



St Josephs Infant and Junior Schools

Safeguarding-Aware Practice for Vulnerable Pupils

Best practice for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and pupils with
SEND

Every child's voice matters

Safeguarding is effective only when every pupil can understand how to recognise risk, seek help, and report a concern. Information must be accessible, taught explicitly, and checked for understanding.

Purpose of this guide

To help all staff remove communication, language, sensory and cultural barriers so that EAL and SEND pupils understand safeguarding messages and can use the school's reporting and support systems with confidence.



Understanding additional vulnerability

Pupils who use EAL, pupils with SEND, and pupils who are both EAL and SEND may experience additional barriers to recognising unsafe situations, explaining worries or making a disclosure. Staff must not interpret limited language, reduced eye contact, unusual presentation or unclear communication as evidence that there is no concern.

EAL pupils may:

- Know everyday English but not the vocabulary needed to describe harm or worry.
- Be unfamiliar with UK child protection systems and school reporting routes.
- Worry about getting into trouble or causing difficulty for family members.
- Experience cultural barriers to questioning adults or discussing private matters.
- Access online spaces, messages and content in more than one language.

Pupils with SEND may:

- Have communication, processing or memory difficulties.
- Find it harder to recognise unsafe behaviour or social cues.
- Be more dependent on adults and less able to avoid unsafe situations.
- Experience bullying, isolation or online vulnerability.
- Require several opportunities, formats or trusted relationships before disclosing.

Core safeguarding principle

Behaviour, distress or a change in presentation may be a form of communication. Follow the school safeguarding procedure whenever there is a concern. Adapt communication, but do not lower the safeguarding threshold.

A graduated approach to accessibility

- Plan: identify language, communication, sensory and cognitive needs before teaching safeguarding content.
- Teach: model key words and reporting routes explicitly.
- Practice: use scenarios, visuals, role-play and repeated rehearsal.
- Check: ask pupils to explain or demonstrate what they would do, rather than asking only, "Do you understand?"
- Review: analyse pupil voice and follow up any gap for an individual or group.

I. Explicitly teach safeguarding vocabulary

Do not assume that conversational English means a pupil can describe risk, harm or abuse.

Key word or phrase	Child-friendly meaning
Safe / unsafe	Protected and cared for / something does not feel right



Key word or phrase	Child-friendly meaning
Worried / concerned	Feeling that something may be wrong
Trusted adult	An adult who listens and helps to keep a child safe
Hurt	Physical pain or emotional upset
Bullying	Repeated behaviour that causes harm or distress
Private parts	Parts of the body covered by underwear
Appropriate / inappropriate touch	Touch that is safe and respectful / touch that is not okay
Consent	Giving age-appropriate agreement and knowing that it can be withdrawn
Online stranger	Someone not known in real life
Threat	Words or actions used to frighten or control
Secret / surprise	An unsafe secret causes worry; a surprise is temporary and safe
Abuse	A term for older pupils, taught carefully and appropriately



Practical teaching strategies

Use regularly

- Visuals, photographs and symbols through widgit and flash academy
- Dual-language resources where appropriate.
- Repetition in PSHE, RSHE, assemblies and class routines.
- Social stories and communication boards.
- Role-play, modelling and rehearsal.
- Simple, concrete language and additional processing time.

Avoid relying on

- One-off assemblies or a single annual lesson.
- Written English without visual support.
- Abstract or euphemistic language.
- Whole-class participation as proof of understanding.
- Peers or family members to interpret a disclosure.
- Leading questions or repeated questioning after a disclosure.

Useful sentence stems

I need help because...

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.

I feel worried about...

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.

I do not feel safe.

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.

Can I speak to an adult privately?

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.

Someone is hurting me.

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.

This happened online.

Practice the words in a calm, familiar context so pupils can use them when needed.



2. Ensure every pupil knows who can help

Every EAL and SEND pupil should be able to identify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), deputy DSLs, the class teacher, and other trusted adults.

- Display photographs, names and roles around the school.
- Add symbols, translated labels or simple language where helpful.
- Introduce trusted adults in person, not only through photographs.
- Revisit reporting routes in assemblies, class discussions, and induction.
- Check that each pupil can name or point to at least one adult they would approach.

Simple reporting pathway

I feel worried > I tell a trusted adult > The adult listens and takes action > I am kept informed in a way I can understand.

3. Use visual and multilingual safeguarding materials

Safeguarding information should never depend solely on a pupil reading or understanding written English.

- Picture-based posters and safeguarding comic strips.
- Translated key messages and home-language resources, where available.
- Videos with subtitles and clear visual examples.
- Pictorial reporting pathways and communication boards.
- Widgit or other symbol-supported materials where appropriate.
- Accessible versions for pupils with sensory, cognitive or communication needs.

Accessibility check

Could a newly arrived pupil, a non-reader, or a pupil with communication difficulties understand this message and show what to do next?



4. Check understanding, not just participation

Attending an assembly or lesson does not show that a pupil understood the safeguarding message. Use pupil voice, scenarios and demonstration to find out what pupils know and can do.

Pupil voice prompts

- ☐ What would you do if you felt unsafe?
- ☐ Who would you tell if someone was hurting you?
- ☐ What would you do if someone was bullying you online?
- ☐ Can you name or point to an adult who can help?
- ☐ What is the difference between an unsafe secret and a surprise?
- ☐ How would you ask to speak to an adult privately?

Make pupil voice accessible

Use pictures, symbols, objects of reference, role-play, supported communication or a trained interpreter where needed. Record the support used so that responses are interpreted fairly.

Analyse responses separately

- EAL pupils
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who are both EAL and SEND
- Newly arrived pupils
- Disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable groups

5. Include safeguarding in induction

New arrivals may be particularly vulnerable because they may not yet understand school routines, expectations, or reporting systems. This can be supported with Flash Academy

Induction should cover

- ☐ Who keeps children safe and how to recognise trusted adults.
- ☐ How to report a worry or concern and how adults will respond.
- ☐ School routines, behaviour expectations and anti-bullying procedures.
- ☐ Fire, evacuation and other emergency procedures.
- ☐ Online safety, personal information and safe communication.
- ☐ Attendance expectations and how families can ask for help.

Practical induction activity

Walk around the school with the pupil. Introduce trusted adults and physically show key places, including where the pupil can seek help. Revisit after the pupil has settled in.



6. Develop culturally responsive safeguarding practice

- Child protection systems differ between countries.
- Some children may not expect adults to ask about wellbeing.
- Cultural norms can affect a pupil's willingness or language for disclosure.
- Families may be unfamiliar with UK safeguarding expectations.
- Trust is built through respectful, consistent, and nonjudgemental communication.

Non-negotiable

Be culturally aware and professionally curious. Cultural sensitivity must never prevent staff from recording, reporting or escalating a safeguarding concern. The child's welfare remains paramount.



7. Make online safety accessible

EAL and SEND pupils face the same online risks as their peers and may experience additional barriers where content, messages or relationships cross languages and platforms.

Teach explicitly • Safe communication online. • Grooming and exploitation. • Sharing personal information and images. • Reporting harmful or upsetting content. • Cyberbullying and coercion. • Gaming, messaging and social media risks.	Use accessible methods • Live demonstrations and visual examples. • Role-play and short scenarios. • Subtitled videos and symbol-supported prompts. • Home-language resources where available. • Repeated checks of understanding. • Clear practice using reporting tools.
Check for application Can the pupil explain what personal information is, recognise an unsafe online interaction, and show how to block, report or seek adult help?	

8. Engage families as safeguarding partners

Parents and carers need accessible information about the school's safeguarding responsibilities, attendance expectations, online safety guidance and how to raise concerns.

- Use professional translation or interpretation services where required.
- Provide multilingual or visual newsletters and guides.
- Offer videos or workshops that explain safeguarding procedures.
- Check understanding and provide opportunities for questions.
- Avoid using pupils, siblings or untrained family members to interpret sensitive safeguarding matters.
- Explain confidentiality and information sharing in clear, respectful language.

Family accessibility question

Could this parent or carer understand the school's safeguarding systems, know how to raise a concern and access support in a language and format they understand?

9. Monitor EAL and SEND pupil voice separately

- ☐ Do EAL and SEND pupils report feeling as safe as their peers?
- ☐ Can each pupil identify a trusted adult?
- ☐ Do pupils understand how to report concerns?
- ☐ Do pupils understand key online safety messages?
- ☐ Are pupils represented in councils, leadership roles and wider school life?
- ☐ Is there evidence of belonging, inclusion and confidence to speak?



Staff reflection and audit

Reflection question	Evidence / finding	Action needed
Could every EAL pupil explain or demonstrate how to report a safeguarding concern?		
Could every pupil with SEND identify a trusted adult using their usual communication method?		
Are safeguarding displays accessible to non-readers and pupils with communication needs?		
Do we monitor pupil voice by vulnerable group and act on the findings?		
How do we know pupils have understood safeguarding messages?		
Can families access information in a language and format they understand?		
Are new arrivals given an accessible induction and a follow-up check?		
Are staff confident in responding to a disclosure made through limited English or alternative communication?		



If a pupil tells you something worrying

- 1 Listen** Stay calm. Give the pupil time and use the pupil's usual communication method or support.
- 2 Reassure** Explain that the pupil has done the right thing by telling you. Do not promise confidentiality.
- 3 Clarify only** Use minimal, open prompts only where necessary. Do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- 4 Record** Write an accurate, factual account using the pupil's own words or communication as far as possible. Record any interpretation or communication support used.
- 5 Report immediately** Follow the school's safeguarding procedure and pass the concern to the DSL or deputy DSL without delay.
- 6 Continue support** Maintain normal, supportive contact and follow the DSL's direction. Do not discuss the concern with others who do not need to know.

Remember

Accessibility adjustments support communication. They do not replace the school safeguarding procedure, professional judgement or immediate referral to the DSL.

Safeguarding is effective only when every child can access it, understand it and use it when needed.