



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Signed:

Sally Michaels

Name:

Sally Michaels

Position:

Safeguarding Director

Date:

10 September 2025

To be reviewed on:

01 September 2026

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1. Key Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Leads

All members of staff and volunteers are responsible for safeguarding.

Those named below have received Level 3 Designated Safeguarding Lead training, which is updated every two years.

Name	Contact	Last DSL Update
Sally Michaels	Safeguarding Director Designated Safeguarding Lead sally@bluesquidlearning.com 07562 516 537	June 2024
Frances Smith	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead frances@bluesquidlearning.com 07562 516 537	October 2025

If you are unable to contact any of these nominated people, contact your local safeguarding service.

Cambridgeshire Social care

034 5045 5203 (Mon-Fri, 8am to 6pm) or 017 3323 4724 (out of hours)

Cambridgeshire LADO - 01223 727967, LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

If you need urgent help, call 999

NSPCC Helpline — [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk), 0808 800 5000

2. Introduction and legal Context

At Blue Squid Learning, the safety and well-being of our young people is our highest priority. Many of our learners arrive experiencing high levels of anxiety, which makes them particularly vulnerable. This policy sets out how we protect them, how we respond to concerns, and how we work together to keep them safe.

This policy is rooted in the following statutory guidance:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025* (KCSIE)
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order)
- The Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- The Equality Act 2010

3. Our Commitment to Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring they grow up with safe and effective care, and taking action to enable the best outcomes.

For us, it's also about creating a calm, nurturing environment where anxious young people can feel heard, understood, and safe enough to learn.

We believe safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Every adult at Blue Squid is trained, supported and expected to play an active role.

We are also committed to **listening to children** and ensuring their views are taken seriously in decisions about their safety and welfare. Their voice matters, and they have a right to be heard.

4. Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, governors, agency and third-party staff, contractors, and trainee teachers working at or on behalf of Blue Squid Learning.

It covers all young people aged 9–16 who access our services, whether referred by schools (and remaining on their school roll) or attending as privately funded electively home educated learners.

5. Key Safeguarding Roles

Our **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**, Sally Michaels, is the central point of contact for all safeguarding matters and has the time, training and authority to carry out this role.

She is supported by **Deputy DSLs (DDSLs)**, who can act in her absence. All staff know how to contact the DSL and DDSLs and understand their responsibilities.

6. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

Because our young people are especially vulnerable, we maintain a vigilant and curious approach to safeguarding.

All staff are trained to spot the signs of abuse or neglect, which may be subtle and include changes in behaviour, appearance or communication. This includes being alert to child-on-child abuse such as bullying, sexual harassment or other forms of peer-on-peer harm, whether online or offline.

Staff are also trained to recognise indicators of specific safeguarding issues such as child criminal exploitation (CCE), domestic abuse, forced marriage and radicalisation.

If a member of staff has a concern, they must:

1. Record it immediately on LearnTrek (our secure system).
2. Escalate it to the DSL or a DDSL without delay (LearnTrek notifies them automatically).

Staff are encouraged to share even small worries. It is the DSL's responsibility to assess concerns, decide next steps, and record all actions and rationales.

All Blue Squid staff and volunteers must refer to the **Safeguarding Handbook** for practical guidance on recognising signs of abuse, what to do if a child discloses something concerning, and step-by-step guidance on how to report within the provision. This internal guide is essential reading for all staff and forms part of our mandatory safeguarding training.

7. Early Help

We believe early intervention can stop small issues becoming serious harm.

Staff are expected to consider whether a young person or family may benefit from **Early Help** support at the first sign of emerging need.

Where appropriate, the DSL will coordinate an Early Help assessment or work alongside other agencies to ensure support is offered promptly and proportionately.

8. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We share safeguarding information lawfully, proportionately and in line with the principles in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

Internally, LearnTrek allows the DSL, DDSs and authorised staff to see relevant information to build a full safeguarding picture.

Externally, we:

- Share safeguarding records with the referring school's DSL (if the learner remains on roll there).
- Refer to statutory services where thresholds are met.
- Always share on a "need to know" basis and in the child's best interests.

9. Online Safety, Filtering and Monitoring

Online safety is an integral part of our safeguarding approach.

We educate young people about safe online behaviours and how to seek help.

We use technical filtering and monitoring systems to protect learners on our network. The **DSL has strategic oversight of these systems** and works with our IT provider to review them regularly. All staff receive annual training on how the systems work and how to report any alerts or attempts to bypass them.

10. Young People at Greater Risk

We recognise that some young people are particularly vulnerable, including those who:

- experience high anxiety or emotionally based school avoidance (as is common among our learners);
- are known to social care;
- have a social worker or are looked after;
- have SEND or disabilities.

Staff receive training to help them recognise that **safeguarding concerns may be more difficult to detect in children with SEND**, and are expected to be alert, curious and tenacious in pursuing concerns.

11. Staff Training and Safer Recruitment

All staff receive induction and regular training in child protection and safeguarding, including our procedures, the use of LearnTrek, recognising vulnerabilities, and their duties under the Prevent Duty.

We use safer recruitment practices to ensure all staff and volunteers are suitable, including pre-employment checks, rigorous vetting, and maintaining a Single Central Record (SCR) of all checks.

All staff must follow our Staff Code of Conduct, which sets out clear professional boundaries.

12. Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns

Any allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has harmed a child or may pose a risk of harm will be reported to the DSL immediately, who will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) the same day.

Concerns about the DSL (who is also the proprietor) are reported directly to the LADO.

We also have procedures for recording and addressing **low-level concerns** about staff behaviour that don't meet the threshold for an allegation but could indicate a safeguarding risk.

Concerns about Blue Squid's overall safeguarding practice can be raised via our Whistleblowing Policy.

13. Attendance and Engagement

We closely monitor learners' attendance and engagement, as reduced participation can be a sign of safeguarding risk.

Any persistent absence or sudden drop in engagement is treated as a safeguarding concern and escalated to the DSL.

14. Learning from Safeguarding Incidents

Following any serious safeguarding incident, allegation or near miss, the DSL will lead a review to identify lessons learned.

Policies, procedures and training will be updated immediately if needed, and learning will be shared with staff to strengthen practice.

15. Review and Publication

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation or guidance.

It is available on our website, our staff shared drive and in hard copy on site. It is shared with all staff, volunteers, parents, carers and commissioning schools.

Next scheduled review: September 2026

Supporting Documents

- Safeguarding Handbook (Internal)
- Safeguarding Glossary
- Specific Safeguarding Issues Guidance (e.g. domestic abuse, county lines, FGM)
- Reporting Safeguarding Concerns Flowchart
- Online Safety Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy

Actions required after any updates

- Upload to staff shared drive
- Inform staff in writing
- Upload to website
- Inform parents/carers via the parent newsletter - Amend/replace hard copies of policy in centre
- Update company policy record
- Inform commissioning schools
- Inform Lynn MacFarlane (Cambridgeshire County Council Alternative Provision)