



**GT Scholars**  
**Safeguarding Policy & Procedures**  
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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Underpinning values</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Guidance on ‘Whether this is a Child Protection Matter’</b>	<b>5</b>
Physical abuse	5
Emotional abuse	5
Neglect	5
Sexual abuse	5
Confidentiality	6
Talking to and listening to children	7
Record keeping	7
<b>Reporting concerns about a young person</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Protecting yourself against allegations of abuse</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Allegations of abuse against a professional staff member or volunteer</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Responding to allegations of abuse</b>	<b>10</b>
Allegations against a member of staff/volunteer	10
Concerns about poor practice	10
Internal enquiries and suspension	10
<b>Recruitment, supervision and training for staff</b>	<b>11</b>
Induction of new staff and volunteers	11
Frequency of training and Enhanced DBS checks	11
<b>Data Protection &amp; Consent procedure for Children’s Data (Including Images)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>E-Safety</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Updates to the Safeguarding policy and procedures</b>	<b>13</b>
Resources	13
<b>Designated Safeguarding Officers and Deputies:</b>	<b>13</b>

## Introduction

This safeguarding policy is for GT Scholars CIC and GT Scholars Foundation CIO which is jointly referred to as GT Scholars throughout this document.

GT Scholars recognises its duties under the 1989 Children Act and is intentional about protecting and safeguarding the interests of all young children. GT Scholars recognises that effective child and vulnerable adult protection work requires sound procedures, good inter-agency cooperation and a workforce that is competent and confident in responding to child protection situations.

This procedures document provides the basis for good practice within the organisation for Child Protection work and is in keeping with relevant national procedures for safe and professional practice in this context.

Child Protection has to be considered within professionals wider safeguarding responsibilities that include a duty to cooperate under the Children Act 2004. Within the context of Every Child Matters, this takes account of the need for children “being healthy and staying safe”.

These procedures aim to provide a framework which ensures that all practice in the area of child protection is consistent with stated values and procedures that underpin all work with children and young people.

This document also seeks to make the professional responsibilities clear to all staff & tutors to ensure that statutory and other duties are met in accordance with Safeguarding Children Board requirements and procedures.

GT Scholars is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect our staff and tutors to share this commitment.

## Underpinning values

Where there is a safeguarding issue, GT Scholars will work in accordance with the principles outlined in local authority Safeguarding Children Board Inter-agency Child Protection procedures:

- A child’s welfare is paramount. Each child has a right to be protected from harm and exploitation and to have their welfare safeguarded.
- Each child is unique. Action taken by child welfare organisations should be child-centred, taking account of a child’s cultural, ethnic and religious background, gender, sexual orientation, their individual ability and any special needs.
- Children, parents and other carers should be made aware of their responsibilities and their rights, together with advice about the power of professionals to intervene in their family circumstances.

- Each child has a right to be consulted about actions taken by others on his/her behalf. The concerns of children and their families should be listened to and due consideration given to their understanding, wishes and feelings.
- Individual family members must be involved in decisions affecting them. They must be treated with courtesy and respect and with due regard given to working with them in a spirit of partnership in safeguarding children's welfare.
- Open-mindedness and honesty must guide each stage of assessment and operational practice. The strengths of individual family members, as well as their needs, should be given due consideration.
- Personal information is usually confidential. It should only be shared with the permission of the individual concerned, or unless the disclosure of confidential personal information is necessary in order to protect a child. In all circumstances, information must be confined to those people directly involved in the professional network of each individual child and on a strict "need to know" basis.
- Professionals should be aware of the effects of outside intervention on children, upon family life and the impact and implications of what they say and do.
- Explanations by professionals to children, their families and other carers should be plainly stated and jargon-free. Unavoidable technical and professional terminology should be explained in simple terms.
- Sound professional practice is based upon positive inter-agency collaboration, evidence-based research and effective supervision and evaluation.
- Early intervention in providing support services under Section 17 of the Children Act (1989) is an important principle of practice in inter-agency arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children.

## **What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred**

1. You must report your concerns immediately to the designated safeguarding officer at GT Scholars who will assess the information quickly and carefully and ask for further information, and make a decision on the most appropriate course of action. The designated safeguarding officer may need to:
  2. Obtain information from staff/volunteers, children/young people or parents/carers who have child protection concerns and record this information
  3. Consult with statutory child protection agencies
  4. Ensure that the parents/carers of the child/young person are contacted as soon as possible, following advice from the safeguarding board.
  5. Make a referral to the Croydon Local Authority Designated Officer or to the police without delay
  6. If a GT Scholars' designated safeguarding officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the chair of the management committee, who will refer the allegation to the Croydon Local Authority Designated Officer

It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to child protection agencies. If an individual, for any reason, believes that the designated people have not responded appropriately to a concern, then they may contact child protection agencies directly.

## **Guidance on 'Whether this is a Child Protection Matter'**

If staff or tutors have significant concerns about any child they should make them known immediately to GT Scholars Designated Safeguarding Officer. These concerns may include:

### **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**

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 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 from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **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 caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Sexual abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

It is not possible to rely on one absolute criterion when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the extent of the harm suffered, the context within which it occurred and its duration.

long-standing and which may impair the child's physical, psychological and social development.

In order to both understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider the family context, together with the child's development within their wider social and cultural environment. It is also necessary to consider any special needs, e.g. medical condition, communication difficulties or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family. The nature of harm, in terms of ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care also needs consideration alongside the impact on the child's health and development and the adequacy of care provided.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an issue that needs to be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. This is a complex area and involves the consideration of a number of pieces of legislation.

You can never guarantee confidentiality to a child as some kinds of information may need to be shared with others. A suggested form of words that may help when talking to children is as follows:

*"I will keep our conversation confidential and agree with you on what information I can share unless you tell me something that will affect your personal safety or that is illegal, in which case I will tell you if I am going to pass the information on and who to."*

Professionals can only work together to safeguard children if there is an exchange of relevant information between them. This has been recognised in principle by the courts. However, any disclosure of personal information to others, including social service departments, must always have regard to both common and statute law.

Normally, personal information should only be disclosed to third parties (including other agencies) with the consent of the subject of that information (Data Protection Act 1998 European Convention on Human Rights, Article 8). Wherever possible consent should be obtained before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances, however, consent may not be possible or desirable but the safety and welfare of the child dictate that the information should be shared.

The law requires the disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard a child or children. Under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 statutory agencies have a duty to cooperate. Therefore, if the Police or Social Care/Services are conducting a Section 47 investigation under the 1989 Children Act, staff and volunteers must share requested information relevant to the investigation. Legal advice should be sought if in doubt.

## Talking to and listening to children

If a child chooses to disclose, you SHOULD:

- be accessible and receptive;
- listen carefully and uncritically at the child's pace;
- take what is said seriously;
- reassure the child that they are right to tell;
- tell the child that you must pass this information on;
- make a careful record of what was said.

You should NEVER:

- take photographs or examine an injury;
- investigate or probe aiming to prove or disprove possible abuse – never ask leading questions;
- make promises to children about confidentiality or keeping secrets
- assume that someone else will take the necessary action;
- jump to conclusions or react with shock, anger or horror;
- speculate or accuse anybody;
- confront another person (adult or child) allegedly involved;
- offer opinions about what is being said or about the persons allegedly involved;
- forget to record what you have been told;
- fail to pass the information on to the correct person;
- ask a child to sign a written copy of the disclosure.

For children with communication difficulties or who use alternative/augmented communication systems, you may need to take extra care to ensure that signs of abuse and neglect are identified and interpreted correctly, but concerns should be reported in exactly the same manner as for other children.

## Record keeping

Well-kept records are essential in situations where it is suspected or believed that a child may be at risk of harm. Records should:

- state who was present, time, date and place;
- use the child's words wherever possible;
- be factual/state exactly what was said;
- differentiate clearly between fact, opinion, interpretation, observation and/or allegation;
- be written in ink and signed by the recorder

## **Reporting concerns about a young person**

If you have any concerns about a young person and you are concerned that he or she has been a victim of abuse or neglect, your concerns must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding officer.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (or their deputy) will then need to contact the appropriate M.A.S.H (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) referral team or Single Point of Contact team within the child's local authority. It is vital that the DSO reports these concerns so that they can be investigated.

If you believe a young person is at immediate risk or harm, always call 999.

## **Protecting yourself against allegations of abuse**

You should seek to keep your personal contact with children under review and seek to minimise the risk of any situation arising in which misunderstandings can occur. The following sensible precautions can be taken by volunteers or tutors when working alone with children. As a staff member or volunteer, you must:

- make sure that other adults are present and visit the room occasionally.
- work in a room where there is a glass panel in the door or leave the door open
- be aware and cautious of physical contact such as hugs
- not swear, use bad language or speak inappropriately around young people
- not drink or smoke during or directly before interaction with young people or their parents
- not work in isolation with children unless thought has been given to safeguards.
- not take photographs or videos of or with pupils and students (A designated professional photographer or trained staff member will do this at the required events and parental consent will always be sought)
- not give out personal mobile phone numbers or private e-mail addresses
- not befriend or chat to pupils on social media platforms
- not give students lifts home in your car
- not arrange to meet them outside of sessions agreed with parents, carers and GT Scholars

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is a criminal offence for anyone working in an education setting to have a sexual relationship with a pupil even when the pupil is over the age of consent. Any use of physical force or restraint against pupils will be documented and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. If it is necessary to use physical action to prevent a child from injury to themselves or others, parents/carers will be informed. Children will not be punished using any form of verbal abuse, hitting, slapping, shaking or other degrading treatment.



## **Allegations of abuse against a professional staff member or volunteer**

Children can be the victims of abuse by those who work with them in any setting. All allegations of abuse of children carried out by any staff member or tutor should therefore be taken seriously. Any unprofessional incidents or behaviours should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer particularly if the staff member or volunteer 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 that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

Allegations of abuse made against staff or tutors, whether historical or contemporary, should be dealt with by the Designated Safeguarding Officer (if the allegation is against the Designated Safeguarding Officer then it should be dealt with by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer).

The Designated Safeguarding Officer (or their deputy) should contact the Croydon Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to discuss the allegation.

As outlined in the Children Act 2004, the LADO will be informed of all allegations against adults who work with children. The LADO provides advice and guidance to senior managers on the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with robustly and resolved as quickly as possible.

This initial conversation will establish the validity of any allegation and if a referral is required. If this is the case a strategy meeting will be called that the Designated Safeguarding Officer should attend.

The decision of the strategy meeting could be a/an:

- investigation by children's social care
- police investigation if there is a criminal element to the allegation
- single agency investigation completed by the local authority which should involve the Designated Safeguarding Officer

The fact that a member of staff, volunteer or tutor offers to resign should not prevent the allegation procedure from reaching a conclusion.

## **Responding to allegations of abuse**

### **Allegations against a member of staff/volunteer**

GT Scholars will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports their concern that a colleague is, or another, may be abusing a child/young person.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff/volunteer, there may be three types of investigation: criminal investigation, child protection investigation or disciplinary/misconduct investigation.

### **Concerns about poor practice**

If following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, this will be dealt with as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by one of the designated safeguarding officers, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the chair of the management committee, who will advise how to deal with the allegation and whether or not GT Scholars should initiate disciplinary proceedings.

### **Internal enquiries and suspension**

The designated safeguarding officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended, pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, GT Scholars will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this should be handled.

This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, GT Scholars will need to reach a decision based on the available information. This might suggest that, on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child/young person must remain of paramount importance throughout.

## **Recruitment, supervision and training for staff**

### **Induction of new staff and volunteers**

- The Designated Safeguarding Officer or their deputy will be expected to attend an initial Child Protection Conference. Volunteer and tutor attendance may also be requested where appropriate.
- When recruiting new members of staff or tutors, GT Scholars follows the guidance given in the Safeguarding Children: Safer Recruitment in Education.
- The organisation ensures that enhanced DBS checks are undertaken in line with policy and that references are taken up and obtained and that qualifications are verified.
- Newly appointed staff, tutors and volunteers will have initial training in Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and procedures as part of their induction process, and be given a copy of the GT Scholar's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

### **Frequency of training and Enhanced DBS checks**

- Enhanced DBS checks on staff, tutors and volunteers should be carried out a minimum of once every three years.
- The Designated Safeguarding Officer should attend an appropriate level of accredited Safeguarding Training at least once every two years. This should be with a trusted external provider such as NSPCC or London Youth.
- All other staff, tutors, mentors and volunteers will need to attend Child Protection and safeguarding training at least once every three years.
- DBS issue dates and certificate numbers are stored internally and monthly checks are made to ensure that all volunteers and staff have an up-to-date DBS issued in the past 3 years.
- All staff will receive an e-mailed copy of our updated safeguarding policy and procedures at least once a year.

## **Data Protection & Consent Procedure for Children's Data (Including Images)**

- All Data for Young people and children is collected, stored and managed, following our data protection policy and procedures
- Volunteers, staff and tutors must not take photographs or collect personal details for young people. However, personal contact details for parents and carers will be shared on an 'as need' basis eg. to arrange tutoring or mentoring sessions
- Parents and carers must give consent before their child's photos are taken
- Photographs, videos and audio recordings may only be used for impact and publicity purposes eg. published on our website, social media platforms and other materials including partner materials.

- Full names of children will not be published along with their photograph or video. First names, ages and schools may be included or Pseudo-names in sensitive cases.
- As part of the application process for programmes or booking process for workshops, parents and carers must be informed about any possible photography/videography
- Parents and carers will have the right to choose for their photograph and their child's photographs/videos to be taken or not taken during events, workshops and programmes.

## **E-Safety**

We make use of online platforms for communicating with our young people and parents. This means that our volunteers and staff must be cautious when using social media and our online communication platforms.

The growth of different electronic media in everyday life and an ever-developing variety of devices including PCs, laptops, mobile phones, webcams etc place an additional risk on our children.

Internet chat rooms, discussion forums or social networks can all be used as a means of contacting children and young people with a view to grooming them for inappropriate or abusive relationships. The anonymity of the internet allows adults, often pretending to be children, to have conversations with children and in some cases arrange to meet them.

Access to abusive images is not a "victimless" act as it has already involved the abuse of children. The internet has become a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs of children. Students can engage in or be a target of bullying using a range of methods including text and instant messaging to reach their target. Mobile phones are also used to capture violent assaults of other children for circulation (happy slapping).

The best protection is to make pupils aware of the dangers through reference to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre where appropriate <http://www.ceop.gov.uk/>

## **Updates to the Safeguarding policy and procedures**

The Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Procedures will be reviewed and updated no less than once per year.

### **Resources**

Safeguarding is important to all members of staff & tutors. The organisation is responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources are made available to enable the necessary tasks to be carried out properly under Safeguarding Children Board procedures including attending meetings, collating and writing reports, and staff training. GT Scholars will also ensure that all staff, volunteers & tutors have an understanding of safeguarding issues and that policies and procedures are in place in the organisation to safeguard and promote the welfare of all GT School students.

For more information on safeguarding visit:

[www.safenetwork.org.uk](http://www.safenetwork.org.uk)

<http://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

### **Designated Safeguarding Officers and Deputies:**

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Ms Temi Kamson

Deputy Safeguarding Officer

Ms Bilqees Peters

Chair of Management Committee

Ms Gwendoline Gaisie

Tel: 02088168066

Email: [office@gtscholars.org](mailto:office@gtscholars.org)