

# Femtos Learning Hub

## Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

**Provider:** Inquisitive Explorers Ltd trading as Femtos Learning Hub

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Syd

**Deputy DSL:** Qudsia

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### 1. Our Safeguarding Commitment

At Femtos Learning Hub, the safety and welfare of children is our highest priority.

We are committed to creating a **culture of safety** in which children are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, harm and radicalisation and feel able to speak to a trusted adult when something does not feel right.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is not limited to responding when a child makes a disclosure. Staff are expected to notice changes, listen to children, exercise professional curiosity, share concerns and act promptly.

We recognise that children may experience harm:

- at home or within their family;
- from other children;
- within friendships or relationships;
- within the community;
- within organisations or activities;
- online; or
- from adults in positions of trust.

We will respond promptly and appropriately to any concern about a child's safety or welfare.

### 2. Safeguarding Responsibilities

Femtos has a **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** responsible for coordinating safeguarding and child protection within the setting.

The DSL is responsible for:

- receiving and reviewing safeguarding concerns;
- advising and supporting staff;
- maintaining safeguarding records;
- determining appropriate action;
- making or supporting referrals to external agencies;
- liaising with Children's Social Care, the police, LADO, Ofsted and other agencies where appropriate; and
- ensuring staff understand and follow safeguarding procedures.

Appropriate safeguarding cover will be available whenever Femtinis provision is operating.

The existence of a DSL does not remove the safeguarding responsibility of any other member of staff.

Where a child appears to be at immediate risk of serious harm, staff must take appropriate action without waiting for the DSL where delay could place the child at further risk.

### 3. Recognising Abuse and Safeguarding Concerns

Staff should be alert to the four main categories of abuse:

1. **Physical abuse:** deliberately causing physical harm to a child.
2. **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment which adversely affects a child's emotional development.
3. **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including non-contact and online activity.
4. **Neglect:** persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or emotional needs.

Safeguarding concerns may also include:

- domestic abuse;
- child-on-child abuse;
- bullying and cyberbullying;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- child sexual or criminal exploitation;
- county lines;
- trafficking;
- female genital mutilation (FGM);
- forced marriage;
- radicalisation and extremism;
- online abuse and grooming; and
- other forms of extra-familial harm.

Possible indicators may include unexplained injuries, significant changes in behaviour or wellbeing, concerning comments, fear of particular people or situations, inappropriate

sexualised behaviour, signs of neglect, concerning online behaviour or inappropriate behaviour by an adult towards a child.

Staff are **not expected to diagnose abuse or prove that harm has occurred**. A concern is enough to trigger safeguarding procedures.

## 4. Listening to Children

Children do not always disclose harm clearly or verbally.

A child may not recognise that what is happening is harmful, may be frightened or embarrassed, may have been threatened, or may communicate differently because of age, disability, additional needs or language.

Staff should therefore remain professionally curious and take changes in a child's behaviour, communication and wellbeing seriously.

Where a child makes a disclosure, staff should:

- remain calm and listen;
- take the child seriously;
- allow the child to speak in their own words;
- reassure them that they have done the right thing by speaking;
- not promise to keep the information secret;
- explain appropriately that the information may need to be shared with someone who can help;
- avoid leading questions, interrogation or attempting to investigate;
- not confront the person alleged to have caused harm;
- report the concern to the DSL promptly; and
- make an accurate written record as soon as possible.

The child's own words should be recorded wherever possible.

## 5. Recording and Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding concern, disclosure or observation must be recorded as soon as reasonably possible.

The record should include:

- the child's name;
- date and time of the incident, disclosure or observation;
- date and time the record was made;
- a factual account of what was seen, heard or reported;

- the child's own words where relevant;
- any action taken;
- the name of the person making the record; and
- when and to whom the concern was reported.

Records should clearly distinguish between **fact, what the child said and professional observation**.

The DSL will consider the concern and determine the appropriate action. This may include:

- monitoring or further support;
- speaking with the child;
- speaking with parents/carers where appropriate and safe;
- seeking safeguarding advice;
- contacting Children's Social Care;
- contacting the police;
- contacting the LADO;
- making an appropriate Prevent referral; or
- notifying Ofsted or another relevant body where required.

Femtos does not need proof that abuse has occurred before seeking advice or making an appropriate safeguarding referral.

If a member of staff believes that a child remains at risk and that their concern has not been dealt with appropriately, they must escalate the concern.

In an emergency or where a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, **999 should be called**.

## 6. Working With Parents and Information Sharing

Femtos seeks to work openly and constructively with parents and carers.

Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns will ordinarily be discussed with the child's parent/carer.

However, Femtos may seek safeguarding advice or make a referral **without first informing the parent/carer** where doing so could:

- increase the risk to the child or another person;
- prejudice an investigation;
- lead to intimidation, coercion or destruction of evidence; or
- otherwise undermine action intended to protect the child.

Safeguarding information will be handled confidentially and shared only where there is a legitimate safeguarding reason to do so.

Information may be shared with relevant professionals and agencies where necessary to protect a child.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely with appropriately restricted access.

## 7. Child-on-Child Abuse

Children can abuse other children, and Femtinis will not dismiss harmful behaviour as “banter”, “children being children” or “just a joke”.

Child-on-child abuse may include:

- physical abuse;
- bullying or cyberbullying;
- sexual harassment or sexual violence;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- coercion or intimidation;
- discriminatory abuse;
- abuse within relationships; and
- inappropriate or non-consensual sharing of sexual images or content.

Staff should be particularly alert where there is a significant difference in age, development, power or vulnerability, or where behaviour involves coercion, threats, secrecy or fear.

Concerns will be managed as safeguarding matters where appropriate, rather than solely as behaviour incidents.

The safety and needs of all children involved will be considered.

## 8. Online Safety, Exploitation and Radicalisation

Safeguarding concerns can occur both online and offline and often overlap.

Staff should remain alert to concerns including:

- online grooming;
- cyberbullying;
- inappropriate sexual content or image sharing;
- coercion or threats online;
- child sexual or criminal exploitation;
- county lines;
- trafficking;
- serious youth violence; and
- children being drawn into terrorism or extremist activity.

Femtos encourages children to ask questions, think critically and explore different views. A religious, cultural or political belief, or questioning social or political issues, is not by itself evidence of radicalisation.

Where there is a genuine concern that a child may be vulnerable to exploitation or radicalisation, staff must report it to the DSL, who will determine the appropriate safeguarding response.

## 9. Allegations or Concerns About Adults

Any safeguarding concern about a member of staff, volunteer, contractor, facilitator or other adult working with children must be taken seriously.

This includes allegations that an adult may have harmed a child, behaved inappropriately towards a child or behaved in a way which raises concerns about their suitability to work with children.

Concerns should be reported immediately to the DSL.

Where the concern relates to that person, it should be reported to the deputy DSL.

Where appropriate, advice will be sought from the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** and notifications made to Ofsted, police, Disclosure and Barring Service or other bodies as required.

Staff should also report lower-level concerns about adult behaviour which appears inconsistent with expected professional boundaries, even where it does not initially appear to meet the threshold for an allegation.

This may include:

- inappropriate familiarity;
- inappropriate one-to-one contact;
- inappropriate comments;
- unnecessary physical contact;
- favouritism;
- inappropriate private communication;
- inappropriate use of social media; or
- photographing or recording children contrary to Femtos procedures.

Concerns should be raised early rather than allowing inappropriate behaviour to become normalised.

## 10. Safe Practice at Femtos

Femtos takes reasonable steps to create an environment in which children are safe.

This includes:

- safer recruitment and appropriate suitability checks;
- appropriate DBS checks where required;
- staff safeguarding training and induction;
- appropriate supervision;
- visitor sign-in and access controls;
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries;
- safe use of photography and recording;
- appropriate management of one-to-one situations;
- responding immediately where a child is missing or unaccounted for; and
- maintaining clear procedures for raising concerns.

Staff must not use personal devices to photograph or record children unless specifically authorised under Femtos procedures.

Parents/carers and visitors may only photograph or record their own child and only where Femtos has indicated that photography is permitted. They must not photograph, video or audio-record other children.

Reasonable physical intervention may only be used where necessary and proportionate to prevent immediate harm to a child or another person. It must never be used as punishment.

## **11. Staff Training, Conduct and Whistleblowing**

All staff working with children will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role and will be expected to understand:

- signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- how to respond to a disclosure;
- how to report and record concerns;
- child-on-child abuse;
- online safeguarding;
- exploitation and radicalisation;
- professional boundaries;
- concerns or allegations involving adults; and
- Femtos safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding knowledge will be refreshed regularly and safeguarding will form part of ongoing staff development and discussion.

Staff have a responsibility to raise concerns about unsafe practice, including concerns about colleagues or management.

No member of staff should be discouraged from making a genuine safeguarding report.

Where a concern cannot appropriately be raised internally, or a member of staff believes that a safeguarding concern has not been properly addressed, they should use the appropriate external safeguarding or whistleblowing route.

## 12. Safeguarding Contacts, Related Policies and Review

Current safeguarding contact details will be maintained and readily available to staff, including:

- **Children's Social Care / Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS):** 0121 303 1888.
- **Children's Social Care – Out of Hours / Emergency Duty Team:** 0121 675 4806
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 0121 675 1669 |  
Ladoteam@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
- **Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP)**
- **Birmingham Prevent:** prevent@birmingham.gov.uk
- **Police Emergency:** 999
- **Police Non-Emergency:** 101
- **NSPCC:** 0808 800 5000

This policy should be read alongside the Femtinis:

- Admissions & Participation Policy;
- Attendance & Engagement Policy;
- Behaviour, Wellbeing & Inclusion Policy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- First Aid Policy;
- Privacy and CCTV arrangements;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Safer Recruitment procedures;
- Whistleblowing procedure; and
- applicable Terms & Conditions.

Femtinis will follow current applicable safeguarding legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding partnership procedures and Ofsted requirements.

This policy will be reviewed **at least annually**, and sooner following significant changes in guidance, provision or where a safeguarding incident identifies learning or procedural changes that are required.