

Platt Bridge Community School & Nursery - Safeguarding, Child Protection, and Early Help Policy 2026



School Name: Platt Bridge Community School

Address: Rivington Avenue, Platt Bridge, Wigan, WN2 5NG

Headteacher: Mr. Stephen Wallace

Policy Written By: Abigail Harmer

Date of Policy: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

1. Statutory Framework and Policy Introduction

This document constitutes the unified safeguarding, child protection, and early help policy for **Platt Bridge Community School**. It establishes a multi-disciplinary framework to ensure the school discharges its statutory duties with absolute fidelity to the law and a relentless, auditing focus on the safety and wellbeing of every child.

This policy is grounded in the statutory requirements of **'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) 2026** and **'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2026**. Central to this framework is the paramountcy of the child's welfare and the application of a proactive **anti-discriminatory and anti-racist approach** as a core principle in the application of all safeguarding activity.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined 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 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.
- Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the four key outcomes from the Children's Social Care National Framework:
 - Outcome 1: Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need.
 - Outcome 2: Children and young people are safe in and outside their homes.
 - Outcome 3: Children and young people are supported by their family network.
 - Outcome 4: Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.

2. Key Safeguarding Personnel and Availability

Role	Platt Bridge Community School	Contact details
Headteacher	Stephen Wallace	swallace@plattbridge.atctrust.org.uk
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Stephen Wallace	swallace@plattbridge.atctrust.org.uk
Deputy DSL (DDSL)	Abigail Harmer/Carly Bozdogan	aharmer@plattbridge.atctrust.org.uk cbozdogan@plattbridge.atctrust.org.uk
SENDCo	Nicola Wood	nwood@plattbridge.atctrust.org.uk
Chair of Governors	Michael Farrell	mikefaz94@gmail.com
Safeguarding Governor	Michael Farrell	mikefaz94@gmail.com

Local Authority and Statutory Contacts (Wigan)

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** Heather Martin
- **Referral Hub:** Children's First Partnership Hub - Wigan - 01942 828300

CRUCIAL DIRECTIVE

"A Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL (DDSL) will always be available during school hours for staff consultation."

3. Staff Responsibilities and Professional Conduct

Following the formal removal of 'Annex A' from KCSIE, the school issues the following active command:

1. **Mandatory Reading:** All staff **MUST** read 'Part 1' of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 in its entirety. Staff are required to provide a written or digital confirmation of this reading to the Headteacher/DSL.
2. **Professional Conduct and Culture:** The school maintains a zero-tolerance approach toward 'banter', misogyny, and misandry. These are recognised as potential precursors to, or masks for, more serious forms of abuse and harassment.
3. **Communication:** All staff communication must be respectful, inclusive, and professional at all times.
4. **Active Challenge:** Staff have a duty to challenge and report discriminatory behaviour, language, or negative stereotypes immediately.
5. **Professional Curiosity:** Staff must maintain an "eyes on" approach, looking beyond surface-level explanations for changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, or family circumstances.

4. The 'Family Help' Model (Targeted Early Help)

The 2026 statutory framework replaces traditional 'Early Help' with the **Family Help** model, designed to provide a seamless, multi-disciplinary system of support centered on the family unit.

The Two Sections of Family Help

- **Targeted Early Help:** Multi-disciplinary support for families with complex needs that do not yet meet the threshold for statutory Section 17 intervention.
- **Statutory Support (Section 17):** Support for "children in need" to help them achieve a reasonable standard of health or development.

Principles for Working with Parents and Carers

- **Trusting Relationships:** Engage families with empathy, avoiding shame or blame.
- **Strength-Based Approach:** Identify and utilise what is working well within the family to effect change.
- **"No Surprises" Culture:** Parents must be kept fully informed of meeting attendees, purposes, and decisions.
- **Inclusive Communication:** Use jargon-free language and professional interpreters; never rely on family members for translation.
- **Family Group Decision-Making:** Utilise Family Group Conferences (FGCs) to promote family-led planning and prevent the need for care wherever possible.

Indicators for Family Help

A child may benefit from Family Help if they exhibit:

- Persistent school absence or being missing from education.
- Risk of being drawn into criminal behaviour (gangs, county lines, or organised crime).
- Signs of mental ill health, substance misuse, or viewing harmful online content.
- Responsibilities as a Young Carer or status within a Kinship Care arrangement.

5. Safeguarding in the Digital Age: AI, Filtering, and Monitoring

The school recognises that digital risks are dynamic and require proactive technical oversight combined with staff accountability.

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Staff must be vigilant regarding the risks of Generative AI, including its potential use in sophisticated grooming, the creation of harmful or illegal content, and deceptive information (deepfakes).
- **Filtering and Monitoring Duty:** The Governing Body must conduct an annual review of filtering and monitoring systems to ensure they meet DfE Data Protection guidance. Educational staff hold a specific duty to monitor these filters and intervene immediately when risks are flagged.
- **Specific Monitoring Focus:** Systems must explicitly monitor for:
 - Disinformation and misinformation
 - Conspiracy theories
 - Emerging AI-driven risks

6. Operation Encompass, Domestic Abuse, and Prevent

Operation Encompass: Under the **Victims and Prisoners Act 2024**, police forces have a statutory duty to provide immediate notifications to schools when a child is linked to a domestic abuse incident.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: The school recognises children as victims in their own right if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse. The DSL will ensure immediate emotional and practical support is provided to mitigate trauma.

Prevent Duty: Under **Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015**, the school prevents radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and building pupil resilience. All staff receive Prevent awareness training to identify indicators for the multi-agency **Channel programme**.

7. Child-on-Child Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

The school operates a proactive stance on the continuum of peer-based abuse.

- **Terminology:** The term '**nudes and semi-nudes**' is used to describe the sharing of images, replacing previous concepts of 'consent' which are inappropriate in a peer-child context.
- **Extra-Familial Contexts:** Assessments must move beyond the home to consider harm encountered in:
 - Peer groups (normalisation of HSB).
 - Public spaces (parks, transport, community hubs).

- Online environments (gaming, social media, encrypted apps).

8. Safer Recruitment and Transferable Risk

Removal of Supervision Exemption

The 'supervision exemption' for volunteers in regulated activity is **removed**. All volunteers in regulated activity must undergo full vetting, including an Enhanced DBS with Barred List check.

Online Pre-recruitment Checks

Shortlisted candidates are subject to online searches, including social media, to identify potential issues of unsuitability.

Mandatory Reference Standards

The school will obtain a minimum of two references originating from legitimate sources. These must clarify any vague content and explicitly establish the reason for the candidate leaving their previous post.

Transferable Risk

The school maintains strict vigilance regarding **Transferable Risk**, where behaviour outside the setting, such as social care involvement with an adult's own children, may affect an adult's suitability to care for children within the school environment.

9. Transitions: Elective Home Education (EHE) and Alternative Provision (AP)

Transitions are periods of significantly increased vulnerability.

Elective Home Education (EHE) When a child moves to EHE, the school must ensure robust safeguarding procedures are followed so the child does not "fall out of view."

Alternative Provision (AP) For children moving to AP, the school maintains a duty of care to ensure the placement is safe. Safeguarding information regarding radicalisation concerns, including support provided through Channel, must be shared securely during these transitions to ensure continuous protection.

10. Specific Vulnerabilities and Kinship Care

- **Kinship Care:** The school works with the Virtual School Head (VSH) to ensure children in kinship care receive the same advocacy and support as Looked After Children.
- **Young Carers:** These pupils must be identified through the school census. Schools do not require parental or pupil consent to provide this information for census purposes.

- **SEND and Disabled Children:** The school engages the **Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO)** to ensure EHC plans are integrated with safeguarding, acknowledging the significantly higher risk of abuse for disabled children.

11. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In Nursery and EYFS settings, staff must maintain a child-centred approach, interpreting non-verbal and pre-verbal cues and observing interactions to understand a child's wellbeing. Practitioners must remain professionally curious, especially when relying on parent accounts, and be alert to unexplained injuries or changes in development.

Our settings strictly adhere to enhanced welfare standards regarding Safe Sleeping and Safer Eating and Weaning. Following September 2026 guidance, staff must effectively implement statutory requirements for babies' sleeping arrangements and preventing harm during weaning.

12. Intimate Care, Toilets, and Hygiene

- **Privacy and Dignity:** Schools must provide appropriate facilities for boys and girls that do not compromise their safety, comfort, or dignity.
- **Intimate Care Policy:** Staff follow the school's intimate care procedures, ensuring that while children are supported with toileting and washing, they are also encouraged toward independence where developmentally appropriate.

13. Assessment Framework and Information Sharing

The Three Domains of Assessment

1. **Child's Developmental Needs:** Health, education, and emotional development.
2. **Parenting Capacity:** Basic care, ensuring safety, and emotional warmth.
3. **Family and Environmental Factors:** Housing, employment, and extra-familial contexts.

Procedural Timelines

- **Immediate Harm:** Contact police/Social Care immediately.
- **One Working Day:** Social Care must decide on next steps within one working day of a referral.
- **45 Working Days:** Statutory assessments must conclude within 45 working days.
Auditor's Rule: Action to meet a child's needs must begin as soon as a need is identified and must not be delayed until the assessment concludes.

Myth vs. Reality: Information Sharing

- **Myth:** Data protection prevents us from sharing information.
- **Reality:** UK GDPR provides a framework for *appropriate* sharing to protect children.
- **Myth:** We always need parental consent to share.

- **Reality:** Consent is not required if there is a 'legal obligation' or 'public task' (safeguarding).
- **Myth:** Information law is a barrier between agencies.
- **Reality:** For children at risk, information law is rarely a barrier to sharing with other practitioners.