

# Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Evergreen Forest School 2025

## Policy Leadership

- Designated Safeguarding Lead / Headteacher: Monika Brown
- Deputy DSL: Amy Wilson
- Online Safety Lead: Alice Whittaker

**Last Updated:** May 2025 **Approved by Staff:** May 2025

**Next Review Due:** September 2026 (or earlier if required)

## 1. Context and Rationale

Evergreen Forest School is a unique outdoor learning environment where children thrive through nature-based experiences. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child in our care, which includes children and young people up to the age of 18. Our setting recognises that a holistic, preventative, and proactive approach to safeguarding is essential.

Our Forest School ethos builds strong, trusting relationships, enabling children to feel safe, seen, and heard. This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for safeguarding practice, aligned with statutory guidance and relevant legislation. It applies to all staff, volunteers, students, parents, and visitors.

We acknowledge that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that effective safeguarding requires collaboration with families and external agencies.

We promote a culture of vigilance and transparency, maintaining an unwavering belief that 'it could happen here.'

## 2. Definitions

**Child:** Any person under the age of 18.

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children includes:**

- Protecting children from maltreatment

- Preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring children grow up in safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

**Abuse** includes physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect. It can occur both online and offline and can be perpetrated by adults or peers (child-on-child abuse).

**Child-on-child abuse** includes:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Physical abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Sextortion, sharing of nudes/semi-nudes

**Online abuse** includes exposure to harmful content, grooming, exploitation, cyberbullying, sextortion, and radicalisation.

### **3. Legal Framework and Guidance**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023)
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Local Safeguarding Arrangements (Lancashire CSAP)

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **All Staff and Volunteers Must:**

- Prioritise the safety and welfare of children
- Understand the safeguarding policies and procedures
- Know how to report concerns and be confident to do so
- Receive regular safeguarding training (including online safety)
- Recognise signs of abuse and neglect (including child-on-child and online abuse)
- Maintain professional boundaries and adhere to the Code of Conduct
- Never agree to babysit for families or connect with parents online via personal accounts

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Monika Brown**

- Overall lead for safeguarding and child protection
- Responsible for referrals to CSC, Prevent, police, and other agencies
- Ensure training and policy compliance
- Liaise with Early Help, MASH, LADO, and other multi-agency partners

### **Deputy DSL: Amy Wilson**

- Supports the DSL and acts in their absence

### **Online Safety Lead: Alice Whittaker**

- Ensures all staff understand online risks, including emerging threats
- Provides training and advice to families

## **5. Online Safety**

Evergreen Forest School does not provide regular internet access as part of the children's learning. However, we recognise that children and families may face significant online risks at home.

We commit to:

- Providing staff with online safety and cyber risk training
- Sharing advice and resources with parents
- Supporting children's understanding of safe choices through storytelling and discussion
- Ensuring all images of children are taken with consent and never shared without permission
- Prohibiting staff from sharing personal digital content that could conflict with child protection values

We maintain a proactive approach to emerging technologies such as AI-generated imagery, deepfakes, and online grooming.

## **6. Multi-Agency Working**

We work closely with children's social care, health professionals, education services, police, and other agencies to safeguard children effectively. We follow Lancashire's Safeguarding Children Partnership protocols and ensure timely referrals and active participation in case conferences and reviews.

## **7. Early Help**

Evergreen Forest School is committed to identifying children and families who may benefit from Early Help. Staff are trained to recognise emerging needs and report to the DSL, who can initiate assessments and liaise with family support services.

## **8. Types of Abuse and Neglect**

We recognise four main categories of abuse:

- Physical Abuse

- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

Staff are trained to recognise signs and symptoms and report any concerns immediately to the DSL.

## **9. Specific Safeguarding Risks**

We are alert to other safeguarding concerns including:

- Domestic abuse
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Serious youth violence
- Harmful sexual behaviour

We follow national guidance and make referrals to appropriate services.

## **10. Child-on-Child Abuse**

We have a zero-tolerance policy for child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and violence. We take disclosures seriously, conduct risk assessments, provide support, and engage parents and external services as needed. Children are supported in understanding consent, personal boundaries, and respectful behaviour.

## **11. Safer Recruitment**

We follow Safer Recruitment practices to ensure adults working with children are safe to do so. All staff and volunteers undergo enhanced DBS checks. Interviews include safeguarding questions, and references are thoroughly checked.

## **12. Managing Allegations Against Staff**

All allegations or low-level concerns about staff conduct are referred to the DSL and, if necessary, to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Staff understand how to whistleblow and raise concerns confidently.

## **13. Confidentiality and Record Keeping**

Child protection records are kept confidential, secure, and separate from other records. Access is restricted to safeguarding leaders. Information is shared only with those who need to know, in line with GDPR.

## **14. Induction and Training**

All new staff receive safeguarding induction and regular training, including updates on KCSIE. We use real-life examples and scenarios relevant to outdoor education and child-led learning.

## **15. Voice of the Child**

Children's voices are central. We encourage expression through words, play, art, and non-verbal cues. Every concern is listened to, believed, and followed up with action.

## **16. Visitors and External Agencies**

Visitors are supervised unless enhanced checks are completed. They receive safeguarding guidance on arrival and are not left alone with children unless appropriately cleared.

## **17. Policy Monitoring and Review**

This policy is reviewed annually or following any significant incident, regulatory change, or update in national or local safeguarding guidance. All stakeholders, including parents and governors, are invited to contribute.

## **18. Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children**

We are aware of the additional risks that looked after children and previously looked after children face. The DSL works closely with the Virtual School Head to ensure appropriate support and educational planning is in place.

## **19. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

Children with SEND may face additional safeguarding challenges. We ensure a culture of vigilance by:

- Recognising signs of abuse in non-verbal or differently expressive children
- Adapting communication and support
- Working closely with SENCOs and external professionals

## **20. Children Missing from Education (CME)**

Unexplained absences are a serious safeguarding concern. We:

- Monitor attendance daily
- Make immediate contact with families after unexplained absence
- Escalate concerns to the Local Authority if children are missing without explanation

## **21. Elective Home Education (EHE)**

If a parent/carer withdraws their child for EHE, we notify the local authority. Where safeguarding concerns are present, we follow our safeguarding escalation procedures.

## **22. Use of Reasonable Force**

We follow DfE guidance on the use of reasonable force, which is permitted to prevent children from harming themselves or others. Any use of force is documented and reported to parents and governors.

## **23. Filtering and Monitoring**

Although we do not use school-based internet access with children, our systems for administration and training are filtered and monitored appropriately, as per Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## **24. Site Security**

We ensure our forest site is secure and regularly risk assessed. Only authorised visitors may enter with appropriate supervision and checks. Staff challenge any unidentified persons.

## **25. Whistleblowing**

Staff are expected to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices. Our whistleblowing policy supports and protects staff who do so in good faith.

## **26. Allegations Management**

We follow statutory guidance when managing allegations against staff, ensuring immediate referral to the LADO where necessary. This applies to concerns within and outside of the setting.

## **27. Safer Working Practices**

Staff are trained to maintain professional boundaries, avoid inappropriate behaviour, and ensure safe relationships with children, including:

- No social media contact with parents or children
- No one-to-one unsupervised contact without recording
- Appropriate use of personal phones and devices

## **28. Low-Level Concerns**

We foster an open culture where low-level concerns are shared early to prevent escalation. These are recorded and reviewed regularly by the DSL.

## **29. Staff Code of Conduct**

Staff must uphold our values of professionalism, safety, and respect at all times, including out-of-hours conduct. Behaviour such as public promotion of alcohol, sexualised content, or inappropriate language on social media is strictly prohibited.

## **30. Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras**

Staff do not use personal mobile phones or cameras in areas where children are present. All photographs are taken on school devices with appropriate permissions.

## **31. Staff Training**

All staff receive:

- Annual safeguarding and Prevent training
- Online safety training

- Induction and refresher sessions Training is recorded and monitored.

## **32. Parent Engagement and Communication**

We work closely with parents to build trust and raise awareness of safeguarding issues, including online safety, positive discipline, and child development. Resources are regularly shared.

## **33. Curriculum and Child Empowerment**

We support children's understanding of:

- Their right to be safe and respected
- Consent and body autonomy
- Recognising unsafe situations This is integrated into daily practice and stories.

## **34. Record Keeping**

All safeguarding records are stored securely and shared appropriately. We maintain clear chronology and follow-up, and transfer records securely when a child leaves.

## **35. Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy is monitored by:

- Ongoing internal safeguarding audits
- Governor visits and reviews
- Feedback from staff, parents, and children
- Safeguarding supervision with DSL and Deputy DSL

For any safeguarding concerns: **DSL:** [safeguarding@evergreenforestschoo.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@evergreenforestschoo.org.uk)

**Emergency:** 0300 123 6722 (Lancashire MASH)

**LADO (Lancashire):** 01772 536694

*“Safeguarding is not just a policy—it is a daily responsibility and a promise of safety for every child who steps into our woods.”*