

St Bede's Catholic College



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Key Contact Details & Governance

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Mr D O'Rourke (Vice Principal)
- **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL):** Mrs Garton
- **Designated Child Protection Governor:** Dr Vigna
- **Chair of Governors:** Mrs Gilpin
- **Principal:** Mr R King
- **LA Professional Advisor on Safeguarding:** Jessica Curtis
- **Local Safeguarding Advisor:** Colin Clements
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** Nicola Laird (0117 903 7683 / LADO@bristol.gov.uk)

Keeping Children Safe

Our Catholic Social Teaching Rights and Responsibilities inform us that every person has a fundamental right to life. It is this right that makes all other rights possible. Everyone has the right to food, health care, housing, education, and employment. We all need to strive to secure and respect these rights for others both locally and globally. With the additional guidance of this policy, God wants us to help make sure that everyone is safe and healthy and can be the best that they can be.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)*. St Bede's Catholic College is in the safeguarding partnership with:

- **Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership** (bristolsafeguarding.org)
- **South Gloucestershire Children's Partnership** (sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children)
- **North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership** (northsomersetsafeguarding.co.uk)
- **Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board** (bnssg.icb.nhs.uk)

Policy Links

This policy has been drawn up following consultation and must be read in conjunction with the following college policies:

- Use of Physical Contact with Pupils
- Online safety policy
- Safer recruitment policy
- Whistleblowing policy

Rationale & Overall Aims

The College recognises that it has a duty to safeguard and protect children from abuse and will do whatever is possible to exercise this duty, mindful of the fact that **the welfare of the child is paramount**.

As a Catholic community, we are concerned with all aspects of a child's welfare. We value and cherish each child and seek to ensure that every effort is made to protect the children in our care. Everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play—we adopt an **"it can happen here"** approach across all safeguarding practice.

We endeavour to:

- Provide help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge to prevent the impairment of their mental or physical health or development.
- Protect children from maltreatment, whether within or outside the home (extra-familial harm), including online.
- Ensure children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Create a safe, resilient, and robust safeguarding culture built on shared values where learners are treated with respect and dignity, feel safe, have a voice, and are listened to.
- Maintain a clear model for early identification, intervention, and management of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Ensure staff, governors, contractors, and visitors undergo appropriate background checks in full compliance with statutory requirements.

Equalities Statement & Anti-Oppressive Practice

With regard to safeguarding, St Bede's Catholic College considers its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Some children experience an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist with respect to recognizing or disclosing it.

- **Children Questioning Their Gender:** Children who are questioning their gender may face additional vulnerabilities, including discriminatory bullying, social isolation, family stress, mental health concerns, or online harm. Staff will respond in a child-centred, respectful, and safeguarding-led manner, strictly following the setting's equalities duties, involving the DSL where concerns arise, and **avoiding assumptions about risk or need based solely on gender questioning.**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND):** Staff are aware of the additional barriers to recognising abuse, neglect, and exploitation in children with SEND. Staff must maintain **professional curiosity** and **never assume that signs of abuse, neglect, or behavioral changes are merely part of a pupil's underlying SEND condition or communication difficulties.**
- **Rights & Charter Commitments:** We adhere to both the Bristol Equality Charter and the Bristol Children's Charter, promote anti-oppressive practice, and respect the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Professional Expectations, Roles, and Responsibilities

Role of All Staff

- **Reading Expectations:** All staff must read and understand **Part One** of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* in full. The *Part One Overview* may be used as a complementary reference, but it does not replace reading Part One.
- **Early Identification & Professional Curiosity:** All staff must be alert to indicators of vulnerability, extra-familial harm, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), modern slavery, trafficking, serious youth violence, financial exploitation, misogyny, and technology-facilitated abuse.
- **Reporting Systems:** Staff must record all concerns, disclosures, or emerging low-level concerns promptly on **CPOMS** and/or inform the DSL/DDSL in person. The safeguarding team will then triage concerns presented to form appropriate action.
- **Handling Online Sexual Content:** Staff must **never view, copy, store, or forward** self-generated, manipulated, or AI-generated intimate images/videos unless strictly necessary for immediate safeguarding escalation to the DSL or police.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- **Leadership & Audit Trail:** The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team who leads safeguarding practice, liaises with external agencies, and ensures detailed, accurate, and secure written records are maintained on CPOMS.
- **Family Help & Early Help Oversight:** The DSL maintains oversight of Early Help and Family Help involvement, ensuring the college contributes relevant information, analysis, and challenge where required.
- **Low-Level Concerns Pattern Analysis:** The DSL and DDSL will systematically review patterns of low-level concerns to identify underlying cultural issues, staff training needs, or wider organizational vulnerabilities.
- **Contextual Safeguarding:** The DSL will engage with local multi-agency pathways, utilizing the **Safer Connections Team** for contextual advice on Harm Outside the Home (HOtH), while making immediate statutory referrals to Children's Social Care or police when a child is at immediate risk.

Role of the Governing Body

- **Strategic Assurance:** Appoint a link Safeguarding Governor (Dr Vigna) and review the effectiveness of safeguarding policies, filtering and monitoring, and single central record (SCR) compliance annually with C Walker.
- **Emerging Technology Oversight:** Maintain strategic oversight of emerging technology risks, including artificial intelligence (AI), deepfakes, image-based abuse, cyber-enabled coercion, smart technology, and information security/access management.
- **Third-Party Premises Hire:** Ensure robust safeguarding expectations and suitability checks are built into any transfer of control agreement (lease/hire agreements) when college premises are used for non-college activities. Hirers must demonstrate compliant policies and allegation processes; failure to comply will result in agreement termination.

Safeguarding Training & Safer Recruitment

- **Staff Training:** All staff receive safeguarding and online safety induction training, followed by updates at least annually (via INSET, bulletins, and weekly briefings). Training explicitly incorporates emerging themes: serious violence, financial exploitation, modern slavery, misogyny, and AI misuse.
- **DSL Training:** The DSL and DDSLs undergo formal inter-agency training updates at least every two years, supplemented by annual refresher learning.
- **Enhanced DBS & Vetting Checks:**
 - All staff undergo enhanced DBS checks (with barred list checks for regulated activity) prior to appointment.
 - **5-Year Renewal Cycle:** Staff are subjected to updated enhanced DBS clearance every five years, supported by an annual self-declaration form confirming no disqualifications or cautions exist. Random sampling checks are conducted.
 - **Overseas & Online Checks:** Shortlisted candidates are subject to online due diligence searches. Overseas criminal record checks and Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) checks are conducted where applicable.
- **Volunteers & Work Experience:** In accordance with KCSIE 2026 (in force 1 September 2026), all volunteers engaging in regulated activity must hold an enhanced DBS check with barred list information based on a risk assessment. Off-site work placements and homestays are fully vetted.
- **DBS/NCTL Referral Duty:** A mandatory referral will be made to the DBS and TRA within one month if an individual in regulated activity is dismissed or removed due to safeguarding harm/risk.

Key Safeguarding Procedures & Action Pathways

1. What to Do if There is a Concern

- Staff must share concerns immediately via **CPOMS** and/or directly with the DSL (Mr D O'Rourke) or DDSL (Mrs Garton). Staff must **never investigate** suspected abuse themselves.
- **Immediate Serious Harm:** If a child is at risk of immediate serious harm and the safeguarding team is unavailable, any staff member must contact Children's Social Care or the Police directly without delay.

2. Managing Allegations Against Staff or Adults on Site

- Any concern or allegation regarding a staff member, volunteer, contractor, or governor must be reported immediately to the Principal. Allegations against the Principal must be reported to the Chair of Governors. Allegations against the Chair of Governors must be referred to the Diocesan Director for Education (Mary Cox).
- **LADO Escalation Requirement:** The Principal/Chair of Governors **must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 24 hours and BEFORE taking any internal disciplinary action or conducting an internal investigation.**

3. Information Sharing & File Transfers

- **Legal Framework:** Safety overrides confidentiality. Information can be shared without consent if a child is at risk of harm. Decisions must be necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely, and secure, with rationale documented.
- **Secure File Transfer Benchmark:** When a child leaves or joins the college, the safeguarding file must be transferred securely and separately from the main student record, obtaining confirmation of receipt.

4. Vulnerable Learners, Attendance, & Restrictive Responses

- **Early Indicators:** Repeated classroom removals, internal suspension, reduced or part-time timetables, persistent absence, or requests for Elective Home Education (EHE) serve as immediate triggers for the attendance team and DSL to meet to identify unmet need or escalating risk outside the home.

5. Online Safety, Filtering, Monitoring & Generative AI

- **Curriculum & 4 C's:** Pupils are educated on Conduct, Content, Contact, and Commercialism, covering digital footprint, social media safety, fake news/disinformation, and mobile phone protocols.
- **Generative AI & Deepfakes:** Staff explicitly address risks associated with AI-generated content, impersonation, and deepfakes. Systemic filtering and monitoring systems block harmful content while logging alerts for DSL review. Staff-student social media contact is strictly prohibited.

6. Child-on-Child Harm, Sexual Violence & Harassment

- Child-on-child harm (including sexual violence, sexual harassment, misogyny, upskirting, and harmful sexual behaviour) is never tolerated or dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up", or "just a laugh".
- Staff follow DfE KCSIE 2026 Annex B procedures. Upskirting is a criminal offence under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019. Victim-blaming attitudes are strictly prohibited, and children are provided with multiple trusted reporting routes (face-to-face, written, and digital).

Emergency & Multi-Agency Contact Directory

Pathway / Purpose	Agency / Contact Method	Direct Detail
Immediate Risk / Emergency	Emergency Services (Police / Ambulance)	999
Children's Social Care (Immediate Referral)	Bristol First Response (Duty)	0117 903 6444 (<i>Out of hours: 0117 922 2000</i>)
Local Authority Designated Officer	Nicola Laird (LADO)	0117 903 7683 / LADO@bristol.gov.uk
Contextual Safeguarding / HOTH Advice	Safer Connections Team	Bristol Safeguarding Education Portal
Whistleblowing Helpline	NSPCC National Helpline	0800 800 5000 / help@nspcc.org.uk
Non-Emergency Police	Avon & Somerset Constabulary	101

Approved by Governors October 2026

Will be reviewed July 2027