



# SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## Summary for Parents and Carers

### Introduction and Purpose

Rotherham Opportunities College (ROC) is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students. Safeguarding is central to the college's ethos and practice, ensuring that students are protected from harm, supported appropriately, and enabled to achieve positive outcomes.

This policy applies to students aged 16–25, many of whom have additional needs such as learning disabilities, autism, communication difficulties, physical disabilities, and/or mental health needs. These factors may increase vulnerability, and the college recognises the importance of tailored support, early identification of risk, and proactive safeguarding measures.

### Scope

This policy applies to all staff, visitors, contractors, and external professionals working with ROC students. It also applies to students themselves. All individuals are expected to follow safeguarding procedures and contribute to maintaining a safe environment.

### Safeguarding Approach

ROC operates a whole-college safeguarding approach underpinned by the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff are expected to maintain a "it could happen here" mindset and act in the best interests of the student at all times.

The college aims to:

- Protect students from maltreatment
- Prevent impairment of physical and mental health or development
- Ensure students are supported in safe and effective care environments
- Promote resilience, independence, and positive outcomes
- Enable students to understand risks and how to stay safe

### Safeguarding Team

The college has a designated safeguarding structure led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and supported by Designated Safeguarding Deputies (DSDs).

The safeguarding team is responsible for:

- Managing safeguarding concerns and referrals
- Liaising with external agencies e.g. Children's Safeguarding and Adult Social Care
- Ensuring safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented and reviewed
- Supporting staff with safeguarding matters
- Maintaining accurate safeguarding records
- Providing safeguarding training for all staff

All safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and handled in line with statutory guidance.



## **Reporting Safeguarding Concerns**

Any safeguarding concern should be reported immediately to the safeguarding team. Staff record concerns using the college's online system (CPOMS), ensuring that concerns are logged accurately and in a timely manner.

Parents and carers may also report concerns directly using the safeguarding contact details:

- Email: [safeguarding@theroc.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@theroc.co.uk)
- Telephone: 07351 768335

The safeguarding team will assess concerns and determine appropriate next steps, which may include consultation with external agencies

## **Responding to Disclosures**

If a student discloses information relating to abuse or harm, staff are trained to respond appropriately by:

- Listening carefully and without interruption
- Remaining calm and non-judgemental
- Avoiding leading or investigative questioning
- Reassuring the student that they have done the right thing
- Recording the disclosure accurately using the student's own words where possible
- Reporting the concern immediately to the safeguarding team

Staff do not promise confidentiality where a safeguarding concern exists, as information must be shared to protect the student.

## **Categories of Safeguarding Concerns**

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect
- Peer-on-peer (child-on-child) abuse, including bullying, harassment, and sexualised behaviour
- Online abuse, including cyberbullying, exploitation, and exposure to harmful content
- Radicalisation and extremism (Prevent duty)
- Child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation (e.g. county lines)
- Domestic abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and honour-based abuse
- Financial or organisational abuse
- Mental health concerns and self-harm
- Self-neglect and vulnerability due to disability or circumstances

Staff are trained to identify indicators of abuse and to act upon concerns appropriately.

## **Early Help**

ROC actively promotes early help, which involves providing support at the earliest stage of a difficulty arising. The college works in partnership with families and external agencies to identify needs and coordinate support.



## **Online Safety**

The college implements filtering and monitoring systems (including Smoothwall) to help safeguard students online. Online safety is embedded within the curriculum, ensuring students understand:

- Safe and responsible internet use
- Risks associated with misinformation, disinformation, and online exploitation
- How to report concerns

The use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, is monitored in line with safeguarding expectations.

## **Child-on-Child (Peer-on-Peer) Abuse**

ROC recognises that abuse can occur between students and adopts a zero-tolerance approach to peer-on-peer abuse. This includes physical, sexual, emotional, and online abuse, as well as bullying and harassment.

All concerns are reported, recorded, and acted upon promptly. Where appropriate, external agencies may be involved.

## **Staff Training and Responsibilities**

Safeguarding is embedded within staff training and professional practice. All staff:

- Receive safeguarding training at induction and regular updates
- Complete training aligned with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Are trained in recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns
- Participate in ongoing professional development, including Prevent duty training

Trustees and senior leaders also receive safeguarding training to ensure oversight and accountability.

## **Safer Recruitment**

ROC follows safer recruitment practices in line with statutory guidance. This includes:

- Enhanced DBS checks and barred list checks
- Verification of identity, qualifications, and references
- Assessment of employment history
- Use of trained interview panels including senior leaders
- Maintenance of a single central record of recruitment checks

These procedures ensure that all individuals working with students are suitable and appropriately vetted.

## **Supporting Students and Teaching Approaches**

Safeguarding is supported through the curriculum and teaching approaches. Students are supported to:

- Develop awareness of risks and protective behaviours
- Build resilience and critical thinking skills
- Understand topics such as safeguarding, Prevent, British values, and protected characteristics



The Personal and Social Development (PSD) curriculum includes safeguarding-related themes delivered in accessible and engaging formats.

### **Allegations Against Staff**

Any allegation or concern involving a member of staff is taken seriously and managed in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

- Low-level concerns are recorded and reviewed internally
- Allegations meeting the threshold for harm are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Where appropriate, referrals are also made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The college works with external agencies to ensure appropriate action is taken.

### **Whistleblowing**

ROC encourages a culture where staff feel able to raise concerns about unsafe practice or wrongdoing. Whistleblowing procedures are in place to ensure that concerns can be reported and addressed without fear of reprisal.

### **Working in Partnership**

Safeguarding at ROC is delivered in partnership with:

- Parents and carers
- Local authority safeguarding services
- Children's Social Care (MASH)
- Adults' Social Care
- Health and mental health services
- Other relevant agencies

This collaborative approach ensures that students receive coordinated and effective support.

### **Key Message for Parents and Carers**

ROC is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all students. Safeguarding concerns are taken seriously, acted upon promptly, and managed in line with statutory guidance.

Parents and carers are encouraged to maintain open communication with the college and to contact the safeguarding team if they have any concerns about a student's welfare or safety.