Safeguarding Policy

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Section 1: Document Control

Document title: Safeguarding Policy

Version	Author		Reviewed		Authorised by BOD
	By	Date	By	Date	
1.1	Luis De Abreu	2015	Board of Directors	**21.10.2016**	**21.10.2016**
1.2	Luisa Figuerola	27.01.2017	Unknown	**Unknown**	
1.3	Luisa Figuerola	13.09.2017	Shirley Coen	**13.09.2017**	
1.4	Luisa Figuerola	22.10.2018	BOD	**27.11.2018**	**27.11.2018**
1.5	Luisa Figuerola	22.10.2018	Luisa Figuerola	**19.07.2019**	
1.6	Luisa Figuerola	16.07.2020	Maggi Knights	**03.08.2020**	
1.7	Luisa Figuerola	02.06.2021	Luis De Abreu	**16.06.2021**	
1.8	Luisa Figuerola	18.07.2022	Luis De Abreu	**18.11.2022**	
1.9	Luisa Figuerola	20.06.2023	BOD	**27.06.2023**	**27.06.2023**
1.10	Luisa Figuerola	27.07.2023	Luis De Abreu	**28.07.2023**	
1.11	Luisa Figuerola	18.07.2024	Luis De Abreu	**18.07.2024**	
1.12	Luisa Figuerola	10.01.2025	Christopher Costigan	**10.01.2025**	**25.03.25**

Issue: 1.12
Date of current issue: 25.03.2025
Date of next review: 25.03.2026

Section 2: Safeguarding Policy

The directors have accepted this policy and will implement it. They will ensure the policy is reviewed thoroughly on an annual basis and will monitor it by reviewing reports from the Principal and Chief Executive Officer and staff, tabled at Full Board of Director meetings.

Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out the College's duty to safeguard any child or adult at risk who is a student at Bird College. It applies to all College staff, contractors, students, alumni, guest teachers, and freelance creatives.

Definitions

Child/Children: A person/people under the age of 18.

Young People: A person/people between the ages of 15 and 24

Adult at Risk: An adult at risk adult is anyone who is 16 or over, who is disabled, or has a mental disorder, illness or physical infirmity that means they are more vulnerable to being harmed than other adults. Someone who cannot look after their own wellbeing, property, rights and other interests, someone who is at risk of harm from themselves or someone else.

Legal context

This policy complies with the guidelines set out by the Department for Education: *Keeping Children safe in Education (September 2024)* and the updated *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings* (Guidance commissioned by DfES in 2006 and revised in 2022).

Links to other policies

The Safeguarding Policy links the following Bird College Policies:

- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Student Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy
- Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing)
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Prevent Policy
- GDPR Policy
- HR DBS Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- Health & Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Risk Assessment for Students Giving Cause for Concern
- Students Giving Cause for Concern Procedure
- Accommodation Booklet – Section for Students
- Questionnaire for Host Families

Policy Statement and Aims

We, at Bird College are committed to practices which protect children, young people and adults at risk from harm. College staff accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which may cause harm. The College encourages staff to raise safeguarding concerns without fear of recrimination.

We will aim to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with young people, parents, and staff
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving young people and parents appropriately.
- Carefully following the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff
- Providing effective management for staff through support, supervision, and training
- Reviewing our policy and good practice annually

We recognise that because of the day-to-day contact with young people and adults at risk, College staff are well placed to observe signs of abuse. The College will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where young people and adults at risk feel secure, are confident to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure young people and adults at risk know they can approach any adult employed in the College if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the curriculum for young people and adults at risk to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from harm or abuse.

Young people and adults at risk needs and rights
Bird College fully endorses the needs and rights of all young people and adults at risk including:

- the need for physical care and attention
- the need for intellectual stimulation
- the need for emotional support and security
- the need for social contact and relationships
- the right to have their needs met and safeguarded.
- the right to be protected from neglect, abuse, and exploitation.
- the right to be protected from discrimination.
- the right to be treated as an individual.

The College's commitments

In the context of these needs and rights, the College's Executive Group and the Board of Directors are committed to ensuring that the College:

- fully recognises the welfare of young people and adults at risk as paramount and that all young people and adults at risk (whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity) have the right to protection from abuse.

- raises awareness of issues relating to the welfare of young people and promotes positive relationships between staff and young people.
- provides a safe environment for young people to learn within the College's campus and in off-site activities in which the College has lead involvement.
- identifies any young people who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
- takes seriously and responds quickly and appropriately to all suspicions and allegations of abuse, including referral to the relevant investigating agency; and
- in undertaking these commitments, adopts an appropriately rigorous approach to risk assessment and management.

Specifically, the College recognises the need to work with other agencies in undertaking its safeguarding commitments, including:

- to designate a senior member of staff as having lead responsibility for safeguarding and ensure that they receive appropriate training.
- to have in place and to follow procedures in line with relevant interagency (local safeguarding children board) guidance.
- to operate safe recruitment procedures
- to have in place procedures to deal with concerns/suspicions about a young person's welfare.
- to have in place procedures to deal with allegations of abuse against members of staff and students.
- to report to police where appropriate
- to ensure staff working with young people receive appropriate safeguarding training and are aware of their responsibilities, including the identification of young people at risk of significant harm.
- to review this policy annually
- to report annually to the Board of Directors on the implementation of this policy

Other Safeguarding issues to be aware of:

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Honour-based violence/abuse
- Extremism/radicalisation
- Domestic abuse/violence
- Online abuse
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Human trafficking and Modern Slavery
- Fabricated or induced illnesses

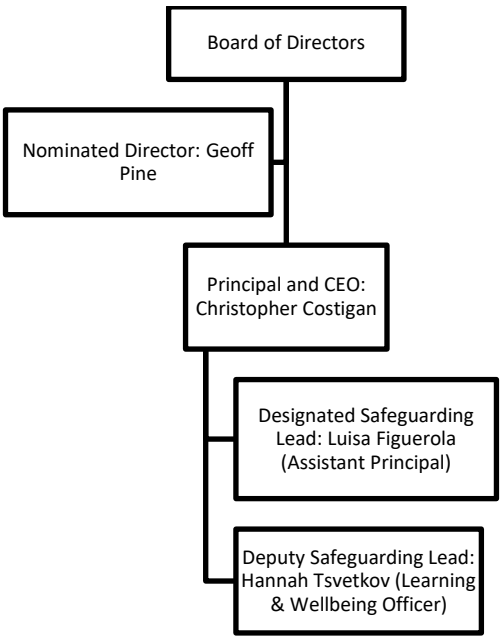
Statutory Guidance and Framework

The statutory guidance that contains information on what the schools and Colleges must do to keep children safe is called "Keeping Children safe in Education'. All staff should read and understand at least Part One of the guidance and those that work directly with children should read and understand Annex A.

This policy has been drawn from the following Legal Framework:

- Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024
- The Children Act 1989 (2004)
- OFSTED guidance

The Management of Safeguarding



The Role of the Governing Body

The Board of Directors of the College have ultimate responsibility for the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk and the duty to ensure that the policies, procedures, and training at Bird College are effective and legally compliant. This includes approving institutional policy and monitoring its implementation.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board of Directors shall nominate a Designated Safeguarding Lead with lead responsibility for issues relating to the safeguarding of young people.

The Role of the Nominated Director

The Board of Directors shall appoint a Nominated Director to oversee the review and implementation of the policy and the effectiveness of procedures and policies. The Nominated Director will act on behalf of the Board of Directors and will report to the Board of Directors at least annually.

The Nominated Director provides advice to the Designated Safeguarding Team where required.

The Role of the Principal and Chief Executive Officer

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer role is to ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Directors are followed by all staff.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Nominating a Designated Safeguarding Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Officers
- Consulting with External Agencies regarding allegations of abuse against staff
- Contributing to inter-agency discussions regarding allegations of abuse against staff

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will receive training in safeguarding issues and inter-agency working and will be required to receive refresher training at the required intervals and is also required to keep up to date with developments in safeguarding issues.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- the College's safeguarding and child protection practices
- ensuring that safeguarding is afforded utmost priority at the most senior level within the College.
- ensuring that there is a staff structure and committee structure in place to fulfil safeguarding responsibilities.
- liaising with human resources about safe recruitment procedures, Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, induction of new staff and training
- ensuring procedures are in place for managing allegations against staff; whistleblowing; and safe recruitment practices.
- ensuring that secure records of young people in need of protection concerns are stored and shared appropriately.
- developing College-wide procedures, practice, and guidance for safeguarding, considering any local safeguarding children board guidance
- ensuring that monitoring review systems are in place to incorporate new guidance and legislation and to test existing systems.
- ensuring that the College has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and students.
- referring any suspected cases of abuse to the relevant investigating agency.
- providing advice and support to other staff and working with other agencies such as the local authority and local safeguarding children's board.
- ensuring that staff undertake training appropriate to their roles.
- rectify without delay any deficiencies or weaknesses regarding child protection that are brought to their attention.
- reviewing existing policies and procedures
- overseeing the referral of cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the appropriate agencies
- ensuring that the College's Board of Directors considers the institutional policy on safeguarding each year.

The Roles and Responsibilities of all staff within the organisation

All members of staff within Bird College will undergo child protection training at the required intervals.

Members of staff are responsible for:

- ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are always adhered to.
- liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Safeguarding Leads.
- inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Deputy Safeguarding Lead, of any suspected cases of abuse and neglect.
- dealing with any disclosures in a supportive and reassuring way...

Online Safety

The online safety will be managed in accordance with the Online Safety policy.

Safeguarding Training

All Directors and members of staff at Bird College are required to undertake training courses at regular intervals. Adding to this, training courses of a more comprehensive nature are also undertaken by members of staff with safeguarding responsibilities. Training is undertaken biennially, when new appointments are made, when there is a change in legislation, or as a yearly refresher. Evidence of training is up to date and easily accessible for review in CPD records. The DSL shares Safeguarding Training Data with the Board of Directors at regular intervals.

Code of Conduct for Staff and Students

Staff are required to demonstrate exemplary behaviour and to maintain high professional standards at all times. Such behaviour will protect both staff and students from allegations of misconduct. Students are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner in their day-to-day activities, including in their dealings with other students, staff, and external organisations.

For more information, please refer to the Staff Code of Conduct.

Safer Recruitment

The College has in place a formal policy on the recruitment and selection of staff. This is supported by a formal College policy and procedure on vetting job applicants through the Disclosure and Barring Service.

The College has an additional procedure on the vetting of students on courses which involve contact with child/young adult.

These policies and procedures shall be reviewed annually.

Requirements for specific Subsidiary Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures which apply to other areas of College activities include:

- field trips
- summer schools
- open days

- school's visits
- placement of students with external employers
- employment of young people
- insurance arrangements
- use of premises
- widening participation
- use of photographic images
- the admission of under-18-year-olds as students

Consideration will be given to the need for supplementary policies annually.

Confidentiality

A good pedagogical relationship between staff and students depends to a large extent on the establishment of trust. This may be described as a 'confidential relationship'. However, guarantees of absolute confidentiality should not be given as it may prove necessary to make a referral to an appropriate agency.

If a child/young adult discloses abuse to a member of staff, it is important that the boundaries of confidentiality and the need to pass on that information are explained to the child/young adult. It is often easier to explain to the child/young adult that you have a responsibility to pass on information on certain matters than to get into a situation where you break a confidence.

Record Keeping

All written case records shall be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Case records shall include a written record of the outcome and details of any disciplinary action taken. Where an allegation has been found to be without substance, a record of the allegation, investigation and outcome shall be retained. The Designated Safeguarding Lead shall keep all case records in secure conditions for a period of at least 25 years.

GDPR

To find out how we process and handle your personal data and your rights relating to this, please read the Student Privacy Notice on our website (http://bird-College.com/he-fe/about/privacy-policies/), which applies to applicants and prospective students.
To find out how we process and handle your personal data and your rights relating to this, please read the Staff Privacy Notice on our website.

Data Protection

Case records are confidential. They may be accessed by the subject of the record but not by any third party other than the Principal and Chief Executive Officer, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Chair of the Board of Directors / Nominated Director, and other specific staff with designated responsibilities for safeguarding young people.

No other members of staff, including personal tutors, must keep any records relating to a safeguarding case.

Further information

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024

Keeping children safe in education 2024

Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2018

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

Meeting digital and technology standards

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and Colleges – Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and Colleges – Guidance – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Bexley LSCB – Allegations against staff – The LADO

- http://www.bexleylscb.org.uk/page.php?section=policies&id=299

Safeguarding Adults – Bexley Council

- http://www.safeguardingadultsinbexley.com/
- https://carehub.bexley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/help/safe/adabuse

Bexley LSCB – Self-harm

- http://www.bexleylscb.org.uk/page.php?section=section_5&id=367

Appendix A

Safeguarding Form

Please use this form to record incidents or concerns of abuse or neglect of young people and adults at risk.
It is important that we maintain local and national records to pass to local safeguarding agencies such as social services and the police.
The records will be used to produce an annual report of safeguarding for Bird College.

Your Name:	
Your role at Bird College:	

Name and contact details of the person at risk:

Name:	Date of Birth or Age:	Names of individual/s reporting the concern if different:	Date Concern reported:
Phone Number:	Address:	Sex:	Time, location, date of incident/s (if known):
Ethnicity	Nationality	First Language	Immigration or asylum status

Your relationship to the individual

Concern or Incident
(What you have been told or observed yourself with dates, if possible, and distinguishing fact from fiction. Your description of the Safeguarding issue. Description might include something you have witnessed or account of something a third party has reported to you)

Does the individual know you are sharing this concern?
Yes No I have informed a parent or legal guardian

Concerning behaviours noticed/disclosed

	Absenteeism		Appearance or use of symbolism
	Abuse		Anti-social behaviour
	Suicide ideation/attempt		Change in appearance
	Alcohol and/or drug use		Confrontational
	Self-harm		Desire to travel to conflict
	Illness		Expression of extremism views
	Becoming socially isolated		Fixated on a topic
	Mental/physical illness		Legitimizing the use of violence

Circumstances of the individual

	Adolescence or period of transition		Learning disability
	Disability victim of crime		Links to criminality
	Domestic abuse		Loss or bereavement
	Extremism material		Mental health
	Family breakdown		Socially excluded
	Family dispute		Sexual abuse
	Financial support		Trauma from conflict
	Homelessness		Unemployment
	illness		Unexplained travel
	Victim of hate crime		Gang or group membership

Please elaborate on any of the behaviours selected above or describe behaviour not listed.

Action taken (*e.g. report to*):

Signature:	**Date**

Follow up from Safeguarding Team:

Is the child or young adult who is the subject of the concern at immediate risk?	Yes/No Details:
Does the incident relate to an allegation about a student or a member of staff?	

Should the staff or student be referred for consideration of a precautionary suspension?	
Does the reported incident require referral to the LADO?	
Does the reported incident require referral MASH?	
Does the reported incident constitute a criminal offense requiring referral to the police?	
Does the concern require a referral to Channel?	
Actions undertaken: a) No further action b) Referral to HR and Principal for precautionary suspension c) Referral to an alternative College Policy or Procedure such as the Staff and Student Disciplinary procedure d) Report the incident to the Local Safeguarding Team e) Report the incident to the LADO f) Report the incident to the Police g) Report concern to the FE/HE Regional Prevent Co-Ordinator for London	

Follow up Meeting(s):

Name:	**Signature:**	**Date:**
Job title:		
Email:		

Appendix B

Categories of Child Abuse

Physical Abuse
Physical abuse is a form of abuse which 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.

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, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. 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. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to 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.

Sexual Abuse
Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse and harassment can also occur between children/young people of any sex.

Neglect
The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer 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 caregivers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Categories of Adult Abuse

- Physical Abuse: hitting, kicking, burning, inappropriate restraint or moving and handling, misuse of medication, force feeding.
- Sexual Abuse:
    - ***Non-contact*** - photography, indecent exposure, harassment, enforced witnessing of sexual acts.
    - ***Contact abuse*** -inappropriate touching, forced masturbation of either or both persons, sexual assault, rape.
- Psychological/Emotional Abuse: threatening, prevention of using services, denial access to friends, lack of stimulation and meaningful occupation.
- Financial Abuse: For example, theft of money or possessions, misuse of benefits, misuse of power of attorney, loans made under duress.
- Neglect and acts of omission: For example, a carer not meeting a person's care needs, failure to provide food, shelter or clothing, medical care.
- Discriminatory Abuse: Any abuse based on discrimination for example, not providing someone with culturally appropriate meals, inappropriate "nicknames", unequal treatment, and derogatory remarks.
- Institutional Abuse: For example, repeated incidents of poor practice or neglect within an organisation, services that are based on the needs of staff / managers rather than service users.

Appendix C
Dealing with Disclosures (Staff Guidelines)

If a student tells a member of staff about an incident:

Receive

- listen carefully and stay calm.

Reassure

- reassure the young person that by telling you, they have done the right thing.
- inform the young person that you must pass the information on, but only those that need to know about it will be told. Tell them who you are going to report the matter to

React

- do not interview the young person. To be sure that you understand what you are listening to, use open-ended questions and do not attempt to put words into the young person's mouth, keep questions to the minimum.
- note the main points carefully, specifically.
    - date, time, and place of incident
    - your name and name of young person
    - name of young person alleged to have been involved in the incident, if different from above
    - nature of incident (Staff should record the young person's disclosure carefully and aim for a verbatim account if possible. It is important to report the disclosure as factually as possible. Opinion should be avoided or clearly presented as an opinion)
    - description of any physical and or mental injuries observed if any.
    - any other information given.
    - confirmation that the young person has been advised of the next steps.
    - sign and date and time of report

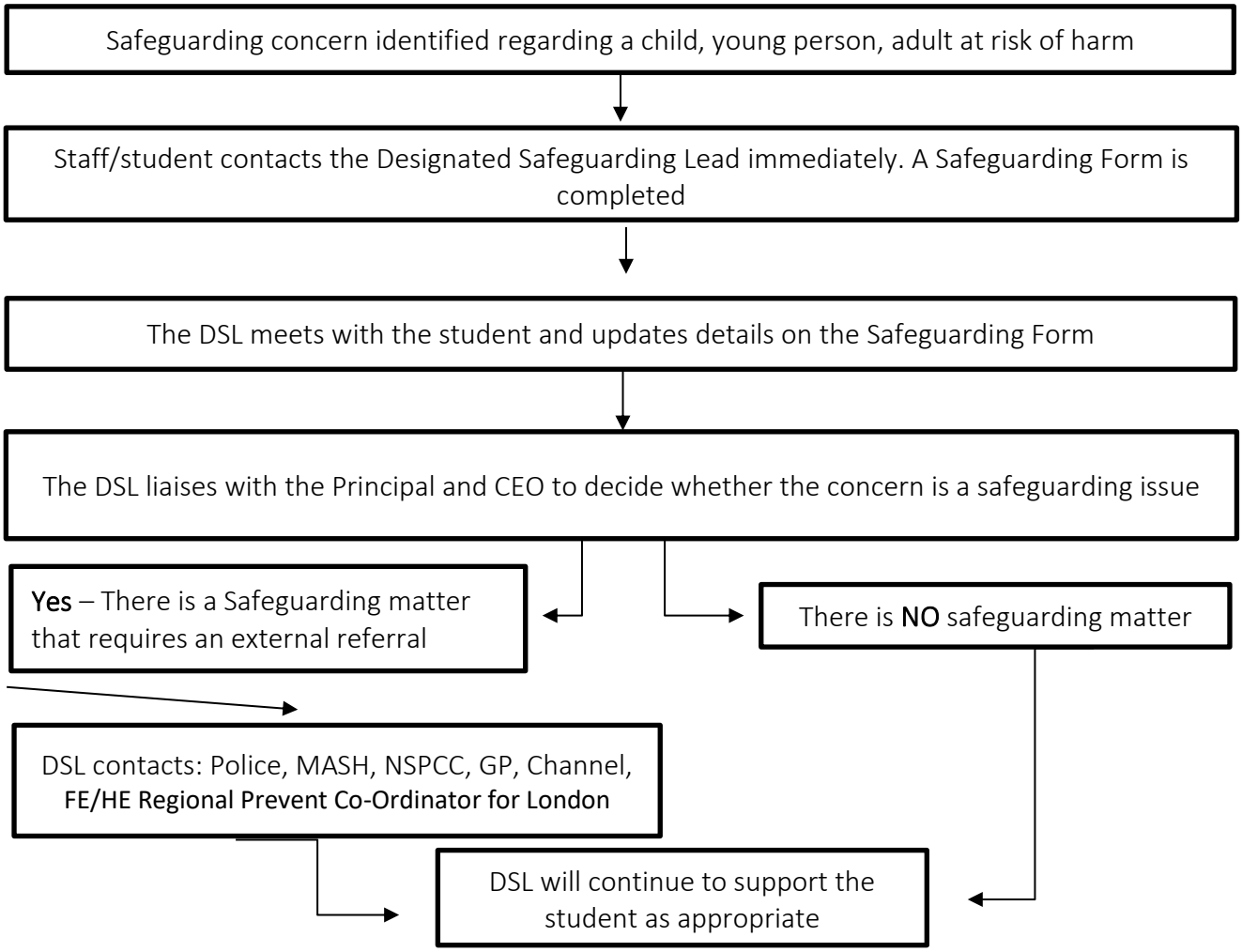
A member of staff may have concerns or suspicions of abuse, harmful behaviour to the individual or others, extremism views, and radicalisation without having received a disclosure from a young person. In these circumstances the member of staff should record their concerns as factually as possible, reproducing verbatim any words used by any young people concerned, and avoid expressing opinions. Where opinions are unavoidable, they should be clearly presented as such. (Please refer to Appendix A)

Staff should not investigate concerns or allegations themselves but should report them immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In any absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, staff should contact the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Generally, staff other than the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Principal and Chief Executive Officer could make referrals. However, for coordinated approach to safeguarding a young person, staff are encouraged to pass their concerns on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who could then make a referral to the relevant agency. If after discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, a member of staff believes that a referral should be made but the Designated Safeguarding Lead does not, they may make the referral to the relevant external agency.

If abuse is suspected but not disclosed, it may be appropriate to remind the young adult about the availability of other possible and appropriate sources of assistance.

Appendix D
Safeguarding Reporting of Concern Procedure



Contacts:
Safeguarding Lead (Luisa Figuerola): 020 3846 0322, Mobile: 07805259044
Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Hannah Tsvetkov): 020 3846 0337

Referral to MASH (Children's Services Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub)

- The DSL will contact MASH to ask for a consultation with a social worker.
- It is good practice to discuss concerns with the parent/s first and explain why the DSL plans to make a referral to Children's Social Care. Unless the DSL thinks that this will place the child at further risk of significant harm because of the parents' reaction. In suspected sexual abuse, it is common practice not to let parents know about the referral immediately in case the child is intimidated and cannot provide evidence to the police and social workers.
- The DSL will complete a referral form. On completion of this referral, it will be automatically sent to the MASH Children's Team and the DSL will receive a unique reference number (via email).

How to contact the MASH
Telephone: Daytime hours (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) 020 3045 5440.
Out of hours (5pm to 9am Monday to Friday and 24 hours cover at weekends) 020 8303 7777 or 020 8303 7171.

Send the referral form to the MASH at:
Secure email: Childrenssocialcare.admin@bexley.gov.uk
Visit the office: Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AT.

Referral Form to MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) are available here:

https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/health-and-social-care/social-care-for-children/reporting-concerns-about-child/worried-about-child

Police: 999 or 101
NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Adult at Risk of Harm or in need of protection
Bexley Contact Centre – ring 0203 045 5159. Email bexleycare.spc@nhs.net
For further information on Domestic Violence:
https://carehub.bexley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/help/safe/adabuse

Appendix E
Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff

Application
The procedures apply to all staff, whether teaching, administrative, management or support. The word "staff" is used for ease of description.

Introduction
In rare instances, staff of education institutions have been found responsible for abusing young people. Because of their frequent contact with young people, staff may have allegations of abuse made against them. The College recognises that an allegation of abuse made against a member of staff may be made for a variety of reasons and that the facts of the allegation may or may not be true. It is imperative that those dealing with an allegation maintain an open mind and that investigations are thorough and not subject to delay.

The College recognises that the Children Act 1989 states that the welfare of the child/young person is the paramount concern. It is also recognised that hasty or ill-informed decisions in connection with a member of staff can irreparably damage an individual's reputation, confidence, and career. Therefore, those dealing with such allegations within the College will do so with sensitivity and will act in a careful, measured way.

An allegation is any information which indicates that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offense against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they would pose a risk of harm to children.

Receiving an allegation
A member of staff who receives an allegation about another member of staff should follow the guidelines in the section 'Dealing with Disclosures'.

The allegation should be reported immediately to the Principal and Chief Executive Officer, unless the Principal and Chief Executive Officer is the person against whom the allegation is made, in which case the report should be made to the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or the chair of the Board of Directors if the allegation is against the Principal and Chief Executive Officer) should:

- obtain written details of the allegation from the person who received it (signed and dated)
- the written details should be countersigned and dated by the Principal and Chief Executive Officer, or the Chair of the Board of Directors
- record information about times, dates, locations, and names of potential witnesses

Initial assessment by the Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Chair of the Board of Directors)
The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or the Chair of the BOD) should immediately discuss the allegation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The purpose of an initial discussion is for the DSL and the Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or the Chair of the BOD) to consider the nature, context, and content of the allegation.

It is important that the Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) does not investigate the allegation. The initial assessment should be based on the information received and is a decision whether or not the allegation warrants further investigation.

There may be situations when the police and/or LADO involvement may be immediate, for example if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offense.

Where the allegation is considered to be either a potential criminal act or indicates that the young person has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the matter should be reported immediately to the relevant LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children's Boards).

Bexley LSCB Guidelines: Managing Allegations Against Staff & Volunteers Working with Children – The LADO

A referral form must be completed and emailed immediately to the LADO if you think 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, or related to, a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

Once the referral has been made the manager should telephone the LADO immediately to discuss the next course of action.

LSCB has produced a leaflet to explain the process for making a referral to the LADO. It helps referrers to understand their responsibilities and what the potential outcome of a referral might be. You can find it here: **http://www.bexleylscb.org.uk/page.php?section=section_4&id=299 Referral form.**

Contact details

The LADO in Bexley is:
Liston Williams
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Bexley Council
Civic Offices
2 Watling Street
Bexleyheath
Kent DA6 7AT
Tel: 0203 045 3436 (LADO Team)
Tel: 0203 045 5645 (Business Support)
Tel: 0203 045 5440 (MASH)

Email: LADO@bexley.gov.uk
Email: childrens.triageteam@bexley.cjsm.net
If you are unable to contact the LADO Business Support or LADO directly, please call through to the MASH. The Social Worker on duty will be able to give you advice or will forward a message to the LADO. Alternatively, please email LADO@bexley.gov.uk and they will endeavour to get back to you the same day.

Please use the secure email (cjsm or Egress Switch) for sending referral forms or any other sensitive information.

The initial sharing of information and evaluation may lead to the decision that no further action is to be taken regarding the individual facing the allegation or concern. In this case, the justification for this decision will be recorded by both the LADO and the DSL, and an agreement put in writing to the individual concerned and by whom. The LADO and the DSL will then consider what action should follow up in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation.

Other potential outcomes are:

- The allegation represents inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by the member of staff and is neither potentially a crime nor a cause of significant harm to the child. The matter should be addressed in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedure.
- The allegation can be shown to be false because the facts alleged could not possibly be true.

Enquiries and investigations

Child protection enquiries by Children's Social Care or the police are not to be confused with internal, disciplinary enquiries by the College. The College may use the outcome of external agency enquiries as part of its own procedures. The child protection agencies, including the police, have no power to direct the College to act in a particular way. However, the College shall assist the agencies with their enquiries.

The College shall hold in abeyance its own internal enquiries while the formal police or Children's Social Care investigations proceed. To do otherwise may prejudice the investigation. Any internal enquiries shall comply with the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

In the case of an allegation been made about a member of staff, there may need to be an investigation by an external agency, for example the police. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) shall normally be involved in, and contribute to, the inter-agency strategy discussions. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) is responsible for ensuring that the College gives assistance with the agency's enquiries. They will ensure that appropriate confidentiality is maintained in connection with the enquiries in the interests of the member of staff about whom the allegation is made. The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) shall:

- inform the member of staff that concerns, or allegations have been raise and give an explanation of the likely course of action (unless there is an objection raised by the external agencies)
- advise the member of staff that she/he should seek advice from a friend or representative, e.g., through a trade union.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated safeguarding Lead) will consult with the police or other investigating agency (e.g., social services), particularly in relation to timing and content of the information to be provided, and shall:

- ensure that the parents/carers of the child/young adult making the allegation have been informed that the allegation has been made and what the likely process will involve.
- inform the Nominated Director of the allegation and the investigation.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) shall keep a written record of the action taken in connection with the allegation.

Suspension of staff

In the event of an allegation against a member of staff, suspension should not be automatic. In respect of staff other than the Principal and Chief Executive Officer, suspension can only be carried out by the Principal and Chief Executive Officer in accordance with the College's procedures. In respect of the Principal and Chief Executive Officer, suspension can only be carried out by the Chair of the Board of Directors (or in their absence, a Non-Executive Director nominated by the Chair of the Board).

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or the Chair of the BOD/Nominated Director) should interview the member of staff prior to making the decision to suspend. This interview should take place with the approval of the appropriate agency [identified by the relevant LSCB]. In particular, if the police are engaged in an investigation the officer in charge of the case shall be consulted.

Prior to the interview, the member of staff shall be advised to seek the advice and/or assistance of their trade union and should be informed that they have the right to be accompanied by a friend. The member of staff shall be informed that an allegation has been made and that consideration is being given to suspension. It shall be made clear that the interview is not a formal disciplinary hearing, but solely for raising a serious matter which may lead to suspension and further investigation.

During the interview, the member of staff shall be given as much information as possible, in particular the reasons for any proposed suspension, provided that doing so would not interfere with the investigation into the allegation. The interview is not intended to establish the member of staff's innocence or guilt, but to give the opportunity for the member of staff to make representations about possible suspension. The member of staff shall be given the opportunity to consider any information given to them at the meeting and prepare a response, although that adjournment may be brief.

Suspension may be considered at any stage of the investigation. It is a neutral, not a disciplinary act and shall be on full pay. Consideration should be given to alternatives: e.g., paid leave of absence; agreement to refrain from attending work; change of, or withdrawal from, specified duties.

There must be good reason to suspend in each case, for example:

- where a child/young person is at risk
- where the allegations are potentially sufficiently serious to justify dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct; and/or
- where necessary for the good and efficient conduct of the investigation

If the Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Chair of the Board /Nominated Director) considers that suspension is necessary, the member of staff shall be informed that they are suspended from duty. Written confirmation of the suspension, with reasons, shall be despatched as soon as possible, and ideally within one working day.

Where a member of staff is suspended, the Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Nominated Director) shall address the following issues:

- the Chair of Board of Directors shall be informed of the suspension in writing.
- the Chair of the Board of Directors shall receive a report that a member of staff has been suspended pending investigation (the details given to the Board of Directors shall be minimal)
- where the Principal and Chief Executive Officer has been suspended, the Chair of the BOD /Nominated Director will take action to address the management of the College.
- the parents/carers of the child/young adult making the allegation shall be informed of the suspension. They shall be asked to treat the information as confidential. Consideration shall be given to informing the child/young adult making the allegation of the suspension.
- senior staff who need to know of the reason for the suspension shall be informed.
- depending on the nature of the allegation, the Principal and Chief Executive Officer shall consider whether a statement to (a section of) the student body of the College and/or parents/carers should be made, taking due regard of the need to avoid unwelcome publicity.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer shall consider carefully and review the decisions as to who is informed of the suspension and investigation. The relevant LSCB and external investigating authorities shall be consulted on this point.

The suspended member of staff shall be given appropriate support during the period of suspension. They shall also be provided with information on progress and developments in the case at regular intervals.

The suspension shall remain under review in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

The disciplinary process

The disciplinary process shall be conducted in accordance with the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

The member of staff shall be informed of:

- the disciplinary charge against them
- their entitlement to be accompanied or represented by a trade union representative or friend.

Where the member of staff has been suspended and no disciplinary action is to be taken, the suspension shall be lifted immediately, and arrangements made for the member of staff to return to work. It may be appropriate to offer counselling.

The child/young adult making the allegation and/or their parents shall be informed of the outcome of the investigation and proceedings. This shall occur prior to the return of the member of staff (if suspended) to the College.

The Principal and Chief Executive Officer (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) shall consider what information should be made available to the College generally.

Allegations without foundation

False allegations may be indicative of problems of abuse elsewhere. A record shall be kept, and consideration given to a referral to appropriate external agencies in order that other agencies may act upon the information.

In consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead the Principal and Chief Executive Officer shall:

- inform the member of staff against whom the allegation is made orally and in writing that no further disciplinary or safeguarding action will be taken. Consideration should be given to offering counselling/support.
- inform the parents/carers of the alleged victim of the outcome.
- where the allegation was made by a child/young adult other than the alleged victim, consideration shall be given to informing the parents/carers of that child/young adult.
- prepare a report outlining the allegation and giving reasons for the conclusion that it had no foundation and confirming that the above action had been taken.

Disclosure and Barring Services

If a member of staff is dismissed or resigns before the disciplinary process is completed, they should be informed about the College's duty (from October 2009) to inform the Secretary of State for Education under the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Monitoring effectiveness

Where an allegation has been made against a member of staff, the Designated Safeguarding Lead shall, at the conclusion of the disciplinary process, consider whether there are any matters arising from it that could lead to the improvement of the College's procedures and/or policies and/or which should be drawn to the attention of the relevant LSCB. Consideration shall also be given to the training needs of staff.

Reporting and dealing with allegations of abuse against students

The provisions of Section 'Reporting and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Members of Staff' of this policy shall apply, where appropriate, to students of the College. This shall include student volunteers. The relevant disciplinary procedure is the Disciplinary and Complaints – Regulations and Procedures.

Students against whom allegations have been made will be advised to contact the Students' Union for advice/representation.

On the question of suspension, the Principal and Chief Executive Officer shall consider whether it is necessary to suspend the student from all or a specific set of College activities.