****

**Date: - Revised for academic year 2024-2025 (spring term 2025)**

**Auditing of Child Protection and Confidential Files**

The Named Governor for child protection and safeguarding, on behalf of the governing body, has confirmed that the school’s record keeping in relation to children of concern is appropriate, by conducting an audit of a sample of pupil files every year during the spring term.

**Auditing your school’s record keeping and maintenance of files is much more than ‘best practice.’ KCSiE 2024 makes clear what actions should and must be taken to keep children safe. This now includes specific statutory requirements placed on all schools, colleges and alternative education providers, Designated Safeguarding Leads and Designated Teachers from the 1st of September 2024. This includes the management and maintenance of child protection files and includes information required to be shared during transition and transfer of school and college placement.**

**Good record keeping is not bureaucracy it is safeguarding!**

**Ofsted: if there is no evidence of it happening, it did not happen!**

Does the quality of your record keeping allow you to demonstrate to others your effective safeguarding practice? But more importantly does it keep the children and young people safe and afford them the necessary provision to ensure they are able to thrive and fully engage with their education and learning opportunities?

**Background**: Case reviews have identified the importance of good record keeping in safeguarding children, and of the need to ensure the transfer of information between learning and training environments is effective.

Governors need to be confident that schools keep careful records in relation to children of concern. One way to do this is for school to conduct an audit of a sample of child protection, confidential files each year.

The audit should be undertaken by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their Deputy with either the Chair of Governors or Named Safeguarding Governor or any combination of these people.

**Responsibilities:** Safeguarding and protecting children from abuse and harm is everyone’s responsibility but for those in leadership roles, such as the Head teacher, members of the school’s senior leadership team and those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, they have a duty to ensure all children are kept safe and free from harm as detailed in:

* The Education Act 2002, Sec 175 and 157.
* HM Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023 (updated January 2024).
* DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 in particular: Part One and Part two as set out in the accompanying guidance and as set out in Annex C Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
* Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Inter-agency Safeguarding Children Procedures and Guidance.

**Purpose**: The aim of such an audit is to learn how effective school record keeping is in relation to children with child protection/ safeguarding concerns – potentially the most vulnerable pupils in the school. Lessons from the audit can then be fed back to all staff to improve future practice and ensure all actions are taken to keep children safe.

In addition, this audit toolkit has been revised to take into account the revised guidance in KCSiE 2024 which all schools, colleges and alternative education providers are required to and local learning from recent Rapid Review’s

We wish to draw your attention to the supplementary guidance which forms part of this toolkit and makes clear the statutory requirements placed on all schools, colleges and AP’s and is now included within the audit questions below.

This NCC & NSCP Child Protection and Confidential File Audit Toolkit for 2024-2025, provides you with the information, guidance, and resources to ensure you maintain a focus on every child’s individual safeguarding journey, and ensure your learning environments adopts the required ‘safeguarding arrangements’ to keep them safe through high quality and seamless transition and transfer arrangements.

We do not require you to provide the LA or the NSCP with a completed copy of your audit, it is for you, your leadership team, Governors and or Trust to adopt and use to maintain oversight and a quality assured framework of how you keep children safe through their journey in schools/ college and education.

**Sample**: Clearly the more files (electronic or paper) that you examine, the fuller the picture you will have of the management of them and the processes your school, academy, college, or alternative provision has in place. However, we acknowledge this needs to be balanced against the time demands of an audit and the pupil population. In smaller primary schools looking at one file from each year group might give sufficient information, while in larger primary schools two from each year group might seem more appropriate. In a secondary school the audit may need to look at approximately three or four files from each year group. It is also reasonable to take a proportionate approach; if audits regularly show widespread good practice, then fewer files may need to be examined in future. If, however, the audit reveals poor practice this will indicate the need not only for training and guidance but also more careful monitoring of this issue. Prioritising the files of children who are open to social care or recently closed should be taken into account in your decision making, to ensure all ‘safeguarding arrangements’ ensure the child’s journey is thorough, documented and gaps do not occur to ensure the child’s safety.

**Confidentiality**: Material in child protection and confidential files is often of an extremely sensitive nature and the highest standards of confidentiality are required by anyone reading these files.

Governors are not required to read through all the child protection, confidential file content but should only read and check sufficient information to ensure the process of creating a file, the recording and maintenance of information and follow up actions are of a quality standard that meets with the requirements as described in DFE ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024’ and the schools own child protection policy.

**Summary and outcomes:** The audit checklist below provides a framework to review the school, college or AP’s record keeping, recording and management of the child protection or confidential file to ensure staff and the DSL team are carrying out the statutory responsibilities placed on them in KCSiE 2024 and identify any shortfalls. Any identified shortfalls should be address as a matter of urgency and where required reported to safeguarding agencies to ensure all follow up actions are completed to keep children safe.

The responsibility for record keeping in-line with local and national guidance rests with the school, college, AP, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead as does the self- evaluation. However, schools are invited to make use of the SCIEO and Head of the Virtual School for advice where this is felt to be helpful.

**NOTE: Paper files or electronic recording management systems such as CPOM’s or My Concerns should be audited using the same questions.**

**References:**

HM Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023-

[**https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)

DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024-

[**Statutory guidance overview: Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website- [**www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscp**](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nscp)

Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Interagency Safeguarding Children Procedures Resolving Professional Disagreements (Escalation Procedure)

[**https://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p\_conflict\_res.html**](https://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_conflict_res.html)

**Please Note:** On the 18th November 2024, the Department for Education published - **DfE Keeping children safe helping families to thrive**, outlines the government's commitment to keeping **families** together and children safe and a policy statement setting out the government's commitment to whole system reform of the children’s social care system see link: [Keeping children safe, helping families thrive - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-helping-families-thrive)

**For Further Support Contact:**

Cheryl Stollery - Safeguarding Children in Education Officer

Email- [**cheryl.stollery@nottscc.gov.uk**](mailto:cheryl.stollery@nottscc.gov.uk) Tel: 0115 8041047

Stephanie McGill - Head Teacher Virtual School

Email: - [**stephanie.mcgill@nottscc.gov.uk**](mailto:stephanie.mcgill@nottscc.gov.uk) Tel: 0115 8042227

**Child Protection File/Confidential File Audit Date: ……………………………....**

**School: ………………………………………………………………………………………**

**Auditors: (names)…………………………………………………………………………..**

**Checklist:** To support an audit of a child protection file or confidential/ concern files this checklist will help to identify key issues or support confirmation of compliance.

|  | **Yes/No** | **Follow up action/further information (by whom and by when)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Does the child’s main pupil file have a clear marker on it to indicate that a concern file is also held?  (We recommend that a clear red C be written on the top right-hand corner of the main pupil file or symbol which is clarified in your school/colleges child protection policy).  This alerts any member of staff to the existence of a separate confidential/concern file. |  |  |
| Was all confidential information transferred from the main pupil file to the child protection/confidential file when it was opened?  (Check there are no confidential documents still sitting in the main file) |  |  |
| Does the child protection or confidential file have an up-to-date and accurate ‘Front Sheet’ giving basic factual information about the child and family?  If using CPOMs check all information is completed in each section and remains current for the child and family. |  |  |
| Does the file have a running chronology of events/concerns?  This chronology would normally have begun in the child’s main pupil file and then should be transferred at the point of either a child protection concern is raised or the threshold for concern being reached. This will determine whether a child protection or confidential file is opened/ or created if using an electronic management system. |  |  |
| Is every entry in the file timed, dated?  Does every recording have the name and signature of the person who wrote the entry?  Has the Designated Safeguarding Lead acknowledged sight of the recording?  Have the Designated Safeguarding Lead documented what actions they have taken to address the incident/ concerns or disclosure? |  |  |
| Have staff made use of the ‘logging an incident or concern template or a similar school/ college system to help them record issues and concerns? |  |  |
| Where applicable, have any original contemporaneous notes been kept?  Have these been added to later through the addition of more formal records? |  |  |
| Have telephone calls and discussions with other agencies (police, health, social care, early help) been recorded?  Is it clear from these notes what action is to be taken and by whom and by when? |  |  |
| Is there evidence that the school’s Snr Designated Safeguarding Lead has reviewed the file and discussed the child with relevant staff?  Has this been recorded?  Has the Snr Designated Safeguarding Lead spoken with the child, his parents, or a family member?  If so, was this done in a timely manner and in accordance with the school/colleges safeguarding procedures? |  |  |
| Is there evidence that school staff have reflected on the information they have about a child of concern, discussed it appropriately with others and then taken ***appropriate*** action in line with the Pathway to Provision v 9.1 (note this is currently under revision)  This action might include:   * Sharing information with others, e.g. DSL * Completing an EHAF * Referring to another agency * Discussed the case with the Education Adviser at MASH * Discussed the case with the SCIEO or Virtual School. * Making a referral to MASH |  |  | |
| Has the Snr DSL been consulted around these actions, and have they taken all appropriate action?  Discussed concerns with   * Safeguarding Children in Education Officer (SCIEO) * MASH * Early Help Team * Family Hub * Virtual School * EPS * Contacted MASH Consultation Line * Other |  |  | |
| (**Note:** As appropriate to districts trialling new front door processes).  If a telephone referral was made to the MASH, was the referral confirmed in writing, by the referrer, within 24 hours as per the interagency procedures and guidance?  If the referral was not accepted by MASH, was this followed up by a written report within 48 hours? (Statutory requirement)  If the referral was **not accepted** by MASH, is there evidence of a discussion with the Snr DSL around what further actions are necessary? |  |  | |
| Where school staff considers that there is conflict of professional opinion, is there evidence of appropriate escalation to resolve the conflict?  (See Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Procedures: Resolving Professional Disagreements) |  |  | |
| If meetings relating to the child and their family have been called did the school act in accordance with KCSIE 2024, and local NSCP procedures and guidance by:   * Sending a report? (Statutory requirement) * Sending a representative? (Statutory requirement) * Receive minutes of the meeting? * Completed any/all actions they were assigned by the meeting? * Ensured that other key people in school were aware of any important issues? * Engaged with ongoing conferences, reviews and core group meetings plans put in place for the child? |  |  | |
| If injuries to the child have been noted by the school.  Did staff use the body map and recording form and were the records clear? |  |  | |
| Moving between schools can be a time of risk as children may be leaving a school where they and their family are known well, to attend one where they may not be known.  See DfE KCSIE 2023:   * Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead with particular attention to: Part One, Part Two and as set out in Annex C Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and with particular attention to pages 170 to 176.   It would be wise to include in the audit a review of files for a child who has ‘moved in’ recently and one who has ‘moved out’ through either transition or transfer.  If the pupil concerned has transferred in from another school is their evidence that the Snr Designated Safeguarding Lead from this school and previous school have discussed and shared key child protection/safeguarding information?  Has the DSL recorded what information was shared, including any actions agreed as part of the child’s transfer?  For a pupil of concern who has transferred school recently; did the Designated Safeguarding Lead contact the Snr Designated Safeguarding Lead at the new school?  Is there a note to that effect?    Was the pupil’s concern file delivered to the new school?  Where children leave the school or college (including in year transfers) the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and **within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first** **5 days of the start of a new term**.  Did this take place?  Is there evidence that the file was received?  Have you ensured the guidance within KCSIE 2024 Annex C has been included within your school, academy or colleges child protection policy and ensure the procedures have been fully adopted and implemented regarding pupil transition, transfer or move of placement to such as an alternative education provider?  Have all actions been taken to promote the ‘best interests of the child’ and promote their well-being and safety?  Was the child’s journey fully supported/seamless?  Has the chid been consulted regarding the support out in place to help them settle into their new environment?  Have the child’s parents been involved in decision making and informed of the support available?  Have any required plans, assessments including risk assessments been put in place to ensure all areas of vulnerability are supported?  For children who move from secondary school to college or alternative education provision, has communications between DSLs been conducted to ensure a seamless transfer?  Have agreements been out in place to support the child/ young person which are in the child’s best interested?  Has planned support been agreed by all involved, so any shortfalls can be remedied without delay to maintain oversight of positive engagement and or address any concerns?  If the pupil is looked after, is there evidence that all the above points have been followed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Designated Teacher?  Have the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Designated Teacher arranged for regular discussions/ meetings to ensure all vulnerable children (and those subject to statutory plans) been afforded the most appropriate packages of support? And are plans are being fully managed and progressed to keep children safe, support their well-being and enable them to thrive?  Has the SENCO been involved and informed of all children who may need additional support to address their SEND, as part of the school/ colleges early help arrangements?  KCSiE informs the lack of information about a child’s circumstances can impact on the child’s safety, welfare, and educational outcomes.  In addition to the child protection file, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving to help them put in place the right support to safeguard this child and to help the child thrive in the school or college. Did this happen?  If the child/ young person had a social worker or was involved with other safeguarding agencies/ services, did the information along with contact details for the workers be provided?  Was information shared sufficient to allow your school or college DSL team to continue supporting the child/ young person?  Was contact made in a timely manner for the  children who have had a social worker and or  been victims of abuse?  And was all the necessary support in place for when the child arrived in school/college or put on roll in accordance with KCSiE 2024 page 199 to 201?  If not, what actions have been taken to address this, by the Snr DSL?  Were the escalations procedures used to resolve any shortfalls?  **This section is in place for the Chair of Governors/ Safeguarding Governor & Snr Designated Safeguarding Lead to agree the audit findings.**  **Should any shortfalls be found, timely actions will need to be agreed to ensure the schools ‘safeguarding arrangements’ are compliant with statutory guidance to keep children safe.**  **Please add here any other findings from conducting the audit and whether a further audit is required to ensure all follow up actions have been completed.**  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  **Please add here any evidence of good practice seen.**  1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  6.  **Did any concerns require escalating?**  **Date Completed: ………………………………**  **Date of follow up audit if required: ………………..**  **Signed off by: …………………………………..,,,,,,,,**  **Signed off by:** ………………………………………… |  |  | |

**NOTE: Please retain a copy of your completed audit to evidence your findings and planned actions to address any shortfalls, to keep children safe.**

**This audit form does not require returning to the NCC or the NSCP.**

**‘Safeguarding Children is Everyone’s Responsibility’**