



HOMEBROOK WOODS

Independent Special School
Ages 5 -11

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Academic Year 2026 –2027

Policy Title	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
School	Homebrook Woods
Policy Owner	Vonika Shelley
Role	Proprietor & Headteacher
Approved by Proprietor	
Date of Approval	28 February 2026
Date Issued	February 2026
Review Cycle	Annual
Next Review Due	February 2027

This policy has been developed in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), together with the Independent School Standards and local Derby, Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire safeguarding procedures.

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. What is Abuse?**
- 3. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 4. Key Safeguarding Contacts**
- 5. Ensuring a Safe Environment**
- 6. Responding to Concerns**
- 7. Child-on-Child Abuse**
- 8. Safer Recruitment and Selection**
- 9. Staff Concerns, Allegations and Whistleblowing**

Appendix 1 - Safeguarding Flowchart

Appendix 2 – Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP) Safeguarding Flowchart

Appendix 3 - The Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing

Appendix 4: Safeguarding Referral Contacts Poster

Section 1: Introduction

This policy has been written to reflect the statutory requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 and should be read and implemented alongside all associated statutory safeguarding guidance.

Safeguarding is fundamental to the work of Homebrook Woods.

The safety, welfare and dignity of every child sit at the centre of our culture, decision-making and leadership accountability. This policy sets out how Homebrook Woods fulfils its legal and moral responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in accordance with statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements.

This document applies to all adults working in or on behalf of the school, including proprietors, senior leaders, teaching and support staff, volunteers, contractors, supply staff and visiting professionals.

Definition of Safeguarding

In line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children includes:

- Providing timely help when concerns first arise.
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that occurs within the home, in the community or online.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care.
- Supporting children to achieve the best possible outcomes in line with the Children's Social Care National Framework.
- Promoting the upbringing of children within their family network wherever this is safe and in their best interests.

Safeguarding is broader than protection from deliberate harm. It encompasses prevention, early identification, support, and coordinated intervention.

Definition of Child Protection

Child protection refers to activity undertaken to protect individual children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that takes place both offline and online.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

Whole-School Safeguarding Culture

Homebrook Woods adopts a vigilant, proactive approach. We operate with the understanding that serious harm can occur in any setting. A culture of professional curiosity is expected. Staff are encouraged to notice patterns, question inconsistencies and share concerns early.

Safeguarding is embedded across:

- Leadership oversight
- Curriculum planning
- Behaviour systems
- Pastoral structures
- Attendance monitoring
- Safer recruitment
- Online safety
- Staff conduct expectations

All school systems operate with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration. In all safeguarding decisions, the welfare of the child is paramount. Where professional disagreement arises, Homebrook Woods will escalate concerns in line with the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP) Dispute Resolution and Escalation Policy. No decision will prioritise organisational convenience over child safety.

Early Identification and Early Help

Concerns are addressed at the earliest possible stage. Staff are trained to recognise low-level indicators and emerging vulnerabilities. Early help may involve internal pastoral intervention, coordinated support via an Early Help Assessment (EHA), or referral to appropriate external services.

No child's situation is regarded as static. Where circumstances change or risk escalates, action is reviewed accordingly.

Online and Contextual Safeguarding

Children may face risk in their homes, communities and online environments.

Homebrook Woods recognises:

- The increasing role of technology in safeguarding risk.
- The potential for contextual harm beyond the school gates.
- The vulnerabilities associated with developmental delay and complex needs.

Children in specialist provision may be at heightened risk of grooming, exploitation and online manipulation. Our staff are trained to identify and respond to such risk.

The school undertakes an annual Prevent duty risk assessment and maintains a Prevent action plan in accordance with *Prevent Duty Guidance (2023)* and *The Prevent duty: safeguarding learners vulnerable to radicalisation (2023)*.

Operation Encompass / SDAT

Homebrook Woods participates in the Stopping Domestic Abuse Together (SDAT) initiative, Derby and Derbyshire's local implementation of Operation Encompass. Police notifications regarding domestic abuse incidents are shared with the school to enable appropriate pastoral and safeguarding support.

Dedicated safeguarding communication systems are in place to receive and respond to notifications securely.

Multi-Agency Working

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Homebrook Woods works in partnership with:

- Local Authority Children's Social Care
- Early Help Services
- Health providers (including CAMHS and school nursing)
- Police
- Domestic abuse services
- Substance misuse services
- Disability charities
- Community and family support organisations

The school follows Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP) procedures, including:

- The Threshold Document (criteria for action)
- Local Protocol for Assessment
- Dispute Resolution and Escalation Policy
- Professional Dissent process

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) team attends relevant multi-agency meetings including Child Protection Conferences, Team Around the Family (TAF), Child in Need meetings and other safeguarding forums.

Secure Safeguarding Communication

Homebrook Woods maintains a dedicated safeguarding email address accessible to at least two DSLs. This inbox is checked daily during term time. Out-of-office responses provide clarity regarding response times during holidays.

Concerns are recorded electronically via the school's safeguarding recording system and managed under DSL oversight.

Learning from Safeguarding Reviews

The school monitors local and national learning from case reviews and safeguarding practice reviews, including DDSCP briefing notes. Where appropriate, policy and practice are updated accordingly.

Linked Statutory Guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*
- ***Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026***
- *Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children (2018)*
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010 (including Public Sector Equality Duty)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Prevent Duty Guidance (2023)
- Derby and Derbyshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures

Related School Policies

Safeguarding intersects with numerous school policies including:

- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying
- Attendance
- Online Safety
- Staff Code of Conduct (including low-level concerns)
- Suspension and Exclusion
- Use of Reasonable Force
- Medical Needs
- First Aid
- Educational Visits
- Intimate Care
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Safer Recruitment
- School Security
- RSE and Health Education
- SEND Information Report
- Whistleblowing

These policies operate collectively to provide a coherent safeguarding framework.

Section 2: What is Abuse?

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Harm may be inflicted deliberately, through reckless behaviour, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can be perpetrated by adults or by other children.

Children may experience harm:

- Within their home
- Within institutional settings
- In their community
- Online
- Through peer relationships

Categories of Abuse

Abuse may involve:

- **Physical abuse** – causing physical injury or harm.
- **Emotional abuse** – persistent emotional ill-treatment affecting development.
- **Sexual abuse** – involving a child in sexual activity.
- **Neglect** – persistent failure to meet basic physical or psychological needs.
- **Exploitation** – including sexual or criminal exploitation.

Children may also be harmed by witnessing domestic abuse.

Overlapping and Contextual Risks

Safeguarding concerns rarely exist in isolation. Multiple vulnerabilities often coexist. Indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Sudden behavioural changes
- Persistent absence
- Substance misuse
- Involvement in serious violence
- Grooming
- Radicalisation

- Sharing of nude or semi-nude images
- Criminal exploitation (including county lines)

Specific Safeguarding Risks

Staff must remain alert to:

- Bullying (including prejudice-based and online)
- Gender-based violence
- Sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Radicalisation and extremist influence
- Technology-related risks
- Abuse within teenage relationships
- Upskirting (criminal offence under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019)
- Gang involvement
- Forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- So-called honour-based abuse
- Perplexing Presentations / Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)
- Homelessness
- Modern slavery and trafficking

Further detail on indicators can be found in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)*.

Vulnerability Factors

Certain children may face increased risk, including those who:

- Have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)
- Have mental health difficulties
- Are looked after or previously looked after
- Are absent from education
- Are privately fostered
- Identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning
- Live in households affected by domestic abuse, substance misuse or adult mental health issues

Recognition of vulnerability must inform safeguarding response.

Abuse by Other Children

Children can harm other children. This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Child-on-child abuse is addressed in detail in Section 7 of this policy.

The Role of Staff

All staff must:

- Understand definitions and indicators.
- Recognise that behaviours may signal deeper harm.
- Share concerns without delay.
- Avoid minimising or dismissing harmful behaviours.

Professional curiosity and timely reporting are critical to effective safeguarding.

Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding at Homebrook Woods is underpinned by clear leadership accountability, defined responsibilities and structured oversight by the Proprietor. The Proprietor is supported by independent safeguarding advisors who provide external professional scrutiny and challenge to ensure safeguarding arrangements remain robust and compliant.

Every adult working in or on behalf of the school shares responsibility for safeguarding; however, specific roles carry additional statutory and operational duties.

Safeguarding Leadership Structure at Homebrook Woods

Role Holder	Safeguarding Responsibility
Proprietor & Headteacher	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
	Proprietor (Strategic Safeguarding Oversight)
SENDSCO	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
	Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children
	Senior Mental Health Lead
Senior Teacher	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Independent Safeguarding Advisor (Consultancy)	Provides external professional scrutiny and safeguarding audit support

3.1 Induction and Ongoing Training

All new staff, proprietors and regular volunteers receive a safeguarding induction appropriate to their role before working unsupervised with pupils. Induction includes:

- The ethos and expectations of Homebrook Woods.
- The school's safeguarding and child protection policy (including child-on-child abuse procedures).
- The Behaviour Policy, including anti-bullying and screening/searching powers.
- The Staff Code of Conduct (including low-level concerns and whistleblowing).
- The Attendance Policy and safeguarding response to absence and children missing education.
- Online safety arrangements.
- The safeguarding recording system and reporting procedures.
- The identity and role of:
 - The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
 - Deputy DSLs
 - The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children
 - The Senior Mental Health Lead

All staff must read and confirm they have understood relevant statutory guidance:

- Staff working directly with children: at least Part 1 and Annex B of **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**.
- School leaders, proprietors and DSLs: the full **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**.
- Staff not working directly with children: Part 1 or Annex A (condensed version).

This confirmation is recorded.

3.2 Core Responsibilities of All Staff

All adults working in school must:

- Remain alert to signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and radicalisation.
- Understand that children may not disclose harm directly.
- Recognise that children with SEND or health conditions may face additional barriers to communication.
- Be aware of the safeguarding response to:
 - Children missing education.
 - Private fostering arrangements.
 - Child-on-child abuse.
 - Sharing of nude or semi-nude images.
- Understand the early help process and how to initiate it.
- Know how to refer to local authority children's social care.
- Record concerns promptly using the school's safeguarding system.
- Reassure pupils who disclose harm that they will be taken seriously and supported.

Staff must understand:

- The 'one chance rule' in cases of suspected forced marriage or honour-based abuse.
- Indicators of serious violence.
- Signs of susceptibility to extremist ideology.
- The relationship between mental health and safeguarding risk.
- That poor behaviour may indicate underlying trauma.
-

Where there is uncertainty, staff must consult the DSL without delay.

3.3 Proprietor Accountability

Homebrook Woods is an independent school where the Proprietor holds full legal and strategic accountability for safeguarding in accordance with the Independent School Standards (Part 8) and **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**.

The Proprietor provides strategic safeguarding oversight and holds ultimate accountability for safeguarding and child protection arrangements in accordance with the Independent School Standards and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Where the Proprietor also holds operational leadership roles within the school, these responsibilities are discharged through clearly defined functions as set out below.

Independent safeguarding scrutiny is provided through an external safeguarding advisor operating in a consultancy capacity, ensuring professional challenge and annual review of safeguarding effectiveness. Operational safeguarding quality assurance is supported through the school's Safeguarding Procedures Manual, which includes safeguarding monitoring schedules, audit tools and associated records.

3.4 Headteacher Responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and operational implementation of safeguarding arrangements.

At Homebrook Woods, the Proprietor also fulfils the role of Headteacher.

In this capacity, responsibilities include:

- Ensuring safeguarding policies are implemented consistently.
- Ensuring safeguarding remains a standing leadership priority.
- Promoting educational outcomes for children who have or have had a social worker.
- Ensuring staff training is current and appropriate.
- Monitoring safeguarding trends and incident patterns.
- Ensuring decisions relating to suspension, exclusion or reduced timetables are made in the best interests of children.

3.5 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

A senior leader is appointed as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in line with statutory requirements.

At Homebrook Woods, the Proprietor and Headteacher holds the role of DSL.

The DSL carries lead operational responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety.

The DSL:

- Coordinates safeguarding processes.
- Provides advice and support to staff.
- Reviews and investigates safeguarding concerns.
- Maintains oversight of the safeguarding recording system.
- Attends strategy meetings and multi-agency conferences.
- Contributes to statutory assessments.
- Liaises with:
 - o SENDCO
 - o Senior Mental Health Lead
 - o Pastoral staff
 - o IT lead (filtering and monitoring)
- Ensures police domestic abuse notifications (SDAT) are actioned appropriately.
- Ensures appropriate referrals are made to:
 - o Children's Social Care
 - o Early Help
 - o Police
 - o Prevent Team
- Maintains oversight of children with social workers.
- Ensures safeguarding files are transferred securely within required timescales.
- Ensures filtering and monitoring systems meet DfE standards (2024).
- Oversees online safety review and risk assessment annually.

A trained Deputy DSL is always available during school hours to support safeguarding decision-making and provide operational cover.

The DSL maintains a safeguarding chronology for all pupils where concerns are present. Chronologies are reviewed regularly to identify patterns, cumulative risk and contextual safeguarding factors. Safeguarding

supervision sessions are held termly to review complex cases and ensure reflective professional practice.

3.6 Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

Deputy DSLs are appointed to provide operational coverage. While deputies may undertake many day-to-day responsibilities, ultimate accountability remains with the DSL.

Deputy DSLs:

- Respond to immediate safeguarding concerns.
- Support investigations and referrals.
- Attend multi-agency meetings when delegated.
- Maintain continuity during absence of the DSL.

3.7 Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

This role ensures that:

- Appropriate staff understand legal status and care arrangements.
- Educational attainment and attendance are monitored.
- The school works with the Virtual School Head.
- Children in kinship care receive appropriate support.

3.8 Senior Mental Health Lead

The SENDCO is appointed as Senior Mental Health Lead.

In this role, they:

- Oversee mental health provision within the school.
- Coordinate early identification of emotional wellbeing concerns.
- Work collaboratively with the DSL to ensure mental health risks are considered within safeguarding decisions.
- Liaise with external services, including CAMHS and local mental health teams.
- Support staff understanding of the relationship between safeguarding and mental health.
- Contribute to early help assessments and multi-agency meetings where mental health is a factor.

The Senior Mental Health Lead works in close partnership with the DSL to ensure safeguarding and mental health responses are aligned.

3.9 Safeguarding Training

In addition to induction:

- All staff receive safeguarding updates at least annually.
- Training includes:
 - Prevent duty.
 - Child-on-child abuse.
 - Private fostering.
 - Online safety (including nude/semi-nude image response).
 - Attendance safeguarding.
 - Data protection and cyber security.
- DSLs receive enhanced training in line with Annex C of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- Staff involved in recruitment receive safer recruitment training.
- Proprietors receive training enabling effective strategic oversight.

Training is recorded and monitored.

Section 4: Key Safeguarding Contacts

4.1 Internal Safeguarding Roles

Safeguarding Leadership Structure

Role	Post Holder
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Proprietor & Headteacher
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	SENDSCO (appointed prior to opening)
Additional Deputy DSL	To be appointed prior to opening (trained before pupils admitted)
Designated Teacher for LAC	SENDSCO
Senior Mental Health Lead	SENDSCO
Proprietor	Proprietor

At the point of opening, all safeguarding post holders will have completed appropriate DSL-level safeguarding training in accordance **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**. No pupils will be admitted until safeguarding leadership arrangements are fully in place.

4.2 Key and Local Safeguarding Contacts – Derby and Derbyshire

1. Important Local Authority Distinction

It is essential that staff confirm which Local Authority area a child resides in before making a referral. There are two separate authorities:

- **Derby City Council**
- **Derbyshire County Council**

Schools must refer safeguarding concerns to the Local Authority in which the child resides.

2. Children's Social Care – Derbyshire (Starting Point)

If the child resides within Derbyshire County, referrals must be made via **Starting Point**.

Starting Point is Derbyshire County Council's integrated safeguarding access service. It functions as:

- The Children's Social Care referral service
- The Early Help access point
- The professional consultation and advice service

Contact Routes – Derbyshire

Urgent (Office Hours)

01629 533190

Out of Hours – Emergency Duty Team

01629 532600

Non-Urgent Referrals

Derbyshire Starting Point Online Referral System

When to Use the Urgent Telephone Number

The urgent number must be used when:

- A child may be at risk of significant harm.
- Immediate professional advice is required.
- The concern cannot wait for written submission.
- Risk has escalated and requires same-day action.

This is the DSL's primary referral route for urgent safeguarding matters (excluding emergency situations requiring 999).

Non-Urgent Safeguarding Concerns

Where concerns require assessment but do not present immediate danger, a written referral should be submitted via the Derbyshire online referral system.

This route is typically used for:

- Early Help assessments
- Emerging or persistent neglect concerns

- Ongoing safeguarding concerns requiring multi-agency involvement
- Submission of the online form creates a formal referral record.
If uncertain about threshold or referral route, consultation with Starting Point should be sought without delay.

3. Children's Social Care – Derby City

Derby City Council operates a separate Children's Social Care service from Derbyshire County Council.

If the child resides within Derby City, referrals must be made to **Derby City Children's Social Care**.

Contact Routes – Derby City Urgent (Office Hours)

01332 641172

Out of Hours – Emergency Duty Team

01332 956606

Non-Urgent Referrals

Derby City Children's Social Care Online Referral System

When to Use the Urgent Telephone Number

The urgent number must be used when:

- A child may be at risk of significant harm.
- Immediate professional advice is required.
- There is escalation of safeguarding risk.
- The situation cannot safely wait for written submission.

The out-of-hours number must be used outside normal working hours where immediate safeguarding response is required.

Where there is uncertainty about threshold or referral route, consultation with Derby City Children's Social Care should be sought without delay.

4. Allegations Against Adults (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be contacted where there is an allegation against an adult working with children.

Derby City LADO

Email: CPMduty@derby.gov.uk

Derbyshire LADO

Email: professional.allegations@derbyshire.gov.uk

(These contacts are for allegations against adults only, not general child protection concerns.)

5. Professional Consultation Services

Derby Children's Services Professional Consultation Line

07812 300329

Derbyshire Starting Point Consultation and Advice Service for Professionals
01629 535353

6. The Light House (Integrated Disabled Children's Service)

Tel: 01332 256990

Email: VCM-IDCS@derby.gov.uk

7. Police and Prevent Contacts

Emergency (Police): 999

Non-Emergency Police: 101

Derbyshire Police Prevent Team: 0300 1228694

Prevent Teams

Derbyshire Prevent Team

01629 538473

prevent@derbyshire.gov.uk

Derby Prevent Contact

07765 222032

sally.siner@derby.gov.uk

8. Children Missing Education (CME)

Derby CME

01332 641448

cme@derby.gov.uk

Derbyshire CME

CS.CMECoordinators@derbyshire.gov.uk

9. Virtual School Contacts

Derby Virtual School Head

07812 301044

graeme.ferguson@derby.gov.uk

Derbyshire Virtual School

07798 882876

rachel.moore@derbyshire.gov.uk

10. Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services

Build Sound Minds – 01332 679379

KOOTH – www.kooth.com

Urgent Care Team (24/7 mental health helpline) – 0800 028 0077

CAMHS Rise – 0300 7900264

Mental Health Support Team – 0300 123 3375

11. National Safeguarding Contacts

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000

NSPCC Report Abuse in Education – 0800 136 663

Police Anti-Terrorist Hotline – 0800 789 321

National Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0808 2000247
Operation Encompass National Helpline – 0204 513 9990

Section 5: Ensuring a Safe Environment

Creating and maintaining a secure, respectful and protective environment is central to safeguarding at Homebrook Woods. Safety is not limited to physical security; it encompasses emotional wellbeing, relational trust, digital protection and proactive risk management.

5.1 Culture of Safety and Vigilance

Homebrook Woods promotes an atmosphere in which children feel valued, listened to and respected. Safeguarding is not confined to procedural compliance but embedded in daily interactions, curriculum design and leadership oversight.

We:

- Maintain secure site access arrangements.
- Monitor visitor entry and supervision.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour consistently.
- Promote positive conduct and respectful relationships.
- Act promptly when concerns arise.
- Encourage pupils to speak openly about worries.

Children must experience school as a predictable, supportive and protective setting.

5.2 Attendance as a Safeguarding Priority

Regular attendance is essential to both education and safeguarding. Homebrook Woods recognises that repeated, prolonged, unexplainable or unexplained absence may be an indicator of abuse, neglect, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, mental ill health, domestic abuse or other safeguarding concerns. Staff remain professionally curious where attendance patterns change unexpectedly and concerns are escalated to the DSL without delay.

Homebrook Woods:

- Monitors attendance daily.
- Tracks persistent absence weekly.
- Analyses attendance data half-termly.
- Conducts holistic reviews of persistent absence.

- Engages families early to understand barriers.
- Works collaboratively with local authorities and partner agencies.
- Escalates concerns where absence becomes severe.

Where a child has a social worker, absence is considered within the context of known safeguarding risks. Attendance discussions may form part of multi-agency planning.

Homebrook Woods recognises that children missing education are at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, forced marriage, radicalisation and trafficking. Attendance concerns are considered within the wider safeguarding context rather than solely as an attendance issue.

5.3 Reduced Timetables, Suspension and Exclusion

Children who are not in school are potentially more vulnerable.

Decisions regarding reduced timetables, suspension or exclusion must:

- Be lawful and proportionate.
- Consider safeguarding risk.
- Account for vulnerability (including SEND and looked after status).
- Include reintegration planning.

A senior leader oversees multi-agency coordination where a pupil is not accessing full-time education.

5.3A Safeguarding in Alternative Provision

Where pupils attend alternative provision, therapeutic placements or off-site educational activities, Homebrook Woods remains responsible for ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements. Appropriate safeguarding checks, information sharing and monitoring arrangements will be in place and reviewed regularly.

5.4 Elective Home Education (EHE)

If a parent expresses intention to remove a child from school to educate at home, Homebrook Woods will:

- Seek discussion with the family.
- Liaise with the Local Authority.
- Consider the child's best interests, particularly where the child:
 - Has SEND.
 - Is vulnerable.

- Has a social worker.

Where a pupil is removed from roll, the Local Authority is notified in accordance with statutory guidance.

5.5 Children with Social Workers

Children subject to Child in Need or Child Protection Plans require enhanced vigilance.

The DSL:

- Holds information regarding social worker involvement.
- Uses that information to inform decision-making.
- Works with the Virtual School Head where appropriate.
- Ensures attendance, attainment and welfare are monitored.

Where such pupils move school or are absent unexpectedly, relevant professionals are informed immediately.

5.6 Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Homebrook Woods ensures staff are aware of:

- Legal care status.
- Contact arrangements.
- Delegated authority levels.
- Social worker contact details.
- Virtual School contact details.
- Personal Adviser details for care leavers.

The Designated Teacher works collaboratively with the Virtual School to promote educational achievement. The distinct needs of children in kinship care are also recognised and supported.

5.7 Safeguarding in a Specialist SEND Setting

Homebrook Woods is a specialist independent school for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). All pupils have identified additional needs and many have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

Safeguarding practice at Homebrook Woods is therefore explicitly adapted to reflect the increased vulnerability, communication differences and developmental diversity of our cohort.

Heightened Risk Profile

The school recognises that children with SEND are statistically more vulnerable to:

- Abuse and neglect
- Grooming and manipulation
- Sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour
- Bullying and social isolation
- Online exploitation and coercion
- Criminal exploitation
- Domestic abuse exposure
- Misinterpretation of consent and boundaries

In addition, safeguarding risk may be compounded by:

- Communication difficulties
- Literal understanding of language
- Delayed cognitive or emotional development
- Dependency on adults for care
- Desire to please or comply
- Reduced ability to recognise unsafe behaviour
- Difficulty articulating events chronologically

All safeguarding assessments at Homebrook Woods consider developmental age, communication capacity and cognitive profile — not chronological age alone.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Many children in specialist provision have experienced:

- Early developmental trauma
- Neglect
- Attachment disruption
- Domestic abuse
- Social rejection

Homebrook Woods adopts a trauma-informed approach that:

- Avoids re-traumatisation
- Promotes relational safety
- Recognises dysregulation as communication
- Separates safeguarding risk from trauma response

However, trauma-informed practice does not replace statutory safeguarding response where thresholds are met.

Communication and Disclosure Adjustments

Staff recognise that children with SEND may:

- Communicate distress through behaviour
- Disclose indirectly or through play
- Require extended processing time
- Struggle with sequencing events
- Present inconsistently due to anxiety or dysregulation

Accordingly, staff will:

- Use developmentally appropriate language
- Avoid abstract or leading questions

- Allow additional time for response
- Use visual supports or trusted adults where necessary
- Record behavioural indicators as potential safeguarding evidence

Where external agencies are involved, the DSL ensures professionals are informed of the child's communication profile to support fair and accurate assessment.

Behaviour and Safeguarding Distinction

In a specialist setting, behaviour must be analysed through both:

- A communication lens
- A safeguarding lens

While behaviours may arise from unmet need, staff must not attribute concerning behaviour solely to SEND.

Where behaviour includes:

- Sexualised actions beyond developmental stage
- Sudden aggression or regression
- Self-harm or obsessive behaviours
- Inappropriate online activity

A safeguarding review will be undertaken alongside behavioural analysis.

Intimate Care and Physical Support

Where pupils require intimate or personal care:

- Individual care plans are in place
- Safeguarding considerations are explicit within plans
- Staff receive specific training
- Recording is robust and transparent
- Two-adult protocols are used where risk assessment indicates

Intimate care arrangements are reviewed regularly and overseen by the DSL.

Child-on-Child Abuse in a SEND Context

Due to developmental diversity within Homebrook Woods, there may be significant differences in:

- Cognitive understanding
- Social awareness
- Emotional regulation
- Power dynamics

Risk assessments in cases of child-on-child abuse must consider:

- Cognitive understanding
- Social awareness
- Emotional maturity
- Power imbalance
- Trauma history
- EHCP information

The school differentiates between developmentally inappropriate behaviour and harmful behaviour, but all cases are treated through formal safeguarding processes in line with statutory guidance. Education around consent, personal boundaries and safe relationships is delivered in a highly differentiated, developmentally appropriate manner.

Online Safety in a SEND Setting

Children with SEND may be particularly vulnerable to:

- Online grooming
- Exploitation through gaming or social platforms
- Literal belief in manipulated content
- Difficulty recognising coercion

Homebrook Woods mitigates this risk through:

- Structured and repetitive online safety education
- Visual and concrete teaching of safe/unsafe concepts
- Close parental engagement
- Regular filtering and monitoring review
- Explicit safeguarding oversight of digital behaviour

Multi-Agency Safeguarding and EHCP Alignment

Where safeguarding concerns arise:

- The DSL reviews EHCP documentation
- Communication needs are shared with external agencies
- Social workers are informed of cognitive or emotional factors impacting disclosure
- Meetings consider the child's developmental presentation

Safeguarding planning is aligned with EHCP provision and therapeutic strategies where appropriate.

Enhanced Staff Competence

All staff receive additional safeguarding training specific to:

- Safeguarding children with neurodevelopmental differences
- Recognising harmful sexual behaviour in SEND contexts
- Supporting communication during disclosure
- Analysing behaviour through a dual safeguarding/needs lens
- Understanding exploitation risk in children with cognitive delay

This reflects the specialist nature of Homebrook Woods and ensures safeguarding practice is proportionate to pupil need.

5.8 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The school recognises that mental health difficulties can:

- Be indicators of underlying abuse.
- Increase vulnerability to exploitation.
- Affect behaviour and presentation.

Clear systems exist for:

- Identifying emotional wellbeing concerns.
- Internal pastoral support.
- Referral to external services.
- Escalation where safeguarding risk emerges.

5.9 Children Who May Face Additional Barriers

Certain groups may experience elevated risk, including children who:

- Are young carers.
- Live with domestic abuse.
- Experience parental substance misuse.
- Are asylum seekers or refugees.
- Are affected by parental imprisonment.
- Are vulnerable to discrimination.
- Are involved in the youth justice system.
- Do not speak English as a first language.
- Are at risk of homelessness.

These pupils may require targeted support, accessible communication and external referrals.

5.10 Private Fostering

Private fostering occurs where a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a parent or close relative for 28 days or more.

When Homebrook Woods becomes aware of such an arrangement:

- The DSL notifies the Local Authority in writing.
- Information required under The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 is provided.
- The arrangement is not investigated internally but referred appropriately.

5.11 Preventative Education

Safeguarding education forms part of the whole curriculum.

Pupils are taught:

- Healthy relationships.
- Consent and respect.
- Online safety.
- Digital resilience.
- How to seek help.
- How to recognise exploitation.

Teaching is age-appropriate and developmentally sensitive. It reflects contextual safeguarding risks and reinforces British values.

The school promotes zero tolerance of sexism, racism, homophobia, disablism and harassment.

5.12 Online Safety and Digital Protection

Online safeguarding is integral to child protection. The Proprietor receives regular assurance that filtering and monitoring systems are effective, proportionate and appropriate for the age, ability and risk profile of pupils.

The effectiveness of these systems forms part of the school's safeguarding monitoring and annual safeguarding review.

Homebrook Woods:

- Operates filtering and monitoring systems meeting DfE standards (2024).
- Assigns clear roles for filtering oversight.
- Reviews filtering provision annually.
- Blocks harmful and extremist content.
- Uses monitoring systems proportionate to safeguarding need.
- Reviews cyber security arrangements in line with Cyber Security Standards (2024).
- Provides staff training in online risk.
- Engages parents in digital safety education.

Online risks include:

- Grooming.
- Exploitation.
- Radicalisation.
- Sharing of nude or semi-nude images.
- Cyberbullying.
- Access to extremist material.

An annual online safety risk assessment is undertaken.

The use of mobile phones, smart technology and personal devices by staff is governed by the Staff Code of Conduct. Staff are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times and must not use personal devices or social media in ways that compromise safeguarding.

The school recognises the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies by children and adults. Staff receive guidance regarding the safeguarding risks associated with AI, including manipulated images, deepfakes, online grooming, misinformation, exploitation and inappropriate content generation. Online safety education is updated to reflect emerging technologies.

5.13 Reporting Systems for Pupils

Homebrook Woods ensures children can report concerns confidently.

Pupils may:

- Speak to trusted staff.
- Use established reporting systems.
- Approach the DSL team directly.

All staff recognise that some disclosures may be indirect. Listening culture is central.

Concerns are recorded via the school safeguarding system and reviewed by a DSL.

5.14 Working with Parents and Carers

Safeguarding is most effective when families are engaged constructively.

The school:

- Communicates openly.
- Encourages parents to raise concerns.
- Explains safeguarding duties.
- Shares information when lawful and necessary.
- Maintains accurate contact records.
- Holds multiple emergency contacts where possible.

While parents are normally informed of concerns, this may not occur where doing so increases risk.

Section 6: Responding to Concerns

Timely, proportionate and well-documented action is essential when concerns arise. All staff must understand their immediate responsibilities.

6.1 Immediate Action

If a child is in immediate danger:

- Call 999.
- Ensure medical assistance if required.

Emergencies take precedence over recording procedures.

6.2 Core Principles for Staff

IMMEDIATE STAFF ACTION – WHEN CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD

All staff must act without delay.

When concerned about a child:

- **Do not assume someone else will act.**
- **Report concerns to the DSL or Deputy DSL immediately.**
- **Record concerns before the end of the same working day.**
- **Use the school's safeguarding recording system.**
- **Share information strictly on a need-to-know basis.**
- **Do not view, copy or forward nude or semi-nude images.**
- **Seek support from a senior leader if the situation is distressing.**

If the DSL is unavailable, **report immediately to the most senior leader present** and ensure the DSL is informed as soon as possible.

Failure to follow this procedure may place a child at risk.

6.3 Indicators Requiring Immediate Reporting

Staff must report concerns including:

- Unexplained injuries.
- Behavioural changes.
- Persistent absence.
- Disclosure of abuse.
- Online sexual communication from adults.
- Child-on-child abuse.
- Radicalisation indicators.
- Risk of FGM, forced marriage or honour-based abuse.
- Risk of exploitation (including county lines).
- Modern slavery indicators.
- Suspicion of private fostering.
- Search incidents revealing safeguarding risk.

6.4 Handling Disclosures

HANDLING DISCLOSURES – STAFF GUIDANCE

If a child chooses to speak about a safeguarding concern, staff must respond carefully and professionally.

When receiving a disclosure:

- **Listen without interruption.**
- **Use open questions only (e.g. “tell me”, “explain”, “describe”).**
- **Do not ask leading, probing or investigative questions.**
- **Remain calm and composed.**
- **Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in speaking.**
- **Do not promise confidentiality.**
- **Explain that the information will need to be shared with the DSL.**
- **Record the conversation as soon as possible, using the child’s own words where possible.**
- **Do not ask the child to write a statement.**
- **Seek support from a senior leader if you feel emotionally affected.**

Where possible, **two members of staff should be present when managing reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment.**

Safeguarding concerns must **always be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL immediately after the disclosure.**

If a child chooses to speak:

- Listen without interruption.
- Use open questions (“tell me”, “explain”, “describe”).
- Avoid leading or investigative questions.
- Remain calm.
- Reassure the child.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Explain next steps.
- Record the conversation as soon as possible.
- Do not ask the child to write statements.
- Seek emotional support if required.

Where possible, two staff members should be present for reports of sexual violence or harassment.

6.5 Role of the DSL Following a Concern

Upon receiving information, the DSL will:

- **Assess urgency and immediate risk.**
- Review safeguarding history.
- Consider attendance that day.
- Identify required checks.

- Inform relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.
- **Consult risk assessment tools** where appropriate, including:
 - DDSCP Threshold Document.
 - Graded Care Profile (neglect).
 - DASH (domestic abuse risk).
 - Children at Risk of Exploitation assessment.
 - Stop It Now tools.
- **Decide on:**
 - Internal support.
 - Early Help.
 - Referral to Children's Social Care.
 - Police involvement.
 - Prevent referral.

Where domestic abuse notifications are received (SDAT), general welfare checks are conducted without interrogating the child about the incident.

6.6 Early Help

Early Help is appropriate where:

- Needs are emerging.
- Risks are not yet significant harm.
- Coordinated multi-agency support is required.

The DSL may initiate an Early Help Assessment and coordinate a Team Around the Family (TAF).

If circumstances deteriorate, escalation to statutory services will occur.

6.7 Referral to Children's Social Care

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect significant harm:

- An immediate referral is made.
- Urgent cases are referred by phone and followed in writing within 48 hours.
- Non-urgent cases use the online referral system.

- Information regarding contextual risks is included.

Local Authority decision-making should occur within one working day. If no response is received, the DSL follows up.

6.8 Mandatory Reporting of FGM

Where a teacher becomes aware of a known case of FGM in a girl under 18:

- The teacher must report directly to the police via 101.
- This is a personal statutory duty.
- A referral to Children's Social Care must also be made.
- The report must occur by the end of the next working day.

6.9 Police Involvement

Police must be contacted where:

- A criminal offence may have occurred.
- A child is at immediate risk.
- Sexual violence or serious assault is alleged.

The DSL follows *When to Call the Police – guidance for schools and colleges* and ensures searches or confiscations comply with statutory guidance.

6.10 Notifying Parents

Parents are usually informed of concerns.

However, if informing them increases risk:

- Advice is sought from Children's Social Care.
- Decisions are recorded with rationale.

6.11 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Homebrook Woods operates in accordance with:

- *Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners (2024)*.
- Data Protection Act 2018.
- UK GDPR.

Data protection legislation does not prevent safeguarding information sharing where lawful basis exists.

Staff must:

- Share information proportionately.
- Seek advice where unsure.
- Record rationale for decisions.

6.12 Record Keeping

Safeguarding records must:

- Be clear and comprehensive.
- Include decisions and rationale.
- Document actions and outcomes.
- Record professional disagreements.

Safeguarding files:

- Are stored securely.
- Are separate from main pupil files.
- Are transferred securely within:
 - 5 days (in-year transfer).
 - First 5 days of new term (end-of-year transfer).
- Receipt confirmation is obtained.

Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure safeguarding information is transferred securely and will make direct professional contact with the receiving school's Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss any ongoing child protection concerns, contextual risks and support arrangements, ensuring continuity of safeguarding provision.

Where a child subject to a plan moves or is absent, the social worker is informed immediately.

6.13 Support for Those Involved

Safeguarding matters can be distressing.

Homebrook Woods supports:

- Pupils and families.
- Staff members.
- Whistleblowers.
- Those subject to allegation (where appropriate).

Confidentiality is maintained and appropriate signposting provided.

Section 7: Child-on-Child Abuse

Homebrook Woods recognises that children can harm other children. Abuse between peers is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by adults. A culture that minimises or dismisses harmful behaviour will not be tolerated. We maintain a clear position: abuse is abuse, regardless of the age of those involved.

All staff must adopt the mindset that such behaviour can occur in any setting.

The absence of reports does not mean the absence of incidents. If there are concerns regarding child-on-child abuse, staff must report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

7.1 Understanding Child-on-Child Abuse

In accordance with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**, **child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but is not limited to:**

- Bullying (including cyberbullying and prejudice-based bullying).
- Abuse within intimate personal relationships.
- Physical assault (including online facilitation of threats).
- Sexual violence (rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault).
- Sexual harassment (comments, jokes, online harassment).
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.
- Sharing nude or semi-nude images, consensually or non-consensually.
- Upskirting (a criminal offence under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019).
- Initiation or hazing rituals.
- Forcing involvement in extremist or radicalising behaviour.

Child-on-child abuse can occur online, offline, within school or outside school. It may involve individuals or groups.

7.2 Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour

To support professional judgement, Homebrook Woods recognises distinctions in terminology while aligning safeguarding responses consistently.

Problematic Sexual Behaviour (PSB)

Developmentally inappropriate sexualised behaviour that may not involve deliberate victimisation.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Sexual behaviour by children or young people under 18 that is abusive, exploitative or harmful.

All cases are treated within safeguarding processes and referred to as child-on-child abuse for consistency with statutory guidance.

7.3 Vulnerability and Context

Certain children may be more vulnerable to being victims, including:

- Those living with domestic abuse.
- Children in care.
- Children with SEND.
- Children who are LGBTQ+.
- Children who have experienced bereavement.
- Black and minority ethnic children (who may be under-identified as victims).
- Children with social workers.

Power imbalances can arise due to:

- Age differences.
- Developmental stage.
- Social status.
- Gender dynamics.
- Physical size.
- Economic circumstances.
- Intellectual ability.

Understanding context is critical when assessing risk and impact.

7.4 Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse

Prevention is embedded across:

- Behaviour policy.
- Anti-bullying procedures.
- Online safety curriculum.
- Relationships and Sex Education.
- Attendance monitoring.
- Pastoral systems.
- Clear reporting routes.
-

Staff consistently challenge inappropriate language or conduct. Harmful behaviours are never dismissed as “banter” or “part of growing up”.

Targeted work may be implemented with:

- Children identified as vulnerable.
- Children displaying concerning behaviour.
- Peer groups where risk has been identified.

7.5 Reporting and Initial Response

When a report is received:

- The victim is listened to and reassured.
- The concern is treated seriously.
- The child is not blamed.
- The report is recorded immediately.
- The DSL is informed.

Where possible, two staff members should manage reports of sexual violence or harassment.

Abuse occurring outside school or online is treated with equal seriousness.

7.6 Immediate Safeguarding Measures

For allegations of rape or assault by penetration:

- The alleged perpetrator must be removed from shared classes.
- Careful arrangements are made to avoid contact.
- Transport arrangements are reviewed.

For other cases of sexual violence or harassment:

- Proximity arrangements are reviewed.
- Shared spaces are assessed.
- Protective steps are implemented proportionately.

All decisions prioritise the safety and welfare of the victim.

7.7 Risk and Needs Assessment

The DSL leads risk and needs assessments considering:

- Wishes of the victim.
- Nature and context of behaviour.
- Duration and frequency.
- Presence of coercion or threats.
- Developmental ages of children involved.
- Disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Power differentials.
- Links to exploitation or gang involvement.
- Risks to other children.
-

Separate but coordinated plans are developed for:

- The victim.
- The alleged perpetrator.
- Any other affected children.

Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and updated where required.

7.8 Multi-Agency Working

Where appropriate, referrals are made to:

- Local Authority Children's Social Care.
- Police.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour services.
- Early Help.

Police reports run in parallel with social care involvement where necessary.

The DSL consults relevant guidance including:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education – Part Five.*
- *Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings (2024).*
- *When to call the police – guidance for schools and colleges.*
- DDSCP procedures including Children Who Present a Risk of Harm to Others.

7.9 Recording

All incidents are recorded within safeguarding files.

Documentation includes:

- Decision-making rationale.
- Risk assessment details.
- Protective actions.
- Communication with parents.
- Multi-agency involvement.

If a pupil transfers to another setting, safeguarding information is transferred securely and appropriately, including risk considerations.

7.10 Alleged Perpetrators

Children displaying harmful behaviours may themselves be victims.

Safeguarding response includes:

- Assessment of underlying needs.
- Support plans.
- Consideration of trauma history.
- Multi-agency collaboration.

Safeguarding decisions are not determinations of guilt.

7.11 Mandatory Referral

Where there is suspicion or allegation of sexual abuse involving children, a referral must be made immediately to:

- Local Authority Children's Social Care.
- Police (where appropriate).

Section 8: Safer Recruitment and Selection

Homebrook Woods is committed to preventing unsuitable individuals from working with children. Recruitment processes reflect statutory expectations outlined in **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**

8.1 Recruitment Principles

Safeguarding considerations are embedded at every stage:

- Job descriptions reference safeguarding responsibility.
- Person specifications include suitability to work with children.
- Application forms require full employment history.
- Gaps are scrutinised.
- References are obtained and verified.
- Interviews explore safeguarding values.
- At least one panel member has completed safer recruitment training.

8.2 Pre-Appointment Checks

All staff, including proprietors and volunteers, undergo appropriate checks:

- Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Barred list check where applicable.
- Prohibition from teaching check.
- Identity verification.
- Right to work in the UK.
- Qualifications verification.
- Overseas criminal record checks where relevant.

8.3 Agency and Third-Party Staff

Where supply or agency staff are used:

- Written confirmation is obtained that appropriate checks have been completed.
- Identity is verified upon arrival.
- Supervision arrangements are clarified.

8.4 Contractors

Contractual agreements include safeguarding clauses. Contractors working regularly on site are risk assessed and subject to appropriate checks.

8.5 Volunteers

Volunteers are:

- Risk assessed.
- Appropriately supervised.
- Subject to DBS checks where required.
- Included in safeguarding induction.

Risk assessments for volunteers are recorded.

8.6 Trainee Teachers

For salaried trainees, the school completes checks. For fee-funded trainees, written confirmation is obtained from training providers.

8.7 Single Central Record

Homebrook Woods maintains a Single Central Record in line with statutory requirements.

This records:

- Identity checks.
- DBS checks.
- Barred list checks.
- Prohibition checks.
- Qualification checks.
- Overseas checks.

The record is regularly reviewed.

8.8 Visitors and External Speakers

Visitor procedures ensure:

- Sign-in and identification checks.
- Supervision arrangements.
- Risk assessment for visiting speakers.
- Safeguarding agreement regarding disclosures.

Where the premises are hired by external organisations:

- Written assurance of safeguarding compliance is required.
- Lease agreements include safeguarding clauses.

Section 9: Staff Concerns, Allegations and Whistleblowing

Safeguarding expectations apply equally to all adults using the premises.

A strong safeguarding culture depends on openness, professional integrity and clear reporting pathways. Homebrook Woods expects all adults working in or on behalf of the school to maintain professional boundaries and to raise concerns where behaviour falls short of expected standards. Safeguarding includes vigilance about the conduct of adults as well as children.

Homebrook Woods operates a culture of proactive safeguarding. Patterns of low-level concern will be analysed collectively to identify emerging risk. Safeguarding is viewed as a system responsibility rather than an individual issue. Leadership oversight includes regular review of safeguarding trends, low-level concern logs and behaviour data to ensure early identification of risk.

9.1 Creating a Culture of Transparency

Homebrook Woods promotes:

- An environment in which staff feel able to raise concerns.
- Professional accountability.
- Clear behavioural expectations.
- Early identification of concerning conduct.
- Consistent challenge of inappropriate behaviour.

Staff must understand that safeguarding extends beyond direct interactions with pupils. Behaviour outside school, including online conduct, may also be relevant where it presents transferable risk.

9.2 Two Levels of Concern

The school recognises two categories of concern regarding adults working in or on behalf of the school:

1. Allegations that may meet the harm threshold.
2. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns).

All concerns must be recorded and addressed appropriately.

9.3 Allegations That May Meet the Harm Threshold

An allegation may meet the harm threshold where an adult has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

This includes behaviour occurring outside school (transferable risk).

Reporting Process for Allegations Against Adults

Concerns about an adult working in or on behalf of the school must be reported **immediately**.

Allegations concerning a member of staff (other than the Headteacher) must be reported to the Headteacher, who is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Allegations concerning the Headteacher and Proprietor must be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area in which the school is located.

Where there is any conflict of interest, uncertainty, or concern about internal handling, the LADO should be contacted directly for advice.

Contact details for the LADO are provided in Section 4 of this policy.

A written record must be made including:

- Date and time.
- Location.
- Individuals involved.
- Details of what was observed or disclosed.
- Any immediate action taken.

Action Following an Allegation

Where a child may be at immediate risk:

- Local Authority Children's Social Care must be contacted.
- Police involvement may be required.

The DSL ensures the child's safety is prioritised.

The school follows the DDSCP Safeguarding Children Allegations against Staff, Carers and Volunteers procedure.

9.4 Low-Level Concerns

A low-level concern is any concern about an adult's behaviour towards a child that:

- Is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct; or
- Falls below expected professional standards; and
- Does not meet the harm threshold.

Examples may include:

- Inappropriate language.
- Boundary blurring.
- Inappropriate online communication.
- Behaviour that could be misinterpreted.

Low-level concerns are not insignificant. Early recording helps identify patterns.

Reporting Low-Level Concerns

- Low-level concerns should be reported confidentially to the Headteacher.
- Where the concern relates to the Proprietor/Headteacher, staff should report concerns directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Police (where appropriate), or seek advice from the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line in accordance with statutory guidance..
- Staff are encouraged to self-refer where appropriate.
- Reports about supply staff or contractors will be shared with their employer.

All low-level concerns are recorded in writing including:

- Context.
- Details.
- Action taken.
- Rationale.

The Headteacher determines appropriate next steps, potentially in consultation with the DSL.

9.5 Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing and Raising Concerns About Safeguarding Practice

Homebrook Woods is committed to maintaining a safeguarding culture in which adults feel able to raise concerns about unsafe practice, professional conduct or safeguarding arrangements without fear of disadvantage.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. **All staff have a duty to speak up if they believe:**

- A child is not being adequately protected.
- Safeguarding procedures are not being followed.
- Professional boundaries are being breached.
- Leadership decisions place children at risk.
- There is a failure to respond appropriately to concerns.

Concerns may relate to the conduct of an individual, weaknesses in safeguarding systems, or wider organisational culture.

Raising Concerns Internally

In most circumstances, safeguarding concerns should be raised promptly with the Headteacher, who is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Concerns should be raised as soon as possible and may be shared verbally in the first instance, followed by a written record.

The Headteacher will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the concern.
- Assess the information provided.
- Take appropriate action in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Record decisions and rationale.

Where the Concern Relates to the Headteacher / Proprietor

At Homebrook Woods the Headteacher is also the Proprietor, therefore any concern relating to the conduct, decision-making or safeguarding practice of the Headteacher/Proprietor must be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The school's Independent Safeguarding Advisor may also be contacted to provide external oversight and professional scrutiny.

This ensures concerns can be considered independently and transparently.

External Whistleblowing Routes

Where a member of staff feels unable to raise a concern internally, or believes the matter has not been appropriately addressed, they may contact an **external safeguarding authority** directly.

External routes include:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line (0800 028 0285)
- Ofsted
- The Police (where there is immediate risk or suspected criminal behaviour)

Staff will not suffer detriment for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith.

Confidentiality and Protection

All whistleblowing concerns will be handled sensitively. The identity of the person raising the concern will be protected as far as possible, although absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed if formal investigation is required.

Homebrook Woods will not tolerate victimisation, harassment or retaliation against anyone who raises a safeguarding concern appropriately.

Record Keeping

All whistleblowing concerns relating to safeguarding will be:

- Documented.
- Stored securely.
- Reviewed to identify patterns or systemic issues.

Where required, concerns will be shared with relevant statutory agencies.

9.6 Safeguarding During External Use of Premises

Where allegations relate to activities run by third parties on school premises:

- The same procedures apply.
- Safeguarding expectations form part of contractual agreements.
- The LADO is consulted where appropriate.

9.7 Support for Staff

Where allegations are made:

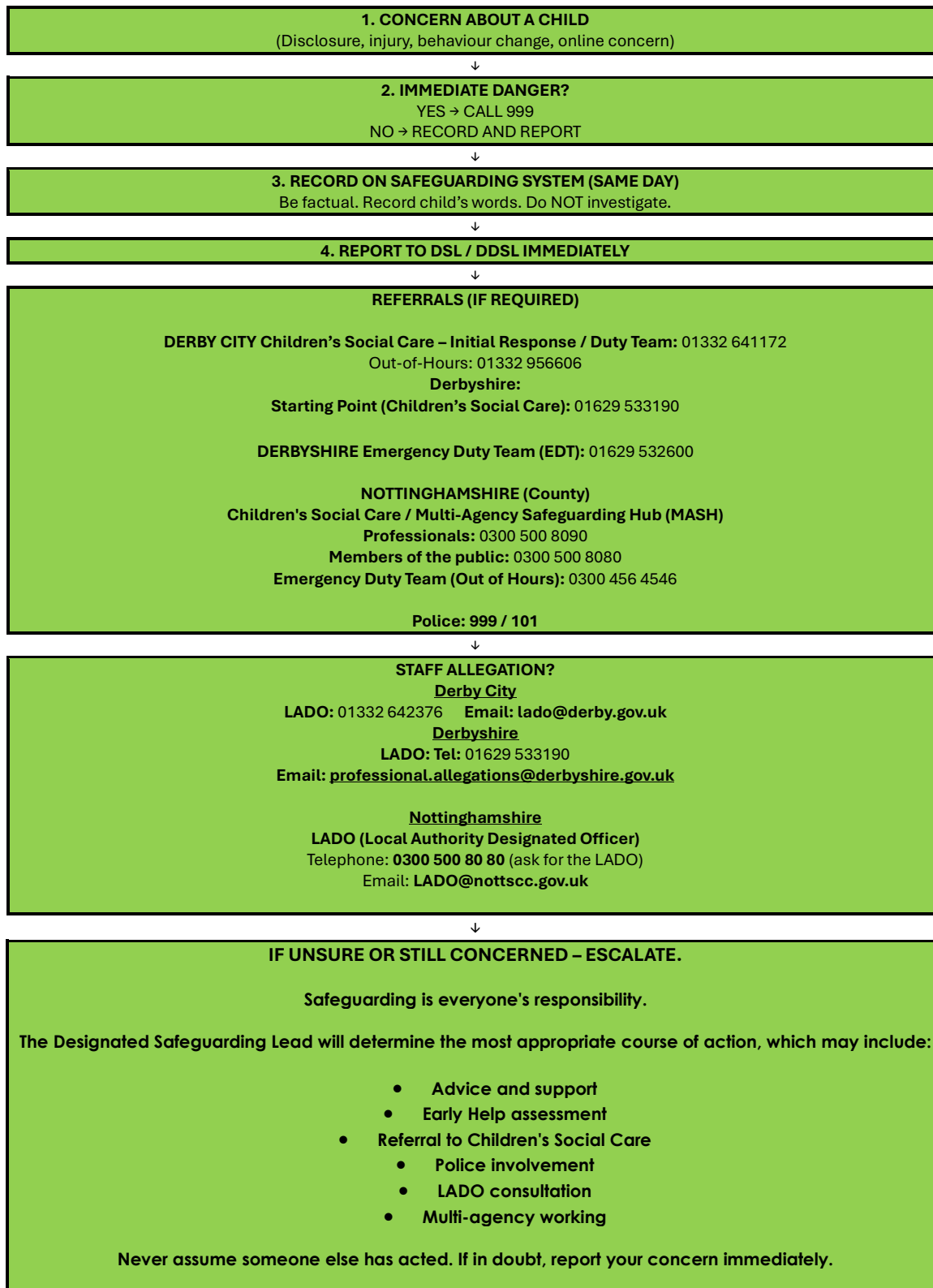
- Confidentiality is maintained.
- Support mechanisms are offered.
- A case manager may be appointed.
- Investigations follow due process.

The welfare of children remains paramount at all times.

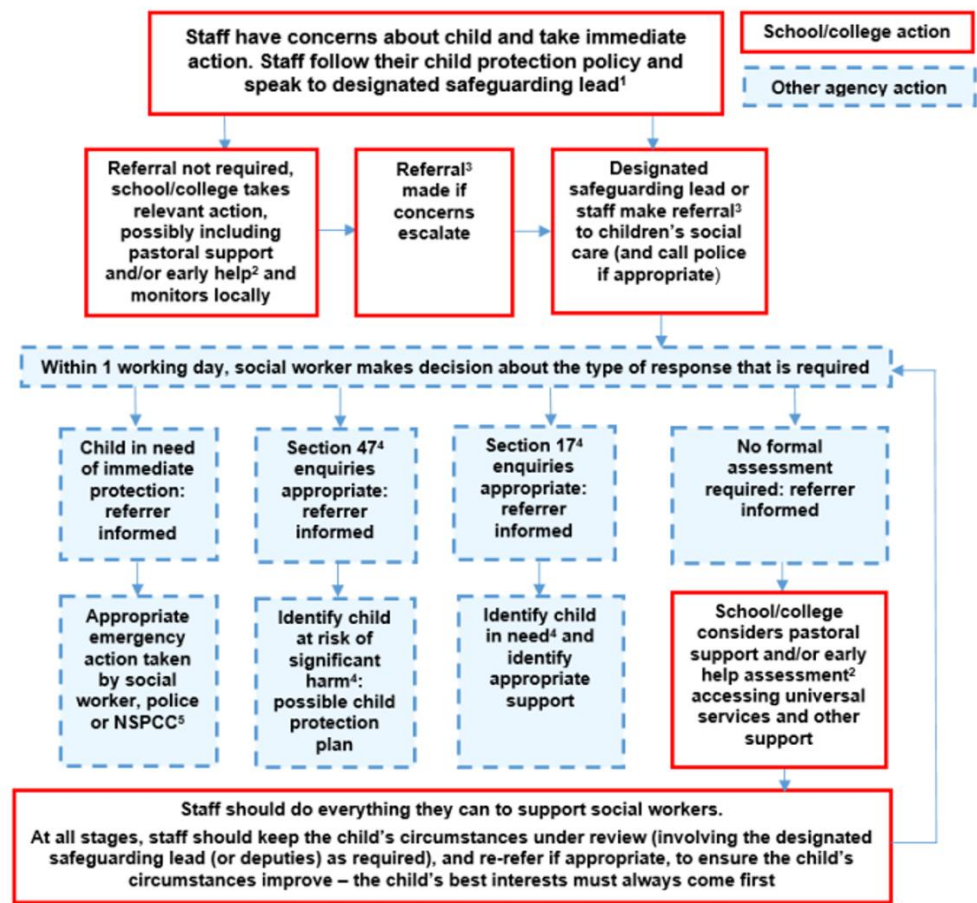


Appendix 1: Safeguarding Flowchart

HOMEBROOK WOODS SAFEGUARDING REPORTING FLOWCHART



Appendix 2:
Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (DDSCP)
Safeguarding flowchart



Appendix 3:
The Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing



The Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing

1. **The welfare of the child is paramount.** Protecting children from harm takes priority over privacy considerations.
2. Where it is safe and appropriate, engage with the child and/or parents about information sharing intentions. **Do not** inform them if doing so increases risk.
3. Consent is not required **where there is a risk of harm**. A lawful basis must exist under data protection law.
4. **Seek advice promptly where uncertain.** Do not delay action because of data protection concerns.
5. **Protect identities** when sharing information, particularly where disclosure could create risk.
6. **Share only necessary, proportionate, relevant and accurate information** with those who have a safeguarding role.
7. **Record the reasons for decisions to share or not share** information. Be prepared to explain your rationale.

Data protection legislation provides a framework to enable appropriate information sharing. It does not prevent safeguarding action.

Homebrook Woods follows the principles outlined in Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers (2024) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Appendix 4:
Safeguarding Referral Contacts Poster

 **SAFEGUARDING REFERRAL CONTACTS**
Homebrook Woods – DSL Quick Reference

STEP 1 – CHECK WHERE THE CHILD LIVES

Before making a referral, confirm whether the child ordinarily resides within:

- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council

Referrals should normally be made to the Local Authority where the child resides.

EARLY HELP & FAMILY SUPPORT (DSL REFERRALS)
Derby City
Early Help Assessment (EHA)
Telephone: **01332 641172** (First Contact Team)
Website: Complete the Derby City Early Help Assessment via the Derby City Council website.

Derbyshire
Starting Point (Early Help & Children's Services)
Telephone: **01629 533190**
Email: **starting.point@derbyshire.gov.uk**

Nottinghamshire
Early Help Unit
Telephone: **0115 804 1248**
Email: **early.help@nottscc.gov.uk**

 **NATIONAL SUPPORT**
NSPCC Helpline: **0808 800 5000**
NSPCC Whistleblowing: **0800 028 0285**
National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0808 2000247**
Anti-Terror Hotline: **0800 789 321**

 **POLICE**
Emergency: **999**
Non-Emergency: **101**
Police Prevent Team: **0300 1228694**

 **DERBYSHIRE (COUNTY)**
URGENT – STARTING POINT
01629 533190
Use when:

- Risk of significant harm
- Immediate advice required
- Escalating safeguarding concern

 **OUT OF HOURS – EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM**
01629 532600

 **NON-URGENT**
Derbyshire Starting Point Online Referral System
Used for:

- Emerging neglect
- Ongoing safeguarding concerns
- Child protection referrals

 **DERBY CITY**
URGENT
01332 641172
Use when:

- Risk of significant harm
- Immediate professional advice required
- Concern cannot wait

 **OUT OF HOURS – EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM**
01332 956606

 **NON-URGENT**
Derby City Online Referral System
Used for:

- Emerging neglect
- Ongoing safeguarding concerns
- Child protection referrals

 **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY**
URGENT – MASH (Professionals)
0300 500 8090
Use when:

- Risk of significant harm
- Immediate professional advice required
- Escalating safeguarding concern

 **OUT OF HOURS – EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM**
0300 456 4546

 **NON-URGENT**
Nottinghamshire MASH Online Referral System
Used for:

- Emerging neglect
- Ongoing safeguarding concerns
- Child protection referrals

⚠ ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ADULTS (LADO ONLY)
(For concerns about staff, volunteers, contractors or the Headteacher/Proprietor.)

Derby City LADO
 CPMduy@derby.gov.uk

Derbyshire LADO
 professional.allegations@derbyshire.gov.uk

Nottinghamshire LADO
 **0300 500 8080** (ask for the LADO)
 LADO@nottscc.gov.uk

⚠ These contacts are for allegations against adults only.

 **PREVENT CONTACTS**
Derbyshire Prevent
 **01629 538473**
 prevent@derbyshire.gov.uk
Derby Prevent
 **07765 222032**
 sally.siner@derby.gov.uk
Nottinghamshire Prevent
 **101** (request the Prevent Team or Prevent Single Point of Contact)

 **CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)**
Derby City
 **01332 641448**
 cme@derby.gov.uk
Derbyshire
 CS.CMECoordinators@derbyshire.gov.uk
Nottinghamshire
 **0300 500 8080**
 CME@nottscc.gov.uk

 **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**
Derby & Derbyshire
Urgent Care Team (24/7): **0800 028 0077**
CAMHS RISE: **0300 790 0264**
Build Sound Minds: **01332 679379**
KOOH: www.kooth.com
Nottinghamshire
CAMHS Single Point of Access (SPA): **0115 854 2299**
Nottinghamshire Mental Health Crisis Line (24/7): **111** (select the mental health option)
KOOH: www.kooth.com