

Orchard Thrive Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy



Policy Title

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Date Adopted

March 2026

Review Date

9/3/27

Responsible Person

Sarah Jones – Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

1. Purpose of the Policy

Orchard Thrive is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for students.
- Protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and inappropriate practice.
- Ensure all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Promote a culture of vigilance, early intervention, and professional curiosity.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are identified, recorded, and responded to appropriately.
- Support students who may be vulnerable due to trauma, exclusion, SEND, SEMH needs, adverse childhood experiences, or barriers to education.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors
- Agency staff
- Students on placement

All adults working with children at Orchard Thrive have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare.

3. Legal Framework and Guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- The Prevent Duty Guidance
- Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures
- Relevant local authority guidance

The provision will work in line with Durham County Council safeguarding expectations and procedures.

4. Safeguarding Principles

Orchard Thrive recognises that:

- All children have the right to feel safe.
- Safeguarding is central to all aspects of practice.
- Children who attend alternative provision may experience increased vulnerability.
- Behaviour can be a form of communication.
- Early intervention can reduce harm and improve outcomes.
- Positive relationships are essential for effective safeguarding.

Our safeguarding approach is:

- Child-centred
- Trauma-informed
- Restorative
- Inclusive
- Proportionate
- Collaborative

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Managing safeguarding concerns and referrals.
- Maintaining safeguarding records.
- Liaising with social care, schools, police, and external agencies.
- Supporting staff with safeguarding concerns.
- Ensuring safeguarding policies are reviewed and implemented.
- Promoting safeguarding awareness and training.

All Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- Read and follow safeguarding policies.
- Maintain professional curiosity.
- Report concerns immediately.
- Record concerns accurately and promptly.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Attend safeguarding training.
- Understand signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and risk.

No member of staff should assume someone else has taken action.

6. Types of Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- County lines involvement
- Online abuse and digital harm
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour
- Grooming, coercion, or exploitation occurring online or offline
- Self-harm, suicidal ideation, or mental health concerns

- Radicalisation and extremism
- Missing education or attendance concerns linked to safeguarding risk
- Unsafe home environments
- Other circumstances affecting a child's safety, welfare, or wellbeing

Safeguarding risks may occur both online and offline, and concerns arising through technology may be connected to wider abuse, vulnerability, exploitation, or emotional distress.

Staff should remain alert to patterns of behaviour, changes in presentation, attendance, relationships, engagement, or wellbeing that may indicate safeguarding need or emerging risk.

Where provision technology, internet access, or digital platforms are used, appropriate filtering, monitoring, and digital safeguarding arrangements will be maintained proportionate to the risks, size, and operational model of the provision.

The provision's **Online Safety Policy** should be read alongside this policy.

7. Vulnerabilities in Alternative Provision

Orchard Thrive recognises that students attending alternative provision may be at increased risk due to:

- Previous exclusion
- Poor attendance
- Trauma or adverse childhood experiences
- SEND or additional needs
- Social, emotional, or mental health difficulties
- Family instability
- Exploitation risks
- Reduced engagement with education

Safeguarding responses should consider the wider context of the child's experiences and needs.

8. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Any safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL immediately.

This includes:

- Disclosures from students
- Concerns about behaviour or presentation
- Concerns raised by parents or professionals
- Concerns regarding another staff member
- Online safety concerns

If a child is at immediate risk of harm:

- Emergency services should be contacted where necessary.
- The DSL must be informed as soon as possible.

Staff should:

- Listen calmly
- Avoid leading questions
- Reassure the child appropriately
- Never promise confidentiality
- Record concerns factually

9. Recording and Information Sharing

Safeguarding records must:

- be factual, accurate, and contemporaneous
- clearly distinguish fact, professional observation, and opinion where relevant
- include actions taken and outcomes
- be dated and attributed appropriately
- be stored securely and accessed on a need-to-know basis
- be transferred securely where required to support safeguarding or continuity of care

Staff must record safeguarding concerns promptly and in accordance with provision procedures.

Information will be shared appropriately with relevant agencies where necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

The provision will comply with data protection requirements and recognised safeguarding information-sharing principles.

10. Professional Boundaries and Safer Working Practice

All staff must:

- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Avoid inappropriate relationships with students.
- Use appropriate language and conduct.
- Follow the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Report low-level concerns appropriately.

Any allegations against staff will be managed in line with local safeguarding procedures.

11. Low-Level Concerns

Orchard Thrive promotes an open and transparent safeguarding culture.

Low-level concerns may include:

- Poor professional judgement
- Boundary concerns
- Inappropriate language
- Conduct inconsistent with professional expectations

All concerns should be reported and recorded appropriately.

12. Online Safety

The provision recognises the importance of protecting children online.

This includes risks relating to:

- Social media
- Online bullying
- Exploitation
- Grooming
- Harmful content
- Radicalisation

Students will be supported to develop safe online behaviours.

Staff should follow the Online Safety Policy and acceptable use expectations.

Where remote education, digital communication, or online contact takes place, safeguarding expectations remain unchanged.

The provision will seek to maintain:

- appropriate staff conduct
- safe communication methods
- professional boundaries
- suitable supervision arrangements
- safeguarding oversight

13. Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Children can abuse other children.

This may include:

- Bullying
- Sexual harassment
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Physical abuse
- Online abuse

Incidents will:

- Be taken seriously
- Be investigated appropriately
- Consider safeguarding implications for all involved

Victims will be supported and protected.

14. Attendance and Missing Education

Poor attendance and missing education may indicate safeguarding concerns.

The provision will:

- Monitor attendance closely
- Follow up unexplained absences
- Liaise with parents, schools, and local authorities
- Escalate concerns where necessary

15. Physical Intervention

Reasonable and proportionate physical intervention may only be used:

- To prevent harm
- To prevent serious damage
- To maintain safety

Physical intervention must:

- Be a last resort
- Use minimum force necessary
- Be recorded and reviewed

Only trained staff should use physical intervention.

16. Safer Recruitment

The provision is committed to safer recruitment practices.

This includes:

- Appropriate DBS checks
- Identity verification
- Reference checks
- Employment history checks
- Safeguarding interview questions

No unsuitable person should work with children.

17. Training

All staff will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

Training may include:

- Child protection
- Prevent duty
- Online safety
- Trauma-informed practice
- Professional boundaries
- Physical intervention
- First aid

Safeguarding updates will be provided regularly.

18. Working with Parents, Schools and Agencies

Effective safeguarding requires partnership working.

The provision will work collaboratively with:

- Parents/carers
- Referring schools
- Durham County Council
- Social care
- Police

- Health services
- Other relevant agencies

The child's welfare remains the primary consideration.

19. Complaints and Whistleblowing

Staff and students should feel able to raise concerns safely.

Concerns about:

- Safeguarding practice
- Staff conduct
- Unsafe behaviour
- Leadership decisions

should be reported through appropriate procedures.

Whistleblowing concerns will be taken seriously.

20. Monitoring and Review

Safeguarding practice will be monitored regularly.

The provision will review safeguarding arrangements:

- annually
- following safeguarding incidents
- following learning reviews
- following changes in legislation or local procedures
- in response to emerging safeguarding risks

Review activity may consider:

- student vulnerabilities
- online safety developments
- attendance concerns
- operational learning
- local safeguarding priorities

