



OE Safeguarding Child Protection Policy Statement

Opportunity Education, part of Global School Exchanges Ltd, believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by a commitment to practise which protects them. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years old.

We seek to maintain a safe and supportive environment and all employees and volunteers involved with Opportunity Education (OE) accept and recognise these responsibilities.

OE recognise that:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents/ carers and their agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose of the policy:

- To provide protection for the children and young people who receive OE's services.
- To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers, paid staff, consultants, volunteers, host families, students or anyone working on behalf of OE.

OE will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Following a Safer Recruitment Policy, ensuring that all who apply to work for OE are interviewed and asked to provide at least two references, at least one of them written; all such references will be followed up.
- Following a Safer Recruitment of Host Families procedure, ensuring all host families complete a thorough recruitment process including completing a detailed application form, an interview in their own home, an inspection of household facilities, an enhanced DBS check and two references.
- Ensuring all children placed in Host Families have suitably selected hosts who can accommodate for any medical conditions/pet allergies/special requirements, information collected from students prior to arrival.
- Ensuring best practice of matching appropriate ages and gender when selecting students to stay in Host Families who have their own children.



- Ensuring that all appointments are subject to a probationary period and will not be confirmed unless OE is confident that the applicant can be safely entrusted with young people.
- It will be made clear to applicants that the work, either paid or voluntary, involves working with young people and is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. OE excludes known abusers. DBS checks will be renewed for teachers that have been away from the school for a period of 1 year or more.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with students, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and students appropriately.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of, understand and apply the direction in the Code of Conduct.
- Sharing information and acting promptly and professionally to any concerns.
- Appointing at least one Company designated Safeguarding Coordinator.
- Regularly reviewing the policy on an annual basis, or more frequently should this be deemed as required.

Designated Safeguarding Coordinator's Duties:

- To be familiar with the Safeguarding Children Policy and the procedures followed by OE.
- To obtain appropriate training on Safeguarding Children.
- To have responsibility for safeguarding children within OE, implement and monitor procedures.
- To inform and train all members of staff and volunteers in the procedures to follow with regards to the safeguarding of children and welfare issues.
- To inform and train staff and volunteers on how to respond to suspicions or allegations against a child or young person or against themselves.
- To inform the Police of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living or working with, or looking after children.
- To ensure all incidents are effectively logged on the reporting form within 24 hours, and reported to the Senior Management team as appropriate.
- Consult with a statutory child protection agency such as the local children's services department or health board or the NSPCC helpline to discuss any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns.
- Be aware of the role of Local Safeguarding Children Boards and the existence of local child protection procedures.
- Know the relevant contact numbers and addresses of local statutory agencies: children's services, the police, health authorities and schools in order to discuss any anxieties or



concerns or, if necessary, make a formal referral; and provide information about helplines and other sources of help for children and young people.

The Designated Safeguarding Coordinator is aware that it is not their role to decide whether or not a child has been abused. This is the task of the children's social services department who have the legal responsibility or of the NSPCC who also have powers to investigate child protection concerns.

Duties of all OE Staff Members

- To be familiar with OE' policies and procedures
- To protect themselves from allegations of abuse by following OE's procedures.
- To complete safeguarding training on an annual basis.
- To seek further guidance if they do not fully understand any safeguarding policies or procedures.

DBS Checks Policy

Scope

- All OE staff are required to undergo an Enhanced DBS Check. This includes academic, administrative and management staff. The only exceptions to this are: staff that are Trainers on our enterprise programmes will only be subject to checks for working with students over 18 and therefore will not be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check. Consultants paid to review our academic programmes, and who will have no access to those under the age of 18, are also not required to undergo an enhanced DBS check.
- Checks are to be carried out before employment starts or, where this proves impossible, at the earliest possible opportunity. This is supported by satisfactory references from the most recent and one other previous employer.
- Any staff member who returns after a period of absence of more than one year is required to undergo a further Enhanced DBS Check.

Procedure:

- It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to coordinate and track DBS applications and ensure coverage across all staff.
- A record is kept of all checks done, to include the name of the staff member, the date and number of the document.
- Records will be kept in line with the Handling of DBS Certificates and Information Policy.



Duties of OE Host Families:

- To read thoroughly OE's safeguarding policies and procedures and sign a declaration to say they understand and will adhere to the policies.
- To seek further guidance if they do not fully understand any safeguarding policies or procedures.
- To safeguard students against any harm and provide suitable living conditions whilst in their care.
- To not leave students under the age of 18 unattended in their homes at any time and to provide suitable supervision at all times when outside of the home.
- To know who the OE Safeguarding Coordinator is and to have access to the OE 24-hour emergency contact number at all times.
- To protect themselves from allegations of abuse by following OE's procedures.
- To complete the Accreditation UK Safeguarding course for Homestay Hosts - linked [here](#).



Child Abuse

Child Abuse is most often used to describe ways in which children are harmed with damage to their physical or mental health.

There are 4 broad categories of abuse as follows:

- Physical: through hitting, shaking, squeezing, kicking, punching etc.
- Sexual: through inappropriate physical contact, the taking of indecent images of children, or the encouragement of sexual activity by children for the purpose of adult gratification.
- Emotional: through persistent lack of affection, unrealistic adult demands, verbal bullying including cyber-bullying.
- Neglect: persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention.

Identifying abuse:

It can be difficult to identify abuse as it has various forms. Below are some typical indicators to watch for:

- unexplained injuries, student describing an abusive act that has happened to them
- another student telling you of their concern about a friend / fellow student
- sexually explicit behaviour in games / activities
- serious distrust of adults or other students
- difficulty in making friends / socialising with other students
- personality changes and behavioural changes,
- changes in dress which may be covering up bruises etc.
- avoiding sports etc. when previously they have been participants

How to react if you suspect abuse:

- remain calm, accessible and receptive, listen carefully without interrupting
- communicate with the student in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference – this is especially important for disabled students
- be aware of the non-verbal messages you are giving
- make it clear that you are taking them seriously
- acknowledge their courage and reassure them that they are right to tell
- reassure them that they should not feel guilty, let them know that you are going to do everything you can to help them and what may happen as a result
- do not promise to keep the information a secret

Procedure to follow if child abuse is suspected:

- inform the OE Safeguarding Coordinator if you notice any significant physical and behavioural changes. A reporting form will be provided.
- if you suspect that an adult is a threat to a student in some way inform the Safeguarding Coordinator and continue to monitor the situation



- if a student makes any comment that gives cause for concern or there is any deterioration in the student's general well-being, react calmly as described in the guidelines above and submit the information to the safeguarding co-ordinator
- make a note of what was said and who was present and report this information immediately to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

The Safeguarding Coordinator will take appropriate actions, which may involve external agencies and contacting parents/guardians.

Procedure to follow if staff or students are accused of abuse:

All members of staff and volunteers should ensure that they avoid making themselves vulnerable to suspicion of any form of abuse by following the guidelines and procedures set out in OE's Code of Conduct to follow if staff or volunteers are accused of abuse

- If a member of staff or a student is accused of any form of abuse, such suspicions will be reported to the Safeguarding Coordinator
- The person against whom the allegation is made will be informed of the allegation and interviewed immediately
- Following the interview, if there is any potential substance to the allegation:
 - for staff and directors: they will be suspended from their duties pending further investigation
 - for students: they will be required to suspend their attendance at of the programme and find alternative accommodation
- Confidential records will be kept of the allegation and all subsequent proceedings
- Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being re-instated. Founded allegations will be passed on to the police and will result in a termination of employment/voluntary services
- OE will also inform the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to ensure their records are correct.

Training

All members of staff will receive training in child protection covering all aspects laid out in the child protection guidance. Access to additional training in relation to safeguarding and child protection will be available at all times. Staff should request such training as and when necessary.

Opportunity Education requires:

- Employees to attend in-house child protection awareness training, to encourage good practice and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- This training is to be repeated annually.
- Senior coordinating staff to have sufficient and up-to-date knowledge on child protection legislation and issues.
- Relevant, nominated personnel to hold recognised and appropriate first aid qualifications.



- Staff to sign to say that they have read and understood this Safeguarding Policy and agree to the Code of Conduct.

Confidentiality Statement

OE endeavours to uphold the confidentiality of students, staff, hosts and volunteers at all times.

This will be achieved by: storing confidential information in a locked filing system at the company registered office, information about children, staff, volunteers and families only being shared on a need to know basis.

Records will be kept in line with the Handling of DBS Certificates and Information Policy.

OE Safeguarding Coordinator: Mr Thomas Saunders

Role: Programme Director

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OE is committed to reviewing this policy and good practice on an annual basis.