



Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

- The Directors and staff of Aspire Farm School fully recognise the responsibilities and duty placed upon them to have arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children & young people in their care.
- We recognise that all staff, including volunteers, have a full and active part to play in protecting them from harm.
- We believe that our Service should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment which promotes the social, physical and emotional wellbeing of each individual.
- Aspire Farm School recognises its responsibility and duty to report Safeguarding concerns.
- Aspire Farm School will ensure that all staff attend appropriate training in safeguarding on a regular basis.
- For the purpose of the Policy and in line with the Children and Families Act 2014, a young person is someone aged 16-25 with a special educational need.

2. Relevant policy, procedure & guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023)
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Care Act 2014
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

- Online Safety Act 2023
- East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures
- The Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Children's Partnership (Home - BHSCP) Pan Sussex Procedures
- Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board Guidance
- Aspire Farm School policies: Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Whistleblowing, Complaints, Safer Recruitment

3. Aims of the policy

- To raise awareness of all staff of the need to safeguard all children & young people and of their responsibility in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To develop a structured procedure within Aspire Farm School which will be followed by all staff members in cases of suspected abuse.
- To support the children/young people's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- To promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe practice.
- To develop and promote effective working relationships with parents and other agencies involved with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people..
- To ensure that all adults working within our organisation have been checked as to their suitability to work with children & young people.
- To ensure that the organisation operates a safer recruitment practice.
- To ensure that all necessary risk assessments are carried out for activities. (These will be kept in a folder in the Director's Office, online and updated regularly).
- To ensure that staff are aware of policies for safe practices including:-
 - Health & Safety
 - Disciplinary Procedure
 - Complaints Procedure
 - and Behaviour Management.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Roles

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) :-
 - Name: Katie Jackson
 - Position: Assistant Director, Aspire Farm School
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) :-
 - Zak Vice
 - Position: Senior Leader, Aspire Farm School
- Designated Safeguarding Persons (DDSL)
 - Anna Dumbrell
 - Position: Senior Leader, Aspire Farm School

- Designated Safeguarding Persons (DDSL)
 - Hamish Gale
 - Position: Senior Leader, Aspire Farm School
- Designated Safeguarding Persons (DDSL)
 - Caroline Tasker
 - Position: Director, Aspire Farm School
- Designated Safeguarding Persons (DDSL)
 - Carlie Barnard
 - Position: Senior Activity Leader, Aspire Farm School
- Designated Safeguarding Persons (DDSL)
 - Simon Potten
 - Position: Senior Activity Leader, Aspire Farm School

4.2 Responsibilities

- All staff and Directors will know who the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Safeguarding Person is, and their remit of the role.
- All staff, including volunteers, agency staff and regular visitors, are required to read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (or Annex B where appropriate to their role) before commencing work and to confirm annually that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- All staff will know how to respond to a child who discloses abuse.
- All parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members with regard to Safeguarding
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy will refer any child believed to have suffered, or to be likely to suffer significant harm to the appropriate School/organisation/Duty Social Worker on the same day of the disclosure, and will follow up any such referral in writing within 24 hours.
- We will ensure the immediate safety of any child felt to be at serious risk by taking appropriate action and by involving other relevant agencies as necessary.
- We will develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters, including attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences wherever possible, and providing reports as a matter of course.
- We will contribute to multi-agency assessments of children's needs where appropriate.
- Written records are kept of all concerns, whether or not there is a need to refer the matter immediately, and that these records are kept securely, separate from the general children's files and in a locked location.
- If a child or young person has a known history of self-harm or suicide ideation, a Risk Management Plan will be written and shared with parent/carer and named professionals. The plan will be reviewed and kept in place for the duration of the placement or until the identified risk ceases to exist.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will have the final decision regarding a child or young person's suitability to be offered a place at the farm school. They will also conduct review meetings following any known episode of self-harm or attempted suicide before the child or young person returns to their placement.

- If the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their deputy is unsure how to proceed in a potential Child Protection situation, or requires advice, this will be appropriately sought from the referring agency DSL or via the **Single Point of Advice for East Sussex SPOA 01323 464222 or Front Door for Brighton & Hove**. For young people aged 18-25 the six key principles of adult safeguarding will be considered and further advice will be sought from the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board.

5. Definitions

- Child abuse refers to any child under 18 years who, through the actions of adults (with a caring role for that child) or their failure to act, has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm.
- For the purpose of this policy and ensuring the protection of all individuals in our care, the definitions of abuse will be applied to children and young people aged 0-25, particularly those with special educational needs.
- Abuse is broadly divided into 4 categories: -
 - a. Neglect
 - b. Physical abuse
 - c. Emotional abuse
 - d. Sexual abuse.

- a. Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's or young person's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born it may involve a parent failing to :-

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

- b. Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or young person.

- c. Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or young person's emotional development.
 - It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
 - It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's or young person's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child or young person participating in normal social interaction.
 - It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another.
 - It may involve serious bullying, causing children or young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children or young people.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- d. Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child or young person is aware of what is happening.
- The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts.
 - They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children or young people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children or young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

6. Key principles

- We believe that all children and young people have a right to be protected from harm.
- We recognise that abuse occurs in all cultures, religions and social classes and that staff need to be sensitive to the many differing factors which need to be taken into account depending on the child's or young person's cultural and social background.
- We recognise that our contact with children and young people means our staff are well placed to observe signs of abuse.
- We know that it is important that children and young people feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are sensitively listened to, and that children and young people know that there are adults who they can approach if they are worried or unhappy.
- We adhere to the principles of working in partnership with those who hold parental responsibility for each child.
- The prime concern at all times must be the welfare and safety of the child. Where there is a conflict between the needs of the child and the parent/carer, the interests of the child must be paramount.
- Aspire Farm School recognises that safeguarding concerns may arise from child-on-child abuse including sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, sexist behaviour, misogyny and prejudice-based behaviour. Such behaviours are never dismissed as banter, part of growing up or simply friendship issues and will always be responded to proportionately and appropriately.

7. Communication with parents/carers

- We will ensure that all parents are informed that Aspire Farm School has a Safeguarding Policy and is required to follow East Sussex's Child Protection Procedures in respect of reporting suspected abuse to the Children's Services Department and Sussex Safeguarding Adults policy and procedures.
- In individual cases, Aspire Farm School will raise child protection concerns with parents/carers at the earliest appropriate opportunity, unless to do so could place a child or young person at risk from further harm.

8. Confidentiality

- We recognise that matters related to Safeguarding are of a confidential nature. The Director will therefore share detailed information about a child with other staff members on a 'need to know' basis only.
- All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other relevant agencies where necessary, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- Where a Welfare Concern Form is completed, it will be shared securely and without unnecessary delay with the commissioning body's Designated Safeguarding Lead or other appropriate safeguarding professional, in accordance with information sharing guidance and data protection legislation. Aspire Farm School does not hold the primary child protection record for commissioned students but will retain copies of Welfare Concern Forms and safeguarding records in accordance with our record retention procedures.

- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child or young person that they will keep certain information secret, and that if children disclose abuse this must be passed on to the Director.

9. Support for staff

- We recognise that staff who have been dealing with child protection issues may find the situation stressful or upsetting.
- We will ensure that opportunities are provided for staff to be supported in these circumstances and to talk through any anxieties they may have.
- Children and young people who have autism may display challenging behaviour and may not have the usual social or sexual inhibitions. This may result in complex situations for staff. Staff will follow Aspire Farm School policy on Behaviour and will record all incidents as detailed in the procedure, which will result in the Director following up any difficult situation which may put children, young people or staff at risk.

10. Allegations or low-level concerns

- We recognise that there will be occasions when a child/young person, or a parent or another person may make an allegation against a member of staff.
- This process applies equally to allegations and low-level concerns involving employees, volunteers, contractors and agency staff.
- In this event, the Director will follow the procedures for dealing with allegations against staff in line with the Complaints Policy.
- If an allegation is made regarding the Director, this needs to be reported to Katie Jackson, Assistant Director at Aspire Farm School.

11. Safer recruitment

- Aspire Farm School Recruitment Policy is used to ensure that all those working in either a paid or unpaid capacity are suitable to do so.
- Enhanced DBS checks including barred list will be carried out on all potential employees working with children and young people, and all references will be taken up and verified.
- Aspire Farm School maintains a Single Central Record of all required recruitment and safeguarding checks in accordance with statutory guidance.
- At interview, candidates will be asked to account for any gaps in their employment history. As part of our safer recruitment procedures:-
 - We carry out online checks (e.g. social media presence) for all shortlisted applicants
 - Staff will not begin work until all mandatory checks are complete

12. Aspire Farm School Directors responsibilities

- The Directors will ensure that the Safeguarding Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.
- The Directors will remedy any deficiencies or weaknesses in regard to Safeguarding arrangements that are brought to its attention without delay.

13. Physical intervention

Our policy on physical intervention by staff is set out in the Behaviour Policy and that, even when necessary, the minimum force should be used to prevent harm to the child or another child/young person or adult.

14. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- The role of the LADO is set out in the HM Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015).
- The LADO works within East Sussex Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:-
 - behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.
 - possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child.
 - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.
- The LADO role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteer, casual, agency and self-employed workers. They capture concerns, allegations or offences emanating from outside of work
- The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case.
- The LADO will provide advice, guidance and help to determine whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures.

LADO Contact details:-

<https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/professional-resources/allegations/referrals/form-lado-referral>

East Sussex Specialist Children's Services - Central Duty Team
SPOA Telephone: **01323 464 222**
Out of Hours Telephone **01273 335 906**

E-mail: 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk

The LADO role sits within the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service:
ladoenquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk
The Brighton and Hove Safeguarding Children's Partnership (Home - BHSCP) Pan Sussex Procedures

15. Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Aspire Farm School recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children includes preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.

We understand that children with SEND, including those with EHCPs, are at greater risk of developing poor mental health and that this may manifest through changes in behaviour, anxiety, withdrawal, self-harm, or aggression.

All staff are trained to recognise signs of emerging mental health needs and understand how to respond appropriately. Where necessary, risk assessments and Risk Management Plans will reflect mental health considerations. Referrals to external professionals (e.g., CAMHS or Family Help and other early intervention services) will be made by the DSL, in partnership with the commissioning body's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

To reduce the risk of infection within a working farm environment and to promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all students, staff and animals, any open wounds, including injuries resulting from self-harm, must be appropriately cleaned, dressed and securely covered before participating in activities. This also helps maintain a safe and supportive environment for students of all ages and needs. Where required, Aspire Farm School will work sensitively with parents/carers and the commissioning body to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place before a young person accesses the provision.

16. Child-on-Child Abuse

Aspire Farm School recognises that children can abuse other children. This may include:

- bullying (including prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- physical abuse
- sexual harassment
- sexual violence
- online abuse
- initiation or hazing behaviours
- image-based abuse including AI-generated or manipulated images

All allegations will be taken seriously. Staff will never dismiss harmful behaviour as banter, horseplay, growing up or part of a child's diagnosis. Concerns will be reported immediately to the DSL and managed in line with statutory safeguarding procedures.

17. Online Safety and Emerging Risks

Our campuses are based in rural farm settings. Students are **not** permitted access to the school Wi-Fi, and any network connectivity is provided solely through their personal mobile service provider.

Although Aspire Farm School is a rural, outdoor provision, we remain vigilant to the potential online risks affecting our students, staff understand that online abuse may include AI-generated images, deepfake content, image-based abuse, online coercion, digitally manipulated sexual images and other emerging technologies. These concerns will be treated in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

Aspire Farm School recognises its responsibilities regarding filtering, monitoring, cyber security and information security. As students do not have access to Aspire Farm School's Wi-Fi or network, filtering and monitoring systems are not required for student internet access. Staff are expected to use Aspire Farm School devices, systems and information securely, protect passwords and confidential information, and immediately report any suspected cyber security or data security incidents to the Director.

Staff are trained to:

- Recognise signs of online grooming, exploitation, or cyberbullying
- Respond appropriately to disclosures involving harmful or inappropriate online contact

All online safety concerns are treated as safeguarding issues and must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will share the concern with the commissioning body's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

17. Policy status and review

Written by:	Katie Jackson, Assistant Director
Owner:	Katie Jackson, Assistant Director
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