The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	**Version**	V1
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Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Safeguarding at The New Walk School is grounded in PACE. Children disclose, regulate and recover in relationships where they feel met, not interrogated. PACE shapes how staff respond to disclosure, distress and the everyday signals that something is wrong:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is written in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the most recent version of which is followed in full; Working Together to Safeguard Children; the Children Act 1989 and 2004; the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 3); the Education Act 2002 s.157; the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent duty); and associated statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection at The New Walk School. The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team, holds enhanced multi-agency safeguarding training updated at least every two years, and undertakes ongoing knowledge updates at least annually. The DSL is the first point of contact for staff with safeguarding concerns and is responsible for liaising with Leicester City Children's Social Care, the Police and other agencies.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

At least two Deputy DSLs are appointed and trained to the same standard as the DSL. A DSL or Deputy DSL is available during all hours that pupils are on site, including off-site educational visits.

All staff

Every member of staff, including supply staff, contractors and volunteers, has a duty to safeguard pupils. All staff read Part 1 of the most recent KCSIE document (and Annex B where applicable) at induction and at the start of each academic year, and sign to confirm they have done so.

Directors

The Directors of The New Walk School Ltd, acting in lieu of a governing body, ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, that policies are in place and effective, that recruitment is safe, and that there is a named safeguarding lead at director level.

5. Categories of abuse and contextual safeguarding

Staff are trained to recognise the four categories of abuse defined in KCSIE — physical, emotional, sexual and neglect — and the wider safeguarding issues that affect our pupil population. Particular attention is paid to:

- Child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviours.
- Online abuse, including grooming, sextortion and exposure to harmful content.
- Criminal exploitation, including county lines and gang involvement.

- Sexual exploitation.
- Domestic abuse witnessed or experienced at home.
- Mental ill-health, self-harm and suicidal ideation.
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) — staff are aware of the mandatory reporting duty.
- So-called 'honour-based' abuse, including forced marriage.
- Radicalisation and extremism (Prevent duty).
- Private fostering arrangements.

Pupils with SEND face additional safeguarding risks: they may have communication differences that mask abuse, be more vulnerable to exploitation, and have indicators of abuse misattributed to their disability. Staff are explicitly trained to look beyond the disability and not to assume that changes in mood, behaviour or self-injury are 'just part of the diagnosis'.

6. Reporting concerns

Any staff member who has a concern about a pupil records it on the school's safeguarding record system on the same day, and speaks to the DSL or a Deputy DSL immediately. Concerns are never held back to 'see how it develops'. Where a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, staff contact emergency services first and inform the DSL as soon as possible.

Disclosures from pupils are received using PACE: the adult listens, accepts what the child says without judgement, asks open clarifying questions only where necessary, does not promise confidentiality, and reassures the child that they have done the right thing in speaking. Notes are written verbatim where possible and as soon after the disclosure as possible.

7. Working with parents, carers and other agencies

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, the school works in partnership with parents and carers. The school refers to Children's Social Care without delay where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. The school co-operates fully with Section 17 and Section 47 enquiries, attends child protection conferences and core groups, and contributes to multi-agency plans.

8. Safer recruitment, training and allegations

All staff, volunteers and regular contractors are subject to safer recruitment checks set out in the school's Recruitment, Selection and Vetting Policy, including enhanced DBS, identity, right-to-work, qualification, prohibition and barred-list checks, and references taken up in writing prior to interview. Single Central Record entries are kept up to date by the school business manager and audited each term by the DSL.

Allegations against staff and low-level concerns are managed under the school's Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy, in line with KCSIE Part 4. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is consulted where the threshold is met.

9. Curriculum, online safety and prevention

Safeguarding messages are embedded across the curriculum — particularly in PSHE, RSHE, Computing and tutor time — so that pupils understand healthy relationships, consent, online safety, the risks of exploitation and how to seek help. Filtering and monitoring meet the DfE's digital and technology standards and are reviewed at least annually by the DSL with IT support.

10. Records, confidentiality and information sharing

Safeguarding records are kept securely, separate from the main pupil record, and are retained, transferred and destroyed in line with KCSIE and UK GDPR. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis. Lack of consent is not a barrier to sharing where a child is at risk.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.