidance on the use of reasonable force *(see section 3)* and recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context. There are appropriately trained staff in all Zenith Multi Academy Trust Schools. Further information will be available in the school's Behaviour policy.

15. Allegations about members of the workforce

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the code of conduct.

The school works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET procedures (ESCB, 2022) in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity), including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors.

Schools have processes in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff (or any adult working with children). Any concerns about the conduct of other adults in the school should be taken to the Headteacher without delay (or where that is not possible, to the deputy headteacher). This role is distinct from the DSL as the named person should have sufficient status and authority in the school to manage employment procedures. Staffing matters are confidential and the school must operate within statutory guidance around data protection. Any concerns about the Headteacher should go to the Chair of Governor; the CEO should also be informed. A concern about the Trust CEO should be reported to the Chair of the Trust. See Appendix 1 for confirmation of each school's procedures, which also highlights to staff the need to share low level concerns in a timely manner. Should a low-level concern be shared about supply staff and contractors, the school will notify their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified. A concern about a Governor should be reported to the Headteacher of the school in which the allegation arose. The Headteacher will also inform the CEO. A concern about a Trust member of staff should be reported to the Headteacher of the school in which the allegation arose. The Headteacher will also inform the CEO. A concern about a Trustee or Member should be reported to the CEO, who will also inform the Chair of the Trust.

In the event of any allegation, a case manager will be appointed to investigate. Non-recent concerns will be responded to in the same way as all other concerns. Where necessary, referrals may be made to children's social care and in emergencies, the police.

At Zenith Multi Academy Trust we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may harm children, including Governors, Trustees, Members, volunteers, supply teachers, contractors, and agency staff. There is an additional Trust policy around procedures for dealing with safeguarding allegations against adults in school. The guidance in KCSIE (Part Four) should be followed where allegations are made.

SET procedures (ESCB, 2022) require that, where an allegation against a member of staff is received, the Headteacher, senior named person, or the Chair of Governors/Trust must inform the duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the Children's Workforce Allegations Management Team on 03330 139 797 within one working day. However, wherever possible, contact should be made immediately as the LADO will then advise on how to proceed and whether the matter requires police involvement. This will include advice on speaking to students and parents/carers, and HR. The school will not carry out any investigation before speaking to the LADO.

Should schools receive an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using their school premises for the purposes of running activities for children, the school will follow their normal safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO.

16. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is 'making a disclosure in the public interest' and occurs when a worker (or member of the wider school community) raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others, for example students in the school or members of the public.

All staff members and the wider community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident that any concerns will be taken seriously by the school and Board of Trustees. As such, staff are made aware of the duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of staff in line with the school's code of conduct/Trust's whistleblowing policy.

We want everyone to feel able to report any child protection / safeguarding concerns. However, for members of staff who feel unable to raise these concerns internally, they can call the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday, and 9.00am to 6pm at weekends) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents/carers or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline on: 0808 800 5000 (24 hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Appendix 1

Individual School Procedures Map

The safeguarding team

The James Hornsby School
Together we excel

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is EVERYONE'S responsibility *KCSIE 2025*

Principal DSL
Dee Sumner

DSL
Ian Warner

Deputy DSL
Matt Clark

Deputy DSL
Katy Hibben

Deputy DSL
Caroline Dudbridge

Deputy DSL
Fern Gleeson

For all non-emergency concerns, please use our email address: safeguarding@jameshornsby.essex.sch.uk
It is important to log the **child's words** not your interpretation.

If you consider the situation to be an emergency (where there is risk of harm, or where a child has been harmed including any injuries, child-on-child abuse, fear of going home, risks when leaving, missing children), concerns should be **taken directly** to the DSL in person ASAP.

In the absence of a DSL, all referrals should be made to the **headteacher** or **a deputy headteacher.** In the absence of any of the above, where a child is at risk of significant harm, you can ring the 'Hub' on 0345 603 7627 (out of hours number: 0345 606 1212). They advise the next steps that are needed. Record this. In situations of immediate risk of significant harm, staff should contact the **police.**

Allegations about adults

The James Hornsby School
Together we excel

Tammy Nicholls
Headteacher

Rob Brooks
Chair of Governors

Andy Hodgkinson
Trust CEO
andyh@zmat.co.uk

Stewart Taylor
Chair of Trust
stewartT@zmat.co.uk

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is EVERYONE'S responsibility *(KCSIE 2025)*

1. If you have a **concern about a staff member,** please report this immediately in person to the **head teacher, Tammy Nicholls** (unless the allegation is about the headteacher).

This includes concerns you may have about anyone working in the school in any capacity, or if a child has disclosed something about a staff member to you to suggest they have behaved in a way that has harmed/ may harm a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children. It is important to report and then log the **child's words** not your interpretation. In the absence of the headteacher, report to David Back, deputy headteacher.

2. In the absence of any of the above, or if the allegation is about the headteacher, this should be reported to the **chair of governors, Rob Brooks.** The **CEO, Andy Hodgkinson**, should also be informed.

3. Any allegations about the CEO, Andy Hodgkinson, should be reported to the chair of the Trust, **Stewart Taylor.**

4. If none of these staff members are available to speak to, call the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on **03330 139 797.** They advise the next steps that are needed. Record this.

Low-level concerns should also be reported to these staff.

Appendix 2
Provision Map of Support

ZENITH MULTI ACADEMY TRUST | Laindon Park Primary School & Nursery | Castle View School | Castledon School | The James Hornsby School | THE KING JOHN SCHOOL – A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

ZENITH SAFEGUARDING

Zenith Multi Academy Trust
Lauren Goodwin
Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead
01702 965363
Laureng@zmat.co.uk

Laindon Park Primary School & Nursery
Cristina Portolea
Headteacher/DSL
01268 544808
headteacher@laindonpark.essex.sch.uk

Castle View School
Lizzie Hobbs
DSL – Assistant Headteacher
01268 696811
lizzie.hobbs@castleviewschool.co.uk

The James Hornsby School
Dee Sumner
DSL – Assistant Headteacher
01268 582400
Dee.sumner@thejhs.co.uk

The King John School
Keith Green
DSL – Assistant Headteacher
01702 559284
keithg@thekjs.com

Castledon School
Jon Hazelgrove
DSL – Deputy Headteacher
01268 761252
jhazelgrove@castledon.org

Zenith Minds
Maria Hill
Zenith Minds Manager
01268 419200
Mariah@zmat.co.uk

Procedure reporting a child concern

Staff must be aware of the school's child protection and safeguarding policy, and the key contacts in each school. This policy states:

1. If staff have a concern about a child they must report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
2. In their absence a report should be made to the Deputy Designated Lead
3. If the above is not available, a report can be made to the Headteacher or the Children and Family hub 0345 603 7627 (or Thurrock MASH and Southend C-SPOC teams). If there is risk of immediate significant harm, call 999.
4. Any verbal reports should be followed up in writing.

Working with a child

Do listen, 'be present', reassure them, and take clear verbatim notes
Do not investigate or ask leading questions
Do not promise confidentiality
Do not keep concerns to yourself

Working safely

Do not put yourself in a vulnerable position
Do ensure you are aware of the child protection policy, code of conduct, and procedures including PREVENT and SET procedures.
Do not share personal or private information including through social media with any student or ex-student under the age of 18

Procedure reporting a staff or adult concern

1. If there is a concern over an adult in the school this must be reported directly to the Headteacher. In their absence, report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the school.
2. If the concern is about the Headteacher, report this to the Chair of Governors. The CEO should also be informed.
3. A concern about the Trust CEO should be reported to the Chair of the Trust
4. If you are unable to report to the people identified above, report to the LADO (Local Area Designated Officer). Further details are outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

All staff and visitors can make a referral. If you have any safeguarding concerns you must speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead following the procedure above, or in an emergency you can refer directly to the police or social care. This includes out of usual hours when on trips.

Appendix 3

Student Name:	Year:	DOB:	
Context for Risk Assessment:			

Lead DSL: Signature:	Completed by:	Start date:		
What is the risk?	Action taken to lower risk		Action by whom? Action by when?	Amended at review Y/N

Risk Assessment Agreed by:	Student:		Signature:
Risk Assessment Agreed by:	Parent/ Carer Name:		Signature:
Risk Assessment Agreed by:	School representative Name:		Signature:

All risk assessments must have been approved by a DSL, with the original signed paperwork kept with the Safeguarding Team.

Zenith Multi Academy Trust recognises that in order to safeguard children effectively, risk assessments may be required and involve a multi-agency approach, involving all members of the child's professional network; if applicable. A framework of risk assessment has been produced to support the identification of risk and make decisions on appropriate actions to address them. Ultimately, any decisions are for the school to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role, using their professional judgement and support from agencies. Risk assessments should be utilised where there is risk of significant harm: "not only ill treatment (including sexual violence, harassment and abuse), but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health; and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development". The main focus of any risk assessment should be the safety and protection of the child/ren and the environment they are in and should take into account any events of the victim and/or the alleged perpetrator which are pertinent to the safeguarding issue. If a High-level risk is identified, then immediate action must be taken.

Review 1: Date

Parent/carer's comments		
Student's Comments		
School's comments		
Parent/Carer:	Student:	School representative:

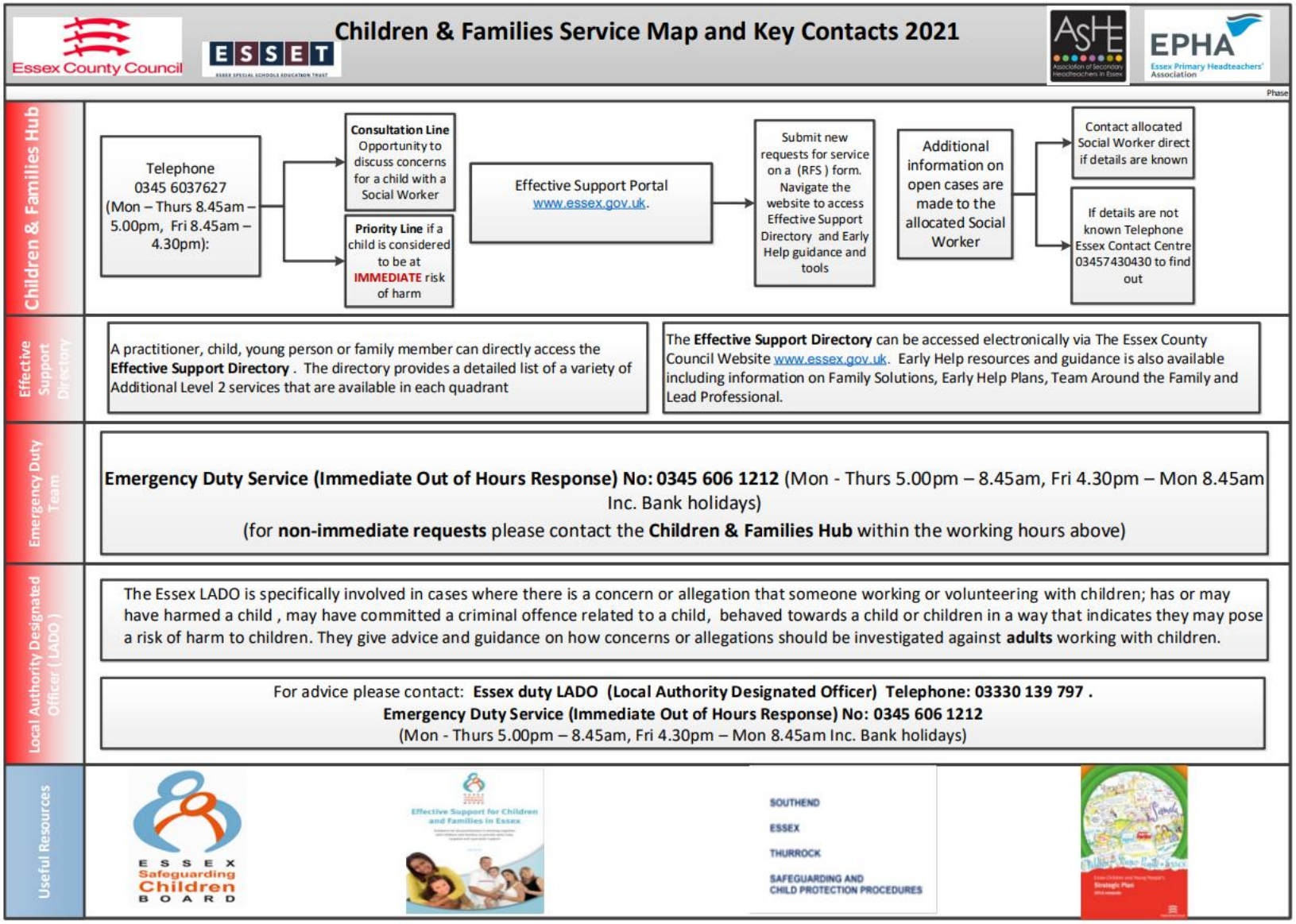
Review 2: Date

Parent/carer's comments		
Student's Comments		
School's comments		
Parent/Carer:	Student:	School representative:

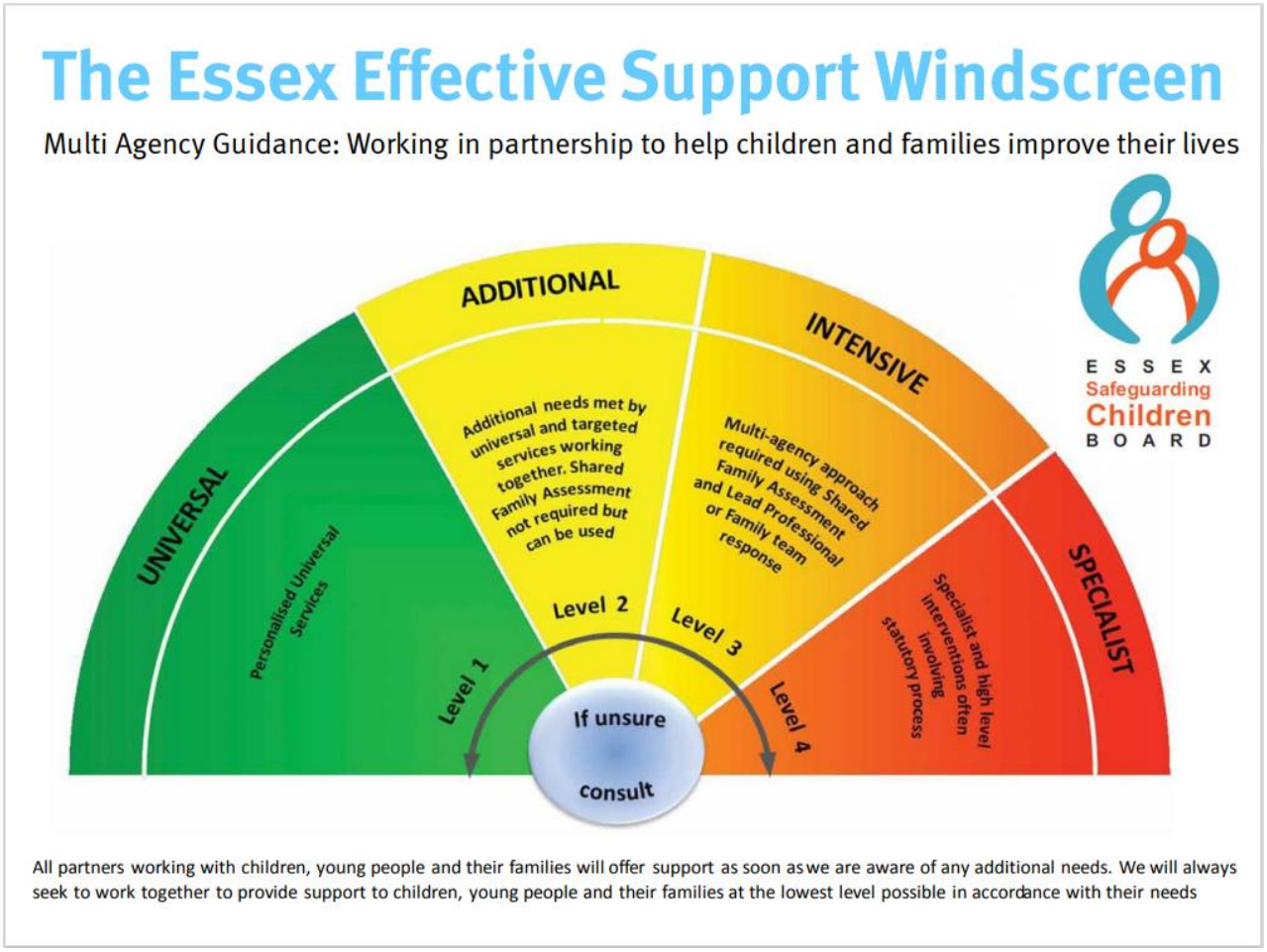
Review 3: Date

Parent/carer's comments		
Student's Comments		
School's comments		
Parent/Carer:	Student:	School representative:

Appendix 4
Children and Families Hub flow chart



Essex Windscreen of Need and levels of intervention



It is important that all agencies understand the needs of each individual child within their own context, each situation is unique and specific to that child. This guidance should assist professional judgement in determining how bet to support children and to help everyone to:

- Understand the child in the context of their family and wider community
- Develop ideas and solutions alongside children and their families, considering strengths and relationships so that timely support is offered by the right service, in the right place, to prevent children and families needing more specialist support.
- Empower families to make decisions to change their own lives.

Level 1 and 2 – Early Help

Early help can and should be provided by anyone who is working alongside children and families in Essex. Early help can support families to build resilience and sustain better outcomes. Early help can be provided by a single agency, for example school, and the services involved may change over time. It can be helpful to develop an early help plan with the family so that everyone understands what they are expected to do as part of the support plan. It can be helpful to bring other practitioners who are working with the family or who may be able to offer support together with the family to hold a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF).

Level 3 - Intensive Needs

Children and families with Level 3 Intensive Needs require a coordinated multi-agency response due to the complexity of their circumstances. These families often face significant challenges that impact their ability to function effectively without substantial support. Examples of intensive services are children's mental health services and Family Solutions.

Level 4 – Specialist Support

Children and families with Level 4 needs require specialist interventions due to the severe and complex nature of their circumstances. These situations often involve significant risk of harm to the child, necessitating immediate and intensive support from statutory services. At this level, comprehensive and coordinated multiagency interventions are crucial to address the high-level needs and to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.

More information can be found here: Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB, 2024)

Appendix 5

Children who go Missing/ Children Missing Education (CME), including Essex procedures and statutory guidance

Our schools recognise that children being absent for prolonged periods and/ or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation, including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, "honour" based abuse or risk of forced marriages.

Schools are aware that their response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of a child going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging, but also when children are already known to social care and being absent from education may increase the known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

It is important that staff are aware of their school's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures

Sometimes children go missing from educational settings; when this occurs, it is important that action is taken quickly to address this, and in line with local procedures.

Educational settings should consider missing episodes like any other child protection concern and take action as appropriate, for example, by contacting parents/carers, the Children & Families Hub consultation line, and in an emergency, the priority line or the police. It may be appropriate to use the Early Help Procedures (including holding a Team Around the Family meeting) to address the issues and prevent escalation. Advice should be sought and concerns should be escalated if there is no improvement.

Where children missing frequently are open to Children's Social Care, a Missing Prevention Plan may be in place. Where this is the case, the educational setting may be set actions as part of the Missing Prevention Plan and should receive a copy if consent has been provided.

Children missing from home or care

Children who have gone missing must be reported to the Police. The parent/carer should take all reasonable steps, to secure the safe and speedy return of the child based on their own knowledge of the child and where relevant the information in the child's placement plan. If there is a suspected risk of harm to the child then the parents/carers should liaise immediately with the police. If a parent reports to the school that their child is missing at the point they are due to attend school, parents should be encouraged to report this themselves in the first instance, describing what they were last wearing and the circumstances that led up to the missing episode. Schools will, however, report concerns if the parent/ carer has not done so.

When a child goes missing in school

When it is suspected that a child is missing from school, this must be addressed immediately. Active steps to locate the child should be taken, for example, searching the premises and surrounding areas, contacting the child by phone, text and social media, and contacting their parents/carers. If none of these actions locate the child, then they must be reported missing to the Police by dialling 101, **or 999 if there is a belief that the child is immediately suffering significant harm.** It is important that the police are informed of any checks already completed as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks set by the police to locate a child.

Staff at the school must inform the child's parents/carers that the child has been reported missing. Where there is a Social Worker allocated to the child, they should also be informed.

After a child has been reported missing, any further information should be communicated to the police by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number that the police would have provided following the initial report. Further information must be passed to the police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the child until informed of their return.

When the child is found

If the child is found by school staff, or if the child returns to the premises of their own accord, or if we know the child has been located in another setting, the police must be notified immediately by dialling 101 or 999 if the matter is an emergency. It is important that this action is prioritised, as the child will remain classified as a missing person until seen by the police.

Essex Police/ Social Care response

On receiving a report of a missing child, Essex Police will classify the child as missing and will respond based on the level of risk involved.

Essex Police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police. On these occasions the parents/carers can assist by reporting to officers their observations on the child's return, e.g. did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance, etc. The setting may also be able to contribute to this process and should provide the police with any relevant information or observations.

Contact should be made by the Local Authority with the child within 72 hours of them returning from missing, to arrange an Independent Return Interview in a neutral place where they feel safe. Appropriate social care authorities should ensure that a return interview is offered The Independent Return Home Interview is an in-depth conversation and should be carried out by an independent professional (e.g. a social worker, teacher, health professional or police officer, who does not usually work with the child, is not involved in their care and is trained to carry out these interviews).

Children Missing Education (CME)

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. CME are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The CME category also includes those children/young people who are on roll at a school but cease to attend **and** where contact cannot be made with the family/emergency contacts to establish the pupil's whereabouts/reasons for absence. CME are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

This overview of the Essex documentation 'Education Compliance: Policy and Practice Guidance in respect of Children Missing Education (CME)' seeks to set out the processes and protocols that are in place across Essex to safeguard our children and young people's right to an efficient, full time education. This document should be read in conjunction with the guidance at the end of Appendix 8.

Referring a pupil who appears to have gone missing from education

Schools are required to inform the local authority of the details of pupils who have been absent from school for 10 continuous school days and where contact cannot be made with the parent/carer to establish the reason for the absence and the absence has not been reported. In Essex, schools are required to notify the local authority, via the Missing_Pupil_Checklist, of any child falling into one of the following categories:

- A pupil has gone missing and no contact can be made with parent/carer to establish reason for absence;
- A pupil ceased to attend the school and a forwarding address for the family OR a destination school for the pupil is not known;
- A pupil has not returned from holiday within 10 school days of the expected date of return;
- A pupil fails to take up their place at the start of the academic year/agreed start date and you require the LA to make enquiries to establish how parents intend to fulfil their parental responsibilities in respect of their child's education.

Pupils deemed at high risk

If a pupil is missing from school and the child is subject to a child in need/child protection plan or is a looked after child, the school must notify their social worker **within the first 24 hours** of the unauthorised absence, where contact cannot be made with the family home.

Please note that CME/EHE Investigation Officers have no rights of entry into homes/right to see the child and it is not their role to investigate safeguarding/welfare concerns that may be held in relation to the child/ren within a family. Where it is suspected or known that a pupil is at potential risk of harm, or where the school has information or reason to suspect that the pupil has been the victim of criminal activity or is at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, the school should notify the Children and Families Hub and/or police without delay and then make a referral to the Education Compliance team as soon as possible afterwards.

If you hold any safeguarding concerns regarding a risk to the child e.g. forced marriage, radicalisation, female genital mutilation, etc. such concerns should be referred to the Children and Families Hub without delay.

Contact details for the Education Compliance team

If you would like to make contact with the Education Compliance team, please find relevant email contact details below, or alternatively you may wish to call the team line on **03330 322 962** or email the team at **cme@essex.gov.uk**
Anita Patel-Lingam – Statutory Education Compliance Manager - anita.patel-lingam@essex.gov.uk
Manda Briggs – CME/EHE Investigator (South) – manda.briggs@essex.gov.uk

This document should be read in conjunction with the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures (SET Procedures), Essex policies and procedures, as well as the relevant DfE guidance below:

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board – for the SET Procedures and other resources
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Child Missing Education Policy and Practice Guidance (ECC April 2023)
- Children Missing Education (DfE, 2016)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children

Appendix 6
AI protocols

Student Protocols for the Safe and Responsible Use of Generative AI (GenAI)

Generative AI tools (e.g. Chat GPT, Gemini, Microsoft Co-Pilot) can be great for learning, but they need to be used the right way. These rules will help you use AI responsibly, safely, and fairly while following school expectations.

Key Principles

• Be honest in your work - Your schoolwork should reflect your own understanding and effort. If you use GenAI tools for support (like brainstorming ideas), make sure to let your teacher know how you used it.

• Double-check AI generated content – AI generated information isn't always correct or fair. If you use it to help with research or ideas, check that the information makes sense, is accurate, and fits what your teacher is asking for.

• Keep personal information private - Never type personal details like your name, address, or anything sensitive into GenAI tools. This keeps your information safe and secure.

• Respect academic integrity - Don't use GenAI to cheat, copy answers, or complete assignments for you. Using AI dishonestly is treated the same way as copying someone else's work.

• Use GenAI to learn, not replace learning - AI should help you think, practice, and learn. Don't let it do the work for you—using it as a shortcut won't help you improve.

Dos and Don'ts

• Do use GenAI for practice, like summarising notes or explaining tricky topics.
• Do check everything GenAI creates to make sure it's correct and fits your task.
• Do ask your teacher if you're unsure how to use GenAI tools for an assignment.
• Do use GenAI to brainstorm ideas or get help with research, but always review the output.
• Do use GenAI tools to get quick feedback on grammar and structure in your writing, but always review and proof-read your work yourself to improve your skills and ensure it meets the expectations of your teacher.
• Do not use GenAI to write essays, assignments, or other work that you submit as your own.
• Do not enter personal information like your full name, address, or passwords into GenAI tools.
• Do not trust everything GenAI tells you without checking—it can be wrong or misleading.
• Do not use GenAI to avoid learning or to complete work dishonestly.

Advice on Misusing AI

Using AI tools dishonestly, such as submitting AI-generated work as your own, can lead to serious consequences. According to JCQ guidance, this counts as malpractice, which could result in losing marks, disqualification from an exam, or even being barred from future assessments. To avoid this, always ensure that the work you submit reflects your own knowledge and effort. If you use AI for support, be transparent and follow your school's rules. Misuse of AI not only impacts your academic record but also undermines the integrity of your learning. For more details, check the JCQ guidance on AI.