**Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

**Important Contact Details:**

|  | **Phone** | **Email** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Nightingale Cottage Designated Safeguarding Lead: Francesca Paul** | **07842392245** | **francescalouise\_@hotmail.com** |
| NSPCC Helpline | 0808 800 5000 | help@nspcc.org.uk |
| Kent County Council Social Services  | 03000 41 11 11 0300 41 91 91 (out of hours) | frontdoor@kent.gov.uk |
| Whistleblowing Advice Line | 0800 028 0285 | help@nspcc.org.uk |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Purpose and Scope**

Nightingale Cottage provides classes for small groups of home-educated pupils.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

* to protect children who receive Nightingale Cottage’s services from harm
* to provide any volunteers and staff, as well as children and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection
* to make sure we always act in the child’s best interests
* to maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’ where safeguarding is concerned

**Legal Framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available from nspcc.org.uk/childprotection.

**We believe that:**

* children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
* we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them

**We recognise that:**

* the welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take
* working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting children’s welfare
* all children, regardless of age, disability, gender assignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse
* some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
* extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse

**We will seek to keep children safe by:**

* valuing, listening to and respecting them
* creating a caring, safe and nurturing environment by adopting child protecting and safeguarding best practice through our policies and procedures
* appointing a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who has undertaken safeguarding training

* ensuring any staff have an up to date DBS check and have completed an induction on our safeguarding policies and procedures
* providing effective management for any volunteers so that they know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently
* recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
* making sure that children and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
* using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, parents, families and carers appropriately
* using our procedures to manage any allegations against any staff and volunteers appropriately
* creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment, and ensuring that we deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
* ensuring that we have effective complaints measures in place
* ensuring that we provide a safe, physical environment for our children, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance

* building a safeguarding culture where any staff and volunteers, children and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns

**Identifying Concerns:**

If we have suspicions of a safeguarding or welfare concern in relation to a child, we will contact Kent County Council Social Services. If we are concerned that the child is in immediate danger, we will call the police.

**Disclosure**

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action.

Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse or a case being made or being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

It is vital that we are able to provide any child who makes a disclosure with the support they need.

**How disclosure happens:**

Children may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

* Directly – making specific verbal statements about what’s happened to them
* Indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
* Behaviourally – displaying behaviour (deliberately or not) that signals something is wrong
* Non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways

**Spotting the signs of abuse:**

It is important to remember that children who have been abused may want to tell someone, but do not have the exact words to do so.

For more information on different types of abuse, and what to look out for, please read [Child abuse and neglect | NSPCC Learning](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect).

The DSL has undertaken training which means they are able to spot these signs. This will be updated every two years.

**Responding to disclosures:**

If a child is in immediate danger, contact the emergency services using 999.

If a child makes a disclosure, we will:

* Listen carefully to the child so they know we are taking the disclosure seriously
* Not ask leading questions and maintain an unbiased approach with regards to the child and alleged abuser
* Reassure the child that they have done the right thing
* Explain to the child that in order to keep them safe, the information must be passed on
* Report what has happened to the DSL (if the disclosure has been made to another member of staff/volunteer) as soon as possible
* Record what the child said as soon as possible (but on the same day)
* Remember that if there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral can and should be made, and that anybody can make this referral
* If the child’s situation does not appear to be improving, the staff member with concerns should always press for re-consideration

The DSL will:

* Consider whether the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm
* Consider whether the matter should be discussed with the child’s family or whether doing so would put the child at further risk of harm because of delay of the family’s possible actions
* Call Kent Children’s Services Front Door and seek advice if unsure that a child protection referral should be made
* If appropriate, report without delay to Kent Children’s Services Front Door and/or police
* If a referral is not considered appropriate at that stage, make full written records of the information received, detailing the reasons for the judgement that the matter was not referred
* Keep a written record of all concerns/contact with other agencies, which will be kept securely

Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child’s disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child.

**Allegations against a child:**

There are different ways that a child may be abusive towards others and they might not realise they are doing so:

* bullying or cyberbullying
* emotional abuse
* online abuse
* physical abuse
* sexting
* sexual abuse

‘Child-on-child’ abuse is when a child abuses another child. Sometimes, children might also display abusive behaviour towards adults.

We will keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns we have about a child’s behaviour, including:

* the child’s details (name, age)
* the date and time of the incident
* what was happening before the incident took place
* what the child said or did that gave you cause for concern
* whether the behaviour appeared spontaneous or premeditated

The DSL will be informed of any inappropriate or harmful behaviour, who will decide what action to take.

An allegation becomes a child protection concern when:

* the behaviour involves sexual assault or physical assault
* the child who has experienced the abusive behaviour has suffered significant harm
* the behaviour forms part of a pattern of concerning behaviour by the child who is being abusive
* the child carrying out the abuse is displaying sexualised behaviour
* there is concern that the child carrying out the abuse may be doing so because they have experienced abuse themselves

It is also a child protection concern when there’s a significant difference of power between the child who is displaying the behaviour and the person being abused, for example when:

* there’s an age difference of more than two years
* there’s a significant difference in terms of size or level of ability
* the child displaying abusive behaviour holds a position of power (such as being a helper, volunteer or informal leader)
* the child being abused is significantly more vulnerable than the other child or young person

Reporting concerns:

Inform the DSL. If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999.

You can also contact the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk for expert advice, or local child protection services (details are at the top of this policy).

**Allegations against staff:**

In the event of an allegation against staff, report this to the DSL straight away. If the allegation is serious, credible and alleges that the member of staff has a)behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child, b) possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or c) behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be informed on the same day.

If unsure, the DSL will call the LADO for advice.

**Records retention and storage**

**Child protection records:**

If there are any concerns about a child or young person’s welfare or safety, it is vital all relevant details are recorded. This should be done regardless of whether the concerns are shared with the police or the children’s social care.

These should be recorded on our standard form for recording concerns in a separate child protection file for each child, rather than in one ‘concern log’.

Any records will be kept confidential and stored securely. If electric, they will be password protected. Only the DSL will have access to the records.

**Adult concerns records:**

Clear and comprehensive records of all allegations made against adults working or volunteering with children will be made, including:

* What the allegations were
* How the allegations were followed up
* How things were resolved
* Any action taken
* Decisions reached about the person’s suitability to work with children

Records relating to concerns about an adult’s behaviour will be kept in the person’s confidential personnel file (not in a central ‘concerns log’) and a copy will be given to the individual.

These records will be kept in their personnel file at least until they reach normal pension age, or for 10 years – whichever is longer (IRMS, 2019; Department for Education, 2023). This applies to both volunteers and paid staff.

Records will be kept for the same amount of time regardless of whether they were unfounded. If they were false, the record will be destroyed immediately.

Information will be retained even if the person stops working or volunteering for the organisation.

**Whistleblowing:**

If you have concerns about how child protection issues are handled, you can share your concerns by whistleblowing.

The NSPCC has a dedicated Whistleblowing Advice Line for support if:

* You feel our safeguarding procedures aren’t clear
* Concerns aren’t dealt with properly or may have been covered up
* A concern that was raised hasn’t been acted upon
* You’re worried about being treated unfairly

You can contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line on:

0800 028 0285

help@nspcc.org.uk

**Preventing and responding to bullying:**

The size of Nightingale Cottage and high staff:pupil ratios helps to keep any instances of bullying to an absolute minimum. We will not cater for children who if, after appropriate intervention and support has been put in place, continue to show bullying behaviour towards others.

Please see our behaviour policy for further information.

**Online Safety**

Children’s safety online is also our responsibility.

When children have access to the internet, it will always be supervised by a member of staff, and we will have positive, supportive conversations with children about online safety where necessary.

Any search engines we use (for example, Chrome or Safari) will have have appropriate filters switched on.

See [Appropriate Filtering and Monitoring - UK Safer Internet Centre](https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring) for further information on this.

Children are not permitted to bring phones, smart watches or any other personal devices to school.

**Photography & Sharing Images**

We seek permission from parents in our Registration & Consent Form to take photographs of their children and share it on our social media.

**Adult to Child Ratios:**

In line with OFSTED guidance, we ensure that there is at least one adult for every six children.

**Other Adults on Site**

One of our key aims is to give children exposure to unique learning experiences. In order to do so, we will occasionally invite professionals, ‘hobbyists’ or specialist teachers in.

Usually, these adults will come in once for a day/afternoon. In this case, they will not be required to obtain a DBS check, but will never be left unsupervised with children.

If adults are to be regularly working with children, such as volunteers, they must obtain an enhanced DBS check. ‘Regular’ contact, as defined by the Disclosure and Barring service, is considered as [‘working at least 4 days within a 30-day period in a specified establishment’](https://onlinescr.co.uk/do-school-volunteers-need-dbs-checks/).

**The Prevent Duty**

This is a safeguarding responsibility to protect children from being radicalised into a criminal act of violence, or being affected by the radicalisation of those around them (Prevent Duty Guidance, 2015).

There isn’t a single way of identifying an individual who is being radicalised, but causes of concern could be someone who is viewing extreme, violent propaganda online or expressing extremist views which may lead to an act of terrorism.

We will:

* Be alert to changes in children’s behaviour or circumstances which would indicate that they may be in need of help or protection
* Inform the police by calling 999 if we have any immediate concerns
* Make a referral to Prevent or contact the Kent and Medway Prevent Coordinator if we observe any behaviour of concern

**Code of Conduct:**

For children:

At present, we have a behaviour policy that we expect children to follow. Taster sessions are put in place to make sure we are confident that children will follow our behaviour policy before allowing them to join, and parents are required to sign that both they and their child have read the policy. Within our sessions, we refer to this policy regularly.

As Nightingale Cottage grows, we would like the children themselves to be actively involved in the creation of any codes of conduct and the development of our behaviour policy.

For adults:

Everyone who works with children is acting in a position of authority, responsibility and trust. Staff and volunteers are often seen as role models by young people so it’s essential that they behave in an appropriate way and are able to recognise and report any behaviour in others that might be a cause for concern.

Our code of conduct sets out expectations for all staff and volunteers and is given to them before they start working at Nightingale Cottage.

**Complaints**

Nightingale Cottage actively encourages families to give us feedback about their experience on a regular basis and talk to us about anything that concerns them.

Complaints can be made verbally, either in person or by telephone, or in writing by email.

If any concern or complaint is raised, we will discuss this with the parents/carers (in writing, if requested) and try to resolve the matter. Nightingale Cottage keeps record of the complaints and feedback that we receive. We log the details of the concern, the date it was raised, and the outcome of the process. We will notify the parent/complainant of the investigation within 28 days.

Records of the complaints will be kept for 3 years.

See our complaints policy for further details.

**Safer Recruitment Policy**

**Recruitment and selection process**

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

**Advertising**

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

* Nightingale Cottage’s commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
* That safeguarding checks will be undertaken
* The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children
* Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are ‘protected’, so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

**Application forms**

Our application forms will:

* Include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)
* Include a copy of, or link to, our child protection and safeguarding policy

**Shortlisting**

Because of the size of Nightingale Cottage, at present it is not possible to ensure the shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people, as per recommendations. However, it will:

* Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
* Explore all potential concerns

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

* Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:
	+ If they have a criminal history
	+ Whether they are included on the barred list
	+ Whether they are prohibited from teaching
	+ Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
	+ Any relevant overseas information
* Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true

We will also consider carrying out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online. Shortlisted candidates will be informed that we may carry out these checks as part of our due diligence process.

**Seeking references and checking employment history**

We will obtain references before interview, unless not agreed to by the candidate. Any concerns raised will be explored further with referees and taken up with the candidate at interview.

When seeking references we will:

* Not accept open references
* Liaise directly with referees and verify any information contained within references where necessary
* Ensure any references are from the candidate’s current employer and completed by a senior person. Where the referee is school based, we will ask for the reference to be confirmed by the headteacherl as accurate in respect to disciplinary investigations
* Obtain verification of the candidate’s most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed
* Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children
* Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate
* Resolve any concerns before any appointment is confirmed

**Interview and selection**

When interviewing candidates, we will:

* Probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, and ask candidates to explain this
* Explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate’s suitability to work with children
* Record all information considered and decisions made

**Pre-appointment vetting checks**

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals’ personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

**New staff**

All offers of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks. When appointing new staff, we will:

* Verify their identity
* Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken. We will check staff’s DBS via the update service annually.
* Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
* Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
* Verify their right to work in the UK
* Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate
* If registered with the DfE, ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher
* Carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK. These could include, where available:
	+ For all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records checks for overseas applicants](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants)
	+ For teaching positions: obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach

**Regulated activity** means a person who will be:

* Responsible, on a regular basis in a school or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or
* Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or
* Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not

**Existing staff**

In certain circumstances we will carry out all the relevant checks on existing staff as if the individual was a new member of staff. These circumstances are when:

* There are concerns about an existing member of staff’s suitability to work with children; or
* An individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or
* There has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more

**Updated:** 04.09.25

**Review Date:** 04.09.26