

# Pippa's Guardians Online Safety Policy

## Overview

All staff, host family members and students should understand the importance of adopting good online safety practice and reporting misuse, abuse or access to inappropriate materials and they should all know how to report these concerns.

An effective approach to online safety can protect and educate children in their use of technology and offers the ability to identify, intervene in and escalate any incident where appropriate. Education for our students about having a healthy and safe online presence is key. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding Policy which can be found at [www.pippasguardians.co.uk](http://www.pippasguardians.co.uk).

This policy has been written using guidance from 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2024 and NSPCC advice on 'Online Safety'. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Safeguarding Lead's (DSL) and Head of Compliance.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads at Pippa's Guardians are Sarah Checketts and Rose Vigers Belgeonne.

Broadly speaking, Sarah looks after our schools in the Northern Region and Rose looks after our schools in the Southern Region. Either DSL would be able to help in an emergency.

The contact details for our DSL's are:

Sarah Checketts on 07548 833044 or [safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk).

Rose Vigers Belgeonne on 07731 997732 or [safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk)

Ben Hughes is the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and can be contacted on [ben@pippasguardians.co.uk](mailto:ben@pippasguardians.co.uk) or 07714 034749.

The 24 hr Duty Phone is 07721 372865 and is always manned by Pippa's Guardians safeguarding trained staff.

Online safety can be broadly categorised into three areas of risk:

**Content** - being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material, for example web pages containing indecent images of children or pro-eating disorder or self-harm websites.

**Contact** - being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, for example cyberbullying or grooming.

**Conduct** - personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm.

### **What is online abuse?**

The NSPCC define online abuse as any type of abuse that happens on the internet, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying (bullying that takes place using technology including social media sites, mobile phones, gaming sites), grooming (building an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking), sexual abuse, 'sexting' or youth produced imagery, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse from people they know as well as from strangers.

### **Cyberbullying**

Bullying that occurs on social media, online gaming or via mobile phones is called cyberbullying. It can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images or videos. A child may know the person who's bullying them online – and they might be experiencing bullying in the real world as well. They may also be targeted by someone using a fake or anonymous account. It's easy to be anonymous online and this can increase the likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour. Cyberbullying can happen at any time or anywhere and a child might feel like there's no escape from the bullies. It is sometimes difficult to trace the bully online.

Cyberbullying can include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' – sending menacing or upsetting messages online
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting or pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

## Grooming

Grooming is about building a relationship with a child in order to later abuse them. This can be far easier online.

- Games, social media, live streaming platforms and chatrooms enable people to make contact with children to try to groom them.
- They can create multiple online identities and even pretend to be children and young people to trick real children into chatting and sharing.
- They can find out a lot about individual children before they make contact by looking at the things the child has posted.
- Using this information they can target children who are particularly vulnerable and carefully plan what they will say and show an interest in.
- They can also contact lots of children very quickly in the hope that one will respond.

People who want to groom children will use any sites and services which are popular with young people. They can become very active in online games or communities popular with children. On social media they might send out multiple 'friend requests' at random in the hope that young people will accept them. They also try to identify young people who might be particularly vulnerable by looking at the things they post. In games and chatrooms they will try to start conversations with young people and then ask them to chat privately, perhaps on social media or on a mobile chat app. It should be assumed that if a site or app is popular with young people then people with a sexual interest in children will try to use it to communicate with them. If a student uses online games, social media, live streaming platforms or chatrooms it's important to make sure they know how to report anything if someone is making them feel uncomfortable. This can be done by encouraging students to look at **Think U Know** to stay up to date with the social network sites and understanding reporting and privacy settings.

• <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/reporting-to-social-media-sites/>

The goal of grooming is to sexually abuse a child. This can happen in two ways:

1. Online sexual abuse. Increasingly children and young people are being tricked or coerced into sexual activity on webcam or into sending sexual images.
2. A physical meeting. Some people will try to persuade children and young people to meet them face to face in order to abuse them. Please tell your student that they should always talk to you if they want to meet up with someone they've only known online.

Encouraging or forcing a child into sexual activity on webcam or through images is sexual abuse and can be just as harmful as 'contact' sexual abuse.

There isn't one clear sign of online grooming and it can be very hard to spot. If a child is being groomed they will probably be trying to keep it a secret.

## Possible signs of online abuse

Possible signs of a child experiencing abuse online if they demonstrate a change in behaviour or unusual behaviour:

- Being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone.
- Unwilling to talk or secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.
- Spending much more or much less time texting, gaming or using social media.
- Many new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses appear on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet. After texting or being online they may seem withdrawn, upset or angry.
- Not wanting to go to school and/or avoiding meeting friends.
- Avoiding formerly enjoyed social situations.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Low self-esteem.

We encourage all Pippa's Guardians staff and host families to look at the NSPCC Keeping Children Safe online resources which offers expert advice and strategies to help our students navigate the internet safely.

[www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety)

## Privacy Settings and parental controls

Host families are encouraged to use privacy settings, parental controls and built in

internet safety features provided by the major internet service providers. Both the UK Safer Internet Centre and the NSPCC website 'Online Safety' has guides for parental controls that host families may find useful.

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/parental-controls/](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/parental-controls/) • [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/)

## Social network sites

Children and young people connect online with friends, make new friends and browse the internet for information, chat with others and play games. This may include using search engines, sharing images, watching videos, using social network sites, playing games and chatting with people through online gaming. Pippa's Guardians staff and host families are encouraged to ensure that their students know where the reporting functions are on each of the sites they use, how to block someone and how to keep information private. This can be done by encouraging students to look at **Childline/taking care of your digital footprint** to stay up to date with the social network sites and understanding reporting and privacy settings.

• <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/taking-care-your-digital-footprint/>

## Procedure for dealing with an online incident

If a Pippa's Guardians staff member or host family member receives a report of suspected online abuse from a student, parent or other source via a face to face disclosure, email or phone call they should record the disclosure using the form on page 7 of this policy and the disclosure should be reported verbally as soon as possible to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, Ben Hughes in her absence.

The written record of the disclosure should be passed to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead or Ben Hughes as soon as is practically possible via email on [safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@pippasguardians.co.uk) or [ben@pippasguardians.co.uk](mailto:ben@pippasguardians.co.uk). The DSL will report and pass on the incident and written disclosure to the student's school DSL and will ask that they assess the alleged threat and risk to the child and implement an action plan and we will continue to review the situation until a resolution has been achieved. This incident report will be stored correctly on the student file.

The Pippa's Guardians DSL will request the school contact the parents or carers of the children involved. In most cases parents should be involved unless there is good reason to believe that involving these parties would put the student at risk of harm. If there is a concern a young person has been harmed the incident should be referred to the police by dialling 101. If the student is considered to be at **immediate risk** of harm the incident should be referred to the police by dialling 999.

The first person to hear of an incident that they feel requires police attention should report this so there is no delay in getting help to the child involved. This should take priority over any other form of reporting. Once the incident has been reported to the police the incident should be recorded as above.

### **Incidents such as those listed below are all cases where police involvement is the correct response:**

- The incident involves an adult
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example owing to special educational needs)
- What you know about the imagery or other content suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery or other content involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13
- You have reason to believe a pupil or pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

The Pippa's Guardians DSL will, if required and requested, work with the school and the relevant Area Manager (if appropriate) to ensure the student is well supported. This may include helping them to understand how to recognise the early signs of online abuse and the wider issues and motivations of online abuse.

Where the Pippa's Guardians DSL is aware that youth produced sexual imagery or other content has been unavoidably viewed by a member of staff, the Pippa's Guardians DSL will work with Ben Hughes to ensure that the staff member has appropriate support. Viewing youth produced sexual imagery or other content can be distressing for both young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

**Reporting Form** (Please complete in black pen)

Date
Time
Place
Member of staff present and position
Full name of student(s)
<p>Before proceeding have you reassured the student that you are there to help them but you cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality and that you may need to pass the information on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will ensure the correct action is taken?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Ask the student to explain their concern or allegation and record details of the matter in the space below. Use a separate sheet if necessary and then attach to the form.</p>
<p>DO NOT investigate the matter, as this could prejudice the investigations of outside agencies. Where the concern or allegation is made against the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, you must immediately inform the Worcestershire Duty LADO on 01905 843311 A non-exhaustive list of the details to be included: what was said or done, by whom, to whom and in whose presence, when the incident took place and where and whether the student wishes their parents [or legal guardian] to be informed. Please also include a note of any other evidence, for example mobile phone messages or images relating to the matter. Please record what action you have taken and when;</p>

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