Balsham Education Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Written by: Alex Baxter and Lucas Davison
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1. Introduction

Balsham Education is wholly committed to safeguarding and protecting children and young people involved in its programs. This policy outlines the responsibilities of all staff, tutors, volunteers, and any individuals associated with Balsham Education, whether through face-to-face interactions, residential settings, or online educational services. Safeguarding is at the core of every action, ensuring that the welfare of children is paramount at all times.

Our policy is aligned with the statutory guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, among other critical legislative frameworks. This document serves as a guide and a procedural reference for safeguarding practices within Balsham Education. It will be reviewed annually to reflect current best practices and legal standards.

Review Schedule: Annually, the following review is scheduled for 01.10.2025.

Policy Owner: Alex Baxter, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

2. Relevant Statutory and Non-Statutory Advice

This policy adheres to the latest guidance and statutory frameworks, including but not limited to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023.

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004.

- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

- Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2015.

- Sexual Offences Act 2003.

- Data Protection Act 2018.

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In addition, this policy references local safeguarding frameworks, including guidance from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the safeguarding boards to which Balsham Education is accountable.

3. Key Personnel for Safeguarding and Child Protection

The key safeguarding personnel within Balsham Education ensure that this policy is implemented effectively and that staff are supported in carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities.

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
  Alex Baxter
  Contact: info@balsham.education
  Responsibilities: Ensures overall safeguarding oversight, makes referrals, liaises with external agencies, and maintains safeguarding records.

- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL):
  Lucas Davison
  Contact: info@balshameducation.com

- Responsibilities: Supports the DSL, assumes duties in the DSL's absence, and ensures continuity in safeguarding practices.

These individuals have received advanced safeguarding training and are equipped to handle child protection concerns, liaising with local authorities as necessary.

4. Safeguarding Reporting Summary

The safeguarding reporting process is critical to handling any concerns swiftly and effectively. All staff and tutors must:

1. Immediately report concerns: Whether it's about a child's welfare, the behaviour of a staff member, or a third party, all problems must be reported to the DSL or DDSL without delay.

2. Complete written records: provide written notice to the DSL or DDSL as soon as possible.

3. Follow-up: If immediate action is required, such as contacting external agencies (e.g., Children's Services or the police), the DSL or DDSL will oversee this process.

5. Aims and Objectives of the Safeguarding Policy

The aims of the Balsham Education Safeguarding Policy are:

- To establish a safe environment for all children and young people, whether participating in in-person or online programs.

- To prevent the risk of harm through early identification and swift action.

- To ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are understood by all staff, tutors, and volunteers.

- To foster a transparent culture where concerns about child welfare are reported and addressed without delay.

6. The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is pivotal in coordinating all safeguarding activities within Balsham Education. Alex Baxter, as the DSL, carries the responsibility for:

- Managing safeguarding concerns: Ensuring concerns are recorded, assessed, and escalated appropriately to external agencies.

- Maintaining records: Ensuring all safeguarding records are confidential, detailed, and stored securely.

- Liaison with authorities: Acting as the primary point of contact for local authorities, the police, and other safeguarding agencies.

- Monitoring safeguarding practices: Ensuring compliance with internal safeguarding policies and statutory guidelines.

The DSL is also responsible for overseeing the safeguarding procedures during high-risk activities such as residential camps, international trips, and online tutoring sessions.

7. The Role of the Deputy DSLs

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), Lucas Davison, is critical in supporting the DSL and ensuring continuity in their absence. The DDSL will:

- Assume the role of DSL when required: Carrying out all responsibilities with the same level of authority and oversight.

- Support investigations: Assist with the collection of evidence and reports when concerns are raised and liaise with external agencies under the direction of the DSL.

8. Responsibilities of All Staff and Tutors in Relation to Safeguarding

Every staff member, tutor, and volunteer has a duty of care to safeguard and protect children. Their responsibilities include:

- Reading and understanding the safeguarding policy: Every staff member must familiarise themselves with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and this safeguarding policy.

- Being alert to signs of abuse: Recognising potential indicators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation and being proactive in identifying concerns.

- Maintaining professional boundaries: Adhering to the Staff Code of Conduct to ensure that relationships with students remain professional and appropriate.

- Reporting concerns: Ensure that all safeguarding concerns are reported to the DSL or DDSL without delay and complete the necessary documentation.

- Maintaining confidentiality: Respecting the privacy of those involved in safeguarding cases and only sharing information on a need-to-know basis with relevant authorities.

9. Safer Recruitment Policy

Balsham Education adopts a robust Safer Recruitment Policy to prevent individuals who pose a risk to children from joining the organisation. This includes:

- DBS checks: All staff, tutors, volunteers, and contractors with regular or unsupervised contact with children must undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check with a Barred List check for regulated activity.

- Two references: One reference must come from a recent employer or academic supervisor.

- Right to work and qualification verification: All new recruits are thoroughly checked for identity, qualifications, and the right to work in the UK.

The recruitment process is transparent and ensures all individuals meet the required safeguarding standards before being appointed.

10. Professional Boundaries and Staff Code of Conduct

Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries is essential to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people at Balsham Education. All staff, tutors, volunteers, and third-party contractors must adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct, which is designed to:

- Prevent abuse of power: Staff must avoid exploitation, favouritism, or inappropriate behaviour toward children and ensure that relationships with students are kept strictly professional.

- Prohibit gifts or favours: Staff should not give or accept gifts from students or their families, except small tokens of appreciation that must be disclosed to senior management.

- Discourage personal relationships: Staff and tutors must not engage in personal relationships with students or their families online or offline. Communication should always remain within professional contexts and through appropriate channels.

- Respect personal boundaries: Staff must be mindful of physical boundaries and ensure that any necessary contact, such as first aid, is appropriately explained to the student beforehand.

- Promote positive behaviour: Staff should model positive behaviour, set high expectations, and create an environment where students feel safe and respected.

Failure to adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or the termination of the working relationship.

11. What to Do When There Are Concerns or If a Child Makes a Disclosure

All staff, tutors, and volunteers must be prepared to act immediately if they suspect a child is being abused or if a child discloses any form of abuse. Balsham Education follows a structured process for managing disclosures and concerns:

1. Listen carefully: If a child discloses, listen to them attentively. Do not interrupt or ask leading questions. Let the child speak in their own words.

2. Reassure the child: Assure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking out and will be supported. Do not promise confidentiality; the information must be shared with those who can help.

3. Record the disclosure: Make an accurate written record as soon as possible. Include the date, time, exact words used by the child, and any observations, such as their emotional state.

4. Report to the DSL: Immediately report the disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. Ensure that this is done as soon as possible, especially in cases of immediate danger.

5. Follow-up: The DSL will assess the situation and, if necessary, make a referral to Children's Services, the police, or other relevant agencies. Ensure you follow up with the DSL to verify the appropriate actions have been taken.

The "What to Do If a Child Discloses Abuse" section of the safeguarding training materials provides further guidance.

12. Procedures if Staff Have a Concern About a Child or Young Person

If a staff member has concerns about the welfare of a child or young person but there has not been a direct disclosure, the following steps must be followed:

1. Observe and document: Staff should note any signs of distress, unusual behaviour, or physical signs of abuse (such as bruises or marks). It is crucial to maintain an objective view and avoid jumping to conclusions.

2. Report the concern to the DSL: Regardless of how minor they may seem, all problems must be reported to the DSL or DDSL. A concern form detailing the observations and any relevant information should be completed.

3. DSL action: The DSL will review the concern and may:

   o Monitor the situation further.

   o Engage the child in a confidential discussion.

   o Refer to external agencies, such as Children's Services, if the concern warrants further investigation.

4. Confidentiality and follow-up: All safeguarding concerns are handled confidentially, and staff will be informed of the actions taken, but only as necessary.

Balsham Education prioritises early intervention, ensuring that concerns are addressed promptly before they escalate.

13. Tutor and Volunteer Code of Conduct

Balsham Education tutors and volunteers are crucial to the learning and development of students. Therefore, they must adhere to the highest standards of conduct. The Tutor and Volunteer Code of Conduct includes the following fundamental principles:

- Safeguarding awareness: Tutors and volunteers must recognise the signs of abuse and follow safeguarding procedures.

- No personal relationships: Tutors must not form personal relationships with students or their families. This includes avoiding social media connections or personal correspondence.

- Communication guidelines: Communication with students should be limited to educational purposes and conducted through Balsham Education's approved platforms. Tutors must not use personal phones, emails, or social media to contact students.

- Professionalism in online and face-to-face settings: Tutors must maintain professionalism whether teaching in person or through virtual platforms. This

includes appropriate dress and behaviour and ensuring privacy during online sessions.

- Disciplinary procedures: Breaches of the code will be addressed through formal disciplinary procedures, which may result in the termination of the tutoring relationship.

14. Acceptable Use of Technology and Online Safety

As Balsham Education operates online tutoring and communication platforms, it is essential to ensure that all interactions are safe, secure, and professional. The Acceptable Use of Technology Policy includes:

- Recording sessions: Staff and tutors cannot record online sessions unless explicitly authorised for safeguarding or educational purposes. All recordings must be securely stored and managed according to GDPR guidelines.

- Cybersecurity: Staff must ensure their devices are secure and regularly updated to prevent unauthorised access or data breaches. This includes using strong passwords and encrypted platforms for communication.

15. Information Sharing and Record Keeping

Balsham Education takes information sharing and record keeping seriously to ensure the safety and well-being of children while complying with data protection laws. Key practices include:

- Information sharing: The DSL will only share information with external agencies, such as Children's Services, when it is necessary to protect a child's welfare. Information is shared on a strict need-to-know basis.

- GDPR compliance: All safeguarding records comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data is kept secure and confidential.

- Safeguarding records: A dedicated safeguarding log will be maintained for each concern, ensuring that all incidents are documented in detail, including the nature of the problem, actions taken, and any referrals made.

- Retention of records: Safeguarding records will be securely stored for at least 25 years, per statutory guidelines. The DSL, DDSL, and relevant authorities may only access these records.

16. Referrals to Children's Services and/or Other Agencies

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for making referrals to external agencies when safeguarding concerns arise. The procedure is as follows:

1. Assessment of concern: Upon receiving a problem, the DSL will assess the situation, gathering as much information as possible and consulting with relevant staff members.

2. Referral to Children's Services: If the concern meets the threshold for intervention, the DSL will formally refer to the local Children's Services department. This referral will include all relevant information, including the child's background, the nature of the concern, and any supporting evidence.

3. Referral to the police: If a child is in immediate danger or is suspected of a crime, the DSL will refer the case to the police.

4. Follow-up: The DSL will remain in close contact with Children's Services or the police to ensure the child receives the appropriate support. Records of all referrals will be maintained in the safeguarding log.

17. Staff Induction and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Staff Induction: All new staff members, tutors, and volunteers will undergo a safeguarding induction that includes:

- Online and face-to-face safeguarding training: All new hires will complete initial training, including online safety, professional boundaries, and handling disclosures.

- Prevent duty and radicalisation: Understanding and responding to the risks of radicalisation.

- Emotional well-being and mental health: How to support children facing mental health challenges.

19. DSL and DDSL(s) Advanced Training and Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) must undergo advanced safeguarding training to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The training focuses on:

- Multi-agency collaboration: Working with local authorities, health services, law enforcement, and other external agencies to protect children from harm.

- Handling complex safeguarding cases, Including child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, and serious youth violence.

- Child protection processes: Ensuring staff understand the steps for reporting, escalating, and following up on safeguarding concerns.

- Record-keeping: Ensuring that all safeguarding documentation, including records of concerns, referrals, and staff training, is maintained accurately and securely.

20. Allegations Against Staff and Procedures to Inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, tutor, or volunteer, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Immediate action: The DSL must be informed immediately, and if necessary, the staff member in question may be suspended while an investigation is conducted.

2. LADO referral: The DSL must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within two working day. The LADO will guide the following steps, including whether the allegation requires a formal investigation.

3. Investigation: If the LADO deems it necessary, an investigation will be carried out, potentially involving interviews with the accused, the child involved, and witnesses.

4. Outcome: Depending on the outcome, possible actions range from reinstating the staff member to dismissal or referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) for potential barring from working with children.

21. Whistleblowing Policy

Balsham Education encourages staff to report concerns about safeguarding practices, including any misconduct by colleagues, without fear of repercussion. Key points of the Whistleblowing Policy include:

- Confidential reporting: Staff can report concerns anonymously through a dedicated whistleblowing line or directly to senior management, the DSL, or an external safeguarding body.

- Protection for whistleblowers: Whistleblowers are protected by law from harassment or victimisation, and any attempt to retaliate against a whistleblower will result in disciplinary action.

- External reporting: If a staff member feels their concerns need to be adequately addressed internally, they may report directly to the Local Authority, NSPCC, or the LADO.

22. Low-Level Concerns and Their Management

Low-level concerns may include behaviour that does not meet the threshold for serious harm but could still indicate a need for intervention. Balsham Education handles these concerns with a preventative approach to avoid escalation. Procedures include:

- Identifying low-level concerns may involve breaches of professional boundaries, such as inappropriate comments or excessive familiarity.

- Recording and reporting: All low-level concerns are documented and discussed with the DSL. This ensures patterns of behaviour are monitored and acted upon if necessary.

- Feedback to staff: The DSL provides constructive feedback to the staff member involved, offering guidance on maintaining professional behaviour.

- Escalation: If low-level concerns persist or worsen, they may be escalated to a formal investigation.

23. Allegations Relating to Contractors, Third-Party Workers, and Visitors

All contractors, third-party workers, and visitors at Balsham Education must adhere to the organisation's safeguarding policies. If an allegation is made against any of these external individuals, the same processes as for internal staff are followed:

1. Reporting to the DSL: The allegation must be reported immediately.

2. LADO involvement: Depending on the nature of the allegation, the LADO will be informed and guided in further actions.

3. Contractor/third-party accountability: Contracts with external providers must include clauses that outline safeguarding expectations and the consequences of failing to meet them. Balsham Education reserves the right to terminate contracts with providers who breach safeguarding policies.

24. Referral to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) and Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)

In cases where a staff member, tutor, or volunteer is dismissed due to safeguarding concerns or if they resign while under investigation, Balsham Education is legally obligated to refer the case to the DBS for assessment. If the individual is a teacher, a referral may also be made to the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA). The steps include:

- Submission of a referral: The DSL will complete the referral process, providing the necessary documentation and evidence.

- The outcome of the referral: The DBS and TRA may decide to bar the individual from working with children if they pose a risk. Balsham Education will fully cooperate with these regulatory bodies during the investigation.

25. Non-Recent/Historical Allegations

Non-recent or historical allegations are treated with the same seriousness as current ones. Balsham Education is responsible for responding to allegations of abuse that may have occurred in the past, regardless of when they are reported. Procedures include:

- Listening to victims: Individuals coming forward with historical allegations are treated with respect, and their concerns are taken seriously.

- Reporting to authorities: Non-recent allegations are reported to the LADO and relevant authorities for investigation.

- Support for victims: Support services, such as counselling, will be offered to victims who disclose historical abuse. The accused will also be allowed to respond to the allegations.

26. Risk Management, Risk Assessment, and Safeguarding Reporting

Effective risk management is essential for creating a safe environment at Balsham Education. This includes:

- Risk assessments: All activities, including field trips, residential stays, and high-risk environments, must be accompanied by a risk assessment. These assessments identify potential safeguarding risks and detail the measures taken to mitigate them.

- Ongoing monitoring: The DSL reviews risk assessments and safeguarding practices regularly, ensuring that any emerging risks are addressed promptly.

- Reporting: All safeguarding concerns are recorded, and the DSL monitors these reports to identify patterns or trends that may require additional risk mitigation.

27. Appendix 1: Definitions of Abuse

This appendix provides detailed definitions of the various forms of abuse staff should be aware of:

- Physical abuse: Deliberate physical harm or injury to a child, such as hitting, shaking, or burning.

- Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as verbal abuse, manipulation, or neglect of emotional needs.

- Sexual abuse: Forcing or enticing a child to participate in sexual activities, including exploitation and grooming, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

- Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, resulting in significant harm.

- Peer-on-peer abuse: Abuse that occurs between children, which can include bullying, sexual harassment, or violence.

28. Appendix 2: Logging a Concern About a Child's Safety and Welfare

This appendix outlines the process for logging a safeguarding concern:

1. Completion of a safeguarding log: Staff should complete the log immediately after becoming aware of a concern. This includes details such as the date, time, individuals involved, and the nature of the concern.

2. Submission to the DSL: The completed log must be submitted to the DSL, who will assess the concern and determine the appropriate course of action.