
Post 18 Safeguarding Policy

Category of Policy: Central Education Policy Adapted by School

Willow Tree Park School

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Policy Statement

Post 18 is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students aged 18–25. Although students become adults at 18, they may continue to require significant support due to their complex needs, disabilities, communication difficulties, learning needs or dependence on others.

Safeguarding responsibilities therefore continue beyond the age of 18, although the legal framework changes. Students aged 18 and over are safeguarded primarily through adult safeguarding arrangements, including the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

This policy should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Positive Behaviour Support Policy, Intimate Care Policy, Online Safety Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Missing Student Procedure and relevant health and safety procedures.

1. Safeguarding Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to safeguard students and to report concerns promptly to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Post 18 will work with relevant agencies where concerns indicate that a student may be experiencing, or be at risk of, abuse or neglect.

Safeguarding concerns may include:

- physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse;
- neglect or acts of omission;
- financial or material abuse;
- discriminatory or organisational abuse;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation, grooming or trafficking;
- criminal or sexual exploitation;
- online abuse;
- bullying, harassment or abuse by peers;
- radicalisation and extremism;
- self-neglect;
- inappropriate use of restraint or restrictive practices;
- abuse or neglect by staff, carers, family members or other professionals.

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, emergency services will be contacted.

2. Students with Complex Needs and Communication Difficulties

Post 18 recognises that students with complex needs may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and may experience difficulties recognising, communicating or reporting concerns.



A student does not need to make a verbal disclosure for a safeguarding concern to be identified. Changes in behaviour, communication, presentation, relationships, emotional wellbeing or routine may indicate that a student is experiencing difficulties or harm.

Staff will use appropriate communication methods to support students to express their wishes and concerns, including communication aids, symbols, visual resources, signing, technology and other individualised approaches.

Safeguarding information will be provided in an accessible and age-appropriate way.

3. Curriculum

The post-16 and safeguarding curriculums are designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to recognise, respond to and reduce risks as they develop greater independence and prepare for adulthood. Safeguarding is embedded throughout the curriculum and daily life rather than being taught as a standalone subject.

Learning is personalised according to each student's developmental level, communication needs, EHCP outcomes and individual risk profile. Areas covered include healthy and respectful relationships, consent and boundaries, online safety, exploitation, abuse and neglect, financial safety, staying safe in the community, personal safety, managing risk, recognising unsafe situations and knowing how and when to seek help.

For students using AAC, Makaton or other communication systems, appropriate communication methods and visual resources are used to ensure they can access safeguarding information and communicate concerns.

The curriculum also supports preparation for adulthood by developing self-advocacy, decision-making, independence and an understanding of rights and responsibilities. Safeguarding learning is reinforced through real-life opportunities, community access, vocational experiences and individualised support, enabling students to apply their learning in different environments and reduce their vulnerability as they transition into adult life.

4. Adult Safeguarding, Capacity and Consent

Post 18 will follow the principles of the Care Act 2014 when responding to safeguarding concerns involving adults.

A student may be considered an adult at risk where they have care and support needs, are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and are unable to protect themselves from that risk because of their needs.



Students aged 18 and over will be presumed to have capacity unless it is established otherwise. Having a disability or complex needs does not in itself mean that a student lacks capacity.

Where a student may lack capacity to make a specific decision, Post 18 will follow the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, including supporting the student to make their own decisions wherever possible and acting in their best interests where necessary.

The student's wishes, feelings, views and rights will remain central to safeguarding decisions.

5. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

If a student discloses a safeguarding concern, staff should listen, remain calm, take the concern seriously and reassure the student that they have done the right thing by speaking to someone.

Staff must not investigate the concern, ask leading questions or promise confidentiality.

Concerns must be reported to the DSL as soon as possible and recorded factually, including the student's own words where appropriate.

Where concerns relate to a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or other adult working with students, the appropriate allegations procedure must be followed. This may include referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Adult Social Care, the police or another relevant agency.

6. Personal Care, Physical Intervention and Professional Boundaries

Some students may require support with personal or intimate care. Staff must maintain students' dignity, privacy and independence and follow individual care plans and agreed procedures.

Any concerns about inappropriate personal care, rough handling, humiliation, neglect or unnecessary physical contact must be reported.

Any physical intervention or restrictive practice must be necessary, proportionate, lawful and consistent with the student's individual support plan and Post 18 procedures. It must never be used as punishment or for staff convenience.

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times, including when communicating with students online or through social media.

7. Exploitation, Relationships and Online Safety



Post 18 recognises that students may be vulnerable to exploitation through relationships, social media and online activity.

Staff should be alert to concerns such as:

- unexplained gifts, money or possessions;
- sudden changes in relationships or behaviour;
- contact with unknown adults;
- inappropriate or sexualised communication;
- coercion or controlling behaviour;
- unexplained absences;
- financial exploitation;
- online grooming, scams or blackmail.

Students will receive appropriate support and education to help them understand healthy relationships, consent, personal safety and online risks.

8. Missing Students and Safeguarding Outside Post 18

Post 18 will follow its Missing Student Procedure where a student is absent unexpectedly or goes missing from the premises, an activity, work placement or other supervised environment.

The response will take account of the student's individual needs, communication, mobility, understanding of risk, medical needs and known vulnerabilities.

Safeguarding concerns arising outside Post 18 will be acted upon where they affect the student's welfare or indicate that they may be at risk of harm.

9. Transition at 18 and Multi-Agency Working

Post 18 will support appropriate transition from children's to adult services when a student reaches 18.

Where appropriate, Post 18 will work with students, families/carers and relevant professionals to ensure that safeguarding information, support arrangements and referrals are transferred appropriately.

Post 18 will work with Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care where relevant, health professionals, the police, SEND services, advocacy services and other agencies when necessary to safeguard a student.

Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and where necessary to protect a student from harm.

10. Staff Training, Recording and Review

All staff working with students aged 18–25 will receive appropriate safeguarding training, including awareness of adult safeguarding, safeguarding students with



complex needs, mental capacity, consent, exploitation, online safety, professional boundaries and reporting procedures.

Safeguarding concerns will be recorded securely and reviewed by the DSL to identify patterns, emerging risks and any further action required.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or the needs of students.

11. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed yearly or as required. The next review is scheduled for September 2027.

12. Appendix 1 – Revision Log

Date of first publication – September 2026

Revision number	Date of Revision	Nature of Revision
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		