



## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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## **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction and Aims .....	3
2. Culture of Safeguarding and Supporting our Learners.....	4
3. Legislation and Statutory Guidance.....	5
4. Roles and Responsibilities .....	5
5. Low- and Higher-Level Safeguarding Concerns .....	6
6. Framework of Escalation .....	8
7. Notifying Parents/carers and Schools .....	12
8. Record Keeping .....	12
9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing.....	13
10. Staff, Director and Volunteer Training.....	13
11. Multi-Agency Working .....	14
12. Physical Intervention .....	14
13. Specific Concerns .....	15
13.1 Drugs and Alcohol .....	15
13.2 Child-on-child abuse .....	15
13.3 Online Safety.....	16
13.4 Mobile phones and cameras .....	16
13.5 LGBTQIA+ learner considerations.....	16
13.6 Children Missing from Education.....	17
14. Linked Policies .....	18



## 1. Introduction and Aims

At Oaks Rise, Child Protection and Safeguarding is integral to everything that we do. We want all children and young people attending our provision to feel safe and secure and to be supported in seeking help whenever they need it. We strive for all children and young people in our care to feel confident in their trust of staff members and feel able to confide in staff members if they are experiencing any problems or concerns. We aim to provide an environment of open communication with staff, learners, parents / carers and any schools that learners may be on roll at.

We have written this policy to outline our duty of care to learners and ensure that all staff members feel confident, supported, and able to report any safeguarding concerns.

We recognise that safeguarding children and young people is everyone's responsibility and everyone who comes into contact with a child or young person has an essential role to play in this process. We also recognise that SEND children are additionally vulnerable to abuse and harm.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- We provide a safe and nurturing environment for all our learners, with our learners' welfare being paramount.
- All staff members, directors, and volunteers are fully aware, confident, and invested in their statutory responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
- All staff members, directors, and volunteers are appropriately trained in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
- All allegations are treated as sincere and appropriate action is taken.
- We take an active role in promoting safeguarding and child protection, including liaising with parents / carers, schools and external agencies where appropriate, to ensure that all children and young people have the best possible outcomes.
- We have robust procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse and neglect.



## 2. Culture of Safeguarding and Supporting our Learners

At Oaks Rise we recognise that their neurodivergence can make it harder for some of our learners to understand or communicate when they are experiencing abuse or neglect. As such we aim to empower our learners with the ability to recognise when something is wrong and tell a trusted adult.

We aim to embed a culture of safeguarding in everything we do through:

- Raising awareness through exploring the hallmarks and dangers of abuse, exploitation, grooming, and extreme ideologies through our PSHE curriculum, to help our learners recognise if they may have encountered these.
- Creating a culture of trust between staff members and children / young people so that it is easier for them to disclose abuse or harm.
- Responding appropriately to any disclosures or incidents.
- Creating a culture of openness where learners can feel comfortable asking questions without fear of embarrassment, shame, adverse or disproportionate consequences.
- Supporting learners to tell appropriate adults if a peer discloses something to them.
- Supporting learners holistically after a disclosure is made or a problem is raised.
- Supporting learners to communicate their concerns in a way that feels safe, comfortable, and accessible to them.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, schools they may be on roll at, and agencies to promote young people's welfare.

Whilst we are committed to not asking leading questions during a disclosure, we also recognise that some learners may not feel ready or able to make a disclosure about abuse or neglect and staff members are committed to having a professional curiosity and talking to the DSL if they suspect abuse or neglect may be taking place, even if a learner hasn't directly disclosed that this is the case.

We work in a trauma-informed way to support learners and understand that their experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm and negatively impact their long-term mental health and ability to engage with others. We are



committed to working with all our learners in a way that recognises that adverse experiences can affect them for a long period of time, and we strive to support learners in any way that we can. For more information on this please see our Community Guidelines Policy.

### 3. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

We have written this policy to be in line with the following legislation and statutory guidance, and ensure that all our staff have a clear understanding of the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children 2023
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education 2019
- Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges 2025

### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

#### **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead has overall responsibility for child protection and safeguarding at Oaks Rise. Their duties include:

- Be a point of escalation for all safeguarding concerns.
- Be a point of contact for advice for staff, parents / carers, schools that our learners may be on roll at, and any members of our community wishing to discuss a safeguarding concern.
- Managing referrals to external agencies such as West Sussex Front Door.
- Follow up with any referrals to ensure appropriate action has been taken.
- Attend multi-agency meetings to discuss safeguarding concerns relating to our learners.
- Manage allegations made against staff members and refer these to the LADO.



- Keep detailed and accurate records of any safeguarding concerns or investigations; including written reports from staff members, learner disclosures, and minutes from meetings with external agencies.
- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns or information is collected regarding any incoming learners.
- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns or information is passed on to the next provision that a learner attends.
- Keep up to date with changes in statutory guidance.
- Ensure that all staff have read and understand all relevant Oaks Rise policies, including this safeguarding policy, and that they have up-to-date training that is refreshed on a yearly basis.
- Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so.

#### **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Our DDSL will take over safeguarding duties for our DSL if they are unavailable, such as if they are absent or if they are busy dealing with a different safeguarding issue. The DDSL may also attend multi-agency meetings if the DSL is unavailable. The DDSL will also support the DSL with talking through and collaborating on decisions regarding safeguarding issues that arise.

#### **Director with oversight of Safeguarding**

Our Director with oversight for safeguarding will step in to take over safeguarding duties if the DSL and DDSL are unavailable for any reason. They will be there to ensure that there is always someone with DSL training on site and available during opening hours and will provide oversight of all safeguarding matters at Oaks Rise.

#### **5. Low- and Higher-Level Safeguarding Concerns**

At Oaks Rise we aim to ensure that our learners are supported through all experiences, issues, and events that may negatively impact their wellbeing. We recognise that our learners' ability to engage with us and feel safe at our provision may be impacted by a wide range of concerns. We aim to treat all these concerns with validity and support. As such we will monitor and keep records of all concerns relating to our learners, whether they are low risk or higher-risk.

##### **Low Risk Concerns**

These are concerns that may impact our learners' behaviour, ability to engage, and wellbeing, but do not immediately require input from external agencies.

For illustrative purposes, these might include, but are not limited to, concerns related to:

- Unhealthy or turbulent relationships with staff or peers.



- Verbal aggression toward staff members.
- Learner personal hygiene.
- Vandalism.
- Low level concerns around sleeping, nutrition, energy levels, or physical wellbeing.
- Smoking or vaping.
- Engaging in high-risk activities in the past.
- Low mood or high levels of anxiety.
- Refusal to communicate with staff and/or peers.
- Changes in behaviour.
- Feeling physically or mentally unwell.

When staff are aware of low-level concerns, they will record their concerns in the safeguarding log and where appropriate a parent/carers will be informed. These may also be communicated to the school that the learner may be on roll at, depending on the nature of the agreed reporting arrangement.

We will also encourage our learners to explore these topics through our PSHE sessions.

If low level concerns are ongoing they may become a higher-level concern over time.

### Higher Level Concerns

Higher Level Concerns will trigger one of our safeguarding frameworks of escalation.

These are incidents where a child or young person might be at risk of significant and/or immediate harm. For illustrative purposes, these include, but are not limited to:

- Absence or lateness without informing Oaks Rise.
- Verbal or physical aggression toward a member of our community.
- Verbal or physical aggression towards a member of the public.
- Disclosure of intent to cause harm.
- Being prevented from attending Oaks Rise.
- Accessing inappropriate content online.
- Sharing inappropriate content with others.
- Non-consensual sharing of images, videos, text, or audio relating to another learner.
- Concerns around child-on-child abuse and bullying.
- Refusal to leave Oaks Rise.
- Concerns around drinking or substance misuse.
- Attending whilst under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs.
- Concerns around neglect.
- Concerns around emotional abuse.
- Concerning bruising or marks.



- Concerns around extremism.
- Concerns around grooming, child sexual exploitation, or child criminal exploitation.
- Concerns around physical abuse.
- Concerns around sexual abuse.
- Concerns around domestic violence.
- Concerns around self-harm.
- Concerns around disordered eating.
- Concerns around suicidal ideation or behaviour.
- Concerns around female genital mutilation.
- Concerns around forced marriage.

## 6. Framework of Escalation

### **Observation of Suspected Abuse or neglect of a Child or Young Person**

<u>Step 1</u>	Staff concerns shared with DSL and Director with oversight for safeguarding and recorded in safeguarding log	Detailed written report added to safeguarding log by reporting staff member
<u>Step 2</u>	Staff to monitor the situation, reviewed in safeguarding meetings on a weekly basis.  If appropriate, parents/carers are contacted and the school that a learner may be on roll at.	Notes added after each meeting on safeguarding log.  If parental/carers or school contact is verbal then a follow up email will be sent in order to preserve record of communication.
<u>Step 3</u>	If the situation escalates or if more information comes to light, the safeguarding disclosure framework will be utilised from Step 2.	This will be noted in safeguarding log

### **Disclosure of Abuse or neglect by a Child or Young Person**

<u>Step 1</u>	Staff member will reassure the learner and listen to the learner without asking leading questions. They will support the learner to share their story with the DSL. If they are unable or unwilling to do this then staff member will let them know they have to pass along this information to the DSL.	Staff member to pass along disclosure verbally immediately.  Staff member to write-up a report of what was disclosed by the end of the day and share with DSL. This will be added to the safeguarding log.
<u>Step 2</u>	DSL will dynamically risk assess the situation based on the information they have and decide on the best course of action.	DSL will make notes on safeguarding log
<u>Step 3.1</u>	If the abuse is not happening at home and it is safe to do so, DSL will share the information with parents/carers and where appropriate, the school, and discuss what actions to take next.	DSL will share information verbally and via email and add notes to safeguarding log.
<u>Step 3.2</u>	If abuse is happening at home, DSL will dynamically risk assess whether it is safe for the young person to return home. If it is deemed that the learner cannot return home then the police will be called. Any school the learner is on roll at will be informed and parents/carers will be informed where appropriate.	DSL will add notes to the safeguarding log and if information is shared with parents/carers and school it will be communicated via phone and email.
<u>Step 4</u>	A referral to West Sussex Integrated Front Door (or the regional equivalent where the child is based) may be made if this is deemed appropriate. This may be done with or without parental/carers consent depending on the situation and disclosure.  Incident may be reported to Prevent depending on the nature of the incident.	DSL will make a referral and add notes to the safeguarding log.
<u>Step 5</u>	Staff will continue to monitor the situation and provide support to the young person.  DSL will follow up with relevant services and agencies.	Notes will be added to the safeguarding log and where appropriate discussed in weekly safeguarding meetings.

**If a Parent/Carer or Non-Staff Member Suspects Abuse or neglect is Taking Place**

<u>Step 1</u>	DSL contact information will be shared with all parents/carers and any school the learner may be on roll at, and they will be encouraged to share any concerns with the DSL.	If report is made, detailed written report added to safeguarding log by reporting staff member
<u>Step 2</u>	<p>Staff to monitor the situation, reviewed in safeguarding meetings on a weekly basis.</p> <p>If concern is raised about their own child, parent/ carer and school will be kept up to date with any reviews (where appropriate).</p> <p>If the concern is raised by a parent / carer other than the child's parent/carers, the child's parent/carers and school will be informed if appropriate.</p>	<p>Notes added after each meeting on safeguarding log.</p> <p>If parental/carers and school contact is verbal then a follow up email will be sent in order to preserve record of communication.</p>
<u>Step 3</u>	If the concern is of high risk, if the situation escalates, or if more information comes to light, the safeguarding disclosure framework will be utilised from Step 2.	This will be noted in safeguarding log

#### **If a Safeguarding Incident Takes Place At Oaks Rise**

<u>Step 1</u>	Staff will de-escalate the situation and support learners with what has happened.	Incident will be recorded in the incident log
<u>Step 2</u>	Parents/carers and any school the learner may be on roll at, will be informed of what has taken place as soon as practically possible and on the same day that the incident occurs.	DSL will add notes to the safeguarding log and if information is shared with parents/carers and schools, it will be communicated via phone and email.
<u>Step 3.1</u>	If the incident can be dealt with internally (such as an argument or fight) the Community Guidelines Accountability Process will take place (please see Community Guidelines Policy).	Notes will be added to the safeguarding log and to the Community Accountability Process log.
<u>Step 3.2</u>	If the incident requires external support (such as child-on-child abuse or child-on-child sexual abuse), parents / carers and young people will be supported with making these	DSL will add notes to the safeguarding log and if information is shared with parents/carers and schools

	reports to the relevant services such as the police.	it will be communicated via phone and email.  DSL will support with any reports needing to be made to external agencies such as the police.
<u>Step 3.3</u>	If the incident is indicative of a wider issue, it may be reported to West Sussex Integrated Front Door (or the regional equivalent where the child is based) with or without parental/carers consent depending on the nature of the incident.  Incident may be reported to Prevent depending on the nature of the incident.	DSL will make a referral and add notes to the safeguarding log.  If information is shared with parents/carers and schools, it will be communicated via phone and email.
<u>Step 4</u>	Staff will continue to monitor the situation and provide support to learners affected.  DSL will follow up with relevant services and agencies.	Notes will be added to the safeguarding log and where appropriate discussed in weekly safeguarding meetings.

### **Learner Absence Without Notification**

Please note: this framework will not be used in the instance that a learner is absent or late and staff at Oaks Rise have been made aware of their whereabouts. For more information on this please see our Attendance and Engagement Policy.

<u>Step 1</u>	Attempt to contact parent/carers to determine the whereabouts of the child.	Written in Absence Log
<u>Step 2</u>	If the parent/carers cannot be reached, the alternative contact for the child will be contacted to try to determine their whereabouts.	Notes added to Absence Log
<u>Step 3</u>	We have a 15-minute soft start to sessions. After this time there will be a 30-minute window for contacting parents and carers. If we cannot reach either contact for the child within this time the DSL will assess the situation and the commissioning school will be informed. These timeframes may be shortened for individual learners should their individual risk assessment indicate the need for swifter follow up to absences.	Notes added to Safeguarding and Absence Log
<u>Step 4</u>	If a child is consistently absent without notification, a home-visit may be arranged to	Notes added to SG-ing & Absence Log



	try to determine underlying causes and a new parental / carer contract may be drawn up.	Log
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## 7. Notifying Parents/carers and Schools

We view families as an integral part of our Oaks Rise community, and as such we strive to work with families to help them access any support that they may need. Parents/carers will be kept informed about any safeguarding incidents relating to their child unless we deem it unsafe to do so.

The only instances where we may not share information with a parent/carers are:

- If they were the perpetrator of the suspected or disclosed abuse.
- If the disclosed abuse was related to an identity that the child did not feel safe to share with their parents/carers. Please see section 13.e for more information.

Details of safeguarding incidents that we can share will be communicated to parents / carers on the day of the incident or disclosure. This will be done verbally with whomever is collecting the young person that day - either over the phone or in person - with a follow-up email sent to all parental/carers contacts, so that there is a written record of all details shared.

Family members will be welcome at any point to call a meeting with the DSL or the Director with safeguarding oversight, in order to discuss any concerns they may have, or any developments with safeguarding processes.

Oaks Rise aims to work in partnership with any 'home' school that a learner may be on roll at. We work in a spirit of full transparency and open communication, placing the best interests of the child at the heart of all discussions. We will seek all relevant information from schools, including any safeguarding concerns, before a learner enrolls at Oaks Rise. We will keep schools informed of any safeguarding, child protection and welfare concerns and actions taken in line with the Framework of Escalation, set out above. Safeguarding concerns will be raised with the home school on the same day as the occurrence. Low level concerns will be recorded on the weekly standard reporting format that will be sent to schools where the school is the commissioning organisation. We will also request, as part of our initial communication with home schools that Oaks Rise is notified of any safeguarding concerns that the home school is aware of, in relation to a learner who is attending Oaks Rise, as soon as possible.

In the case of a learner absence without notification, Oaks Rise will notify the home school in line with the framework of escalation outlined above.

## 8. Record Keeping

We will keep accurate, secure, and up to date records for all our learners, including safeguarding concerns, attendance records, and involvement in any incidents at Oaks Rise. These will be utilized to support our learners in a holistic way and will not be used punitively.



#### 9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

All matters relating to safeguarding, child protection and welfare will be considered confidential and shared on a need-to-know basis, prioritising the wellbeing of the child or children involved.

Staff will be aware that they cannot make promises of secrecy if a child's safety or welfare is at risk; if a child discloses a safeguarding concern to them they have a duty of care to pass along this information.

Where appropriate, children will be encouraged to decide whether they would like to be involved in the process of sharing this information with the DSL, for them to feel in control of their own stories and narratives.

#### 10. Staff, Director and Volunteer Training

We ensure that at least one staff member or director on each interviewing panel has completed Safer Recruitment training. See our Safer Recruitment Policy for further information.

There is a weekly meeting to discuss any safeguarding concerns with learners at Oaks Rise, which the DSL and DDSL attend.

#### 11. Multi-Agency Working

We will maintain communicative working relationships with external agencies throughout West Sussex and any other local authority linked to our learners. This includes Front Door services, children's social care services, SEND services, the police, and any other professional agency involved in the wellbeing of the children who attend Oaks Rise.

We will ensure a member of our Safeguarding Team can be made available to attend any multi-agency meetings to support our learners.

We will work in collaboration with any schools that our learners may be on roll at, communicating and reporting on safeguarding concerns as agreed on a case-by-case basis.

#### 12. Physical Intervention

Oaks Rise staff will only use safety interventions (restraint) when there is a high level of risk to the young person, member of staff or the public. In this instance we would use proportionate force to ensure safety (physical holds). Physically restraining a young person can have serious risks associated with it such as bruising, respiratory damage,



cardiovascular damage, bone or articular damage, psychosocial effects, re-traumatization for the young person. The risk to the young person, staff or public must be higher than the risk of the above for the young people.

If the risk is high enough to use safety interventions, then staff will do this for the minimum time needed. Staff will never hurt or injure a student in any way to gain control of a situation. The hold will be stopped at the earliest opportunity.

If a young person has been held, staff must ensure they inform an Oaks Rise Director as soon as practicably possible to complete a safety intervention form. This will be shared with parents/carers, the Local Authority and any school a child /young person is on roll at.

Parent/carers must be informed of this at the earliest possible opportunity including the length of time the young person was held, how the young person was held and the reasoning behind the need for a safety intervention to be used.

After an incident where a learner has needed to be physically restrained, the learner will be unable to come back on site until a meeting has been held with parents and the learner in order to repair relationships, address next steps, develop a safety plan, and avoid this event in the future. See the Oaks Rise Community Guidelines for further information.

### 13. Specific Concerns

#### 13.1 Drugs and Alcohol

Any child arriving at Oaks Rise under the influence of recreational drugs or alcohol cannot be allowed to attend, the same goes for any child consuming drugs or alcohol on the premises. In this event:

- Parents / carers will be notified to collect the child as soon as possible and we will limit their interaction with other members of the community.
- We will fill out an internal safeguarding report about the incident.
- We will inform any school the learner may be on roll at.
- We will meet to discuss if this is indicative of a larger issue.
- We will strive to provide support on or off site to address any wider issues with the aim to welcome the learner back on site as soon as possible.
- If appropriate, we will make a referral to West Sussex Integrated Front Door.
- The learner will need to take part in some form of accountability process before being able to attend again. For more information on this see our Community Guidelines Policy.
- The safeguarding team may meet to risk assess whether we can continue to meet needs for the young person.

#### 13.2 Child-on-child abuse

We recognise that due to their neurodivergence, many of our learners may be at higher risk



of child-on-child abuse due to communication differences. This may make it more difficult for our learners to recognise if they are experiencing child-on-child abuse, recognise if they are unintentionally engaging in child-on-child abuse, and communicate their experiences of any form of subtle child-on-child abuse.

Many of our learners will also be more likely than their neurotypical peers to have experienced child-on-child abuse before attending Oaks Rise and as such may either be emotionally dysregulated when they feel this is happening, or have normalised this abuse to themselves.

As such we are committed to embedding conversations around healthy relationships, supporting one another, recognising when something doesn't feel right, and understanding how our actions affect others, into everything that we do.

For more information please see our Mobile Phones and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Community Guidelines Policy.

### 13.3 Online Safety

Many of our learners, especially those who have been out of education for some time, may have spent significant time with their main outlet for socialising being through the internet. We recognise that for many neurodivergent young people the internet can provide a significantly more accessible way of communicating and socialising than face to face interactions.

As such we will ensure that there is ongoing and open discourse around online safety with both learners and the adults supporting them. This will help our learners to develop important independence skills, critical thinking skills, and safety awareness in relation to the internet, online relationships, misinformation, online grooming, exploitation, and radicalisation.

For more information, please see our Mobile Phones and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy, and our PSHE Curriculum, Anti-bullying Policy and Community Guidelines.

### 13.4 Mobile phones and cameras

At Oaks Rise we appreciate that many of our learners utilise mobile phones to self-regulate and to manage social anxiety. As such, mobile phones are allowed to be used throughout sessions. However, this presents some potential safeguarding risks, and as such some restrictions are in place. For more information, please see our Mobile Phones and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.

### 13.5 LGBTQIA+ learner considerations

At Oaks Rise we are aware that LGBTQIA+ learners may face specific risks linked to their identity, both in terms of child-on-child abuse or bullying, as well as the fact that they may



face additional barriers to disclosing abuse linked to their identity as they do not think it is safe to share their identity with some of the people in their lives.

We want all our learners to feel safe at Oaks Rise and as such, we will not reveal details of young people's LGBTQIA+ identities to parents/carers/others without the direct consent of the young person. What we will strive to do is create a space of safety and provide support to help the young person to have this conversation with their parents/carers when they feel ready.

As such, details of incidents at Oaks Rise that pertain to LGBTQIA+ identities will not be shared with parents / carers. Parents / carers will always be informed if an incident has taken place, but some of the details around an incident may, at times, be kept confidential.

Staff at Oaks Rise have a wealth of experience around supporting LGBTQIA+ young people and their families. They have access to a large number of resources that they can share with families of LGBTQIA+ young people. They will be on hand to support families and young people through any adverse experiences they may have relating to their identity, and will be happy to signpost families to any external services that could provide additional support.

LGBTQIA+ identities will be explored through our PSHE Curriculum in order to maintain an embedded culture of safety and support for all of our learners.

For more information about our support for LGBTQIA+ young people please see our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy.

### 13.6 Children Missing from Education

We recognise that many children attending Oaks Rise will have a history of emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), school-based anxiety, or disengagement. As such we want to support our learners to engage and attend in whatever way feels accessible and safe for them. For more details on this please see our Attendance and Engagement Policy.

We are also aware that this may create some specific safeguarding issues for our learners, such as:

- Staff at Oaks Rise may be unable to ensure that learners are safe if we have not seen them in person.
- Staff need to be aware that a responsible adult knows the whereabouts of each of our learners.

As such, we ask all parents/carers to support us in safeguarding your children and young people by:

- Communicating with staff as soon as possible if a child is going to be unable to attend that day due to physical or mental illness.



- Communicating with staff if a child is struggling to attend on a specific day, and letting us know when and if you are likely to get to Oaks Rise.
- Communicating if a child is going to have an extended absence for any reason.
- Keeping us up to date with any change in your contact information.
- Providing contact information for at least two people.
- Remaining contactable whilst on your way to the provision and throughout the session time.

If we have been unable to see a learner in person for more than a fortnight we may ask to do a home visit to ensure their wellbeing.

If a child is consistently absent without notification, a home-visit may be arranged to try to determine underlying causes and a new parental / carer contact contract may be drawn up.

If a child is absent and we are concerned about their wellbeing we will make a referral to the appropriate agencies.

We will keep in regular communication with any school a learner may be on roll at in line with agreed protocols.

#### 13.7 Allegations of Abuse Against Staff

See our separate Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy.

#### 14. Linked Policies

For more information on how we embed safeguarding into everything that we do, please see the following policies:

- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Community Guidelines Policy
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy & procedures
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Mobile Phones and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy