



OAKMONT SCHOOL

Safeguarding

Policy Document

Version: 3

Purpose and Scope

Oakmont School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. Safeguarding is the responsibility of every staff member, volunteer and visitor, and this policy sets out the arrangements in place to prevent harm, identify concerns early, and respond swiftly to protect pupils from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

This policy applies to:

- All pupils attending Oakmont School.
- All staff members, volunteers, governors/proprietor, contractors and visitors engaged with the school.
- All school activities, both on and off site, including online activity that may affect pupils' welfare.

The policy is both a professional statement of Oakmont's safeguarding approach and a practical guide to ensure consistency, accountability and compliance across all aspects of school life.

About Oakmont School

Oakmont School is an independent day school for pupils aged 9–18 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Many of our pupils also have associated conditions such as autism, ADHD, and speech, language and communication difficulties.

We provide:

- Small class sizes and high staff–pupil ratios.
- A flexible curriculum combining academic, therapeutic and vocational learning.
- A nurturing environment designed to rebuild confidence, resilience and self-esteem.

The school is inspected by Estyn and operates in line with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Legal and Policy Framework

This policy is informed by, and must be read in conjunction with, the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- Keeping Learners Safe (Welsh Government, 2022)
- All Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2020)
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Education Act 2002 – duty to safeguard and promote welfare
- Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (latest)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
 - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
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Aims and Principles

Oakmont School's safeguarding approach is designed to protect pupils from harm, promote wellbeing, and ensure that every pupil is supported to grow in a safe and nurturing environment. Safeguarding practice is embedded across all aspects of school life and reflects Oakmont's ethos of taking responsibility, working hard and being kind.

The aims of safeguarding are to:

- Safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.
- Prevent impairment of pupils' health or development.
- Protect pupils from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Ensure that safeguarding concerns are identified early and acted upon quickly.
- Provide clear procedures for staff members, volunteers and visitors to follow.
- Work in partnership with parents, carers, local authorities and external agencies.
- Embed safeguarding throughout the curriculum, pastoral support and wider school culture.

The principles guiding this policy are:

- **Responsibility** – safeguarding is the duty of everyone in the school community.
- **Welfare first** – the needs of the child are paramount in all decisions.
- **Pupil voice** – pupils' wishes and feelings are considered when safeguarding decisions are made.
- **Confidentiality** – information is shared lawfully, proportionately and only with those who need to know.
- **Safe culture** – safer recruitment, induction, training and supervision underpin safeguarding practice.
- **Accountability** – accurate records, clear reporting lines and regular monitoring ensure transparency.
- **Continuous improvement** – safeguarding practice is regularly reviewed and updated in line with new risks, guidance and legislation.

Main Types of Abuse

Understanding the main types of abuse is essential to safeguarding practice at Oakmont School. These categories provide the foundation for recognising when a pupil may be at risk and ensure that staff members are clear about what abuse looks like in practice.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse often involves deliberately causing physical harm to a child. This may include hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, or any other action that results in injury. It can also involve fabricating or inducing illness. Indicators may include unexplained injuries, inconsistent explanations, or repeated medical attention without clear cause.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child that causes severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. It may include constant criticism, rejection, humiliation, intimidation, or exposing a child to domestic abuse. It can also involve isolating a child, placing unrealistic expectations upon them, or withholding emotional support. Signs may include low self-esteem, withdrawal, extreme behaviours such as aggression or anxiety, or over-compliance.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activity. This may include physical contact or non-contact activities, such as grooming, coercion, exposure to sexual images, or exploitation. Online sexual abuse is an increasing risk, with children being persuaded or forced to share images or engage in inappropriate communication. Indicators may include knowledge or behaviour that is not age-appropriate, secrecy, or sudden changes in relationships and emotional wellbeing.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs. This may include lack of food, clothing, hygiene, supervision, medical care, or emotional nurturing. Neglect is the most common form of child abuse and can severely impact a child's development and future outcomes. Signs may include consistent hunger, tiredness, poor hygiene, delayed development, or missed medical appointments.

Together, these categories form the basis of safeguarding awareness at Oakmont. They are not exhaustive, but they provide the framework through which staff members are trained to recognise potential harm and take appropriate action to protect pupils. These definitions are consistent with national safeguarding guidance and the NSPCC's descriptions of abuse, which can be accessed at: www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse.

Other Specific Safeguarding Issues

Alongside the four main categories of abuse, Oakmont School recognises a range of specific safeguarding issues that can place pupils at risk of harm. Awareness of these risks ensures that staff members remain vigilant and take proportionate action to protect pupils.

Child-on-child abuse

This can take many forms, including bullying, physical assault, sexual harassment or violence, harmful sexual behaviour, and initiation activities. Such incidents are never minimised or regarded as typical behaviour. They are taken seriously, recorded, and addressed through safeguarding procedures and the school's Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.

Online abuse

Pupils may be exposed to risks such as grooming, exploitation, coercion, harmful content or cyberbullying. Online abuse can take place on any internet-enabled device and may be hidden from parents or staff. Oakmont promotes digital resilience through the curriculum, supervision and filtering systems. Staff members are required to act promptly where there are concerns about a pupil's online activity.

Exploitation

Exploitation may take the form of child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), trafficking or county lines activity. These situations often involve manipulation, coercion or intimidation, where children are persuaded or forced to engage in sexual or criminal activity for someone else's gain. Indicators may include unexplained money or possessions, significant changes in behaviour or relationships, or unexplained absences from school.

Domestic abuse

Children may suffer directly from domestic abuse in the home or experience significant harm through exposure to violence and controlling behaviours between adults. Even when children are not physically harmed, the impact on their emotional development can be profound. Staff should be alert to pupils who show fear of going home, anxiety, or physical or emotional symptoms linked to stress.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a criminal offence and a form of child abuse. It involves procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Staff have a statutory duty to report known cases of FGM in under-18s to the police, and concerns must always be referred to the DSL.

Radicalisation and extremism

Pupils may be vulnerable to extremist ideology or radicalisation. Staff members are trained to notice changes in behaviour or expression that could indicate such risk. Concerns are referred to the DSL who, where appropriate, makes a referral under the Prevent duty or seeks advice from partner agencies.

Missing from education

Pupils who are missing from education or whose attendance is irregular may be at risk of neglect, exploitation or abuse. Oakmont's Attendance Policy sets out procedures for monitoring absence and responding quickly to unexplained patterns of non-attendance.

Children looked after and pupils with additional vulnerabilities

Children looked after, those with additional learning needs, or pupils with disabilities can face increased vulnerability due to communication barriers, social isolation or greater dependency on adults. Staff members are expected to adapt their practice and remain especially alert to safeguarding risks in these groups. Children who are looked after, or subject to child protection planning, usually require accelerated reporting requirements to ensure timely intervention. Oakmont's Attendance Policy reinforces this approach, with a clear "priority follow-up" process for vulnerable pupils. Please refer to the Attendance Policy for full details of priority follow-up arrangements.

By acknowledging and responding to these safeguarding issues, Oakmont ensures that practice is not confined to the four main categories of abuse but reflects the wider risks that can affect pupils' safety and wellbeing. The definitions provided in this section are intended to guide awareness, not to restrict it.

All staff members must understand that safeguarding is not about categorising perfectly or waiting for certainty. If there is any worry that a pupil may be at risk of harm — whether or not it fits neatly into one of the definitions set out here — it is treated as a safeguarding concern. In such

circumstances, the expectation is simple and non-negotiable: staff members observe, record, and report their concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Recognising & Recording Concerns

Safeguarding at Oakmont School depends on staff members remaining vigilant and confident in noticing when something may be wrong. Concerns can arise from a pupil's appearance, behaviour, mood or attendance, from something a pupil says, or from information shared by others. Professional instinct is also valued: if something does not feel right, it is treated as a potential safeguarding concern.

When a concern is identified:

- Staff members must record the concern, disclosure or observation factually and accurately using the school's agreed recording systems, avoiding assumption or opinion.
- Each record must include the date, time and the staff member's signature.
- Staff members must record their own concerns and should not create entries based on second-hand information from colleagues.
- Once the concern is recorded, it must be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately and without delay. Concerns should be shared on the same day at the very latest, and wherever possible before the end of the school day, so that the DSL can assess and, if necessary, act the same day.

This process ensures that all concerns are captured promptly and consistently, reducing the risk of important information being missed or delayed. By embedding this practice across the school, Oakmont sustains a safeguarding culture in which staff members are confident in their responsibilities, pupils are protected, and any potential risk is addressed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Reporting Concerns

Once a concern has been recorded and shared, it is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to decide what action is required. The reporting process at Oakmont School is designed to ensure that concerns are acted upon promptly, proportionately, and in line with statutory requirements.

Staff members have clarity that their role is to observe, record and report. The DSL carries the responsibility for assessing the level of risk and determining next steps. Concerns are never ignored or left unaddressed, and the principle of "immediate reporting, same-day action" underpins practice across the school.

The DSL will:

- Review the concern on the same day it is received.
- Decide on the appropriate course of action, which may include continued monitoring, provision of early help, or referral to the Local Safeguarding Team.

- Seek advice from external safeguarding partners if thresholds are uncertain, ensuring that decisions are timely and in the best interests of the pupil.
- Record the decision-making process, actions taken, and outcomes in the pupil's safeguarding chronology.
- Maintain on-going communication with staff members who raised the concern, confirming that it has been received and is being acted upon.

Parents and carers may be informed where this is consistent with safeguarding guidance and does not place the pupil at further risk. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis, in line with data protection legislation and safeguarding best practice.

All referrals are made to the Local Authority in which Oakmont School is located. Referrals are not submitted to placing authorities. While the school will discuss safeguarding concerns with placing authorities and with a pupil's home local authority, reporting for the purposes of safeguarding must always be directed through the host Local Authority.

In urgent situations, such as where a pupil is at immediate risk of harm, the DSL will contact emergency services and the Local Safeguarding Team without delay. If the DSL is unavailable, the Deputy or appointed DSL will act in their place, ensuring there is no delay in response.

This structured reporting process ensures that concerns do not remain at the level of observation alone, but are escalated and addressed in a way that ensures pupils' safety. By setting clear roles and expectations, Oakmont embeds a safeguarding culture where staff members know exactly what to do, and pupils can trust that their welfare will be protected.

Allegations Against Staff Members or Adults

Oakmont School takes all allegations or concerns about staff members, volunteers, contractors or any adult working with pupils extremely seriously. The welfare of the child is always the first consideration, and any action taken will be consistent with statutory guidance and the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Where an allegation suggests that an adult has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved in a way that undermines the safeguarding culture of the school.

In the first instance, staff members must follow the procedures set out in the *Recognising & Recording Concerns* section of this policy. Once the concern has been recorded and shared appropriately, the following procedure will apply:

- The Headteacher must be informed immediately. Where the concern involves the Headteacher, the Responsible Individual (RI) will be informed without delay.

- The Headteacher or RI will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or equivalent local safeguarding lead to discuss the allegation and agree next steps. No internal investigation will be initiated until guidance has been received.
- The school will cooperate fully with statutory agencies, including the police and the Local Safeguarding Team, ensuring that decisions about investigation, suspension, or disciplinary action are guided by professional advice.
- Staff members subject to allegations will be treated fairly and in line with employment law, with appropriate support provided while investigations are ongoing.

Oakmont is committed to transparency and accountability. Allegations are always handled in a way that protects children, respects the rights of staff members, and preserves the integrity of the safeguarding process. Suspension is not an automatic response when allegations are made against professionals. Decisions regarding suspension are considered carefully, taking into account the nature and seriousness of the allegation, the potential risks to pupils, and the advice of external safeguarding partners. This ensures that any action taken is proportionate, fair and consistent with statutory guidance.

Safer Recruitment

Oakmont School is committed to maintaining a safe environment by ensuring that all adults working with pupils are suitable, appropriately vetted and supported to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding practice. Recruitment and workforce procedures reflect statutory guidance, including *Keeping Learners Safe* and the *Education (Independent School Standards) (Wales) Regulations 2024*.

Our approach to safer recruitment is based on clear principles:

- Safeguarding responsibilities are embedded in all role descriptions and recruitment materials.
- Recruitment processes are designed to test an applicant's suitability to work with children, including their understanding of safeguarding and professional boundaries.
- Vetting checks are carried out rigorously and proportionately to ensure that no individual who poses a risk to children is permitted to work within the school.

Specific details of the checks undertaken — including identity verification, references, enhanced DBS clearance, barred list checks, overseas checks, and the requirement for safeguarding-specific interview questions — are set out in Oakmont School's Safer Recruitment Policy, which must be read alongside this document. This ensures that recruitment practice at Oakmont School is not only compliant with statutory requirements but consistently rigorous in protecting pupils.

Training, Induction and Supervision

Safeguarding practice at Oakmont School is strengthened through purposeful training, regular supervision and a culture of continuous professional reflection. From induction onwards, staff members are supported to understand their safeguarding responsibilities not only in theory but as part of their daily practice.

This commitment to professional development and accountability is demonstrated through:

- Safeguarding training provided during induction and refreshed regularly, ensuring that staff members remain alert to both statutory requirements and emerging safeguarding risks.
- Clear expectations established through Oakmont School's Staff Code of Conduct, which sets the professional standards for conduct and safeguarding practice.
- Adherence to the EWC Code of Professional Practice, embedding professional responsibility within national expectations for the education workforce.
- Ongoing supervision, appraisal and monitoring, providing structured opportunities for reflection, accountability and support in safeguarding practice.
- Swift and transparent responses to low-level concerns, complaints or allegations, ensuring that professional standards are maintained and issues are addressed before they escalate.
- Staff members having access to the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures application and website, offering a reliable point of reference for current safeguarding guidance.
- Safeguarding as a standing agenda item in weekly staff meetings, where current concerns are shared, policies are revisited, and training opportunities are used to deepen collective understanding.

In addition, Oakmont School ensures that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs undertake enhanced, specialist safeguarding training. This equips them to manage referrals, maintain safeguarding records, lead inter-agency working and provide effective guidance to colleagues.

Through this approach, Oakmont School ensures that safeguarding is not confined to compliance training, but embedded in the daily rhythm of professional life. Staff members are supported to remain confident, consistent and reflective in their practice, and pupils benefit from a workforce that treats safeguarding as a shared, living responsibility.

Curriculum and Safeguarding Education

At Oakmont School, safeguarding is not only a duty of protection but also a proactive part of education. Pupils are taught about safety, rights and wellbeing in ways that are sensitive to their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and additional learning needs (ALN). Teaching is grounded in trauma-informed approaches and promotes resilience, confidence and self-advocacy.

The curriculum reflects the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ensuring that pupils understand both their right to be protected and their right to be heard. Safeguarding themes are interwoven across learning, so that pupils see them not as isolated topics but as part of everyday life and relationships.

This includes:

- **Curriculum coverage** – safeguarding is embedded across the Curriculum for Wales, particularly through Personal and Social Education (PSE), Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), and Digital Competence. Themes include healthy relationships, equality and diversity, online safety, bullying, exploitation and children's rights.
- **Teaching approach** – lessons use practical, accessible examples that help pupils make sense of risk and protective behaviours. Staff use clear language, structured activities and reflective discussions to ensure learning is relevant and inclusive.

- **Digital resilience** – pupils are prepared for the challenges of the online world, developing awareness of privacy, respectful communication, harmful content and the importance of seeking help when something goes wrong.
- **Help-seeking and trusted adults** – teaching emphasises that pupils always have the right to raise concerns, know who they can go to, and understand what will happen when they share a worry.
- **Pupil voice** – safeguarding education is shaped by feedback and contributions from pupils, including through the School Council. This reinforces Oakmont’s commitment to rights-based practice by making pupil perspectives central to curriculum design.
- **Partnerships** – external specialists, including health and community safety professionals, contribute to safeguarding education, bringing expertise and ensuring content is current and accurate.

Through this integrated approach, Oakmont School makes safeguarding a living part of education. Pupils are not only protected but empowered: they develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to exercise their rights, keep themselves safe, and contribute positively to the school and wider community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility at Oakmont School, but accountability sits at every level of leadership and practice. Responsibilities are clearly defined to ensure oversight, compliance and consistent action.

Responsible Individual (RI) / Proprietor

- Ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fully compliant with Welsh legislation and national guidance.
- Provide oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding practice through visits, reports and dialogue with leaders.
- Take immediate action where safeguarding practice falls short, including liaising with external regulators and agencies.
- Promote a culture where safeguarding is prioritised at governance level and resources are allocated appropriately.

Headteacher

- Ensure that this policy is implemented and regularly reviewed.
- Support the DSL and deputies with time, resources and authority to fulfil their role.
- Embed safeguarding across the curriculum and wider school culture.
- Escalate safeguarding matters to the RI where appropriate.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs

- Receive, review and assess all safeguarding concerns.
- Decide on appropriate action, including referral to the Local Safeguarding Team.
- Maintain safeguarding files and chronologies, ensuring they are accurate and up to date.
- Liaise with external agencies and coordinate safeguarding responses.

- Provide guidance, training and support to colleagues to ensure consistent safeguarding practice.

All Staff Members

- Safeguard pupils by remaining alert to signs of abuse, neglect and wider risks.
- Record and share concerns promptly with the DSL.
- Follow the procedures set out in this policy, including the *Recognising & Recording Concerns* process.
- Maintain professional boundaries and model safe, respectful behaviour at all times.

Through this structure, Oakmont School ensures that safeguarding responsibilities flow clearly from governance level to everyday practice, creating a culture of accountability and protection for all pupils.

Record-Keeping and Information Sharing

Accurate record-keeping and careful information sharing are essential to ensure that safeguarding practice at Oakmont School is transparent, accountable and effective. Records provide a clear audit trail that supports decision-making and ensures that no concern is overlooked.

- **Safeguarding records** – all concerns are logged promptly, using factual and objective language. Each entry includes the date, time and the staff member's signature. Records are maintained as a chronology, enabling patterns to be identified over time.
- **Secure storage** – safeguarding files are kept separate from the pupil's main education file. Records are stored securely, with access restricted to the DSL and deputies. Files are transferred securely if a pupil moves to another school.
- **Information sharing** – safeguarding information is shared lawfully, on a need-to-know basis, and always in the best interests of the pupil. Oakmont School follows the requirements of UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, Welsh Government guidance, and the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
- **Inter-agency working** – the DSL shares relevant information with external agencies, including the Local Safeguarding Team, police, health and placing authorities, in line with statutory thresholds. Parents and carers may be informed where this is appropriate and does not place the pupil at further risk.
- **Retention and disposal** – safeguarding records are retained in line with Oakmont School's retention schedule and securely disposed of when no longer required.

By maintaining accurate records and sharing information appropriately, Oakmont School ensures that safeguarding is evidence-based, transparent and consistent, enabling timely protection and support for pupils.

Monitoring and Review

Safeguarding practice at Oakmont School is subject to continuous monitoring and regular review to ensure that it remains effective, compliant and responsive to emerging risks.

- **Ongoing monitoring** – safeguarding arrangements are reviewed continually by the DSL, Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) through supervision, staff meetings and evaluation of safeguarding records.
- **Formal review** – this policy is formally reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or best practice.
- **Oversight** – the Responsible Individual (RI) provides governance-level scrutiny of safeguarding practice through regular dialogue, reporting and engagement with leaders, ensuring that safeguarding remains a strategic priority.
- **Feedback** – the views of staff members, pupils and parents are considered in reviewing safeguarding arrangements, supporting a culture where participation and lived experience shape safeguarding practice.

Through this process, Oakmont School ensures that safeguarding practice is dynamic, transparent and continually strengthened in the best interests of pupils.

Linked Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Digital Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- GDPR and Data Protection Policy

Policy Control Information

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Authorship

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Approval

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Appendix A – Safeguarding Contacts and Useful Links

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

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Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

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Local Safeguarding Team (Cardiff)

- Safeguarding Team (Office Hours): 02922 330888
- Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours): 02920 788570

Emergency Services

- Police (Emergency): 999
- Police (Non-Emergency): 101

National Support Services

- NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000
- NSPCC Professionals' Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (for advice and consultation)
- Childline: 0800 1111
- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection): www.ceop.police.uk
- Barnardo's Cymru: www.barnardos.org.uk/cymru
- Meic Cymru (24/7 advocacy for children and young people): 0808 802 3456 / www.meiccymru.org

Professional Resources

- All Wales Safeguarding Procedures: www.safeguarding.wales
- All Wales Safeguarding Procedures Mobile App – available on iOS and Android
- Education Workforce Council (EWC): www.ewc.wales