BOOK CLUBS
IN SCHOOLS

Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect children and young people involved in BCiS activities from harm.
- to provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection and safeguarding.

Principles

1.2. Book Clubs in Schools' exists to develop the social and communications skills of young people by engaging them in reading for pleasure. As an organisation working with children and young people, BCiS recognises that it has a clear part to play in ensuring children's welfare and safeguarding them from harm.

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

1.4. We recognise that the welfare of all children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take.

1.5. We acknowledge that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

1.6. We believe in a culture that values, listens to and respect children and young people and that working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

2. Scope

2.1. BCiS is a small charity and currently has two directly employed staff (part time). Our work is funding dependent and fluctuates according to resources and demand. The two directors therefore work with a pool of freelance contractors and volunteers to support the delivery of the programme. For the purposes of our policies, the term 'staff' is taken to refer to anyone being paid to deliver the BCiS programme.

2.2. This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Book Clubs in Schools, including Directors and the board of trustees, paid staff and volunteers.

2.3. This policy has been developed in line with the principles established by the Children Act 1989, the Education Act 2002 and the statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. All adults involved in working with children have a responsibility to protect children and we are clear that all BCiS Directors, staff, trustees and volunteers have a role in safeguarding.

Role	Name	Contact Details
Trustee Lead	Beth Ginsburg	beth@bookclubsinschools.org
Director Lead	Alison Palmer	alison@bookclubsinschools.org
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Katy Donnelly	katy@bookclubsinschools.org 07818048404
DBS Checks/Records	Alison Palmer	alison@bookclubsinschools.org
Training	Katy Donnelly	katy@bookclubsinschools.org 07818048404
Understanding of Safeguarding Responsibilities and Procedures	ALL	

3.2. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

3.3. It is the responsibility of the DSL to:

- Advise and support the senior team in developing and establishing BCiS's approach to safeguarding.
- Play a lead role in maintaining and reviewing BCiS's plan for safeguarding.
- Coordinate the distribution of policies, procedures and safeguarding resources.
- Advise on training needs and development, providing training where appropriate.
- Provide safeguarding advice and support to staff and volunteers.
- Manage safeguarding concerns, allegations or incidents reported to BCiS.
- Manage referrals to key safeguarding agencies (eg social services or police) of any incidents or allegations of abuse and harm.

4. Procedures

4.1. BCiS aims to embed child protection and safeguarding best practice throughout our policies, procedures and our code of conduct for staff and volunteers.

4.2. This document sets out:

- Our understanding of Safeguarding and Child Protection and our procedures for reporting a child at risk and responding to a child disclosing abuse.
- Our safeguarding procedures in relation to:
  - Safer Working Practices, including recruitment, DBS checks and record keeping.
  - Staff Conduct, including training, working practices, whistleblowing and complaints.
  - Book Club Leaders and safeguarding.
  - General Safeguarding policies, including health and safety, trips and events, bullying, keeping children safe online, use of photography, physical intervention, and GDPR.

5. Review of Policy and Procedures

5.1. This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

6. Safeguarding

6.1. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) defines safeguarding as

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

6.2. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who has contact with children and should always focus on the best interests of the child. It is a continuum moving from measures to ensure all children grow up with safe and effective care, through to: early intervention for those children who many need additional support; Children in Need who require specific services to meet their health and development needs; and children identified as at risk of significant harm where child protection measures are needed to keep them safe.

7. What is Child Protection?

7.1. Child Protection is an important aspect of safeguarding. It refers to the activities that are undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. Significant harm is the threshold identified in the

Children Act 1989 which justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

7.2. Knowing what forms abuse can take and what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. All BCiS staff should therefore be aware of what constitutes abuse, specific areas of abuse and risk, and indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

7.3. The following sections set out definitions of abuse, specific areas of risk and indicators and signs of abuse (taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024).

7. Forms of Abuse

7.1. Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse., including where they see, hear or experience its effects.Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.
Physical

7.2. Physical abuse is a form of abuse which 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

7.3. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a 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 (including cyberbullying), 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, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

7.4. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-

penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, upskirting, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

Neglect

7.5. 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, for example, 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 care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

8. Specific Forms of Abuse

8.1. The following are specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues identified in guidance. An overview is given here to make sure that BCiS staff and volunteers are aware of potentials forms of abuse. These are taken from Annex A of Keeping Safe in Education 2025.

Child Criminal Exploitation

8.2. Children and young people may be exploited by gangs and drug dealers and groomed to transport drugs and money. This may take the form of 'county lines' a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK. Victims are often subject to coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and use of weapons to ensure compliance.

Child Sexual Exploitation

8.3. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group induces a child into sexual activity by offering something in return (e.g. money, drugs, accommodation, gifts or sometimes simply affection). The perpetrator takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive the victim and even if the relationship may appear consensual, it is abuse. Many victims of sexual exploitation may not see themselves as victims. Child sexual exploitation may not involve physical contact and can take place over the internet.

Domestic Violence

8.4. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. Domestic abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Witnessing domestic abuse can be distressing for a child and cause serious harm. Children living in a home where there is domestic abuse are at risk of other forms of abuse themselves.

8.5. Young people may themselves be victims of domestic abuse within a relationship. They may not realise what they are experiencing is abuse or feel ashamed to admit that it is happening.

Radicalisation

8.6. Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. This can take different forms and can involve vocal or active opposition to values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It may also include calling for the death of members of the armed forces and support for terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups and legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence.

Child on Child Abuse

8.7. Children can abuse other children. This child on child abuse can take many forms, including (but is not limited to): bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence (including abuse that takes place in intimate personal relationships between children)and sexual harassment; upskirting (where a picture is taken under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause humiliation, distress or alarm); physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

'Honour Based' Violence

8.8. 'Honour Based' violence includes incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

8.9. Risk factors include being taken on a long holiday to a family's country or origin, talk about a 'special event' or procedure to become a woman. FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting'. FGM is a criminal offence in the UK.

9. Other Safeguarding Risks

Cyber Crime

9.1. Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. Children with particular skills and interest in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime.

Violent Crime

9.2. Children are at risk from, and/or may become involved with, serious violent crime. Violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils are travelling to and from school.

Mental Health

9.3. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Children with mental health problems may also be more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

10. Children who may have greater Safeguarding Needs

Children with Family Members in Prison

10.1. Children with family members in prison may be particularly vulnerable to poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health.

Children involved in the Court System

10.2. Children may be involved in the court system as a result of family separation or as a witness to a crime. The process can be stressful and isolating and children may be fearful of results.

Homelessness

10.3. Children who are homeless or who are at risk of being homeless are more vulnerable to poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. It should be recognised that 16 and 17 year olds may experience exclusion from their family home and be living independently.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

10.4. Children with additional needs face an increase risk of abuse and neglect and adults should therefore take extra care to look out for and identify signs of abuse.

Private Fostering

10.5. Private fostering is where a private arrangement is made between a parent and another adult that is not a close family relation, to take full time care of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) for a period longer than 28 days. Most privately fostered children are looked after appropriately, but they are a group vulnerable to abuse and there is duty on schools to inform their local authority if they become aware that a child might be being privately fostered.

10. Signs of Abuse

10.1. There are a number of warning indicators which might suggest that a child may be being abused or neglected. Physical signs define some types of abuse, but there is also a range of behavioural indicators of abuse. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. It is important that staff are aware of these indicators and report any concerns to the designated person. It is the responsibility of staff to report concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

10.2. A child who is being abused and/or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss school or arrive late
- go missing from education, home or care
- show signs of not wanting to go home, or are living in accommodation they have no connection with
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- become disinterested in their school work
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- misuse alcohol and other drugs , or be particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- appear with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions
- associate with other children involved in exploitation

10.3. A single indicator will rarely provide conclusive evidence of abuse, but may be part of a pattern of information. All concerns should therefore be reported to the DSL. Even if a concern is minor, the DSL may have more information that, together with the new information, represents a more serious worry about a child. All staff should therefore be clear that it is always their responsibility to share concerns, no matter how small.

11. Taking Action

Context

11.1. BCiS staff and volunteers come into contact with children and young people through the delivery of school book clubs, training of book club leaders, author events and book related trips such as theatre performances or bookshop visits.

11.2. BCiS activities with children and young people involve the discussion of books and authors. These may involve the discussion of fictionalised accounts of abuse, risky behaviour or experiences such as bereavement or homelessness and/or the personal experiences of authors which could reference similar issues. This can prompt children to disclose their own experiences of abuse or to display knowledge that could indicate they have experienced abuse or have knowledge of others experiencing abuse or are otherwise vulnerable due to homelessness etc. It is important that our staff recognise these disclosures and take appropriate steps to ensure that the appropriate safeguarding steps are taken.

11.3. We have set out below clear written procedures for dealing with situations where there is a concern about a child involved in a BCiS activity. Currently all BCiS contact with children takes place through schools and colleges and our staff work within their safeguarding procedures. Our processes therefore involve sharing and concerns about a child or young person with the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Child Protection Officer in the relevant school, recognising that it is the school and not BCiS that is in the best position to deal with concerns relating to pupils. If a BCiS staff member does raise a concern within a school setting, they should notify the BCiS DSL so that they are aware of the issue and can follow up with the school concerned.

11.4. We also have clear written procedures for dealing with situations where allegations are made against a member of BCiS staff or a volunteer which set out the processes for sharing information with the appropriate Local Authority Designated Officer.

11.5. At present we do not host events independently of schools and have no plans to do so. Should we develop ways of working that mean our staff will have contact with children and young people outside of working in a school, we recognise that this policy will need to be amended to reflect that.

11.6. During the Covid-19 lockdown we developed additional guidelines for temporarily moving our work online ‘BCiS Online Safeguarding’. We do not currently undertake any work that involves direct online contact with children and young people. It is possible that a child could either email direct or contact us on social media - guidelines for how staff should respond are detailed in our Online Safeguarding policy.

11.7. Staff members working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When worried about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child and report any concerns according to the procedures set out below.

If You Suspect a Child is at Risk

11.8. You may have a concern about a child / young person's wellbeing, based on:

- Something a child/young person/parent has said
- Something you have noticed about the child's behaviour, health, or appearance
- Something another professional said or did

11.9. If this occurs make a note of the following information and report it to the school's DSL at the earliest opportunity. Also inform the BCiS DSL that you have raised a concern.

a. Name of child

b. Date, time and place

c. Who else was present

d. What was said / What happened / What you noticed - speech, behaviour, mood, drawings, games or appearance

e. If child or parent spoke, record their words rather than your interpretation

f. Analysis of what you observed and why it is a cause for concern

If a Child Discloses to You

11.10. It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being neglected and/or abused. They may feel ashamed, threatened by what will happen if they tell, or may believe that the abuse is their own fault. It is therefore important to listen to the child and show that you take them seriously.

11.11. During your conversation with the child:

- Allow them to speak freely.
- Remain calm and do not over react – the child may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting you.
- Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'.
- Do not be afraid of silences – remember how hard this must be for the child.
- Under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the child's mother thinks about all this.
- At an appropriate time tell the child that in order to help them you must pass the information on.

- Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.
- Avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be your way of being supportive but the child may interpret it that they have done something wrong.
- Tell the child what will happen next. The child may agree to go with you to see the designated person. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.
- Make a note of what was said, taking care to use the child's words rather than your interpretation of them.
- Report to the DSL in the school as soon as possible. Notify the BCiS DSL that you have made a report within the school.
- Seek support if you feel distressed.

If You Think an Adult is a Risk to Children

11.12. If while you are in a school you see an adult behaving in such a way that causes you concern that they may be a risk to children, you should report this to the school's DSL (or if it is the DSL you are concerned about, to the Headteacher). You should notify the BCiS DSL that a report has been made.

11.13. If you at any point believe that an adult working or volunteering for BCiS has behaved in such a way that causes concern that they may be a risk to children, you should report this to the BCiS DSL (or if it is the DSL you are concerned about, to a Trustee).

Confidentiality and Records

11.1. Child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

11.2. Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL or headteacher of the school in which they are working in and the BCiS DSL. The school's DSL will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Safeguarding Procedures

12. Safer Working Practices

Recruitment

11.1. We recognise that people who wish to harm children may deliberately seek out roles that allow them contact with children. Even where a role may have no direct contact with children, we recognise that an association with a charity working with children may allow an individual to be perceived as 'safe' to be with children.

11.2. We therefore have stringent procedures in place to make sure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are subject to appropriate checks at recruitment.

11.3. We will:

- Ensure that any advertisement makes clear BCiS's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Ensure job descriptions make reference to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Ensure all person specifications include specific reference to suitability to work with children.
- Verify an applicant's identity using photo ID such as a passport or driving licence.
- Check an applicant's qualifications/experience/ employment/history and explore any gaps in employment.
- Inform candidates that online searches of shortlisted candidates will be carried out.
- Obtain professional and character references directly (we will not accept references supplied by the applicant).
- Hold a face-to-face interview for shortlisted candidates with at least one member of the panel who has attended safer recruitment training (these may take place online, if necessary).

11.4. If appointed, we will:

- Ensure all adults have an enhanced DBS check where a role involves engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.
- Make staff aware of their contractual, legal, administrative and pastoral responsibilities. A key document to support staff's understanding in this area is the most recent copy of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' which will be made available to all staff.

<u>DBS Checks</u>

11.5. All staff, volunteers and trustees are subject to enhanced DBS checks every three years.

11.6. We will normally apply for DBS checks directly using a service such as uCheck. Some of our schools where we visit regularly require staff or volunteers to undertake a separate DBS check applied for by the school.

11.7. Where a staff member has an existing enhanced DBS and has joined the DBS Update Service, a status check to be carried out to confirm that no new information has been added to the certificate since its issue.

11.8. Before using the Update Service we will:

- obtain consent from the applicant to do so;
- confirm the certificate matches the individual's identity using photo id; and
- examine the original certificate to ensure that it is for the appropriate workforce and level of check, e.g. enhanced certificate/enhanced including barred list information.

11.9. Staff are required to take their DBS certificate and a form of photo ID to the schools they visit. If they are regular visitors the school may add them to their systems, otherwise a check is made at each visit.

Other Visitors

11.10. We may occasionally bring other visitors with us to schools, such as authors or funders. They will not have unsupervised contact with children and are always subject to the schools own processes for registering as a visitor, DBS requirements and supervision.

Record Keeping

11.11. We keep a register of all staff DBS details and records of safeguarding training. This ensures that all checks and training requirements are completed and kept up to date.

13. Staff Conduct

Training

13.1. All directors, staff, volunteers and trustees will receive safeguarding training when they first take up post and then annually. This will be recorded in our safeguarding record.

13.2. The DSL will receive appropriate training in leading safeguarding and will update this at least every two years.

13.3. Training will be facilitated by our Designated Safeguarding Lead and where appropriate will draw on resources provided by organisations such as the NSPCC and Safe CIC. This may include using online courses. Training will have a particular focus on recognising signs of abuse, managing a disclosure as well as the monitoring and reporting procedures of abuse and suspected abuse.

13.4. Every member of staff will receive a copy of this Safeguarding Policy, as well as the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education – Part One and Annex A and will need to sign to confirm that they have read and understood the documents.

Working Practices

13.5. Book Clubs in Schools is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

13.6. We are clear that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that pupils are cared for appropriately and safeguarded from any harm, and their duty of care is to promote the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community.

13.7. All staff are taken through our Code of Conduct and Working Practices (see Annex 1) and asked to sign it. This sets out the behaviour and conduct that we expect from staff.

Whistleblowing and Complaints

13.8. We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

13.9. All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude of colleagues.

Allegations Against Staff

13.10. We understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff. Any child making such an allegation will be treated sensitively and made to feel safe and listened to. If there are any immediate concerns of safety action must be taken to remove the child from harm.

13.11. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the DSL. If the allegation relates to the DSL it should be reported to a Trustee. This will then be discussed with the relevant school's DSL and then we will follow the school's specific policy in relation to following up the allegation and notifying the parents/carers of the child.

13.12. Individuals who are the subject of allegations should be informed as soon as possible. However, every effort must be taken to maintain confidentiality, in order to comply with the reporting restrictions in the Education Act 2011.

13.13. Suspension of the member of staff against whom an allegation has been made needs careful consideration, and we will consult the LADO for Child Protection in making any decision. Any member of staff found not suitable to work with children will be notified to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration for barring, following resignation or dismissal.

14. Book Club Leaders

1.1. Our Book Clubs involve older pupils (normally 6th form or Year 10) acting as book club leaders for groups of younger pupils (normally Y7). Throughout their time volunteering as book club leaders there is support and guidance available through each school's coordinator. Each book club session is supervised by a member of the school's staff, but a number of groups may run at the same time so groups do work independently.

1.2. We recognise that the discussion of books and authors may involve the discussion of fictionalised accounts of abuse, risky behaviour or experiences such as bereavement or homelessness and/or the personal experiences of authors which could reference similar issues. This can prompt children to disclose their own experiences of abuse or to display knowledge that could indicate they have experienced abuse or have knowledge of others experiencing abuse or are otherwise vulnerable due to homelessness etc.

1.3. While it is clearly not the responsibility of our student book club leaders to deal with these safeguarding issues themselves, it is important that they know what to do if they are worried about any of their book club members and are supported if any concerns arise. We therefore include safeguarding awareness in all of our training sessions for book club leaders.

Training

14.2. Incorporated into the training for book club leaders is a suggested format for the school's book club co-ordinator (normally a teacher or the school librarian) to outline what book club leaders should do if they have a concern. This involves a named contact for book club leaders should a discussion raise a safeguarding

concern about any of their book club members. This is normally the book club coordinator within the school, but can also be the school's DSL.

14.3. This section of the training includes explaining to the book club leaders the possibility that a club member might say something that causes them to be worried about them. For example, they may be being bullied. Book club leaders are trained:

- To acknowledge and be supportive if a book club member raises an issue, but as far as possible, not to explore their personal circumstances further in the group.

14.4. If they are worried about a book club member:

- To be clear that it is not their role to find out more or 'investigate'.
- Not to promise confidentiality, if they are asked.
- To share their concern with either the book club coordinator or the school's DSL.
- Once they have shared their concern, not to feel responsible for the book club member - that is for the member of staff to follow up.

14.5. The issues raised in the book club discussions may also cause book club leaders to want to disclose their own experience of abuse or neglect and their training also makes clear who in the school they can talk to if this is the case.

15. General Safeguarding

Health and Safety

15.1. Our Health and Safety Policy is set out in a separate document. This an assessment of the health and safety risks of our activities and steps to mitigate them. This includes out activities on school sites, planing for any trips (e.g. visits to a bookshop or theatre) and events (e.g. an author's reading).

Equal Opportunties

15.1. We work to ensure that all children we work with are treated equally regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Please see Book Clubs in Schools' Equal Opportunities Policy.

Bullying

15.2. Our policy on bullying is set out in a separate document (Anti-Bullying Statement) and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures, including homo/bi/transphobic, cyber bullying and sexist bullying. All staff are aware that children with SEND and /or differences/ perceived differences are more susceptible to being bullied / victims of child abuse. We keep a record of bullying incidents.

Keeping Children Safe Online

15.3. Our in school book clubs do not involve any online activity outside of the school environment. Some schools share book guides and materials for book club leaders via their internal electronic information systems which operate within each

school's e-safety policy. BCiS staff do not have any direct electronic contact with book club members or leaders.

15.4. In respect of any temporary online book club programme (such as was required during Covid - 19 lockdowns), please see the separate document BCiS Online Safeguarding.

15.5. The designated BCiS Safeguarding Lead is responsible for updating and ensuring that all relevant staff are trained on this policy.

Use of Photography/Video

15.6. BCiS only uses photographs/video where consent has been granted in line with an individual school's policy. Some schools seek consent when children start at the school for photographs of school based activities to be used, others for individual and activities and other for each individual photograph and we work with them to make sure this is secured. We do not use the children's names in our materials.

15.7. Photographs are taken using the school's own photographic equipment and the schools then send us the photographs where consent has been secured.

15.8. Occasionally we may agree with schools to use a professional photographer to take photographs and/or film the book clubs in action or at a public event. In these cases the normal consent process will take place but will include permission for images to be stored on the photographer's equipment. Photographers will at no time be unsupervised while with the book club members and leaders .

Physical Intervention

15.9. BCiS staff should never use physical intervention unless there is an immediate danger to a child's safety (e.g. a child about to run into the road). In these circumstances, physical intervention must be necessary and proportionate to the level of risk to the child and/or another person (e.g. taking hold of an arm to prevent a child running into a road). Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a pupil in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate conduct

GDPR

15.10. We do not collect or hold personal information about the children and young people in our book clubs. This information is collected and held by their schools and managed in a way that is compliant with their GDPR policies.

15.11. Where we collect feedback from book club members and leaders we do this via anonymous forms that only identify a child's school and year group. These forms do not ask for any information that would allow us or anyone else to identify individuals.

15.12. Any personal data collected about staff members or school contacts is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, only kept for specific purposes, held no longer than necessary and is kept private and secure with appropriate security measures in place, whether used in the workplace, hosted online (only within countries or sites with suitable data protection controls) or accessed remotely.

Annexes

Annex 1: Staff Code of Conduct and Working Practices

1. Book Clubs in Schools is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

2. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that children and young people are cared for appropriately and safeguarded from any harm, and their duty of care is to promote the health, safety and welfare of all children and young people that we work with.

3. BCiS produces a wide range of materials that are used in schools with children and young people. Care should be taken at all times that such materials are appropriate for children and young people and do not expose them to anything that could raise safeguarding concerns.

4. Although most BCiS work does not involve direct contact with children and young people, school visits and events do. Adults working in a school are in a position of trust and their conduct is therefore governed by specific laws and guidance and the policies and procedures agreed by the school's head teacher and governing body.

5. Staff occasionally express uncertainty as to what is and is not acceptable and seek guidance regarding those behaviours which, whilst most probably innocent, may be perceived by others as inappropriate *.

6. The following is, therefore, a code of appropriate conduct for all adults working with children and young people, including those involved in any out of school activities such as bookshop visits and author events. Adherence to this code should ensure that both children and adults are safe from misconduct or unfounded allegations of misconduct.

7. You should always:

    - Adhere to the policies of any school you are working in, many of which are specifically written with safeguarding in mind. For example: Child Protection, Behaviour, Anti Bullying, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety. These policies will be available on the school's website and should be reviewed before starting work in a school.
    - Behave in a mature, respectful, safe, fair and considered manner at all times
    - Ensure that if you are left alone with children or young people that they remain adequately supervised until a teacher or another member of the school staff returns (or in the case of a public event, an appropriate adult carer).
    - Provide a good example and 'positive role model'
    - Observe other people's right to confidentiality unless a safeguarding/child protection issue
    - Treat all children fairly: never confer favour on particular children, or build 'special relationships' with individual children
    - Wear clothing which is appropriate to your role and is not likely to be viewed as offensive, revealing or sexually provocative

7. Report to the Book Club Designated Safeguarding Lead and School Coordinator: (as soon as possible)

    - Any safeguarding concerns you might have about a child.
    - Any behaviour or situation which may give rise to complaint, misunderstanding or misinterpretation against yourself
    - Any difficulties that you are experiencing, for example, coping with a child presenting particularly challenging behaviour; situations where you anticipate that you may not be sufficiently qualified, trained or experienced to deal with or handle appropriately
    - Any behaviour of another adult in the school which give you cause for concern or breach of this code of conduct or other school policies and procedures.

8. BCiS staff should work in such a way that provides a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

9. You should never:

    - Behave in a manner that could lead a reasonable person to question your conduct, intentions or suitability to care for other people's children
    - Touch children in a manner which is or may be considered sexual, indecent, threatening, gratuitous or intimidating
    - Discriminate either favourably or unfavourably towards any child regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
    - Give personal contact details, text, email or telephone, or make arrangements to contact, communicate or meet children outside of work
    - Develop 'personal' or sexual relationships with children
    - Push, hit, kick, punch, slap, throw missiles at or smack a child or threaten to do so
    - Use force as a form of punishment
    - Be sarcastic, embarrass or humiliate, make remarks or "jokes" to children of a personal, racist, discriminatory, intimidating or otherwise inappropriate * or offensive nature (e.g. unprofessional personal remarks, suggestive remarks, attempts to scapegoat or demean)
    - Give or receive (other than token) gifts unless arranged through the Directors or School Co-ordinator
    - Allow, encourage or condone children to act in an illegal, improper or unsafe manner e.g. smoking or drinking alcohol
    - Behave in an illegal or unsafe manner, for example, exceeding the speed limit, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving a vehicle which is known to be un-roadworthy or otherwise unsafe or not having appropriate insurance, using a mobile phone whilst driving, fail to use seatbelts and drive in a safe manner at all times whilst transporting children

- Undertake any work with children when you are not in a fit and proper physical or emotional state to do so. For example: under the influence of medication which includes drowsiness; with a medical condition which dictates that you should not be caring for children; under extreme stress which is likely to impair your judgement.
- Use your personal mobile devices to take any images of the children you are working with
- Express personal views which are offensive or could be treated under the Prevent Duty
- Staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, when a child is immediate danger/endangering him/herself or others, and that at all times it the physical interventions must be necessary and proportionate to the level or risk to the child and/or another person. Staff should always avoid touching or restraining a pupil in a way that could be interpreted as sexually inappropriate conduct.

* Please note:

It is the perception of the person subject to a remark or action rather than your stated intention that defines ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’.

I, ……., agree to abide by the Safe Working Practice Guidance applied above.

Signed …… Date ……