**Safeguarding Children policy**

Here at St. Mary’s Playschool, we believe that children have a right to be safely cared for, and that parents and carers need to have confidence that we can provide safe care. We create within the playschool an environment where each child is valued as an individual, we have positive regards for each child’s heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background. This is always carried out in a developmentally appropriate way.

We have a designated staff member: ***Mrs Tracey Sizer*** who coordinates child protection issues.

The designated person has attended appropriate child protection/ *safeguarding* training which enables her to identify, understand and respond to possible signs of abuse and neglect.

Her work is overseen by the setting manager: ***Mrs Mandy Wanless.***

**As a setting we ensure that children are safeguarded in the following ways:**

Staffing is adequate and appropriate in each group to meet the needs of the children in our care.

Applicants for positions within the setting are clearly informed that these are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Candidates are informed of the need to carry out enhanced Criminal Investigation Bureau checks before being confirmed in their posts and are reviewed every 3 years.

If a candidate is rejected due to disclosed information the applicant has a right to know and challenge incorrect information.

We abide by Ofsted requirements relating to references and D.B.S. checks both for paid staff and volunteers, ensuring that disqualified or unsuitable people do not work at the setting or have access to the children.

Volunteers are always supervised and are not permitted to assist with toileting.

Staff must inform the Playschool Manager of any personal medications that need to be taken at the setting and must be locked away and administered in the Playschool office only.

Staff and visitors mobile phones are not permitted in the classrooms and must be locked away for the duration of the session.  All photographs must be taken by the Playschool’s camera only.

We abide by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act a requirement relating to any person who is dismissed from employment with St Mary’s Playschool, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern

We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the setting. We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who enters the setting, so that unauthorised people do not have access to the children

Our policies and procedures detailed here apply to all regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion.

**Training**

Lead Safeguarding Practitioners attend Level 3 training every two years. All Staff receive Level 2 training at least annually with updates and discussions at regular staff meetings. Level 2 training is lead by our safeguarding lead who attended the training to enable this.

We ensure that all opportunities, for every adult involved in the setting, to receive training are sought out. This ensures that they are able to recognise the signs of physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as abuse through neglect. Staff members are also trained to know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting and are aware of their responsibilities.

**Confidentiality**

All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared on a need-to-know basis. Any information is shared under the guidance of Essex Social Care direct

**How to respond to suspicions of abuse**

Here at St Mary’s, we are aware that abuse of children may take differing forms. These may be sexual, emotional, physical or through neglect.

Children who are suffering from abuse may reflect this in what they say; either directly or indirectly. How they behave or play, or through a change in their appearance.

It is the responsibility of the child’s key person to make a dated record of the details of the concern and discuss what to do with the designated person for child protection. The information is stored in the child’s personal file.

**How to record suspicions of abuse or disclosures**

When a child discloses information to a staff member that causes concern, the child has unexplained injuries or marks on their body the staff member is concerned about the child due to a change in behaviour the child’s general wellbeing has deteriorated the child displays other signs of abuse or neglect:

The staff member in question listens to and reassures the child that action will be taken. Asking only open questions of the child: to encourage the child to expand a point, rather than leading the child.

**It is important not to influence the outcome of further investigations either by the way we speak to the child or through asking leading questions.**

The staff member should then make a written objective report of what has been disclosed including: the date and time of the disclosure:

* The exact words spoken by the child
* The name of the person to whom the disclosure was made along with the names of any witnesses’ present
* The date and time the disclosure was made.

These records are signed and dated and kept in the child’s personal file in the manager’s office.

**Informing Parents**

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded usually the parents are informed at the same time that the report is made, except where Essex Social Care does not allow this. These are cases of sexual abuse, cases of fabricated illness, (formerly known as Munchausen’s syndrome by proxy) and cases where the child or the informer would be put at further risk by disclosure.  These procedures are documented in the Parent’s\Carers welcome letter when their child joins the Playschool Setting.

**The Referral Process**

We refer concerns to Essex Social Care: telephone 0345 603 7627 (office hours)

                                                                                           0345 606 1212 (Out of hours)

**Making a referral**

* Telephone 0345 603 7627
* Ask for the Family Operations Hub and state if it is for one of the following:

**Consultation Line** – for professionals who have already discussed details with their designated safeguarding lead.  The Social Worker will give advice but not record the call.

**The Family Operations Hub Line** – Family should be informed that contact is being made unless this would place the child in significant harm.

**The Priority Line** – When there is an immediate risk of significant harm.

This will give access to a family adviser who will discuss and help identify the right services that will help to meet the family’s needs.

There is a copy of the Essex Social Care Inter Agency Referral form attached to this policy.

**Working with other agencies.**

The welfare of the children in our care is of paramount concern to us at St Mary’s Playschool.  Staff members are familiar with what to do if they have concerns about a child. Training is updated regularly and we have a copy of ‘What to Do If You’re Worried a Child Is Being Abused’ available for staff and parents.  A quick reference guide is available to all staff and is reviewed annually alongside the safeguarding policy.

We notify Ofsted of any incident or accident as well as any changes in our arrangements which could affect the wellbeing of the children in the setting.

If a referral is to be made to Essex Social Care Direct we act within their guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child’s parents at the same time.

**Layout and Staff deployment**

The planning of the rooms allows for constant supervision of the staff and children concerned. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

**Allegations against staff**

St Mary’s Playschool ensures that all parents are informed how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers in the setting which may include allegations of abuse.

All staff are made aware of our whistle blowing policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

We follow the advice of the Children’s Safeguarding Service (LADO) - Tel: 03330 139797 when responding to complaints that a staff member or volunteer or anyone else who is working in the building used by the setting, has abused a child.

Any such complaints are recorded, the complaint would then be referred to The Children’s Safeguarding Service, and Ofsted – Tel: 0300 123 466 along with information about any further measures advised by the Children’s Safeguarding Service. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.

We cooperate fully with any investigation carried out by social services and the police.

Where the manager and the Children’s Safeguarding Service agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the manager will suspend the member of staff on full pay, or the volunteer for the duration of the investigation. This is not to be taken as an admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process.

Where a member of staff or volunteer is dismissed from the setting due to misconduct relating to a child, we notify the Independent Barring Board administrators so that the name may be included on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Barred List

**Support to Families**

We acknowledge the importance of building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.

We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in regard to child protection, such as reporting concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child and liaising at all times with Essex Social Care Direct

We will continue to welcome the child and the family while investigations are undertaken in any case of alleged abuse.

We follow the child’s protection plan as set by the child’s social care worker in relation to the setting’s designated role and tasks in supporting the child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.

Confidential records regarding to children are shared only with the child’s parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the local safeguarding children Board.

**The Prevent Duty**

We ensure that our staff understand safeguarding issues in general and how to identify specific at-risk children.  We are aware of signs that may indicate possible safeguarding concerns such as irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or something in children’s play that may suggest there could be harmful influences in their life. This includes protecting children who could be at risk from radicalisation or illegal cultural practices like for example, FGM and Witchcraft.  We seek advice when children join our setting from high-risk countries like Africa, SE Asia, Ethiopia, Philippines, Nigeria etc.

Promoting fundamental British values

* **Democracy** – making decisions together. Including children in decision making, promoting sharing, turn taking and collaboration.
* **Understanding rules** – learning right from wrong.
* **Freedom for all** – developing self esteem, feelings and differences, ensuring that children have equality of access to learning.  We ensure that the curriculum offered is inclusive of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
* **Mutual respect and tolerance** – making children feel valued and good about themselves and helping them to understand that discriminatory behaviour and remarks are unacceptable.  We avoid stereotypes or derogatory images in the selection of materials.

**Legal Framework *- Employment Law, Anti-discriminatory legislation, Health & Safety, Data collection regulations and Duty of Care.***

**Primary Legislation**

Children Act 1989

The Childcare Act 2006

Protection of Children Act 1999

Data Protection Act 2018

The Children Act (Every Child Matters) 2004

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Act 2006

**Further Guidance**

SET Child Protection Procedures 2018

Joint Child Protection Procedures (2006)

Essex Safeguarding Children Board www.escb.co.uk

What to do if you’re worried a Child Is Being Abused (HMG 2006)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex - July 2017

This policy has been reviewed and agreed at a meeting of St Mary’s Playschool Committee

Signed …………………………………………………………………………… (Chair)

Date ………………………………………………………………………………

Date of review ………………………………………………………………