

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Unique School Solutions Ltd

Policy owner	Managing Directors / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Applies to	Internal staff, candidates, agency workers, contractors and representatives
Approved / effective	1 September 2026
Review date	No later than 31 August 2027, or sooner if requirements change
Version	4.0
Status	Operational policy - designed to support KCSIE 2026
Important: This policy sets the safeguarding standards expected by Unique School Solutions. Workers must also follow the safeguarding, child protection, staff behaviour, online safety, whistleblowing and reporting arrangements of every setting in which they work.	

1. Policy statement and purpose

Unique School Solutions Ltd ("Unique School Solutions", "USS", "we" or "the company") is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Everyone working for or through USS must take a child-centred approach and consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.

This policy sets out how USS prevents unsuitable people from being introduced or supplied to education and childcare settings; equips staff and workers to identify and report concerns; responds to allegations and low-level concerns; works with client settings and statutory agencies; and fulfils relevant referral, information-sharing and record-keeping responsibilities.

For this policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18. The welfare of the child is paramount. No single practitioner will necessarily have a complete picture of a child's circumstances, so concerns must be identified, shared appropriately and acted upon promptly.

Failure to follow this policy may result in removal from an assignment or the supply register, investigation, disciplinary or contractual action, and/or referral to an appropriate authority.

Action will be fair, proportionate and consistent with safeguarding duties and applicable employment law.

2. Scope

This policy applies to USS directors, employees, recruitment consultants, managers, candidates, temporary and agency workers, supply staff, contractors and any other person engaged by or working through USS in a setting where children may be present.

It covers work in schools, colleges, alternative provision, special schools, nurseries, early years settings and other education or childcare environments, including remote or online work. Where a placement falls under more than one safeguarding regime, USS and the client will apply the requirements relevant to that role and setting.

The setting retains responsibility for its pupils, on-site safeguarding arrangements and management of concerns arising in the setting. USS shares safeguarding responsibilities for the people it supplies and will cooperate fully with the setting, LADO and other agencies. Safeguarding responsibility cannot be discharged simply by ending an assignment.

3. Legal and professional framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to the following legislation, statutory guidance and professional standards, as amended from time to time:

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), effective 1 September 2026;
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and its statutory framework;
the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable;
the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and the Education Act 2002;
the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012;
the Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018;
the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order and DBS Code of Practice;
the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and current Prevent duty guidance;
the Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Modern Slavery Act 2015, Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and relevant sexual offences and harmful-practices legislation;
the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025; and

KCSIE is statutory guidance addressed principally to schools and colleges. USS uses it as the core education safeguarding benchmark and will support clients to discharge their duties, while retaining its own legal duties as an employment business/personnel supplier.

4. Safeguarding leadership and contacts

Role	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Rebecca Dodd rebecca@uniqueschoolsolutions.co.uk 0114 339 2026
Deputy DSL	Adele Roberts adele@uniqueschoolsolutions.co.uk 0114 339 2026

The DSL oversees safeguarding arrangements within USS, receives and coordinates concerns, supports staff and workers, liaises with client DSLs and statutory agencies, ensures records are maintained, considers referrals, monitors learning and oversees review of this policy. The Deputy DSL acts when the DSL is unavailable. Safeguarding concerns must never be delayed because a named person is unavailable.

The DSL and Deputy DSL will receive training appropriate to their agency role and maintain knowledge of local referral pathways. Internal staff will receive induction and regular updates appropriate to their responsibilities.

Immediate danger: If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of immediate harm, contact the setting's DSL immediately and contact children's social care and/or the police through the local emergency procedure. Call 999 where there is an emergency. Then notify the USS DSL as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.

5. Responsibilities of all staff and workers

Everyone working for or through USS must:

read and understand KCSIE 2026 Part One in full before or at the start of education work and confirm completion when required;
complete safeguarding and child protection induction/training appropriate to the role and all setting-specific induction;
know the identity and contact route for the setting's DSL or deputy DSL;
remain alert to indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation, modern slavery, radicalisation, online harm and other safeguarding concerns;
exercise professional curiosity and report concerns even when uncertain whether abuse has occurred;
listen carefully, reassure the child that they are being taken seriously, avoid leading questions and never promise secrecy;
make accurate, factual and timely notes, preserving the child's own words where possible, and distinguish observation, information from others and opinion;
report rather than investigate; do not interview witnesses or confront an alleged perpetrator unless directed by the appropriate process;

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maintain professional boundaries and comply with the setting's staff behaviour/code-of-conduct, mobile phone, acceptable-use and online-safety rules;
report concerns about another adult, including low-level concerns and conduct outside work that may create a transferable risk; and cooperate with lawful safeguarding enquiries, risk assessments and statutory agencies.

6. Understanding safeguarding concerns

Safeguarding and promoting welfare includes providing help and support as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment inside or outside the home, including online; preventing impairment of mental or physical health or development; ensuring safe and effective care; and taking action to enable the best outcomes.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation may occur in a family, institutional or community context; be perpetrated by adults or children; take place online or offline; and overlap. A child may not recognise an experience as harmful or feel ready or able to disclose it. Disability, special educational needs, communication differences, language barriers, fear, shame, threats, sexual orientation or other circumstances may create additional barriers.

6.1 Core categories

Physical abuse: may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, fabricated or induced illness, or otherwise causing physical harm.

Emotional abuse: is persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe and adverse effects. It may include persistent criticism, belittling, name-calling, silencing, inappropriate expectations, overprotection, witnessing ill-treatment, serious bullying, exploitation or corruption.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing, causing or inciting a child to take part in sexual activity, whether physical or non-contact, online or offline, and whether or not the child understands what is happening. It can be perpetrated by adults or children.

Neglect: is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, including adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, protection, medical care or emotional responsiveness.

6.2 Specific and contextual harms

Staff and workers must be alert to, and promptly report, concerns including child criminal or sexual exploitation; county lines; trafficking and modern slavery; domestic abuse; serious violence and weapon-related threats; bullying and cyberbullying; racism, faith-based prejudice and discriminatory harm; honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation; radicalisation; children missing or absent from education; abuse in intimate relationships; child-to-parent/caregiver abuse; financial exploitation; mental health concerns that may indicate abuse or safeguarding risk; and risks affecting children with SEND, medical conditions, young carers or children in alternative provision. This is not an exhaustive list. A worker does not need proof or a complete picture before reporting a concern.

7. Child-on-child abuse, harassment and violence

Children can abuse other children inside or outside the setting and online. Such behaviour must never be dismissed as banter, having a laugh, part of growing up or boys being boys. It can include bullying, discriminatory abuse, physical violence, serious threats, abuse in intimate relationships, initiation or hazing, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, upskirting, and the making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images. Images may be consensually or non-consensually shared, digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including deepfakes or deep nudes. Every incident involving nude or semi-nude imagery requires a safeguarding response. Workers must not view, copy, print, forward or ask a child to send such imagery. They must secure the device without unnecessarily handling the content and report immediately under the setting's procedure.

The response must consider the needs and safety of all children involved, including the child who may have displayed harmful behaviour. Victims must be taken seriously, supported and never made to feel ashamed or responsible for causing a problem.

8. Online safety, generative AI and remote working

Technology is a significant component of many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Harm can occur wholly online or be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Workers must follow the setting's policies on acceptable use, filtering and monitoring, mobile phones, information security, photography/recording, generative AI, communication and data protection.

Use only accounts, devices, platforms and communication channels approved by the setting.

Do not contact pupils through personal social media or messaging accounts or accept friend/follow requests.

Do not photograph, record, download, upload to AI tools, retain or share pupil material unless explicitly authorised for a legitimate purpose.

For remote work, use a professional environment, appropriate background, dress and conduct; keep sessions visible/auditable in line with the setting's arrangements.

Report online sexual harm, grooming, cyberbullying, coercion, harmful content, AI-generated sexual imagery and any breach of professional boundaries immediately.

9. Family Help and support before statutory intervention

Workers should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from support before statutory intervention. KCSIE 2026 distinguishes universal services and community-based Early Help from the targeted early help level of Family Help. Workers must report concerns to the setting's DSL so the

appropriate local assessment, support or referral pathway can be considered. They should not attempt to initiate or manage a Family Help plan independently unless acting within an authorised role.

10. Reporting a concern about a child

Act immediately. If the child is in immediate danger, use the emergency route set out in section 4.

Listen and respond calmly. Do not promise confidentiality, ask leading questions, investigate or delay action while seeking certainty.

Report without delay to the setting's DSL or deputy and follow the setting's recording procedure. If neither is available and the risk cannot wait, follow the setting's escalation route and make or support an appropriate referral to children's social care and/or police.

Make an accurate record as soon as possible: date, time, context, people present, the child's own words, observations and action taken. Sign/date it where the system requires.

Notify the USS DSL where the concern is serious, involves a USS worker, may require action by USS, involves unsafe practice, or has not been handled appropriately by the setting. Do not send identifiable child data through unsecured personal channels.

Follow up. If the worker remains concerned, they must escalate through the setting's procedure, contact the USS DSL and, where necessary, use local authority or whistleblowing routes. If in doubt, speak to a DSL.

Do not delay: A safeguarding concern must not wait for the end of the day, the end of an assignment, a written statement, or the return of a particular manager.

11. Allegations or concerns about adults: harm threshold

A concern may meet the harm threshold where it is alleged that a person working with children has:

behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
behaved towards a child or children in a way indicating they may pose a risk of harm; and/or
behaved, or may have behaved, in a way indicating they may not be suitable to work with children.

The final category includes conduct outside the workplace that may create a transferable risk. Concerns must be reported without delay to the setting's headteacher/principal or nominated case manager and to the USS DSL. Where the concern is about a headteacher/principal, the setting's procedure must be followed. Where it concerns a USS internal employee or director, it must be escalated to a director not implicated in the concern and to the LADO where appropriate.

The setting will ordinarily manage the child-welfare response, establish initial facts and liaise with the LADO because it has direct access to the child, witnesses and circumstances. USS will fully cooperate, share relevant information lawfully, attend meetings when invited, and normally lead employment, contractual or disciplinary action relating to its worker.

12. Allegations involving supply staff and USS workers

The setting and USS share safeguarding responsibilities. Ending an assignment is not, by itself, an adequate safeguarding outcome. On receiving an allegation or serious concern, USS will:

- escalate the matter immediately to the DSL and an appropriate senior manager;
- confirm that the setting has taken immediate steps to protect the child and engaged its case manager/LADO route;
- place an appropriate temporary safeguarding hold on new assignments while risk is assessed, without treating suspension as an automatic finding of wrongdoing;
- liaise with the setting and, where appropriate, the LADO, police and children's social care;

provide relevant records and information lawfully, including any previous concerns that may assist assessment;

support a fair, timely process and give the worker an appropriate named contact, subject to advice about when and what they may be told;

record decisions, action, risk assessments, advice received and the rationale; and
consider DBS and, for teachers, TRA referral duties at the appropriate stage.

USS will not conduct enquiries that could jeopardise a police, children's social care or LADO-led process. Any decision about further supply, restrictions or return to work will be risk assessed and informed by available evidence and professional advice. Where a worker leaves or refuses to cooperate, USS will continue the process and seek to reach and record an outcome wherever possible.

13. Low-level concerns

A low-level concern is any concern, however small and even if no more than a sense of unease, that an adult may have acted inconsistently with the staff code of conduct or professional boundaries, but the behaviour does not meet the harm threshold. Examples include over-friendliness, favouritism, inappropriate one-to-one contact, humiliating pupils, inappropriate communication, misuse of social media, unnecessary physical contact or concerning professional judgement.

Workers must report low-level concerns in accordance with the setting's policy and inform USS where the concern relates to a USS worker or may require agency action. USS will share relevant information with the setting, review patterns or repeated concerns, record decisions and consider whether the matter meets the harm threshold or requires LADO advice. Malicious or knowingly false reports will be addressed fairly; good-faith reporting will be supported.

14. Interim action, investigation and outcomes

The welfare of the child is the prime concern, while the person subject to an allegation must be treated fairly and supported. Temporary suspension or a safeguarding hold is a neutral protective measure, not a finding. USS will consider the nature and seriousness of the concern, access to children across all assignments, advice from the setting/LADO and whether proportionate alternatives can manage risk.

Where USS leads an internal process, it will appoint an appropriate investigator or decision-maker, give the worker a fair opportunity to respond when this will not prejudice safeguarding or criminal enquiries, maintain appropriate confidentiality and keep a clear audit trail.

Outcomes will use recognised descriptions where relevant: substantiated, malicious, false, unsubstantiated or unfounded.

Safeguarding investigations will not be compromised by a settlement agreement, resignation or the end of an assignment. References will be accurate and comply with KCSIE and legal requirements: false, malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded allegations will not be included; substantiated safeguarding information will be handled lawfully and fairly.

15. Referrals to DBS, TRA and other bodies

15.1 Disclosure and Barring Service

As a personnel supplier, USS has a legal duty to refer to the DBS when both referral conditions are met:

Condition 1 - USS withdraws permission for the person to engage in regulated activity, moves them to non-regulated work, or would have done so had they not been redeployed, resigned, retired or otherwise left; and
Condition 2 - USS believes the person engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test, and/or was cautioned or convicted of a relevant automatic-barring offence.

Temporary suspension alone does not necessarily trigger the duty. USS will investigate and gather sufficient evidence, take DBS/LADO/legal advice where appropriate and make the referral once the conditions are met. The duty applies even if another organisation has referred or the matter has been reported to the LADO, police or regulator. Failure to refer without reasonable justification may be a criminal offence. USS may also make a discretionary safeguarding referral where lawful and appropriate even if the mandatory conditions are not met.

15.2 Teaching Regulation Agency and other referrals

Where USS ceases to use, or would have ceased to use, the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct, it will consider whether referral to the Secretary of State through the Teaching Regulation Agency is appropriate. A TRA referral is separate from any DBS duty. USS will also cooperate with or refer to children's social care, police, LADO, professional regulators, the client and other authorities where required or appropriate.

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15. Safer recruitment and vetting

USS will take reasonable, proportionate and role-appropriate steps to prevent unsuitable people from being introduced or supplied to work with children. Full requirements are set out in the Recruitment and Selection Policy and operating procedures. The process includes, where applicable:

- initial pre-vetting and a structured, safeguarding-focused interview;
- a complete employment history with gaps, frequent moves and discrepancies explored and recorded;
- appropriate, directly verified references, including the current or most recent relevant employer wherever possible;
- identity, name-change and right-to-work checks using acceptable evidence;
- the appropriate enhanced DBS check and children's barred-list information where the role is regulated activity and the information may lawfully be requested;
- proper use of the DBS Update Service, including identity, certificate, workforce/level and consent checks;
- teacher prohibition and relevant professional-status checks; Section 128 checks where the role and setting require them;
- relevant overseas criminality/professional checks and qualification comparability evidence where appropriate and reasonably obtainable;
- Childcare Act disqualification checks or declarations where the role is in scope;
- online due-diligence searches using publicly available information, applied proportionately and with relevant concerns explored fairly; and documented clearance, client assurance and any additional lawful role-specific checks.

The former supervision exemption from regulated activity has been removed by the Crime and Policing Act 2026. USS will assess the current regulated-activity rules applicable to each placement and will not rely on supervision as a general basis for omitting barred-list eligibility or checks. In EYFS-covered school settings, USS will support the setting's requirement that relevant staff/volunteers do not start covered work until the required enhanced DBS certificate, including barred-list information, has been received. No single check proves suitability. Clearance is a rounded assessment and will be withheld where material safeguarding concerns remain unresolved. Open references or testimonials supplied by a candidate will not normally be relied upon without direct verification.

16. Ongoing suitability and duty to disclose

Safeguarding does not end at initial registration. USS will maintain ongoing oversight through feedback, incident and complaint review, DBS Update Service checks where authorised, renewal/re-verification processes, training updates, expiry monitoring and response to information from settings, referees, regulators or authorities.

Candidates and workers must tell USS immediately about any arrest, charge, caution, conviction, investigation, disciplinary matter, restriction, prohibition, safeguarding concern, change to DBS status, change affecting right to work, or other circumstance that may affect their suitability or deployment.

USS will assess the information lawfully, fairly and proportionately and may pause work while enquiries are made.

17. Information sharing, confidentiality and records

Safeguarding information will be shared with those who need it to protect children, on a lawful, necessary and proportionate basis. Data protection law is not a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing. Consent is not always required and will not be sought where doing so could place a child at risk or prejudice an investigation. Decisions to share or not share, and the reasons, will be recorded.

USS safeguarding records will be factual, dated, appropriately detailed, secure, access-controlled and retained in line with legal and contractual requirements. A record will normally include the concern or allegation, source, immediate risk/action, advice and referrals, communications, decisions and rationale, investigation/outcome, restrictions and review/closure. Safeguarding records will be kept separately or clearly restricted from routine candidate records where practicable.

Staff and workers must not discuss safeguarding matters in public places, on social media or with unauthorised people. Identifiable child information must be transmitted only through approved secure channels. Confidentiality must not be used to prevent a necessary safeguarding disclosure.

18. Whistleblowing and escalation

USS promotes an open culture in which staff and workers can raise concerns about unsafe practice, failures to act, conduct of colleagues or managers, or the way a safeguarding matter has been handled.

Reports should follow the setting's whistleblowing route and USS Whistleblowing Policy. A person who remains concerned must escalate rather than assume someone else has acted.

Good-faith concerns will be taken seriously, and the reporter will be protected from retaliation as far as the law allows. Where internal routes are inappropriate or ineffective, the person may contact the LADO, children's social care, police, DBS, Ofsted or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line, depending on the concern.

19. Training, induction and assurance

Internal staff will receive safeguarding induction relevant to education recruitment, agency responsibilities, allegations management, low-level concerns, information sharing, DBS referral duties and escalation. Knowledge will be refreshed regularly and at least annually through training, briefings, policy updates or other appropriate means. The DSL/Deputy DSL will maintain role-appropriate development.

Workers will receive or be directed to this policy, the Candidate Code of Conduct, KCSIE Part One and relevant safeguarding information, and will be required to confirm understanding. Every client must provide setting-specific induction, including the identity of the DSL/deputies, reporting route, key policies, emergency arrangements and any particular safeguarding risks.

20. Related USS policies and procedures

Recruitment and Selection Policy / safer recruitment and vetting procedures
Candidate Code of Conduct
Allegations, Unsuitable Worker and Disciplinary procedures
Whistleblowing Policy
Complaints Policy and Procedure
Data Protection, Privacy and Retention arrangements
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Social Media Policy

21. Monitoring, approval and review

The DSL will monitor safeguarding activity, referrals, allegations, low-level concerns, training completion, recurring themes and lessons learned. Material findings will be reported confidentially to the directors. This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a significant incident, audit finding, change to law or statutory guidance, or material change to USS services or procedures. A current version will be made available to internal staff, candidates/workers and clients as appropriate. Superseded versions will be retained in accordance with document-control arrangements.

Appendix A - Quick reporting guide

Situation	Action
Immediate danger / emergency	Contact the setting DSL and children's social care/police immediately; call 999 where required. Notify USS as soon as safe.
Concern or disclosure about a child	Listen, reassure, do not promise secrecy or investigate; report promptly to the setting DSL/deputy; record accurately.
Concern about a USS worker or other adult	Report without delay to the setting case manager/DSL and USS DSL. Do not confront the person or carry out your own investigation.
Low-level concern	Use the setting's low-level-concern route and inform USS where a USS worker is involved or agency action may be needed.
Setting has not acted / unsafe practice	Escalate through the setting, contact USS DSL and use whistleblowing or statutory routes where necessary.

Appendix B - Principal external guidance

Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

HM Government: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and statutory framework.

Department for Education: Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework.

Disclosure and Barring Service: Making barring referrals to the DBS; legal duty to refer; regulated activity guidance.

Department for Education: Teachers' Standards and Teaching Regulation Agency referral guidance.

HM Government: Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners.

Policy approval

Approved by	__Rebecca Dodd__
Role	Director/DSL
Signature	<i>R C Dodd</i>
Date	01/09/2026