

# sidmouth *International School*

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2023**

Sidmouth International School is an English Language school that welcomes students of all ages including students under the age of 18 years. We have three separate departments for this age group: the Young Adult Department for 16 to 18 years, the Teenage Department for 14- 17 years and the Young Learner Department for 8-13 years. The majority of our students stay in homestay accommodation organised by the school. We also arrange transfers to and from our school within the UK.

**What is safeguarding?** Safeguarding is looking after and protecting all young students aged under 18 years

**What is child protection?** This is the protection of all young students aged under 18 years from any abuse or harm and it is part of the safeguarding policy.

**It is our first priority at Sidmouth International School to ensure that all our young students are safe and protected during their time at our school.**

### **Students** (under 18 years)

This policy will help us provide a place where all children feel happy, comfortable and safe. We will listen to any worries or allegations they may have and will respond to them quickly and sensitively. The policy is for **all** students in this age group whatever their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability. There will be no discrimination.

All students under the age of 18 years have an induction on their first day in the school. This will include advice on how to stay safe, how to care for each other, how to be safe on the internet, who to speak to if they have any problems/concerns and who to speak to if they have a complaint about an adult or another student. They will be given a welcome pack which will contain copies of this information. They are also told about UK laws regarding alcohol, drugs, knives and cigarettes. This information is given to the Teenage (14-17 years) and Young Adult (16-18 years) groups by the local Police in the summer season.

### **Adults** 18 + - staff and homestay families

This policy will ensure that all adults working with children understand their responsibilities in the safeguarding and protection of students under the age of 18 years. This includes all staff at the school and the homestay families.

All adults working with students aged under 18 years, including homestay families, are given an induction. This includes the importance of safeguarding and their role in helping the school be a safe place for young students and a place where there is a sense of trust between staff and students. They are told what to look for, how to respond and who to speak to if they have a concern.

### **Leaders of Foreign Groups**

All leaders/teachers coming to the school with their group of students will be given an induction which includes the importance of safeguarding and their role in this. They are also told who to speak to if they have any concerns.

**Who is responsible for safeguarding?** All adults working for the school are responsible for keeping the young students safe! The following staff have special responsibilities.

### **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) Level 3**

There are two managers who are trained to deal with safeguarding matters and who can make any important decisions.

**Di Byrne** – General Manager - the Senior member of the Management Team with special responsibility for Safeguarding matters.

**Jane Dumenil** – owner - available to support the DSL's in the event of a safeguarding or child protection matter.

### **Designated Safeguarding persons (DSPs) (Level 2 or 3)**

There are also several other members of staff who have been trained and will be available to listen and answer any questions or concerns students may have.

**Wendy Moores** – Assistant Director of Studies and Young Learner course director

**Gareth Topping** – Social Activities Organiser and holder of the Emergency Phone

**Simon Blyth** – Safeguarding & Compliance Officer

Students will be given the names of these people during their induction on their first day in the school. Student friendly information around the school and information in the student welcome packs, will also contain names, photographs and where to find them. One of these people can be seen at any time if a child or a member of staff needs to talk to someone about a safeguarding issue. There are DSPs to cover all departments of the school and to cover absences and also answer the Emergency phone. A DSL or DSP can always be contacted on the school number 01395 516754 or on the 24 hour Emergency phone 07808054699

All adults working in the school with students under the age of 18 will be active in their safeguarding and protection of the children. They will be aware of the way the young students behave and interact and report any concerns or allegations to one of the DSPs or DSLs. All allegations will be treated in confidence and given to one of the DSLs who are trained to deal with such events. If for any reason the reporting adult is not happy with the way the school deals with the situation, they can contact the local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0345 155 1071 or the Police on 999 (if it's urgent) or 101 (if it's not urgent).

Alternatively, staff can contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline on 0800 028 0285.

## STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

**What is a code of conduct?** It is a guide to behaviour that is expected in the school. The aim is to ensure that adults behave correctly and so protect both the students and the staff from any incidents or actions that could be misunderstood.

Our code of conduct contains the following key points:

- **The adult as a role model** – the way an adult behaves when working closely with young students is very important. The school expects a high standard of behaviour from all adults. The language used and the ideas presented must be appropriate to the age of the students and to the role of the adult.
- **Clear guidelines** are given to all adults on how they should interact with young students and these are to protect the student and the adult from a situation that could be misunderstood. You can be friendly but not a friend. A positive attitude is also required when working with young students.  
Under normal circumstances there should be no touching or physical contact between adults and young students. However there can be exceptions, for example when a student is injured.  
In school there are clear rules for times when an adult may be alone with a student such as one-to-one lessons.  
Outside school no adult should meet or socialise with student(s) unless on school business that has been agreed with the school management.
- **Position of Trust** – this is the law for all adults working with students aged under 18 years. No relationship other than a professional one is allowed between adults and students. To engage in sexual activity of any sort with a student **under the age of 18 years** is a criminal offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003).
- **UK law** - all adults must completely understand the rules and laws regarding alcohol, drugs, smoking and knives and be prepared to discuss the issues with the young students. Adults need to be positive role models. They are responsible for the welfare and well-being of the students and must report any poor behaviour including instances that break UK law. They also need to understand the school's disciplinary policy for students and the importance of being supportive and fair.
- **Electronic communication** - no member of staff should give their personal mobile number, e-mail address or social media contact details to a student under the age of 18.
- **Use of internet and Wi-Fi** – Appropriate filters will be on all Wi-Fi systems in school so that unacceptable websites cannot be accessed. Supervising adults should also monitor the use of WI-FI by young students.  
No inappropriate websites should be used by staff on any of the school's IT equipment at any time.
- **Dress** –  
**Staff** should dress appropriately according to their role at all times. This includes more informal settings such as on the beach etc when care must be taken.
- **Transport** – all drivers transporting the students in school cars, taxis or coaches will have had a DBS check to make sure they are suitable to be working with under 18's. Our Drivers Guidelines and Policy have information regarding staff transporting students.

All adults are expected to follow the code of conduct. If anyone has concerns about a colleague or member of staff's inappropriate behaviour they must report this to one of the DSLs or DSPs – it is a legal obligation. Staff who do report a problem of this kind will be protected and the content of their report will remain confidential.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

Sidmouth International School believes that protecting students under the age of 18 from harm is essential. It is unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and we recognise our responsibility to protect all children and young people coming to our school.

The school has a number of people trained to deal with Child Protection issues, DSL's and DSPs (see page 2 for names and more details). These members of staff are aware of the signs that may indicate that a child is being abused or harmed and they are trained how to respond, quickly and sensitively. If a DSL or DSP is not available you can contact the local government child protection unit at MASH (0345 155 1071) or the Police (999)

### **'Child Abuse' is when children are harmed with damage to their physical or mental health.**

There are 4 broad categories of abuse as follows:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

For more information please see [Appendix 1](#)

All adults working with under 18's at the school are given training on how to respond if they think a child is being abused or what to do if another person gives them this information. They know that they must always respond – it is the law. They also know how to respond if a child or young person (under 18) talks to them about abuse.

### **Identifying child abuse**

It can be difficult to identify child abuse as it has various forms. Below are some things to watch for:

Behaviour by a child that could indicate abuse:

- unexplained injuries
- a child describing an abusive act that has happened to them
- another child telling you of their concern about a friend / fellow student
- sexually explicit behaviour in games / activities
- serious distrust of adults
- difficulty in making friends / socialising with other children

Behaviour by an adult that would be inappropriate

- physical contact that appears unnecessary
- inappropriate language and lesson content
- contact between a child and a member of staff outside school

### **How to respond to a child /young student if they make an allegation**

The most important points are:

- Listen to the child and react calmly
- Write what the child said using the words the child used
- Monitor the situation – keep the child safe
- Do **not** promise to keep the information a secret – if it is a child protection issue it will have to be reported
- Tell a DSL as soon as you can. Do not discuss the allegation with anyone else

(For more information please see [Appendix 2](#))

**Procedure to follow if abuse of a child by an adult is suspected:**

- Tell a DSL or DSP immediately
- The DSL or DSP will take appropriate actions which may involve informing agencies outside the school and contacting parents/guardians.

**Procedure to follow if an adult is accused:**

The allegation must be reported to a DSL or DSP. It may or may not be true so a strict procedure will be followed. This will be confidential. Advice will be taken from the local safeguarding children board (LSCB). The local government authorities (LADO) may need to be informed (see Appendix 3)

**Procedure to follow if a DSL or senior manager is accused:**

There are three DSL's at the school so an allegation of this kind can be reported to one of the other DSL's or a DSP. The allegation may or may not be true so the local LSCB will be contacted immediately for advice.

**Procedure to follow if a student aged under 18 is accused:**

The allegation must be reported to a DSL or DSP. It may or may not be true so the LSCB will be contacted for advice and appropriate action will be taken.

**Confidentiality**

Sidmouth International School will maintain the confidentiality of children, parents/guardians, and staff at all times by:

- Storing confidential information in a locked filing system at the company's registered office
- Only sharing information about children, staff and homestay families when the DSLs or DSPs think it is necessary

**Specific areas of child abuse**

All adult staff are aware of areas such as Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation through training and awareness sessions and know their legal obligations. Staff know that they can refer to a DSL or a DSP if they need more information.

**TRAINING**

Di Byrne, General Manager and DSL is responsible for ensuring all adults have the necessary Safeguarding training which includes on-line training and face-to-face training as follows:

Level 1 Basic Awareness (on-line)	all adults
Level 2 Advanced Safeguarding	teaching co-ordinators – DSP's
Level 3 Advanced Training for DSL	management team – DSL's and DSP's

The school will always try to access training for levels 2 and 3 through EnglishUK which is designed specifically for the English Language School industry.

Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1	all staff read this government publication before working at/for the school
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Refresher training annually	all teachers and activity leaders have a refresher training session in June
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Refresher training for Level 3	this is arranged every two years
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All adults working with students aged under 18 years have a copy of this Safeguarding policy which they have to read. Signed confirmation is required.

Safeguarding is also included in regular meetings with the management, teachers and activity leaders throughout the year.

## **SAFER RECRUITMENT**

Sidmouth International School recognises that recruiting the right staff is essential to the safety of the young students and to the success of the school.

All potential employees (staff and homestays) are told about the school's commitment to Safeguarding and that they will need to be actively involved every day to make sure the school and the homestays are safe places for young students.

Our commitment to safeguarding is made clear in our advertising, our job descriptions, our interviews and offers of employment.

Adults who will be teaching, caring or supervising students aged under 18 years will be checked as follows:

### **Checks for all staff:**

- Proof of identity – we require photo ID at interview
- Two members of school staff are involved in the shortlisting and interview processes
- References – we need two references, one by phone
- The post will not be confirmed until an enhanced DBS check is received
- CV's (working history) any gaps in this must be explained satisfactorily
- Qualifications – we see all the original documents/certificates

**Can a member of staff start work at the school before these checks are completed?** This is not normal safe practice for the school but should we need to start their employment prior to all checks being completed, the following actions would be necessary:

- We must have seen proof of identity and CV with any gaps explained satisfactorily
- An Enhanced DBS check must be in progress
- The person will not be allowed to work on their own with the students, he/she will always be with another fully checked member of staff
- The person will sign a self-declaration
- A risk assessment will be done and our trained staff will make a decision based on the outcome

### **Checks for homestays:**

- Proof of identity – we require photo ID
- Two members of school staff (DSLs) make two separate visits during the recruitment process which ensures that **all** members of the family are met in the home
- Two references for each member of the family aged 18+ registered as a main carer
- An enhanced DBS check is needed for all members of the family aged 16+ if they are taking young students under the age of 18
- All the members of the family aged 16+ are checked by the local child protection unit (LSCB)
- Evidence of an annual gas service/check is required
- Fire risk assessment guidance and template are provided and completed
- If a student is staying for 28 days or more a referral will be made to the local Private Fostering team
- The main carer of each homestay is required to complete the basic Level 1 Safeguarding training and a copy of the certificate is kept at the school

- Homestays are required to sign a document to confirm that they understand their responsibilities and commitments

**Can a homestay take a student before all of the above checks have been completed?** No. A homestay is not allowed to host a young student until all of the above checks have been completed.

**Can a homestay family or employee work for the school if the DBS check shows they have a criminal record?** This will depend on what the disclosure is. Two DSL's or DSP's will interview the person and a risk assessment will be completed and a decision made. We may seek advice from the LSCB. A record of the decision will be kept on file and will be confidential.

**What checks will be done if the member of staff has been living and working abroad?** In addition to the checks above, references from two previous employers, one of them being the most recent employer, will be requested. A police certificate of good conduct will be required if the applicant has lived and worked in any one place for more than 6 months. A risk assessment will be completed.

A single central record is kept by the DSL's and updated regularly to ensure that all recruitment checks are completed and updated when necessary for all adults working with children and young students.

## **STUDENT WELFARE**

There are a lot of policies and procedures in place at the school to help us ensure our young students are safe. The need to 'Be Safe!' will be discussed regularly by the staff and the students. The students will be involved in helping us develop our policies through their feedback and the production of student friendly information including posters and leaflets to be used in the school.

One of the important steps in the safeguarding process is to complete risk assessments. This process can help us care for and protect our students aged under 18 years old.

### **What is a Risk Assessment (RA)?**

A risk assessment makes us:

1. look at things that could cause harm to people.
2. look at what can be done to protect those people from harm.

These are working documents that are regularly up-dated and changed.

Risk Assessments are completed to support many parts of the safeguarding policy. Most are done by members of the management team and are then passed on to the rest of the staff and the students during the induction process for new staff and students, and through refresher training for existing staff.

RAs for activities both on and off site are completed annually and filed. The Activity Leaders read them and sign them every time they are responsible for a particular activity.

RA's for excursions are completed in advance and a meeting is held by the team leader the day before the excursion when he/she discusses it with the team. A copy of the RA is taken on the excursion by the team leader so that the key points are passed on to the students.

RA's for the school buildings, RA's for the town and RA's for transfers are all completed and used in the development of the school's safeguarding policy and the daily safeguarding of students aged under 18 years. Student feedback is also used in the writing of these risk assessments and subsequent safeguarding policy decisions.

RAs are completed and used to support the BE SAFE section of the student's induction, for example the areas of the town which are the safest.

**The supervision ratios** for staff to students are as follows:

Teenagers (14-17 years)	1:15
Young Learners (12-13 years)	1: 12
Young Learners (8-11 years)	1: 12 in class 1: 10 in activities

The Academic Management team are responsible for maintaining these ratios in the classroom. The Social Activities Organiser is responsible for maintaining these ratios during the social programme.

Staff understand that in some cases the supervision ratio may have to be raised as the result of a risk assessment showing an increased risk to students. In an emergency situation these ratios may be temporarily lowered if a member of staff has to attend an emergency situation. The school will send another adult supervisor to the scene as soon as possible.

### **Absence, missing students**

#### **Teenage students aged 14-17 years**

The school has check-in times throughout the day when the students are registered by either the school staff or the homestay.

**Mon-Fri** : 09.00 hrs, 11.00 hrs, 13.30 hrs, 18.00 hrs, 22.30 hrs

**Saturday**: 09.30 hrs, after full day excursion (normally 18:00 hrs) and 22.30 hrs

**Sunday**: times set by the homestay family but 22.30 hrs curfew still applies

If a student does not register at any of these times the office/emergency phone is contacted and the absence is followed up immediately by the school staff who work to locate the student.

All teenage student's mobile phone numbers are given to the homestay family on arrival and to the school on the first morning.

#### **Young Learner students aged 8-13 years**

Full supervision is provided and all staff have to hand over the students to the next member of staff or the homestay family at the end of each session. Those students aged 12-13 years are able to sign out at lunchtime and go into the town and occasionally go shopping in groups on excursions. They are given instructions on how to be safe during this free time at their induction. If any student does not return or goes missing at any time the school staff will immediately contact the office and everyone will work to locate the student.

### **Enrolment and pre-arrival information**

Our students can enrol directly or through one of our agents. During the registration process we request any medical conditions or special dietary requirements. The parents are asked to sign a 'Parental Consent' form for all students under the age of 18 which includes consent to any necessary emergency medical treatment for the child and a contact number for the parents.

Our policies relating to safety and behaviour are easily available on our website for students and parents to view and they will be given a link to the website during the registration process. The policies are also part of the welcome pack and the induction process for students when they arrive.

### **Arrivals and departures**

All students are met upon arrival in Sidmouth by a member of the school staff or their homestay family. The school provides confirmation of transport arrangements and also a travel consent form that the parents need to complete. Both these documents should be carried by the students when they arrive in UK.

The majority of our students use our escorted bus to/from London Heathrow Airport on Saturdays. School staff are at the airport from 12.00 hrs. There is an escort service which is available to students



of all ages - a member of staff will meet the student at Arrivals and take them to the Meeting Point to wait with the other students for the departure of the bus. On departure they will be checked in and taken to Departures. There is a charge for this service and it is compulsory for all students aged under 14 years travelling alone. Our staff also meet students travelling as unaccompanied minors (Ums).

We also arrange school transport to and from other airports and points of arrival in UK.

### **Feedback from students**

All students aged 14+ are given an initial evaluation form to complete on the Thursday after they arrive. This is seen by each member of the Management team who will act on any concerns, complaints or problems immediately. Students staying longer than 3 weeks will have a scheduled fifteen minute+ tutorial every three weeks to talk about academic and welfare issues. Records are kept of these meetings and feedback is reported to the relevant person and is noted in staff meetings.

Students aged 8 – 13 years have an initial evaluation feedback session with an Activity Leader on the first Thursday and a subsequent meeting in their third week if staying longer than 3 weeks. Records are kept of these meetings and feedback is reported to Wendy Moores (YL Course Director) and any other relevant person.

All students aged 12+ are also given a final feedback at the end of their stay which they complete and hand in on the day of departure. The completed forms are seen by all members of the management team and any areas of concern will be actioned immediately. All final feedback data is collected and processed and forms the basis for the evaluation meetings for the management team that take place in December/ January.

### **Be safe!**

During the induction on the first day at school all students are given advice on how to stay safe during their time in UK. The local Police come into the school to speak to the Teenagers (14-17 years) and Young Adults (16-18 years) about safety in the town in the summer months. The students are also given a welcome pack which contains this information. Students will also be told to look after other students and to speak to a member of staff if they have any concerns about themselves or others.

### **IT safety**

Students are given advice and guidance on how to use the internet and social media safely (see policy on our website).

### **Fire safety**

Fire risk assessments are done for every building and the alarm and lighting systems are tested regularly. Full fire drills are done twice a year.

Fire extinguishers are serviced annually and checked weekly. A number of staff have had training on how to use a fire extinguisher.

### **First aid and medical care**

One of the management team (also a DSP) is our main First Aider. In addition, we usually organise a one day first aid course every year for staff to attend.

First Aid boxes are located near the entrance to all buildings and the activity leaders carry basic first aid kits.

If a student is ill or injured and requires medical care the Accommodation and Welfare Officer will make an appointment at the local Medical Centre. All students under the age of 18 years will be accompanied to the medical centre by the Accommodation and Welfare Officer.

If a student has to attend Accident & Emergency at a hospital, a member of staff will go with the student. The school will have a signed Parental Consent form for any student under the age of 18

years which can be accessed by any one of the management team in the office. The parents will be informed as soon as possible.

If medical treatment is needed outside school hours or activities, the homestay will contact the Emergency Number and take advice from the school.

### **Behaviour and Discipline**

We expect a high standard of behaviour from all our students at all times (see Disciplinary Policy on website).

### **Radicalisation and Extremism (PREVENT)**

Adults working at the school are aware of their duty to protect students from any form of radicalisation or extremism. They will challenge any extremist views, know how to report any concerns and promote values such as democracy, rule of law, individual freedom and tolerance of different beliefs.

### **Students with special needs**

As a small school we are able to give our students personal attention and we will try to accommodate the special needs and requirements of individual students. However due to the nature of our school building, only limited wheelchair access is available.

The staff/homestay families working with such students will be made aware of the increased help and care that the students need. This will include their transfers to and from school, care in the home, care at school, their interaction in social activities and their safety in their free time.

### **Private Fostering**

If a student aged under 16 years (18 if disabled) is staying with a homestay family for 28 days or more the Private Fostering team, part of the local LSCB, will be informed. A member of the team will visit the young student at the school in the first week of their stay to make sure they are happy and feel safe. The student will be given a name and phone number that they can contact if they need to speak to someone from the local children's safeguarding board during their stay.

**The safeguarding of our students is part of the daily work of the staff and the homestay families at Sidmouth International School. We continue to update our policies and procedures to ensure the safety of the young students that are put into our care. Some of the policies can be found on our website at [www.sidmouth-int.co.uk](http://www.sidmouth-int.co.uk) If you would like any more information please contact Di Byrne at the school: email - [dibyrne@sidmouth-int.co.uk](mailto:dibyrne@sidmouth-int.co.uk) phone : +44 1395 516754**

This policy has been written to comply with the safeguarding legislation in the Children's Act (1989). Support and guidance in the writing of this policy has come from the British Council and the Private Fostering Team at Devon County Council. A copy is given to all adults working with under 18's at the school. There is a simplified version on our website.

*This policy will be reviewed every year by Di Byrne (General Manager & DSL). The next review date is December 2022. All the managers at the school will be involved in this review and also the feedback from the students and any issues in the incident and accident files will be taken into account.*

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY ~ APPENDIX

### Appendix 1

#### Child Abuse

Child Abuse is most often used to describe ways in which children are harmed with damage to their physical or mental health. There are 4 broad categories of abuse as follows:

- **Physical:** Visual - unexplained bruising, burns etc. Dressing to cover injuries, even in hot weather, change in personality, flinching, violent behaviour or talking about physical abuse
- **Sexual:** through inappropriate physical contact, the taking of indecent images of children, or the encouragement of sexual activity by children for the purpose of adult gratification. A change in character, being over sexual for their age and withdrawing from physical contact
- **Emotional:** through persistent lack of affection, unrealistic adult demands, verbal bullying including cyber-bullying, low self-esteem, mood swings, self-harming and depression
- **Neglect:** persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention, tired and withdrawn, appearance, nothing to contribute

### Appendix 2

#### How to respond if a child speaks to you about a possible allegation:

- remain calm, accessible and receptive
- listen carefully without interrupting
- communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference – this is especially important for disabled children and for children whose first language is not English
- be aware of the non-verbal messages you are giving
- make it clear that you are taking them seriously
- acknowledge their courage and reassure them that they are right to tell
- reassure them that they should not feel guilty
- let them know that you are going to do everything you can to help them and what may happen as a result
- do **not** promise to keep the information a secret

### Appendix 3

#### Procedure to follow if an adult is accused of abuse at Sidmouth International School:

If a member of staff, member of a host family or volunteer is accused of any form of child abuse; such suspicions will be reported to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- The person against whom the allegation is made will be informed of the allegation and interviewed immediately. Following the interview, if there is any potential substance to the allegation, they will be suspended from their duties pending further investigation
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) will be informed and contacted for advice
- The LSCB will take over any investigation and if necessary the case will be passed on to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)
- Confidential records will be kept of the allegation and all subsequent proceedings
- Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being re-instated.
- Founded allegations will result in a termination of employment / voluntary services Sidmouth International School will also inform the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure their records are correct

What to do ....

