

## Barley Lane School

Hard work, humility, kindness

### Safeguarding Portfolio THREE: being safe people and effective practitioners

2.	What to do if you're worried about a child (professionals' version)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding guidance; the top of any list.</li> </ul>
3.	What to do when a child shares or needs to share they are at risk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rare but hugely significant moment</li> </ul>
4.	Safer Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe people safe school</li> </ul>
5.	The wellbeing of staff and students is symbiotic:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The tricky business of balancing challenge and support for staff</li> </ul>
7.	What does best practice look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging and embedding good behaviour rooted in content and happy students?</li> </ul>
8.	All of us must be leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff will seek to become empathetic figures of genuine authority and respect in the school.</li> </ul>
9.	Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a model of decency, reason, compassion and fairness in all your work with the young people</li> </ul>
10.	Working safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practical guidance for staff</li> </ul>
11.	Ensuring practice and people are safe "speaking up"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We must all maintain a healthy scepticism about each other</li> </ul>
12.	Reconciling child-safety with staff security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairness for everyone in the school community</li> </ul>
13.	Personal safety for students and staff in an SEMH setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The setting in which we work offers particular challenges and risks</li> </ul>
14.	Safeguarding: appropriate use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proliferation of "technology" creates safeguarding risks and challenges for everyone</li> </ul>
15.	Managing behaviour day to day...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive behaviour is affirmed and negative behaviours supported with restorative outcomes</li> </ul>
17.	Managing the risk of managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping us safe to keep the children safe</li> </ul>
18.	SEMH job description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any "job description" about SEMH teaching doesn't just mean teachers but all of us</li> </ul>
21.	Whistle Blowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaking up beyond school</li> </ul>
22.	Healthy relationships	if we can't get on how can the children and young people?

## Barley Lane School

Friendship, Optimism, Hardwork

### What to do if you're worried about a child (professionals' version)

Keeping children and young people safe and promoting their happiness and wellbeing is a shared responsibility for all of us: teachers, governors, support staff, parents, carers and visitors of all kinds.

Worries come in all shapes and sizes from those gut feelings we sometimes have through seeing something that troubles us to children telling us they are at risk. Some risks are very serious some less so but they all need to be reliably shared to keep our young people safe: the question is how to do that?

In school as a team we meet twice a day every day before the school day starts and when it ends and we always ask the question "are there any worries or concerns about the children's welfare and safety?" We remind each other too of the range of risks including those we must make safe each day.

We also have a "school operational lead" trained in CP to share with and seek support as the day unfolds...this could mean a very serious risk needs to be made safe or a disclosure managed quickly and correctly and the "lead" is there to help and make sure we do the right things and share with the right people and in practice get the right advice.

The team uses an electronic system called CPOMS to log and record things in writing and what is critical is staff not only talk about concerns but promptly use CPOMS and the "safeguarding" tag to alert our safeguarding team (see below) and to note in writing what has been shared. "Systems" can go wrong so email is fine as would be a handwritten record but you must get them to the right people.

Mr Jones the headteacher is the school's lead on safeguarding and he works closely with and is supported by Carl Moore, Vicki Sessions and Helen Kidney: these are the people to share any worry or concern and don't hesitate to do so.

[djones@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:djones@barleylane.devon.sch.uk) 07848 457 025

[cmoore@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:cmoore@barleylane.devon.sch.uk) 07436 104 050

[vickisessions@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:vickisessions@barleylane.devon.sch.uk) 07860 846 270

[hkidney@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:hkidney@barleylane.devon.sch.uk) 07848 028 342

Please remember to use our school briefings and debriefings not just to share and listen but to challenge the "lead" and safeguarding team about what they've done and what is happening: what progress has been made? Be curious and persistent and there is nothing to stop you as an individual going direct to social care they can be contacted at the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) [mashsecure@devon.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gov.uk) 0345 155 1071 out of hours call 0845 6000 388

Worries or concerns about each other should be shared with Mr. Jones, Mr. Moore, Mrs Sessions or Ms. Kidney who contacts the nominated child protection officers within the local education authority (these are called LADOs and deal with serious concerns about teachers and staff including head-teachers) [childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk). Again, there is nothing to stop you as an individual going direct to LADOs. Any concerns about Mr Jones should be shared with the school's chair and safeguarding governor Damian Furniss [dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk)

Sometimes worries and concerns can occur to folk later or maybe they are just hard to express to people in school: the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline 0800 028 0285 line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

The Devon Children and Families Partnership website is a good place for all kinds of safeguarding related information and guidance <https://www.dcfp.org.uk>

## What to do when a child shares or needs to share they are at risk?

If a pupil talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member will need to let the pupil know that they must pass the information on** – staff are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which they tell the pupil this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the pupil may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the pupil may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the pupils staff will:

- allow them to speak freely
- remain calm and not overreact – the pupil may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the pupil
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what the pupil’s mother thinks about all this. Do remember your TED questions: Tell me.... Explain..... Describe.....
- at an appropriate time tell the pupil that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on
- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as ‘I do wish you had told me about this when it started’ or ‘I can’t believe what I’m hearing’ may be the staff member’s way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong
- tell the pupil what will happen next. The pupil may agree to go to see the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.
- report verbally to the DSL even if the child has promised to do it by themselves
- write up their conversation as soon as possible on the **record of concern form** and hand it to the designated person
- seek support if they feel distressed

### Notifying parents

The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a pupil with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. However, if the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from MASH.

### Enquiry to MASH

The DSL will make an enquiry to MASH if it is believed that a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The pupil (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that an enquiry is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

Any member of staff may make a direct enquiry to children’s social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a child.

## Safer Recruitment

**Recruiting:** we must only recruit, retain and develop staff who are safe, ethical people and do so by being diligent and rigorous in the recruitment process and maintaining the highest professional standards in how we recruit and who we recruit to work with the young people in our care.

The professional characteristics of best SEMH practitioners: *Can you demonstrate and evidence them?*

1. Are safe and transparent and have integrity and humility; they admit their errors and recognise their frailties and seek support and guidance. *When did you last admit a meaningful professional error or seek and apply advice? When did your professional ethics and values influence your decision-making and actions? When did you last do a difficult thing because it was the right thing?*

### BLS teacher application pack

Self-evidently we stay safer with safe people so in recruitment we:

- Apply the same rigour to voluntary and agency workers as they have the same access to the children and young people.
- Promote our commitment to safeguarding in our advertising of posts and in the sharing of information with applicants and in any informal visits.
- Material shared with applicants privileges and promotes the values and ways of working we seek that are safe and ethical.
- We take up references at the earliest opportunity.
- We monitor the integrity of any applicant throughout the recruitment process for example ethical people tend to be reliable and straightforward to deal with, meet deadlines, complete applications diligently and fully, are punctual and accessible.
- At interview the first part is concerned with the character and values and motivation of the candidate and the set questions to explore their nature and integrity are always asked and responses noted.
- Only candidates who successfully navigate part one can move forward because without a shared ethos and the same core values skills and competency are of no value.
- All checks and balances are applied: references, DBS and checks against lists that prohibit working with children.

We promote and consolidate what is safe by retaining and developing safe people:

- Those retained and promoted have been and are measurably safe and ethical practitioners and though hard to measure the perceptions of children, parents and colleagues are worthwhile and telling.
- There is strong history of good judgment and practice and an absence therefore of poor judgment and practice and interventions.

**The wellbeing of staff and students is symbiotic:** the tricky business of balancing challenge and support for staff

The built-in and considerable challenges of choosing to work in our setting can be very tough on us: what do we do to support each other and create an authentic esprit de corps?

- The matter of who we choose and who chooses to join the team and to stay and develop their career is the starting point and our recruitment process works hard and transparently to make sure there is a good fit and folk are in step with the school's prevailing culture and values.
- Good choices lead to essentially happy and motivated staff because we are all happier and so more effective and productive if we are in-step with the organisation's core values and culture and goals.
- Folk should draw a deliberate inference from what our best practitioners look like (see section 8 below) and our people must be by nature resilient, optimistic, driven, robustly self-aware and self-critical, self-reliant and self-improving; they are curious and problem solving; they find a way...
- We have a dedicated risk document that acknowledges *"Hard work -high risk: these are a part of our work and like soldiers we cannot complain we are being metaphorically shot at as we chose to be "soldiers"..."*
- The document also makes clear *"The work is honourable and profoundly worthwhile so value yourselves and each other as you do the children and young people and be proud and know you matter and that an unexpected bacon sandwich and orange juice and coffee or a handwritten card at Christmas mean that too and don't lose sight of the kindnesses offered you ...Praise and encourage and support not only the children and young people but each other and be quick to forgive and move on and try to avoid being petty or political as the children demand so much from us unnecessary negative emotional demands on each are damaging and certainly a distraction."*
- Practical support for example what we have described in school improvement as *"How we best deploy our people and how best to promote and protect their wellbeing and morale and so the energy and effectiveness of everyone in our community."* is paired with authentic emotional connections and friendship amongst us rooted in our shared values and strong work ethic.

We can only promote good mental health and healthy wellbeing in our students if we are "healthy" and fundamental to this is building a team that is united in values and purpose and who are both collectively and individually psychologically healthy.

**What then do we expect of teachers and our support team in this specialist setting: "change us to change them".**

- The school needs a critical mass of staff who can achieve a level of compassionate authority that in turn delivers the whole school community stability that is always vulnerable to the latent and risky sub-culture that is a result of placing many and diverse, complex, risky and mercurial students in one place.
- We all share a particular and obvious responsibility in an SEMH setting to show leadership and initiative in managing the complexity, challenge and vulnerability that characterises our young people with compassion, creativity and skill and the following expectations are made clear to everyone who wants to join and work in our community.

- We have chosen to work in a challenging SEMH setting therefore overcoming complex and diverse and enigmatic and sometimes seemingly insurmountable obstacles to learning is our responsibility and our colleagues are a resource to help and assist not to take over our duties and responsibilities;
- That maintaining good order and discipline in class and beyond and across school life and the creation of a stable and secure and positive climate for learning is both an individual and collective responsibility for everyone in all but the most complex cases;
- The dignity and credibility of our specialist work is built on all of us being “leaders” in our work and being resourceful, problem solving and creative not excuse making and at upper pay levels it is reasonable and proportionate to expect sustained high performance.
- That curiosity to understand the children and young people driven by a commitment to help them behave and learn and the humility and awareness to see how others are succeeding essential to be successful and absent in those who fail with SEMH youngsters because there’s always a reason, an excuse to explain their lack of success and no drive to understand better.
- That the quality of teaching and the support and guidance we give the children in our care should always be at least good and expectations are quite reasonably higher commensurate with experience and pay and so support should be proportionate also;
- There is a dynamic and shifting balance of a) support/facilitation and b) independence/autonomy that begins heavily weighted with a) but shifts to b) over time as staff move from inexperienced and vulnerable to experienced, independent and assertive but the team-working never stops.

This progress and development is rarely smooth and uneventful and can experience sharp reverses and unexpectedly sharp improvements: it is a dynamic and shifting by its nature.

- Experienced staff must always be generous in support but explicit in demanding an appropriate and maturing level of ownership and independence from less experienced colleagues.
- Less experienced staff must own and manage issues but then seek an appropriate and safe level of support in securing good behaviour; one that both keeps them and the children secure but moves them steadily to greater independence and authority.
- Folk will therefore be moving along their own development path at different speeds and facing a variety of setbacks and improvements. Staff will need stoicism, determination, vigour and resilience on this journey to genuine compassionate authority and influence.
- This a then “bottom-up” model led by teachers and support staff who are the critical and essential and most important people in our community after the children and we look to recruit and retain and develop independent, resourceful and problem solving professionals who want the dignity and autonomy and responsibility of owning their work and who embrace being accountable for the progress and happiness of the students and as learners and as more powerfully as people.

People who believe and live out that “old school” and clichéd, but no less powerful or pertinent for that, belief that we must “change us to change them”.

## **What does best practice look like in encouraging and embedding good behaviour rooted in content and happy students?**

It has always been striking how some teachers and support staff are able to soften and ameliorate the struggles and frustrations and hurt that characterise the experiences of so many of the children and young people in our care?

Striking too is how a whole array of “labels” and “needs” seem almost to disappear and become irrelevant when our children and young people are being taught and supported and “parented” by our best people?

Pertinent too is whilst it remains both appealing and “current” but too often only superficially useful notions of multi-disciplinary working most notably in mental health and wellbeing often aren’t there and don’t work and in this context the only real and impactful “therapy” is the steady and relentless drip of kindness and the day to day interactions with compassionate and skilled teachers and support staff in turn supported by reliably present professional partners for example the school nurse, our attached educational psychologist, careers practitioners and authentically collegiate, proactive and visible colleagues across disciplines.

So what do these best people look like? What do they do? Appendix 1 documents our attempts over time (this is something we revisit regularly) to describe the behaviours and characteristics of those who do the work to best effect.

Our most recent attempt to summarise:

- They are warm and authentic, “present” and engaged but also securely and safely boundaried, ethical and transparent.
- They are by nature resilient, optimistic, driven, robustly self-aware and self-critical, self-reliant and self-improving.
- They are curious and problem solving; they find a way to better understand our complex and diverse student body and improve their practice
- They have a strong and authentic and emotional connection and commitment to their professional craft, the children and young people in their care and their colleagues.
- They bring clarity of expectation and embedded routines and rituals imbued with strong and safe relationships rooted in a warm assertiveness that brings both affirmation and challenge.
- They relentlessly live out and model the values and behaviours they want to inculcate in the children and young people.
- Those values are rooted in that “friendship” that unpicked means we model and we work hard to personify the respect-empathy-forgiveness-compassion-protection that encourages and nurtures these qualities in the children.
- Under stress and duress in a testing and risky and stressful context our best people are able to manage their emotions and remain self-aware and self-controlled and make informed and good decisions under pressure.
- They know the value of the figurative “pee break” and that pausing to reflect and share and explore with others is essential in all but the most pressing and immediate of risks and challenges but can be safely decisive too when necessary.

## All of us must be leaders

A key difference in our school that distinguishes us from mainstream is our expectation that **all staff will seek to become empathetic figures of genuine authority and respect in the school.**

The use of skilled teaching and behaviour management, praise, positive reinforcement and reward are all heavily promoted and encouraged. Informally also across school life this message is a constant one.

The purpose of this document is to also privilege the need to apply restorative consequences for challenging and inappropriate behaviour and the necessity for staff to take ownership of issues and lead interventions. Experienced staff are there to support and facilitate. Staff should be seeking to access less and less support incrementally as their own authority is consequently enhanced by their determination to act independently and autonomously. The school needs a critical mass of staff who have achieved a significant level of authority that in turn delivers the whole school community stability that is always vulnerable to the latent and risky sub-culture that is a result of placing many complex and risky and mercurial students in one place.

Senior and experienced staff are expected to be and are generous in offering support but in return expect the initiative, decision-making and intervention in disciplinary work to shift steadily from them to their junior colleagues as they mature and grow in confidence.

It is unacceptable therefore that any MOS whatever their respective position on the continuum of experience, assertiveness and effectiveness allow behaviours to be ignored or passed on inertly to senior colleagues. In short:

- All behaviours outside our core values of kindness and humility and hard-work must always be challenged by all staff and graded intervention from supportive guidance and advice to restorative justice that can sometimes mean punitive action must result: without this the school community cannot be a just, stable and safe place.
- There is a dynamic and shifting balance of a) support/facilitation and b) independence/autonomy that begins heavily weighted with a) but shifts to b) over time as staff move from inexperienced and vulnerable to experienced, independent and assertive but the team-working never stops.
- This progress and development is rarely smooth and uneventful and can experience sharp reverses and unexpectedly sharp improvements: it is a dynamic and shifting by its nature.
- Experienced staff must always be generous in support but explicit in demanding an appropriate and maturing level of ownership and independence from less experienced colleagues.
- Less experienced staff must own and manage issues but then seek an appropriate and safe level of support in delivering discipline; one that both keeps them and the children secure but moves them steadily to greater independence and authority.
- Folk will therefore be moving along their own development path at different speeds and facing a variety of setbacks and improvements. Staff will need stoicism, determination, vigour and resilience on this journey to genuine compassionate authority and influence.



## BLS code of conduct 2021-22

**Be cautious and consultative:** be vigilant around the code and safe-working generally and if in doubt you must seek support and guidance and if necessary the clarity and instruction to protect you and the children

**Wellbeing and safeguarding:** we must be vigilant about the safety and welfare of everyone in our community including our own well-being and not least the children's and in our challenging and risky setting apply intelligent and pragmatic dynamic risk assessment to all we do: we will then constantly intelligently and pro-actively reflect and modify suitably our behaviour and work and interventions to keep everyone safe.

**We are safer together:** given the variety and multiplicity and nuance of risk and challenge in our work we must use each other as a resource and safety net to test and explore risks and how we manage them and never be isolated or maverick. We have a senior "school lead" each day, a day book-ended by team briefing/debriefing so there is no excuse for poor and risky decisions and actions that neglect open sharing, consultation and reflection.

**Teamwork:** in that spirit we are safer and the children are safer when we work in pairs, small groups and as a whole team. Working alone with individual children is of course risky but equally must happen sometimes for example accompanying a student to an interview or as we must sometimes taking them home but when we do we must share and risk assess with the school lead and note on CPOMs briefly our reasoning and any patterns that suggest grooming behaviours intended or accidental quickly identified and challenged.

**Touch:** carries risk, be careful to apply the school's positive handling training and guidance and whilst a brief congratulatory pat on the shoulder can communicate a great deal any greater physical contact beyond a physical intervention recorded in the established way should be noted and explained to the head-teacher (we must have the caveat that a distressed child can be comforted for example)

**Language too carries risks:** too often risks are created around the sloppy and careless use of language and this includes the use of sarcasm and "humour": polite self-deprecation and light touch humour and silliness that are wholly and reliably warm and respectful and inclusive are a part of all our wellbeing and humanity but always with kindness.

**Be seen:** being visible to others, staff and children, is a necessary protection and good working habit that requires rigour and pro-activity: open that door, pull up those blinds avoid corners and corridors. Be seen. Be open. Be obvious.

**Be transparent:** share errors and mistakes immediately and fully with the head-teacher do not allow the benign error to look malign because of a failure to promptly and openly and fully disclose it.

**Be a positive safe role model:** have boundaries, dignified and disciplined, courteous and measured. Retain the necessary formality and distance in your role. Never fall victim to trendy vicar syndrome. You can be friendly but never a friend: be sure all your behaviours always preserve that distinction and difference.

**Be committed but separate:** keep the boundaries absolutely, emphatically clear. Yours is a professional commitment and compassion confined solely to your professional duties in school. Never engage with children beyond or outside them. No child must ever see you as something more.

Your relationship with families too must be positive but never close or over familiar and a professional distance and clear separation must be maintained: never socialise or engage or interact with children or their families beyond school and what are necessary, clear and safe professional interactions in any way including and significantly the multiplicity and diversity of technology, social media, the internet, mobile telephones...

**Be challenging and be challenged:** never sit on an anxiety or concern of any kind around any colleague and worries or concerns about each other should be shared with Mr Jones or his deputy DDSL's (unless concerns are about any of them) and they contact the nominated child protection officers within the local education authority (these are called LADOs and deal with serious concerns about teachers and staff including head-teachers). There is nothing to stop you as an individual going direct to LADOs [childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk). Any concerns about Mr Jones should be shared with the school's chair and safeguarding governor Damian Furniss [dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk)

## **Working safely:** some practical guidance for staff

- Be a model of decency, reason, compassion and fairness in all your work with the young people in your care.
- Be as transparent in everything you do: simple examples might be always keep a door open, make it easy for people to informally, frequently access and see you and the children at all times. Create conditions where transparency, accessibility and accountability will thrive.
- Always act in good faith and be prepared to admit errors and mistakes. Be open and candid about your work. Preserve honesty and truth. Do not allow minor errors or lapses of judgement to be made sinister and damaging by any unwillingness to admit to them or worse an attempt to deny or cover them up.
- Remember in the sensitive and responsible work we do any white lie or small misrepresentation, any spin on events, any fabrication or augmentation of any issue in any context damages your integrity and leaves you vulnerable to suspicion over the big issues. Examples: you do not reveal points on your driving licence or you explain professional errors with elaborate excuses. Such behaviours although almost standard in the average workplace are loaded with difficulty in our setting.
- Be vigilant about actions or circumstances that could be misinterpreted or manipulated to compromise and damage you. Think of worst scenarios, think of perceptions, think of misconceptions. Avoid these. Share immediately any error or anxiety and bring clarity where misinterpretation is possible.
- Understand that some of our students are badly damaged and confused about how to relate to adults appropriately and that this manifests itself in all kinds of ways. Maintain a little distance even from the most needy and those whose difficulties touch you most.
- Be wary of developing “special relationships” treat each youngster equally with compassion and respect. Using both your own judgement and that of colleagues be alive to any particular attachment and if you feel an inappropriate attachment is developing share it with senior staff immediately and with them promptly establish a strategy to safely and sensitively put the appropriate distance between you and the youngster.
- Social activities, informal working, spontaneous good works and so on in fact contact of any kind with students, their families, extended families and friends beyond school outside of spontaneous, unplanned hellos in Tesco or outside the Chip Shop, for example, are **absolutely forbidden** for your and their protection.
- This includes any e-mail, chat-room, internet, mobile phone or text exchanges or other forms of communication. Children should be discouraged and stopped from such activity gently but explicitly and absolutely.
- Do not transport children alone without reflecting on the risks with the school lead and your decisions must be supported and confirmed by them and note this on CPOMs.
- Do not undertake home visits unless risk-assessed: this in practice when speed of the essence does not mean reams of paper but a pragmatic and noted discussion with the head later noted on CPOMs.

- Distance needs to be maintained too in the communities in which we live and the extended families and friendships that sometimes connect us to students outside school: your choice to work in school means you must distance yourself and establish safe and clear boundaries.

## Ensuring practice and people are safe “speaking up”

We must all maintain a healthy scepticism about each other; discomfiting but necessary and we have a duty to speak up because faulty and sometimes bad people get into schools too: we must speak up when we believe there is unsafe or unethical behaviour or practice from colleagues.

Please email [childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk) if you are unhappy or uncertain the head-teacher is acting with sufficient speed and decisiveness.

- If a member of the team believes the school’s practices are unsafe or inadequate they have a duty to share that openly and promptly with the head-teacher she or he then has a duty to respond suitably.
- If a member of the team’s concern is around a specific individual or group of staff (their behaviour or behaviours and their work with the young people) and it is a serious one (please remember this could be quite subtle or nuanced or intuitive but such things must be shared and explored) then share with the head-teacher fully and promptly.
- The head-teacher is then bound to intervene and pursue the appropriate routes for example professional guidance, competency or conduct as set out by the overarching and adopted County Council procedures (any colleague involved in such an intervention would be entitled to full and appropriate support from the school, the council and their professional body).
- Any concern with any hint or nuance of possible harm to a child from a member of staff is the trigger for the head-teacher to contact HR and the LADOs (safeguarding professionals that deal with allegations and concerns about professionals working with children)
- If a member of the team believes the head’s response is inadequate or inappropriate then the chair of governors should be contacted and made aware [dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk](mailto:dfurniss@barleylane.devon.sch.uk)
- More urgently in the case of any serious anxiety or concern about staff behaviour and or a child’s safety if a member of the team feels it is not being addressed promptly or suitably by the head-teacher (who is the lead designated child protection officer) then direct and immediate contact can be made with child protection officers or LADOs at [childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:childsc.localauthoritydesignatedofficersecure-mailbox@devon.gov.uk). 0345 155 1071 out of hours call 0845 6000 388
- Calling the Police 101 line and in an emergency 999 for example a child is sent home when you powerfully feel it is unsafe and whilst this exceptional it must be made clear it is an option.

In such circumstance when worries are serious and anxieties are rising about a child’s welfare and or a colleague’s integrity it can be hard to speak up and accessing the NSPCC to share and seek support could be a pragmatic way of staying strong and speaking up: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). **0808 800 5000**

More widely there should too be understanding and acceptance amongst all of us that if we see something wrong of any nature in school for example misuse of funds or poor treatment of colleagues we must speak up (**whistle-blow**) and accessing the governing body, the local authority, unions and professional bodies, Ofsted, local councillors for example all routes to be heard (see appendix 2 page 31 whistle blowing)

## **Reconciling child-safety with staff security and fairness for everyone in the school community**

- We are our committed to safeguarding children in the innately risky work we undertake; we will therefore suspend staff because it will inevitably be a necessary and unavoidable part of our specialised and difficult work.
- Suspension will then happen but it is not inevitably indicative of any individual guilt or corporate failing but evidences the determination of the school to be robust in securing the truth and protecting both children and staff. Suspension is a neutral act to facilitate the securing of the facts, no more.
- We seek to vigorously reclaim the neutrality of “suspension”.
- We will accept and act upon any emerging individual or corporate failing in co-operation with our partners in the LA, social care and the police service.
- We are as committed to protecting and supporting and reintegrating honourable and safe staff as exposing and calling to account the faulty and unsafe: our students are best served by this.
- Suspension therefore should be a both a route to vindication and a successful return to school as well as a route to accountability and proportionate consequence.
- We seek a point where parents see suspensions as an indication of our rigour and openness not guilt or failure.
- We persist with our reclamation of suspension as a neutral act so we can speak openly about it because it no longer condemns and stigmatises individuals or by association the school community and parents see it as a fair and worthwhile effort to provide justice and safety for children and adults.

### **We operate in the following way:**

- Existing extensive school guidance on working proactively and safely is regularly intelligently revisited debated, tweaked and developed further as a necessary safeguard.
- Practice is monitored both formally and informally as are our interventions across the staff team to ensure guidance is applied.
- The importance of rigour around recording and documenting fully, accurately and intelligently student behaviour and all significant events, incidents, thoughts and reflections is robustly maintained
- Children who display behaviours that suggest or establish a willingness to misrepresent are identified and monitored and matters documented
- Lone working is avoided as far as is practicable and where necessary it is managed proactively to ensure everyone’s well-being
- We ask staff if suspended to behave with honesty, dignity and good judgment throughout thus allowing the school to maintain as much contact as possible to support any future return and avoid unnecessary isolation and any unfair erosion of esteem, credibility and dignity:
- The full package of school, LEA and Professional Body support is accessed by suspended colleagues.

## Personal safety for students and staff in an SEMH setting

The setting in which we work offers particular challenges and risks. The reality for us is some of our students some of the time can be very complex and risky. There are precedents too in most schools now for parents being equally so. We appear at least to live in a society that is increasingly escalatory and confrontational even aggressive and sometimes violent: the use of knives and improvised weapons another example of at least a perceived growing risk.

There are some potentially significant risks then to students and staff but they do remain rare. It's important we have a simple, familiar and basic response because if we do end up in an unlikely but possible crisis we need to act quickly and safely.

We operate in an environment where our duty of care around health and safety includes us, the children and our colleagues. Different colleagues have different abilities, skills, experience and boundaries but we should all approach situations with an alert intelligence, caution and pragmatism:

- Be alive to dangers and potential dangers around you and act sensibly and promptly to diminish risk, perceived or actual, habitually seeking the support of colleagues: we work best and safest in pairs or small teams.
- If you find yourself and the children in your care in any setting or situation you judge unsafe or you feel compromised or vulnerable in keeping children and colleagues safe share your feelings immediately, seek support immediately and remove yourself, the children and colleagues from the perceived or actual risk immediately.
- If you feel increasingly unsafe in a particular context or setting act proactively to understand, evaluate and make safe any perceived or real risk to you or others: share your anxieties with colleagues both formally and informally. Never sit on feelings of unease or anxiety.
- Do not place yourself and the students in your care in risky situations, for example delaying, escalating or physically intervening alone with a student known to be escalatory: exercise good judgement; know your own strengths and limitations. Do not increase risks through poor judgement and actions and get help!
- Be practical: keep your walkie-talkie charged, leave doors open, have your school mobile phone handy just in case, ask for additional support, alert support staff to any low-level anxiety or potential difficulty. Be vigilant, be careful but don't panic.
- Bottom line if in doubt get help and if necessary move away
- There is always senior and experienced help nearby access it promptly and a call to 101 or 999 a wholly necessary and legitimate option to keep everyone safe.

## **Safeguarding: appropriate use**

The proliferation of “technology” computers, laptops, tablets and phones all with internet access and a multiplicity of functions and capabilities create safeguarding risks and challenges for everyone in the school community; what follows is specifically about how the team uses this equipment and capability.

There are available albeit wordy and complex models but it is hard to discern quickly and simply what is expected of people? It seems to us that there are broad principles that can be applied across this technology and its functions and possibilities that keep everyone safe?

### **School staff**

- Use is clearly and obviously appropriate to school and the work and activities of the school team for example a school camera used to take photos to evidence or celebrate pupil learning.

In contrast a school camera used to take informal shots of children with no clear and valid purpose that are then stored on other equipment.

- Use is reasonable, respectful and inclusive for example parents are alerted and invited to a school open evening via social media.

In contrast a teacher uses their social media account to express extremist and inflammatory views.

- Use is reasonable and logical for example a school laptop downloads a BBC i-player documentary on a credible subject say “radicalisation” and it is age appropriate and used in class.

In contrast a school laptop loaded with box sets of comedies quite clearly for personal use and of no educational value.

- Use is ethical and safe for example sensitive safeguarding information must be held and held securely on a laptop (using and keeping equipment and its contents safe and secure an essential bottom line expectation)

In contrast and quite obviously extreme or violent or pornographic material is accessed and stored

- Personal use of any equipment is readily and easily explicable and safe and also infrequent for example a school phone may have to be used to call home occasionally or a personal email account sometimes accessed out of hours on a school laptop.

In contrast the habitual use of school equipment for personal reasons that cannot be reasonably explained and or justified.

- Staff must consider too the safe and appropriate and responsible use of technology and the internet and social media in their personal lives; for example social media activity should be habitually at the highest level of security and confined to their families, friends, peers and other adults.

In contrast readily accessible accounts and careless use of language or extreme opinions and engaging with students via social media (see our code of conduct) are all clearly unsafe and “inappropriate”.

Throughout it should be wholly possible for the school’s IT and or school’s business manager to conduct unannounced “audits” of use and for any anomalies/concerns to be explored and explained.

It should be inferred then that reasonably where use is not demonstrably appropriate, reasonable, logical, ethical, safe and any personal use is not readily explicable and safe and infrequent competency or conduct will be triggered.

## Managing behaviour day to day...

It is essential in a school like ours that positive behaviour is encouraged and affirmed and negative behaviours supported but never fudged and directly challenged with clear and fair restorative outcomes. We all crave fairness and justice and a sense of balance; and if things go wrong what's good in us being remembered and celebrated.

If behaviour needs to be supported or challenged and positively changed this will only be effective if we are measured and respectful in doing so and when we are consistently generous in recognising good behaviour: please then be continually self-evaluative and suitably prepared so the need for support and or challenge is rooted in the student's complex and genuine needs and/or challenging behaviour **not because of an ill-prepared lesson or clumsy behaviour management.**

We must always look hard at our own practice and the best practice of others and "change us to change them" because we can be the root cause of both good and not so good behaviour: in that context please:

- Praise and reward relentlessly but critically authentically reminding children of their successes and asking them to describe and reflect on and learn from them; privately, publicly, informally and formally. Never miss a credible opportunity to reinforce good behaviour and authentic success.
- Your plenary in each lesson must contain strong reference to behaving reasonably and working hard and usefully and the core theme of recovery
- There should be evidence of public reward and praise in assemblies and other whole school settings.
- Beyond the privileges offered by our points system there should be evidence of local incentives and rewards in classes and tutor groups to promote and celebrate good behaviour.
- Parents should be made aware by staff formally and frequently informally of student successes:
- Staff should habitually use the points system to influence their decision-making about access to activities: those who behave appropriately deserve advantages.
- "Prodigal sons" deserve a suitably biblical approach with marked recognition and celebration of their achievements and improvements but the other "sons" deserve quiet recognition for persistently doing the right thing too.
- Please do not challenge students when responsibility lies with you (nothing is more destructive to the adult-student relationship) but learn from such incidences and seek to avoid repetition. You need to win the confidence and trust of your students so when you do apply sanctions they accept and respect them because they accept and respect you and trust your judgment.
- Use a light touch and present your intervention as a healing opportunity to resolve things fairly and promptly.
- Be prepared in our setting to go many extra miles for the children and seek progress and regardless of hours or duties and be there when the critical post-intervention reflection and healing goes on.
- Staff will be and are dogged in seeking a just and restorative outcome and this can be tough where youngsters escalate and throughout the focus is on supporting the young person to develop the greater self-awareness and self-control that appears in so many of their EHCPs: key too is developing an emerging and embedding sense of "win-win" outcomes and the ability to compromise and move on...fresh starts.

- Do not feel the need to rush to judgements and decisions give yourself and the child time to consider and reflect: do not rush to action give lots of dignified routes to redemption including recognising and acknowledging previously positive behaviour and therefore a willingness to offer some “slack”. A most successful strategy used by staff is the “wait and see approach” where previous successes are remembered and the next lesson or activity offers the student a chance to show goodwill and make real an apology; to restore and make good what has been damaged.
- We do not run on a rule book but on reasoned judgements by the adults about what is fair and reasonable and “kind”. This hinges on mutual respect but the adults are in the end the disinterested referees who must win trust and respect by their good judgement, show a willingness to make unpopular decisions but equally demonstrate their obvious determination to be scrupulously fair; they decide.

### **How the day could play out...**

- The school day is divided into small chunks of 45 minute periods, punctuated by an opportunity to access a series of activities at break times. Points are collected and accumulate offering privileged and preferential access to rewards and activities.
- The school uses available classrooms and a variety of smaller comfortable but simple spaces for brief periods of respite and reflection and alternative activities something called “strategic capitulation sometimes where hurt and upset can be safely expressed before the successful return of students to class (in practice the offer of a cup of tea and a slice of toast is often very therapeutic)
- Most students react positively a minority less so and so there is a room dedicated for those who become discombobulated and dysregulated to protect those who respect and use reflection and recovery spaces well.
- We must always privilege the safe supervision and support of students and where this is secure and staffing allows breaks and lunchtimes can offer an opportunity for lost learning to be recovered and positive behaviours encouraged: afternoon activities and tutor time can also be used to reflect on and put right and repair relationships, learning and behaviour.
- Often teachers will give their own time and work flexibly to for example revisit a lesson so good behaviour and learning are promoted.
- Seek support from senior and experienced staff promptly as issues emerge to secure appropriate behaviour and outcomes at an early stage;
- If needed we will persist beyond the school day and the school assumes parental support in this without 24 hour notice because in our experience issues are best dealt with promptly so youngsters can then move on.
- More serious or persistent disciplinary issues are addressed with parents who can return their children in person so a face to face meeting can explore the issue and seek to resolve it positively and supportively together.
- We are willing to, trained in and may resort to physical intervention in order to protect what is reasonable and fair and will reflect and plan for this.
- The school will always seek to work in partnership with parents and carers but equally is willing to assert what it judges to be fair and reasonable in the face of parental opposition
- Behaviours and patterns of behaviour that in the MOS’ judgement are “serious” should be recorded and shared with SMT and a collective response with families agreed. It is in these situations that calm, reflection and consultation are essential.



**Managing the risk of managing risk (health and safety):** looking after staff in our setting (the biggest risk to health and safety in our school is the student body and our most important and pressing health and safety work is done to keep them and us safe and cared for: we can only do that if we are cared for)

The risks to us...	Reconciling the need for safe and preventative and proactive high levels of staffing with staff wellbeing and morale
<p>In responding and managing risk we paradoxically create another risk to our own wellbeing as our work is innately risky, labour intensive and hugely emotionally demanding and draining and can be physically risky: plus there are the associated high and distressing risks in our sector for example physical assault and malicious allegation, suspension and investigation.</p>	<p><b>Hard work -high risk: these are a part of our work and like soldiers we cannot complain we are being metaphorically shot at as we chose to be “soldiers” ...</b></p> <p><b>Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work is honourable and profoundly worthwhile so value yourselves and each other as you do the children and young people and be proud and know you matter and that an unexpected bacon sandwich and orange juice and coffee or a handwritten card at Christmas mean that too and don't lose sight of the kindnesses offered you and be balanced and recognize the leadership team's (including governors) job is to both challenge and support.</li> <li>• Praise and encourage and support not only the children and young people but each other and be quick to forgive and move on and try to avoid being petty or political as the children demand so much from us unnecessary negative emotional demands on each are damaging and certainly a distraction.</li> <li>• Metaphorical and literal hugs have a place in our hugely emotionally demanding work and an arm around the shoulder and a kind word necessary and powerful.</li> <li>• Always speak up and ask for help as however skilled, resolute and experienced you are because this work will ambush you emotionally and you can suddenly feel overwhelmed and that is normal and okay and you deserve compassion and help and understanding...maybe you need to go off duty or go home...</li> <li>• It is okay to admit you cannot do everything so please prioritise always the safety and wellbeing of the children and that meeting can wait...we are a team maybe someone can help you?</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respite and breaks and preparation are necessary and an entitlement and so is offering that bit extra too so know your own strengths and limitations and be both healthily selfish and generous and negotiate within the boundaries of reasonableness and practicality the best rhythm to your working day for you day by day if necessary because demands and challenges shift and so do our abilities physical and emotional...keep sharing.</li> <li>• Seeking to reconcile financial good health with safe supervision but privileging the latter and if cornered by financial constraints and or uncertainty in current climate pupil numbers may have to be reduced to maintain good order and discipline and therefore health and safety.</li> <li>• Keeping meetings and paperwork to just the essential and statutory (even then strip it to the bone) and all the other distracting and wasteful stuff of bureaucracy that doesn't improve the service to the children ignore it or keep it to an absolute minimum and put the tangible invaluable business of high quality teaching and care above all other tasks.</li> <li>• Thinking and sharing and planning together day by day, session by session, lesson by lesson how to deploy staff to best and safest effect we know is our most powerful practical tool and a pragmatic, dynamic, flexible approach is essential so keep talking, sharing and planning together.</li> <li>• Organizing the school day and week in ways that break up key negative and risky student combinations and alliances and triggers amongst students and stops the mob mentality a constant risk in SEMH work bedding in; the variety and stimulation of off-site specialist learning and the fun of social and cultural visits and activities are powerfully ameliorating and make the work more manageable and therefore safer for all of us.</li> <li>• Sometimes we can't cope and that is okay and we need help and the children and young people become too risky to safely manage and respite through FTE or a planned change of provision is sadly unavoidable as is seeking Police intervention in the immediate crisis.</li> </ul>

*Never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up. Jesse Jackson*

## Barley Lane School

*Hard work, humility, kindness*

### SEMH job description

The unity of values and purpose and esprit de corps we have worked hard to earn and that make us so powerful as a group and a team means any “job description” about teaching doesn’t just mean teachers but all of us who contribute and support that effort.

**What kind of people must we be:** what does best practice look like in encouraging and embedding good behaviour rooted in content and happy students?

It has always been striking how some teachers and support staff are able to soften and ameliorate the struggles and frustrations and hurt that characterise the experiences of so many of the children and young people in our care?

Striking too is how a whole array of “labels” and “needs” seem almost to disappear and become irrelevant when our children and young people are being taught and supported and “parented” by our best people?

So what do these best people look like? What do they do?

- They are warm and authentic, “present” and engaged but also securely and safely boundaried, ethical and transparent.
- They are by nature resilient, optimistic, driven, robustly self-aware and self-critical, self-reliant and self-improving.
- They are curious and problem solving; they find a way to better understand our complex and diverse student body and improve their practice
- They have a strong and authentic and emotional connection and commitment to their professional craft, the children and young people in their care and their colleagues.
- They bring clarity of expectation and embedded routines and rituals imbued with strong and safe relationships rooted in a warm assertiveness that brings both affirmation and challenge.
- They relentlessly live out and model the values and behaviours they want to inculcate in the children and young people.
- Those values are rooted in that “friendship” that unpicked means we model and we work hard to personify the respect-empathy-forgiveness-compassion-protection that encourages and nurtures these qualities in the children.
- Under stress and duress in a testing and risky and stressful context our best people are able to manage their emotions and remain self-aware and self-controlled and make informed and good decisions under pressure.
- They know the value of the figurative “pee break” and that pausing to reflect and share and explore with others is essential in all but the most pressing and immediate of risks and challenges but can be safely decisive too when necessary.

**Practical and technical:** what must we do or help to do?

**1. Create and maintain a classroom environment that is:**

- a. well appointed, comfortable, practicable and attractive;
- b. suitably and well-resourced;
- c. characterised by calm, hard-work, courtesy and respect.

**2. Ensure assessment of learning and target setting are:**

- a. accurate, challenging and reliable;
- b. so that learning progress and achievement can be reliably evidenced through student outcomes.

**3. Plan and produce schemes of work that are:**

- a. in place for the long, medium and short term (lesson planning);
- b. coherent and dovetail with colleagues' planning
- c. succinct and accessible and reliably describe what you do
- d. enriched and fun and reflect the need for accessibility and engagement for a challenging SEMH student group alongside statutory curriculum prescription;

**4. Plan and prepare and deliver lessons that:**

- a. are structured, engaging and practical and with a brisk pace with clear, confident and asserted control over the rhythm and fluency of the lesson;
- b. explicit in their purpose and objective(s) and those are revisited and reinforced often;
- c. make sense in the context of the students' longer term learning goals and they are increasingly fluent in this;
- d. are persistent and deliberate in revisiting and reinforcing learning goals both short and longer term to achieve the above;
- e. are enriched and sometimes surprising even risky and practical, engaging; pertinent to the lives and aspirations of the young people that seek to embed the "enjoyment of learning" and that are;
- f. also challenging and stretching and move the young people beyond and outside their immediate lives and experiences and raise and broaden their awareness of a "bigger world and heighten and sharpen their aspirations;
- g. are thoughtfully and tangibly differentiated to both support and challenge the diversity of ability and ameliorate the obstacles to learning (typically disengagement and disaffection and literacy difficulties) in an SEMH classroom.

**5. Assessment for learning that:**

- a. revisits, reinforces, and clarifies;
- b. moves the student towards their learning goals and seeks also to revisit and make certain consolidation and progress of learning has or is happening.

**5i. Reporting that is:**

- a. accessible and easily understood by all and diverse stakeholders and suitably modified to achieve this;
- b. accurate and focussed on accurate starting points and progress against challenging but achievable targets

- c. both written and verbal and both formal and informal, planned and reactive to stakeholder needs for example both formal parent's evenings and parental requests for additional face to face meetings.

#### **6. Behaviour management that is:**

- a. proactive and evidences the teacher understands their responsibility to intelligently and imaginatively overcome the diverse and complex obstacles to learning in a SEMH;
- b. preventative and evidenced by the high quality, environment, resources and engaging teaching that are the most powerful ameliorators of disaffection in class and facilitators and a driver of good learning progress;
- c. committed to those supportive and assertive relationships with SEMH students where praise and celebration of learning come freely and frequently but equally respect and courtesy are protected and asserted;
- d. includes both formal and informal pastoral working that develops the character and competence of the young people and engages with parents, carers, colleagues and other professionals to achieve positive personal growth and learning;
- e. skilled and reflective and seeks to build positive and trusting relationships with young people by improving practice and developing skills and insights;
- f. committed to the reasonable and proportionate discretionary and extra effort and time to apply both reward and consequence beyond the conventional school day essential in an SEMH setting.

#### **7. Reflection, consultation and action that means:**

- a. teachers identify obstacles to learning and look inwards for imaginative solutions that are rooted in improving their practice not seeking to explain underachievement but energetically and wholly committed to challenging and overcoming it by improving teaching to drive learning;
- b. teachers work supportively and collegially and look to the wider and diverse educational community and beyond to develop and improve and overcome obstacles to learning and focussed always on the overriding responsibility to deliver learning success;
- c. every pertinent and credible opportunity for training and development both formal and informal, planned for and encountered is exploited to improve teaching to improve learning.

#### **8. Subject leadership that:**

- a. embraces and reflects the reality of teaching in a small specialist setting where subject leadership is a privilege and a responsibility;
- b. ensures subject knowledge and content are continuously and appropriately developed and improved as are teaching styles and methodology and shared effectively across the team;
- c. learning targets are challenging and outcomes are analysed and understood and responded to and can be lucidly explained to colleagues, governors, inspectors and other stakeholders;
- d. an improvement cycle of reflection and action that dovetails with wider school aspirations and improvement.

#### **9. A contribution to school improvement that:**

- a. dovetails personal professional development and improvement with the school's corporate aspirations and improvement;
- b. is reflected in performance management that is pertinent, challenging and measurably beneficial to student learning and welfare.

## Whistle Blowing

### Introduction

The statutory guidance '*Working together to safeguard children*', updated in 2020, makes clear that all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children, must have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed by the organisation.

### What is whistle-blowing?

Whistle-blowing is the term used when someone who works with or for an organisation, wishes to raise concerns about malpractice in the organisation (for example, crimes, civil offences, miscarriages of justice, dangers to health and safety or the environment), and the cover up of any of these.

Whistleblowing is very different from a complaint or a grievance. It only applies when you have no vested interest and are acting as a witness to misconduct or malpractice that you have observed.

### What does the law say?

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998, known as the Whistleblowing Act, is intended to promote internal and regulatory disclosures and encourage workplace accountability and self-regulation. The Act protects the public interest by providing a remedy for individuals who suffer workplace reprisal for raising a genuine concern, whether it is a concern about child safeguarding and welfare systems, financial malpractice, danger, illegality, or other wrongdoing. The concern may relate to something that is happening or has happened in the past.

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, individuals are protected from reprisals for reasonably raising an honest and genuine concern internally, but you must be acting in the public interest and not for personal gain to be given this protection.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act covers all workers, including temporary agency staff. It does not cover the self-employed or volunteers. The Act also provides protection should individuals have difficulty gaining a reference from an employer because they have raised a concern. It makes it clear that any clause in a contract that purports to gag an individual from raising a concern that would be protected under the Act is void.

For more information on the law visit: [www.pcaw.co.uk/law/uklegislation.htm](http://www.pcaw.co.uk/law/uklegislation.htm)

### Who to contact

To raise concerns about failures in practices and procedures for the safeguarding of children in early years settings in Devon, the member of staff, volunteer or student should contact: MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 0345 155 1071 or email: [mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk)

**Ofsted** – contact can be made as follows:

- A dedicated whistleblowing hotline - 0300 123 3155 (Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm).
- By email to the whistleblowing team - [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk).
- By post: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- The hotline can be used by anybody who has a whistleblowing concern about services or practice in any local authority, or in a care or educational setting regulated and inspected by Ofsted, including:
  - employees and former employees
  - agency staff currently and formerly working within care or educational settings
  - voluntary workers in care or educational settings

## Confidentiality

Ofsted encourage either open or confidential whistleblowing as the best means for protecting staff/volunteer/student and for the concern to be addressed.

Ofsted will ensure that their work in the handling of all concerns, complaints and safeguarding issues complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Under the Freedom of Information Act, Ofsted has the legal obligation to provide information in response to a request unless the information is available by other means; it would not be reasonably practicable to supply it; or the information falls within the exemptions of the Act. If we receive requests for disclosure of information obtained under the whistleblowing procedure, we will always seek to maintain confidentiality where this has been requested. However, Ofsted cannot guarantee confidentiality in every case.

## Healthy Relationships

It is self-evident that to promote good relationships and embedding well-being amongst the children (recurrent themes in statements/EHCPs) we must do the same with each other.

What follows is a **voluntary code** we can choose to sign up to if it resonates with us and represents our core values and commitment to the “humility” and “kindness” that should imbue everything we do.

- I will strive to always see my colleagues in a positive light and remember, recognise and habitually celebrate their strengths and qualities and contribution.
- I will seek to resolve the inevitable tensions and difficulties that happen in every work place in a spirit of openness, respect and positivity and do so with kindness and courtesy.
- I will both challenge myself and my peers when there is negativity and any lack of generosity of spirit and be brave enough to call “politics” and always where behaviours are damaging to team spirit and unity.
- I will use the “three wise people” if I feel a matter is complex or stuck or recurring.
- I will always seek to be authentically forgiving and conciliatory and apply what we preach to the children, “fresh starts” .

