



## **Think FAST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

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## Important Contacts

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Katherine Appleton  
Sthelenslado@sthelens.gov.uk Tel: 01744 671265 (LADO Secretary)
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Monday – Thursday 09:00 – 17:00 Friday  
09:00 – 16:30 01744676767
- Emergency Duty Team (EDT) Outside of the times above EDT@halton.gov.uk 0345  
0500 148
- Merseyside Police www.merseyside.police.uk 0151 709 6010 Prevent referrals  
prevent@merseyside.pnn.police.uk adultandchildrenteam@sthelens.gov.uk
- National Police Prevent Advice Line The advice line is available to access from  
9:00am-5:00pm. If you are worried about someone This enables you to share your  
concerns in confidence, with specially trained Prevent Officers. 0800 011 3764 Any  
calls made outside of these hours will be transferred to specialist Counter Terrorism  
Officers.

## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures and principles that underpin safeguarding and child protection at Think FAST Academy. It aims to promote a safe, supportive environment where children and young people can thrive, free from harm and abuse.

Think Fast Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all young people in our care. This policy outlines our approach to keeping children safe in education, in accordance with the latest guidance and legislation, including the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024 and the Prevent agenda. 2. Purpose The purpose of this policy is to ensure that: - The safety and well-being of all students is our paramount priority. - All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. - Clear reporting procedures are in place for any concerns regarding a child's welfare.

## 2. Aims of the Policy

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people.
- To ensure all staff, volunteers, and governors understand their responsibilities.
- To create a culture of vigilance, openness, and proactive safeguarding.
- To comply with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- To establish clear procedures for reporting concerns and handling allegations.

### 3. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is informed by, and complies with, the following legislation and guidance:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Education Act 2002 & 2011
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Prevent Duty Guidance (2015)

#### 4. Definitions of Child Abuse and Safeguarding

Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

#### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding refers to the overall process of protecting children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. It encompasses ensuring that children's rights to be safe are upheld, and that they are protected from any risks that could harm their well-being.

#### **Promoting the Welfare of Children**

This involves creating conditions that contribute to the healthy development of children, both physically and emotionally. It includes supporting their educational, social, and emotional needs, ensuring they grow up in environments that provide stability and security. Promoting welfare also means helping children achieve their potential and ensuring they are well-prepared for adulthood.

This involves:

- Ensuring children have opportunities for growth and learning.
- Supporting their health and wellbeing
- Providing a safe and caring environment that allows them to thrive.

Together, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children involves both protection from harm and proactive support for their development.

Child Protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Harm refers to any form of abuse neglect or exploitation that adversely affects a child's health development or wellbeing. This includes physical emotional sexual or psychological harm as well as the exposure to the risk of harm such as witnessing where they see hear or experience domestic Abuse or experience its effects or experiencing online abuse, technology can also be used to facilitate off-line abuse. It is important to remember that children can be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or not although this is rarer. Appendix 1 explains the different types of abuse.

Exploitation Can include instances where a child or young person may be groomed to become involved in sexual or criminal activity.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Appendix 1 defines neglect in more detail.

Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery) is where children share nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams. This also includes pseudo-images that are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video. Sharing refers to the sending, receiving, or sharing of all of the above.

### **Contextual Safeguarding**

This is recognising the different relationships that children form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online that can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The following 3 Safeguarding Partners are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education (and defined in the Children Act 2004, as amended by chapter 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017). They will make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs.

- The local authority (LA)
- A clinical commissioning group for an area within the LA

- The chief officer of police for a police area in the LA area

**Victim** is a widely understood and recognised term, but we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will be prepared to use any term that the child involved feels most comfortable with. **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and Perpetrator(s)** are widely used and recognised terms. However, we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what's appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by-case basis. We prefer to use the term 'child that has harmed.'

## 5. Equality Statement

Think FAST Academy is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and safeguarding to all children and young people, regardless of race, gender, disability, religion, or background.

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face. We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or health conditions
- Are young carers.
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language.
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence.
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation. Are asylum seekers?
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs.
- Are a child in Care looked after by the Local Authority or previously a child in care (see section 12) Are missing from education.
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and governors at The Think FAST Academy and is consistent with the procedures of safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to off-site activities. Our provision plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-school approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, transphobia and sexual violence/harassment. To do this we will-

- Ensure policy compliance
- Provide resources and support
- Oversee safeguarding arrangements

## 7. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Staff must share information with the DSL and relevant agencies when safeguarding concerns arise but must also respect confidentiality rights of children and families, sharing information appropriately and securely. **Gemma Murray** is our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and has completed relevant training as of September 2024. The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing advice and support to staff on child safeguarding matters.
- Acting as a point of contact for external agencies.
- Ensuring that appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 We adhere to the principles set out in KCSIE 2024, which includes:

- Recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.
- Understanding the importance of early intervention.
- Ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training on safeguarding and child protection.

All staff are required to read and understand KCSIE 2024 and confirm their understanding annually.

## 8. Recognising Abuse and Taking Action

Staff should be vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect, including changes in behaviour, physical signs, or disclosures.

Procedures:

- Record concerns promptly and accurately.
- Report concerns to the DSL.
- Follow local safeguarding procedures.
- cooperate with investigations.

If you have a concern outside of the working day Phone Children's Social Care 0345 050 0148 or the Police tel: 101/999 or NSPCC tel: 0808 00500012

### **Referral**

If it is appropriate to refer the case to local authority children's social care or the police, the DSL will make the referral for support. All discussions and decisions will be recorded. Expectations when completing St Helens Children and Young Peoples Service Request Form can be found on page 38 of the St Helens Description of Need Document. The Local Authority will make a decision within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up with the local authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded. If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves. We will also continue to offer support to the student/their family as appropriate. Any concerns regarding the referral will be raised with the Contact Centre or EDT outside working hours.

**EXTREMISM** If you have Concerns about Extremism If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL/DDSLs or member of the SLT first to agree a course of action. If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or seek advice from local authority children's social care. Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' above). Inform the DSL or deputy as soon as practically

possible after the referral. Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include the police or Channel, the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of 'becoming involved with or supporting terrorism', or the local authority children's social care team. The Department for Education also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which school staff and governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email [counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk). **Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.**

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- Think someone is in immediate danger.
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group.
- See or hear something that may be terrorist related.

### Mental Health Concern

Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. If you have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, take immediate action by following the steps above. If you have a mental health concern that is not also a safeguarding concern, speak to a member of the DSL to agree on a course of action. Approaches to consider:

- Mental Health Drop in services
- Refer students to Listening Service Refer to CAMHS.
- Contact worker if already engaging in external mental health services.
- Useful links etc. on website Refer to the Department for Education guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools for more information.

Our student's views are very important to us. We ensure that our students know that our staff are always prepared to listen to them. Students are reminded to report any concerns verbally and/or through any member of staff or through class procedures. We also have consultations with students or encourage them to complete an anonymous questionnaire (age appropriate) that specifically asks them to report how safe they feel at The Think FAST Academy. At The Think FAST Academy, we recognise the importance of ensuring pupils feel safe and comfortable to come forward and report any concerns and/or allegations. To achieve this, we:

- Have put systems in place for pupils to confidently report abuse



- Ensure our reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for pupils
- Make it clear to pupils that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback.
- Have regular times to ensure students are prepared to make informed choices.
- Arrange for visitors or visits to sessions such as Drug awareness/County Lines etc.

Where there is a safeguarding concern, we will take the child's wishes and feelings into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

### 9. Online Safety

- Implement safe internet usage policies.
- Educate pupils about online risks.
- Monitor online activity.
- Respond to online safety incidents swiftly.

### 10. Complaints and Whistleblowing

- Encourage a culture where concerns can be raised safely.
- Procedures for making complaints.
- Whistleblowing policy to protect staff raising concerns.

### 11. Record Keeping and Data Protection

- Maintain secure, accurate, and up-to-date records.
- Record safeguarding concerns, disclosures, and actions taken.
- Comply with GDPR and data protection policies.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff must discuss these with the DSL

Records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved.

- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome ('instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as local authority children's social care or the Prevent programme, etc')
- Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate file for each child.
- Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available.
- Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

## 12. Training and Monitoring

All staff members will undertake safeguarding child protection training at induction, including on whistle blowing procedures and online safety, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse, exploitation or neglect.

This training will be regularly updated and will:

- Be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole-school safeguarding approach.
- include regular updates and briefings.
- Be in line with advice from safeguarding partners.
- Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe environment.
- Have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils. A
- ll staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism' and to challenge extremist ideas.
- Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including on online safety, as required but at least annually (for example, through emails, e-bulletins, and staff meetings).

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## 13. Links to Other Policies

- Confidentiality Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- E-safety Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Allegation of abuse Policy

## 14. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Types of Abuse

Child abuse can take many forms, and it is vital that staff, volunteers, and governors are familiar with the different types to identify potential concerns promptly. Recognizing the signs of abuse enables early intervention and helps protect children from ongoing harm.

### 1. Physical Abuse

#### Definition:

Physical abuse involves causing physical harm to a child. It may include hitting, shaking, burning, biting, or other acts that injure the child's body.

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, or other injuries.
- Injuries that are recurrent or have inconsistent explanations.
- Fearfulness or flinching when approached or touched.
- Wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather (to cover injuries).
- Delayed medical treatment for injuries.

#### Examples:

- Hitting or smacking.
- Biting or scratching.
- Shaking a baby or young child (shaken baby syndrome).
- Forcing injuries through rough handling.

### 2. Emotional Abuse

#### Definition:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which damages their emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate.

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- Excessive withdrawal or fearfulness.
- Sudden changes in behaviour or self-esteem.
- Developmental delays or regression.
- Overly clingy or overly independent behaviour.
- Lack of response to praise or affection.

#### Examples:

- Persistent criticism, teasing, or rejection.

- Bullying or verbal abuse.
- Ignoring or isolating the child.
- Imposing unrealistic expectations.

### 3. Sexual Abuse

#### Definition:

Sexual abuse involves engaging a child in sexual activities that they do not comprehend, cannot give consent to, or are unable to refuse. It includes both physical acts and exposure to sexual imagery or behavior.

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour.
- Regressive behaviours (thumb-sucking, bedwetting).
- Withdrawal or anxiety.
- Fearfulness around certain individuals or places.
- Physical signs such as bruising or bleeding in genital areas.
- Sudden changes in appetite or sleep patterns.

#### Examples:

- Inappropriate touching or fondling.
- Exploitation or grooming via online platforms.
- Forcing or coercing a child to observe or participate in sexual acts.
- Showing children sexually explicit material.

### 4. Neglect

#### Definition:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs. It is often ongoing and can be just as damaging as other forms of abuse.

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- Poor hygiene or malnutrition.
- Untreated medical conditions.
- Consistent tiredness or listlessness.
- Frequent absences from school.
- Unsafe or inadequate living conditions.
- Lack of supervision or abandonment.

#### Examples:

- Not providing adequate food, clothing, or shelter.

- Failing to seek medical attention when needed.
- Ignoring a child's educational needs.
- Leaving children unsupervised or in dangerous environments.

#### Additional Categories of Abuse and Harm

While the above are the core categories, it is also important to be aware of other safeguarding issues, such as:

- Radicalisation and Extremism: Exposure to extremist views or recruitment into extremist groups.
- Child Exploitation: Coercion or manipulation for criminal activities.
- Online Risks: Cyberbullying, grooming, or exposure to inappropriate content.
- FGM (Female Genital Mutilation): A harmful traditional practice. (See Appendix 4 for more details.)
- Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery: Exploitation for labor or sexual purposes.

#### Recognising and Responding to Abuse

Staff should be vigilant for signs and indicators across all these categories and remember that some children may not display obvious signs but may disclose abuse verbally or through their behaviour. When in doubt, always follow safeguarding procedures, report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and avoid probing or asking leading questions.

#### Appendix 2: Safer Recruitment and DBS Checks

- Procedures for recruiting staff safely.
- Verification of identity and qualifications.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- Risk assessment for volunteers.

#### Appendix 3: Allegations of Abuse Made Against Staff

- Procedure for handling allegations.
- Support for staff and children.
- Liaison with external agencies.

#### Appendix 4: Specific Safeguarding Issues

This appendix highlights some of the more complex or sensitive safeguarding issues that staff and volunteers need to be aware of. Recognizing these issues early and knowing how to respond is crucial in safeguarding children and young people effectively.

## 1. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

### Overview:

FGM involves the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is a harmful cultural practice that has severe physical and psychological consequences.

### Legal Context:

- It is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.
- The legislation places a duty on teachers and professionals to report known cases or suspected cases of FGM in girls under 18.

### Signs and Indicators:

- A girl talks about undergoing FGM or a family expresses concern about her going abroad for the procedure.
- Withdrawal from activities, prolonged absence from school, or difficulty walking or sitting.
- Repeated urinary, menstrual, or other health problems.

### Response:

- Follow safeguarding procedures.
- Report concerns to the DSL immediately.
- Support the girl and involve health or social services as appropriate.

### Preventative Measures:

- Deliver awareness education on FGM and related risks.
- Engage with families sensitively and appropriately.

## 2. Child Exploitation and Trafficking

### Overview:

Child exploitation involves coercing or manipulating a child into criminal activities (e.g., drug trafficking, theft), often through grooming or threats. Trafficking involves transporting children for exploitative purposes.

### Signs and Indicators:

- Unexplained absences, travel, or being found in different locations.

- Physical or emotional abuse signs.
- Ownership of expensive possessions not consistent with family circumstances.
- Fearfulness, submissiveness, or overly compliant behaviour.

Response:

- Immediate safeguarding referral.
- Collaborate with law enforcement and specialised agencies.
- Provide support and protection for the child.

### 3. Radicalisation and Extremism

(See Prevent Agenda Section for detailed guidance)

Overview:

Radicalisation can lead children or young people to support extremist ideologies, potentially resulting in involvement in terrorism or violence.

### 4. Substance Misuse

Overview:

Children may experiment with or be coerced into drug or alcohol use, which can impair judgment and increase vulnerability to exploitation.

Signs and Indicators:

- Sudden changes in behaviour or mood.
- Bloodshot eyes, smell of substances, or paraphernalia.
- Decline in academic performance.
- Association with known substance-using peers.

Response:

- Engage support services.
- Provide education and support to reduce risks.

### 5. Domestic Abuse

Overview:

Children living in households where domestic violence occurs are at increased risk of emotional and physical harm, as well as behavioral issues.

Signs and Indicators:

- Anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
- Injuries inconsistent with explanations.

- Fearfulness or reluctance to go home.

Response:

- Follow safeguarding procedures.
- Coordinate with social services and support agencies.

## 6. Online Safety and Digital Risks

Overview:

The digital environment presents risks such as cyberbullying, grooming, exposure to harmful content, and online radicalisation.

Signs and Indicators:

- Sudden withdrawal from online activity.
- Secretive behaviour or new online friends.
- Changes in mood linked to online interactions.
- Receiving inappropriate messages or requests.

Response:

- Implement online safety policies.
- Educate children about safe internet use.
- Report concerns to designated safeguarding staff.

## 7. Self-Harm and Suicidal Behaviour

Overview:

Self-harm and suicidal ideation are serious concerns requiring timely intervention.

Signs and Indicators:

- Unexplained cuts, burns, or injuries.
- Withdrawal from friends and activities.
- Expressions of hopelessness or despair.
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns.

Response:

- Take disclosures seriously.
- Follow safeguarding protocols.
- Seek immediate support from mental health services.

## 8. Modern Slavery and Forced Labour

Overview:

Children may be exploited for forced labor or subjected to trafficking situations.



#### Signs and Indicators:

- Poor living conditions.
- Lack of personal belongings.
- Fearfulness or submissiveness.
- Inconsistent stories about their circumstances.

#### Response:

- Alert safeguarding lead.
- Work with law enforcement and specialized agencies.

### 9. Mental Health and Wellbeing

#### Overview:

Mental health issues can be both a safeguarding concern and a risk factor for other issues.

#### Signs and Indicators:

- Persistent sadness, anxiety, or mood swings.
- Withdrawal or social isolation.
- Decline in academic performance.
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

#### Response:

- Provide supportive environment.
- Refer to mental health services as appropriate.

### 10. Other Emerging Safeguarding Issues

The safeguarding landscape is continually evolving. Staff should stay informed about emerging issues such as online radicalisation, hate crimes, and new forms of exploitation.

#### Summary

This appendix aims to equip staff with awareness of complex safeguarding issues beyond typical abuse categories. Recognizing early signs and understanding the appropriate response are vital in safeguarding children effectively.