



ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*To lead those in our care to grow in their faith
and to benefit from an enriching education*

Safeguarding Children Policy

“See that you never despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven are continually in the presence of my Father in heaven”.

Matthew 18:10

Principles

The governing body of St Thomas More Catholic School recognises and accepts its responsibilities for child protection and for maintaining a safe environment at school. It has appointed a safeguarding governor and will work to ensure that all who come into contact with young people recognise an obligation to protect and safeguard their welfare in a broad sense. Staff will read and understand part 1 and annex A&B of the Department for Education’s statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 and review this guidance at least annually. As a Catholic school with a mission to protect the weak, we will take additional steps to identify, support and protect those at risk, including those from vulnerable groups, those who have suffered significant harm, those at risk of association with organised crime and serious violent crime or gangs (including those who might be vulnerable from County Lines exploitation and thus might go missing periodically), those at risk of sexual violence or sexual harassment, those at risk of radicalisation and those at risk of female genital mutilation. Mental health problems presenting in children can also be an indication of abuse neglect or exploitation and may be treated as a Safeguarding concern. The governors are committed to working with safeguarding partners including the local authority (LA) and have the attitude that ‘it could happen here’. Visitors to the site will be carefully vetted and we will invest to make our site secure and ensure that we practise safer recruitment and update our single central record of employees, connected staff, frequent visitors and volunteers. Putting the best interest of children first is the aim of operating procedures. All staff will be trained so that they are alert to issues and know how to react. Training will prepare them to identify if and when there potential need for early help* and to recognise the signs that might indicate that a child is at risk of significant harm.

The potential for significant harm to children can come from a wide gamut of sources and these have increased because of mobile and other technologies. All of us must be alert eg pupil health and safety issues which might include childrens’ mental health. We must plan carefully and with safety in mind for educational visits. Peer on peer abuse may come from bullying, hitting and/or name-calling and this may stem from racist attitudes/homophobic/bi-phobic/transphobic/sexual motives to name but a few. Abuse of children by adults is also a risk that we must mitigate by implementing robust and rigorous procedures. Schools are bound to act carefully if physical intervention/restraint has to be used and must plan to meet the needs of pupils with medical conditions. We recognise issues from drug and substance misuse by young people and the dangers posed by online/internet safety. Most schools in London are touched by gang activity and we must recognise and counter negative influence. The examples in this paragraph are not exhaustive but give an indication of the breadth of ways in which children may be harmed or are at risk of harm.

*We understand that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children and young people than reacting when things go wrong later and safeguarding procedures need to take place. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem is identified, at any point in a child or young person’s life. Early help can also prevent further problems arising and we will strive to engage outside services and share information so this supports children and families.

Single Central Record (SCR)/Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

We will keep an up-to-date SCR which summarises the checks and vetting of all staff working with pupils. All staff (including supply teachers, temporary staff and volunteers and Governors) will be subject to an enhanced DBS check and Barred List check to ensure appropriate safeguarding. Teaching staff will be subject to a 'prohibition from teaching' check and those in leadership positions will have a Section 128 check. Periodically, the school will undertake routine re-checks.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. There are six main elements to our policy:

1. Ensuring we practise safe recruitment (with key governors and staff undergoing approved training) in checking the suitability of governors, staff (including supply staff) and volunteers to work with children. All staff are subject to DBS checks and other appropriate checks and must inform us if any of the following apply. A person may be disqualified ("a Disqualified Person") from working in our school under the 2009 Regulations because:
 - they are on the Children's Barred List (for which the School will carry out a Disclosure and Barring System check);
 - have been cautioned for or convicted of certain violent and sexual criminal offences against children and adults;
 - there are grounds relating to the care of children (including where an order is made in respect of a child under a person's care, including their own children);
 - they have had registration refused or cancelled in relation to childcare or children's homes or been disqualified from private fostering;

We ask staff to inform us on the application forms if any of these apply and the obligation to let us know if circumstances change.

2. Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe. The curriculum will cover a wide range of pertinent topics e.g. e-safety, peer-on-peer abuse (including upskirting) and have regard to the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS), and other wider environmental factors (contextualising safeguarding).
We maintain and review our strategies and filtering systems to monitor any infringements to the acceptable use of technology guidelines, which are operative in the school, and take appropriate steps to deal with these and the perpetrators. The school has strict rules on the use of mobile phones.
3. Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse eg pupils can confidentially approach members of staff and can use the suggestion box or anti-bullying email. We will always follow-up on disclosures made with the relevant external agencies as required.
4. Supporting pupils who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan, incorporated into a Pastoral Support Plan when appropriate. Support may include outside agencies.
5. Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop. This has meant making necessary adjustments in line with Guidance for full opening: Schools GOV.UK, to provide an environment which mitigates against COVID-19 transmission.
6. Being particularly vigilant on the return to school in September 2021 that we have updated our lists of vulnerable children and those in need, that may have suffered detriment during the period of absence from school and may be more vulnerable during a future period when 'normal services' may not be operative. Staff will be aware of the possible effects the most recent lockdown and remote learning period may have had on pupils' mental health. They will look out for behavioural signs, including pupils being fearful, withdrawn, aggressive, oppositional or excessively clingy, to help identify where support may be needed so that the designated safeguarding lead can take action. This group of pupils may include but is not limited to those:
 - with a child protection or child in need plan,
 - Looked after by the local authority

- With an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- Receiving or on the edge of receiving support from children’s social care or CAMHS services
- Adopted
- At risk of becoming NEET (‘not in employment, education or training’)
- Living in temporary accommodation
- Young carers
- Considered vulnerable by the school and/or LA eg because they are living in situations eg volatile family backgrounds, mental health or addiction issues in the home to name but a few examples.

We will monitor attendance carefully in the light of a possible increase in absences due to COVID-19 risks; follow new guidance on recording attendance and put in place remote learning opportunities for pupils, with guidance for staff to ensure their safety and that of pupils.

We recognise that because of the day-to-day contact with children, school staff, volunteers and occasionally governors are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to without initial judgement or rebuff.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.
- Ensure we have procedures in place for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers.
- Ensure staff are aware that anybody can make a referral to social care if there is a risk of immediate, serious harm to a child.
- Ensure staff understand they must raise any FGM concerns with the designated safeguarding lead and recognise their own obligation to report known cases in under 18 year-olds to the police.
- Ensure staff are alert to children that are missing in education or placed temporarily in alternative provision or off-site and their responsibilities to take account of safeguarding risks, reporting any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead because of the potential dangers that include but are not limited to FGM, forced marriage and child sexual exploitation.
- Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities for maintaining professional relationships with pupils and avoid communicating with pupils privately, e.g. by email. Nor should staff interact with pupils on social media or put themselves into potentially compromising situations. Staff should be aware of inappropriate ‘low level behaviours’ where staff may have acted in a way that:
 - is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
 - does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to LADO. ‘Low-level’ concerns could include, but are not limited to:
 - being over friendly with children;
 - having favourites;
 - taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
 - engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door; or,
 - using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language

We will take account of the procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education. A member of the Senior Leadership Team is designated to take the lead, especially dealing with child protection issues, providing oversight of administration and liaising with and working with other agencies. We will ensure we have a Designated Safeguarding Lead for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role. She (or members of the

safeguarding team) are the first point of contact and coordinate procedures in the school. The school has appointed a deputy to act in the absence of the safeguarding lead (see appendix A). If in exceptional circumstances the designated safeguarding lead is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local authority children's social care. Advice can be sought at any time from the NSPCC helpline on 0800 800 5000. The email to use for out of hours contact is safeguarding@stthomasmoreschool.org.uk

The school also has a Safeguarding Administrative Officer who attends ongoing TAF, Child in Need Meetings, etc.

We will:

- Ensure we have a nominated governor responsible for child protection (Ms Regan).
- Ensure every member of staff, volunteer and governor knows the name of the designated safeguarding lead responsible for child protection and their role and is cognisant of the school's policy and procedures.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities of being alert to the signs of abuse, responding and reacting appropriately. Also to react in accordance with annual training, to disclosures made by children; taking responsibility for referring any and all concerns to the safeguarding lead for child protection in the school and to the Police if statutorily required (e.g. in the case of suspected FGM) and/or to the Executive Headteacher/Chair of Governors (in the case of allegations against staff) or social services. We will implement regular staff training (including coverage of e-safety, whistleblowing) and provide frequent updates to evidence this outcome. Staff will be asked to sign that they have read and understood relevant material. Safeguarding is also covered in new staff induction.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers recognise that some are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect than others (e.g. SEN, LAC, pupils with families in prison, pupils with housing issues, pupils that are fostered, pupils that are carers, pupils that have poor attendance, pupils that have certain health conditions etc) and that they should be especially vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect. Pupils in vulnerable groups are shown to be more vulnerable to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), where a power imbalance is used to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity which may include serious violent crime. These pupils may need more help to prevent exploitation and abuse.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for recognising and dealing with peer-on-peer abuse. We recognise that even if there are no reported cases of peer-on-peer abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not reported. Hence we must watch for 'signs' of such abuse and ensure pre-emptive questioning of pupils and investigation eg by Heads of Year. Girls are more likely to be victims and boys the perpetrators but this is not always the case. Children will be supported and encouraged to report and challenge derogatory or sexualised language and report to the designated safeguarding lead or trusted adult (who must then pass on to the safeguarding lead) any incidents that come to their attention of sexual harassment, sexting (sending and receiving sexual messages through technology and the consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos), upskirting and other abuse on social media. Abuse is abuse and 'banter' or similar excuses are not acceptable; any reported cases will be heard and taken seriously. Victims will be supported and sanctions may be imposed on the perpetrators.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers recognise the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. They will be able to identify different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities under PREVENT duty for being alert to the signs of radicalisation/extremism and report these to the DSL so if a referral is can be made as required. We will implement regular training to evidence this outcome.
- Assess and review the extent to which individual students and members of staff may be drawn into terrorism and communicate with the LA panel any concerns and secure the necessary support.

- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the school prospectus.
- Notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences and the use of interagency meetings as and when appropriate.
- Keep written records of concerns; regularly update our child protection register, log the details of meetings with Social Services about children and refer all matters immediately.
- Ensure all records are kept securely; separate from the main pupil file, and in locked locations.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Ensure safe recruitment practises are always followed.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helpless, humiliated and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum.
- Attempting to broker regular counselling or counselling opportunities.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will ensure that pupils know that some behaviours are unacceptable. If they report such behaviours they will be listened to, valued and will not be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as social services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service, Education Welfare Service and Educational Psychology Service.
- Ensuring that, where a pupil on the child protection register leaves; their information is copied for any new school/college as soon as possible but transferred separately from the main pupil file and that the child's social worker is informed.

This policy to be subject to Annual Review and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and government documents:

Staff handbook
 Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (for all workers)
 Anti-Bullying Policy
 Managing Allegations made against Staff
 Whistleblowing Policy
 Complaints Procedure
 Health and Safety Policy
 Pupil Restraint Policy
 Keeping children safe in education September 2021
 Working together to safeguard children August 2018
 Guidance for the full re-opening of Schools GOV.UK August 2021

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

This policy was reviewed on 15th September 2020

This policy was reviewed on 27th September 2021

Appendix A

Safeguarding Lead

Safeguarding Manager

Safeguarding Officer(Deputies)

Safeguarding Administrative Officer

Tracy Warriner

Sarah Bona

Christina Thomas

Leigh Wood

Susan Clark