

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR SAFEGUARDING

This policy is based on Scripture Union Guidelines for safeguarding

This documentation is developed in conjunction with the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS).

Revised and approved at the trustee meeting on 25/05/2021

A. Policy Statement

The Stort Valley Schools Trust (SVST) is a movement made up of trustees, volunteers and paid school workers. We believe that all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God and aim to follow Biblical principles in all that we do.

Therefore:

- We commit ourselves to the nurture, protection, and general welfare of all, especially children and adults at risk of harm. In so doing, we will work, in partnership, as appropriate, with parents, carers, statutory agencies and other organisations.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children and adults at risk of harm from all forms of abuse and to report any disclosures of abuse in addition to suspicions or concerns.
- In order to achieve this, we are committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and adults at risk of harm. We will provide appropriate supervision, recognise mutual accountability and commit to an annual review of our safeguarding policy, procedures and practices.

SVST has adopted the above principles; all trustees, volunteers and school workers are presented with a copy and expected to follow the procedures and guidelines as set out in this document.

B. Statutory Compliance for Stort Valley Schools Trust

The standards in this policy build on and incorporate legislation and government expectations for children and adults at risk of harm. This includes HM Government 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018,)' and new safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014. The guidance is for statutory agencies and voluntary organisations alike and covers all the expectations of government in relation to safeguarding children in England.

1) **Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children and young adults at risk of harm.**

The policy statement included in this document has been adopted following approval by the Board of Scripture Union and the Trustees of SVST. It is reviewed annually, and is available on request for public scrutiny on our website.

NOTE: In most instances, SVST's activities are within a school setting. In those instances workers will follow the safeguarding policy and procedures of the school in which they are working. Any disclosures of abuse in that setting will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead within the school.

SVST will keep brief records of the child who made the disclosure, the essence of the disclosure, the school and activity in which this occurred and, to whom in the school it was reported.

Throughout this document, unless otherwise stated, all statements referring to children and those working with children are applied to young adults at risk of harm when young adults at risk of harm are participating in activities provided by the Trust.

2) **Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur**

We have established and will maintain and review clear procedures to fulfil this policy. They are set out in detail in this document and are under constant review, with any updates necessary given in writing at least annually.

3) **Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.**

SVST will direct children to a member of their school pastoral staff if they wish to talk to an independent person regarding SVST.

4) **Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all school workers and volunteers.**

We have established training and comprehensive procedures for all workers and volunteers in direct contact with children. All workers receive a copy of the policy statement and procedures and are expected to comply.

5) **Give all staff and volunteers clear roles.**

All workers have a written job description and all volunteers are given a clear written role profile

6) **Use supervision as a means of creating a safeguarding culture across the organisation.**

All workers plan and review their work with the person to whom they are accountable.

7) **Treat all would-be paid school workers and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.**

We have comprehensive application and selection procedures for all school workers and all volunteers.

8) **Gain at least two references from people who have experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.**

We require a reference from at least two people (church leaders or equivalent) for each applicant, seeking information which includes character and relationship assessment. We inform referees if work involves direct contact with children.

We appreciate that some of our volunteers are young adults wanting to begin work with children, and therefore it may not be possible to gain references which relate to relevant experience. However, young adults may be able to get a good character reference from a teacher or similar.

9) **Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.**

All paid school workers are interviewed prior to appointment.

Volunteers team members will be interviewed as appropriate to their role with the team.

10) **Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.**

All workers are required to sign a declaration disclosing a criminal conviction or caution. Annual short-term volunteers with children are required to do so annually. This includes, subject to certain exceptions, disclosing convictions which for other purposes are 'spent', as posts involving direct work with children are exempt from the provision of section 4(ii) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions Order 1975). Under DBS filtering rules there are some exceptions to this legislation and we will provide applicants with a copy of the filtering guide so that they can determine whether a conviction, caution, reprimand or warning should be disclosed.

Applicants for roles involving regulated activity are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

11) **Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.**

While the short term nature of much of our volunteer work makes probationary periods inappropriate, we are aware that many volunteers will have limited experience. Appropriate support is provided for each circumstance. In practice, this may mean sharing of responsibility, rather than having unsupervised responsibility, for children.

The School Workers have the authority to ask team members to leave an event if it is in the best interest of the children.

We have a system of specific and general induction for paid school workers, leading into an on-going annual review process.

12) **Issue guidelines on how to deal with a disclosure and/or suspicion of abuse.**

Comprehensive guidelines are established and reviewed annually.

13) **Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors, and policy makers.**

We provide and give access to training for the safe care of children, including increasing understanding of the prevalence of abuse, along with the signs, symptoms and indicators of abuse

C. Safer Recruitment

- The standards listed above are applied to our safe recruitment procedures, specifically standards 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13. SVST is committed to undertaking careful recruitment and selection procedures as stated in this policy.
- SVST school workers who have regulated activity with children are required to apply for Enhanced Disclosures on appointment and every three years thereafter
- All volunteers who are expected to undertake regulated activity with children are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure on appointment and every three years thereafter.
- Trustees apply for an Enhanced Disclosure before appointment and every three years thereafter.
- SVST has appointed a delegated person (currently the Team Leader) to be responsible for verification of the identity and the online processing of DBS checks for School Workers and volunteers with SVST. The safeguarding Trustee will be responsible for the identity verification and processing of DBS checks for trustees.

Update Service

- Those requiring Disclosures for work with SVST are required to apply to the DBS via Scripture Union.
- Where an individual has registered a disclosure certificate with the DBS update service, SVST will accept registered disclosure certificates that comply with the following criteria:
 - The disclosure is for the 'Child Workforce' category and
 - It is an 'Enhanced Disclosure'.
- Where the online disclosure check contains information about cautions, convictions, reprimands or warnings or other relevant information the procedure below on handling disclosure information will be followed.

Handling Disclosure Information

- If a Disclosure contains information about cautions, convictions, reprimands or warnings or other relevant information, advice on how to proceed is sought by SVST's safeguarding lead.
- Information recorded on the Disclosure may be shared by the safeguarding lead only with those directly involved in the particular employment decision.
- Information recorded on the Disclosure is only shared if it is likely to affect the employment decision.
- If additional information is received from a police force, action follows the procedure outlined in the letter and is not shared with the applicant or anyone other than those making the employment decision, and only with those people if the police letter received does not forbid it.
- The date and disclosure number of all checks are recorded in Scripture Union's DBS system.

Renewal of Disclosures

- Disclosures are normally renewed on a rolling three-year basis.
- For disclosures that are registered with the update service these will also be checked on a rolling 3 year basis.
- If, in the intervening years, declarations completed by those working with children suggest changed circumstances, a new Enhanced Disclosure is requested.

D. Events Run By Stort Valley Schools Trust

Mentoring

- The parents of all young people involved in mentoring will have been informed that the mentoring is taking place for their child with SVST. Mentees will normally have been identified by the school in which the worker is working.
- A mentoring meeting should have an agreed start and end time a member of staff from the school should be aware that you are meeting.
- Keep a basic record of dates of meetings and any safeguarding concerns raised.
- Any safeguarding concerns should be reported to the schools safeguarding lead and the school safeguarding procedures followed.

Online Mentoring

- Workers should work from a private space, if working from home for mentoring. On a video call, the background should be appropriate to the meeting and be a neutral setting.
- Workers must have agreed with the school and/or team leader that they will be working on line and the reasons for this recorded.
- Notes must be kept of the individual meetings with mentees, by the worker.
- For any contacts made on line, an SVST or school account should always be used.

Facebook and Instagram

The Instagram and Online Communications policy will apply and are appended to this Safeguarding Policy.

<h2>E. Code of Conduct</h2>

- All those working with children on behalf of SVST will treat them with respect and dignity, which should be reflected in attitude, behaviour and speech.
- SVST accepts a duty of care for a child attending a SVST event.
- School workers and volunteer workers will avoid forming exclusive relationships or those which could be seen as showing favouritism to individual participants.
- It is inappropriate for workers to initiate physical contact with children and young people, except in exceptional circumstances, such as the need for medical attention or to prevent harm. Schools workers and volunteer workers should be cautious of contact initiated by children and young people.
- The use of any corporal punishment is strictly prohibited i.e. any form of physical discipline is not acceptable
- Any physical contact with children in the area of discipline will be purely in terms of an intervention which prevents the child or young person from hurting themselves or others. Minimal force will be used, for the minimum time necessary.
- If it is necessary to remove a child from an activity, the worker should ensure that the school is aware of what has happened with the child to make this necessary, and that the child is returned to the part of the school they should be in or disciplined in line with the policy of the school's policy.
- School workers and Volunteer workers are in a 'relationship of trust' with participants and must take care that an abuse of that trust does not occur. Any behaviour which might allow a sexual relationship to develop between a person in a position of trust and the individual(s) in their care must be avoided.
- This relationship of trust is also in place outside the actual event in any communication between team and participants, whether in person, by letter, email, telephone, text messaging or any other means. Any communication or direct contact with a child will therefore be characterised by transparency and integrity and must operate within SVST's policy on safeguarding children.

- School workers and volunteer workers will not normally be expected to communicate outside of the event with participants other than those for whom they have been given particular responsibility.

F. Understanding Abuse and Neglect (Children)

1. What is abuse and neglect?

The four definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)'.

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, by a stranger, or via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

2. Reporting suspicion of abuse

Whilst working with Stort Valley Schools Trust, school workers and volunteer workers may be told about various personal situations which the participants they work with have experienced. Being prepared to give the time to listen and care without being judgmental will be of great value and assistance. Workers and volunteers must understand the importance of safeguarding and understand that it is possible that the nature of our work may increase the likelihood of children disclosing possible harm. Such disclosures require more than a caring response and a sympathetic ear, and the following procedure must be followed by the worker:

- Give the person time to talk freely but without fear of being overheard. Treat them with respect and acceptance. Always accept what is being said at this stage. Do not ask questions other than to clarify what is being said. Never put words into the person's mouth and be careful with your tone of voice so as not to appear shocked or angry or to show disbelief.
- Do not promise to keep the disclosure 'secret'. Explain that you must share this information with the leader of the event/the designated person at the school, who may in turn call upon other people who will be able to help.
- Stay with the person until you feel they have said all they want to say. Try to avoid leaving them in a distressed state.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead of the disclosure as soon as possible.
- Make a written report of what happened as soon as possible (not in the participant's presence). Do not interpret, only record what was said as verbatim as possible.

Workers handling situations may also need appropriate help and support throughout the process of reporting a disclosure and afterwards. The Designated Safeguarding Lead for SVST is available to provide support in such situations. Counselling support may also be appropriate.

Once a disclosure or allegation of abuse is made, SVST is required to take action. The worker will immediately inform the schools Safeguarding Lead and follow their guidance to take appropriate action. The worker should make themselves aware of the safeguarding policy of the school in which they are working.

- If contact with the person making the disclosure continues during the event, try to ensure that this is as 'normal' as possible, and avoid drawing attention to the situation or repeatedly referring to it unless the person initiates further discussion.
- If an allegation is made against any worker or member of school staff, the same process must be followed, except that it must exclude the individual who is the subject of the allegation.
- Any team member who is concerned about the way an allegation or disclosure has been handled will contact the Safeguarding Trustee for SVST.
- At every stage, procedures will show respect for people and will involve careful consultation, not hasty reaction.

G. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the approval of SVST's safeguarding policy.

The Safeguarding Trustee is the designated lead person for safeguarding. This is currently Kathryn Winfield.

Contact: safeguarding@svst.org.uk