THE RIVERBANK SCHOOL

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Introduction

THE RIVERBANK SCHOOL fully recognises that schools and their staff have an important role to play in the safeguarding system for children and that it has a responsibility to safeguard, promote and protect the safety of all pupils in its care. The school further recognizes that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.

This policy makes explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and ensures that the handling and monitoring of child protection and safeguarding issues is done sensitively, professionally and in ways which support the needs of the child.

Who is this policy for?

This Child Protection and Safeguarding policy is for all students, staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (everyone under the age of 18) is defined in **Keeping Children Safe in Education** as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing the impairment of children's 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.

The school's commitment to safeguarding children is communicated to all governors, professional staff, parents and others who have an interest in our school.

1. Aims of this Policy

- To help nurture an ethos within the school where children feel secure, valued, respected, encouraged to talk and listened to.

- To provide guidance on good practice for recognising and dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues.

- To identify procedures, roles and responsibilities for promoting safe practice and for dealing with child protection and safeguarding issues.

2. The School's Commitment

The RiverBank school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, along with ensuring their protection. We expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. As such, all employees are required to sign a declaration that they are in the possession of the qualifications they claim, that they are not disqualified from working with children, that they have no convictions, cautions or bind-overs, or are subject to any sanctions imposed by any regulatory bodies. The school requires all employees to produce evidence of qualifications and references are sought from previous employers. Finally, police checks are carried out on all employees, including CRB checks where an employee has previously resided in the UK.

We recognise that children will benefit from easy access to trusted adults and The RiverBank School will, therefore, establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk to with staff who will find time to support children whenever the need arises.

We will ensure that the children know that there are adults in school who they can approach if they are worried, or in difficulty. This will be achieved through the PHSE curriculum, assemblies, circle time and the work of the School Council. The PHSE curriculum will feature regular content specifically aimed at equipping children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse.

3.   Table of Contents

1.   Our Safeguarding Pledge Children will:

- Get the help they need when they need it.
- Be taken seriously when they make complaints, discuss concerns or share personal information.
- Be referred to an appropriate professional person, such as a doctor, child psychologist or social worker, where this is deemed necessary by the DSL.
- Be able to discuss issues in private, if and when they want to.
- Feel secure that their private issues will be treated sensitively and confidentially

Professionals will:

- Undertake regular training in Child Protection and Safeguarding.
- Be ready to listen to children or provide them with a named adult to help them.
- Share information to protect children.
- Work together effectively to ensure the welfare of children.
- Handle information on children sensitively and confidentially

2. Equality Statement

In seeking to safeguard the welfare of children in its care, The RiverBank School recognises that there are several negative influences on child development and welfare that teachers and other staff need to be aware of. These may include:
1. Physical, sexual or emotional abuse
2. Neglectful environment
3. Separation, loss or bereavement
4. Social exclusion or bullying
5. Family stress, mental health, unemployment, financial worries
6. Domestic violence
7. Online threats, including cyber-bullying, negative effects of social media and viewing of inappropriate material

Each of these influences can affect individual students and we are committed to ensuring that every child remains safe and has the same level of protection, regardless of material wealth, family background, gender, religious affiliation or ethnic origin.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. There are, however, key people within the school who have a statutory responsibility.

The RiverBank School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Additional staff members may also be assigned safeguarding roles at the discretion of the Head of School. The name of the DSL and DDSL are displayed in school along with their contact details.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will disseminate this policy and provide INSET training for all staff. Staff should discuss any concerns regarding Safeguarding and Child Protection with the DSL or DDSL, who will advise on action to be taken.

The School Board member responsible for Child Protection within the school will report to the Board on issues relating to policy and procedures regularly and through the annual review. The staff holding the key safeguarding roles are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Uzochi Maduekwe	Contact details	uzochi@riverbankschools.org
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mr Prince Ifoh	Contact details	prince.ifoh@riverbankschools.org

All school staff

Every member of staff in our school has a duty to safeguard pupils and maintain a safe working environment in which they can learn. All staff are aware of the safeguarding and child protection policy and know how and where to seek early intervention support.

All staff are aware of signs and symptoms of abuse and understand the importance of recording, reporting and referring any concerns they may have.

The Board of Governors

The Board of Governors ensures that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. The Board of Governors is specifically responsible for ensuring that:

- There is an effective safeguarding and child protection policy in place that describes the procedures the school has in place.
- The safeguarding and child protection policy is available to the public through displaying it on the school website.
- All staff undergo safeguarding training as part of their school induction and maintain safeguarding as part of their continued professional development.
- Children are taught about safeguarding, including online safeguarding, ensuring that that appropriate filters and monitoring systems for online usage are in place. All pupils will be taught how to keep themselves safe through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children, that it adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children, that it has recruitment and selection procedures in place and that it ensures that volunteers are appropriately supervised in school.

Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Lead:
- Takes lead responsibility for managing child protection referrals, safeguarding training and raising awareness of all child protection policies and procedures.

- Ensures that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of the safeguarding procedures in school and that they are followed at all times.

- Serves as a source of advice and support for staff on child protection matters and ensures that timely referrals are made.

- Ensures that the protection and welfare of children within the school is upheld, and the safeguarding vision is communicated to the wider school community.

- Is the decision maker on issues of safeguarding and is there to provide advice, guidance and signposting to staff, pupils, parents and visitors who may have a safeguarding concern.

- Should create and promote professional networks and partnerships, and have the confidence and professional resilience to act in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Keeps a secure central record of all matters related to safeguarding and student welfare.

4. Procedures

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected or actual abuse or disclosures of abuse.

Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred, must report it immediately to the DSL or DDSL.

Teachers, teaching assistants and other school supervisors should note that reporting the suspicion of child abuse, "in good faith" exempts them from liability for civil action, for slander or libel, provided that strict confidentiality is maintained. This policy applies to the whole school, including Pre School and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The reporting channels for child protection and safeguarding concerns are given as an appendix at the end of this policy - see Appendix I.

5. Types of safeguarding issue

Safeguarding covers a vast range of potential issues that can affect children and a non-exhaustive list of categories is given below. In the context of this policy, each is explained in limited detail and through training programmes, research and their own experience, staff will learn more about how to identify and respond to these different issues.

Staff should be aware that students can be affected by any of the issues listed below and should not hesitate about promptly reporting any concerns they observe to the DSL or DDSL.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

a) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

b) Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

c) Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

d) Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can also occur through the use of technology.

e) Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, and is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
1. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
2. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
3. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care- givers);
4. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Neglect may also include the disregard of a child's basic emotional needs.

6. Other safeguarding Issues

Our DSL and deputy DSL conduct safeguarding mapping exercises to identify any trending safeguarding threats within our school community. All staff have an awareness of contextual safeguarding issues that may put children at risk of harm.

Below is a list of potential safeguarding issues. While staff may feel that some of these issues are unlikely to affect RiverBank students, it is important for us all to be aware that all children, regardless of status or background, are potentially at risk and we need to know what these risks are and how to recognise children who are vulnerable.

a) Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity, including through the use of technology.

b) Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity.

c) Peer on Peer abuse

Children can abuse other children. This can include bullying (including cyberbullying), sexual harassment, physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm, sexting and violent initiation and rituals.

d) Domestic Abuse

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

e) Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. This can be adult on or child on child sexual harassment and is likely to: violate a child's dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, or making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance.
- Sexual jokes or taunting.
- Physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone, or interfering with someone's clothes.
- Online sexual harassment, such sharing of sexual images and videos and online and unwanted sexual messages.

f) Upskirting

Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing without their permission and/or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence.

g) Honour Based Abuse

Honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community. These can include including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

h) Prevention of Radicalisation

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology, radicalization and involvement in terrorism. Protecting children from such risks is fundamental to our school's safeguarding approach.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology and radicalisation can occur through many different methods, such as family or peer influence, social media or the internet. As with other safeguarding risks, staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection.

i) Self-Harm and Suicide

Around 10-15% of young people are thought to self-harm at some point. This can include overdosing, hitting, cutting, burning, pulling hair, picking skin and head banging. Research shows that for many young people hurting themselves when they have a problem or feel stressed is a coping strategy. Self-harm is commoner in older children and is a safeguarding issue which when detected needs to be reported to the DSL or DDSL.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on suicidal behaviour amongst children in schools. Although suicidal behaviour is not directly linked to self-harm, both are more likely to occur in children who are emotionally disturbed, have depression or other mental health issues, or are under severe as a result of school or family issues. There are a number of "red flag" warning signs that can point to suicidal thoughts, such as changes in behaviour patterns, loss of interest in routine activities, expressions of hopelessness, preoccupation with death, including writing about death. Any student displaying these warning signs should be reported immediately to the DSL or DDSL.

7. Confidentiality

Through staff safeguarding training, confidentiality has been discussed and fully understood. It is understood that a member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding or child protection concern (including parents, carers or pupils), or promise to keep a secret.

In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern this must be reported to the DSL or DDSL and may require a further referral to and subsequent investigation by the appropriate authorities. Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the DSL or DDSL with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

8. Promoting mental health and wellbeing

All staff should also be aware that 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.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, and a referral made to the designated safeguarding lead.

Our school actively promotes positive health, wellbeing and resilience for our young people and staff including the appropriate use of social media, forming positive relationships, smoking and alcohol.

9. Training

The DSL, DDSL and any other staff allocated to a safeguarding role undertake Level 3 child protection training at least every two years. Subjects covered will include, but are not limited to:

- Child abuse and child neglect — defining and recognising children at risk.
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused.
- An overview of the law and the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other adults in school.
- Bullying, and children abusing children.

Our DSL and DDSL will also undertake prevention training in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements.

Our school maintains a strict safeguarding and child protection training matrix for all staff and governors. Teachers and non-teaching staff, school governors, voluntary helpers and all others who have regular contact with children at our school receive training and induction and a short refresher every year thereafter. Subjects covered include:

- knowing the signs of abuse and neglect and the signs that a child needs help;
- awareness of the confidentiality issue, when confidentiality applies and when it must be overridden in the interest of the child;
- listening to the child and letting the child know that he or she is believed and will be supported as well as asking only enough questions to get the basic facts;
- understanding that the welfare of the child is paramount and therefore being aware of the need to refer issues immediately to the school's DSL.

10.   Recording and sharing information

Records

The DSL will maintain a record of every incident involving suspected or actual issues in child protection. These records are confidential and ordinarily they are accessible only by the DSL and the Deputy DSL. Where it is in the best interests of a child for any record to be disclosed to other agencies, then that record will be carefully disclosed.

The school keeps a single record, listing all of the adults who work at the school as employees or as volunteers and the date and outcome of any disclosure check(s) made in relation to each person. If no check has been made, the record shows why no check was done in that case.

Information Sharing

This is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect. As part of meeting a child's needs, it is important for governing bodies and proprietors to recognise the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies.

Sharing information includes ensuring arrangements are in place that clearly set out the processes and principles for sharing information.

Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

11.   Safer Recruitment

The commitment of our school to safeguarding children is communicated from the beginning of the recruitment process and this is covered in depth in the **Safe Recruitment Policy.**

12. Physical contact with children

Generally, physical contact with the school's children should be minimised. Very young children may seek physical reassurance from a teacher, such as a brief hug when upset, but this should be initiated by the child, not by the adult.

There are occasions when physical contact between a teacher and a child is necessary. A very young child may need to hold an adult's hand while crossing the road. A child of any age may need to be physically restrained from damaging property or from hurting another child. In either case, the adult should use only the absolute minimum of physical contact needed to secure the child's safety. Very often, a note in an incident book will prevent any later misunderstandings. Ideally, another adult should witness all such contact. This witnessing is for the protection of the child, but it may also reassure the adult.

Physical or corporal punishment of any kind is strictly forbidden at The RiverBank School.

13. Allegation about members of staff

All staff members understand the definition of appropriate behaviour and professional boundaries. Through the **Whistleblowing Policy** the school has procedures in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff, or any adult working with children.

Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff will be referred to the Head of School, or to Section Heads in their absence. This role is distinct from the DSL, as the named person should have sufficient status and authority in the school to manage employment procedures. Staffing matters are confidential, and the school operates within statutory guidance around Data Protection and GDPR. Where the concern involves the Head of School, it should be reported direct to the Chair of Governors.

Where the conduct of a member of staff is under investigation, the Head of School may decide to put the staff member under paid suspension pending the outcome of the investigation. This will normally be done when the continued presence of the staff member in school is likely to hamper an ongoing investigation, or where there are concerns that there is an ongoing risk to children.

14. Whistleblowing

All staff members are made aware of the duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of staff in line with the school's **Code of Conduct** and **Whistleblowing Policy.**

Anyone within the school community who has child protection or safeguarding concerns should contact the DSL or DDSL.

15. Reviews

The Governors will review this policy regularly, at least every two years. Reviews will also be conducted in response to new legislation, new official guidance and in the light of operational experience.

Reviewed ………..

Appendix I

THE RIVERBANK SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING and CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS REPORTING PROCESS

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                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │   Pupil safety concern occurs │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Report concern to Safeguarding│
                    │     Officers (DSL & DDSL)     │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
                                  ▼
                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Fill and submit safeguarding │
                    │  concerns form to Safeguarding│
                    │     Officers (DSL & DDSL)     │
                    └──────────────────────────────┘
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Concern is of immediate risk of harm to the child	Concern clearly outlines a case of child abuse	Concern does not involve immediate risk of harm to the child

Report to parents/guardians/ Head of School

Report to appropriate external agencies such as the police

Record and monitor

Inform parents/guardians/ Head of School

Refer to pastoral care