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## **Policy Pack A:**

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

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These policies ensure that children are protected from harm and that staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

- A1. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- A2. Specific Safeguarding Risks Policy (Prevent Duty, FGM, CSE)
- A3. Safer Recruitment Policy
- A4. Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Policy
- A5. Whistleblowing Policy
- A6. Information Sharing Policy
- A7. Absence and Missing Child Policy
- A8. Looked After Children Policy
- A9. Safer Handling (Positive Handling) Policy

# Hillside Gems



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## A1. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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### Designated Safeguarding Leads

**Little Waltham:** Susie Tsui-Lucas, **The Barn:** Maxine Talbot, **Terling:** Becki Fitt

### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

**Little Waltham:** Daniela Young and Abigail Southall, **The Barn:** Daniela Young, **Terling:** Donna Harrington

Essex Children's Social Care contact details : **0345 603 7627**

Out of Hours Safeguarding (Emergency Duty Service) : **0345 606 1212**

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### Safeguarding Framework Statement

Hillside Gems Nursery is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone working within the setting.

This policy outlines the safeguarding systems in place within Hillside Gems and explains the responsibilities of educators in protecting children from harm.

Our safeguarding practice is informed by national legislation and local safeguarding procedures. Rather than repeating statutory guidance within this document, Hillside Gems follows the procedures and frameworks provided by the relevant safeguarding authorities.

This policy should be read alongside the following safeguarding frameworks:

#### Statutory Guidance

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Prevent Duty Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

## Local Safeguarding Guidance

Essex Safeguarding Children Partnership

<https://www.escb.co.uk>

Essex Effective Support for Children and Families

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/support-for-children-and-families>

Essex Child Protection Procedures

<https://www.escb.co.uk/working-with-children>

Educators are expected to familiarise themselves with these documents and follow the procedures outlined within them when safeguarding concerns arise.

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## 1. Hillside Gems Philosophy

At Hillside Gems, the safety and wellbeing of every child is our highest priority.

We are committed to creating a safe, nurturing and respectful environment where children feel secure, valued and protected from harm.

Through our pillars of **Purpose, Positivity and Playfulness**, educators build strong relationships with children and families. These trusting relationships support children's emotional security and help educators recognise when a child may require additional support or protection.

Safeguarding is embedded across all aspects of nursery practice.

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## 2. Purpose of Policy

This policy outlines how Hillside Gems protects children from harm and fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities.

The policy ensures that:

- children are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation
  - educators understand their safeguarding responsibilities
  - concerns about children's welfare are recognised and reported promptly
  - the nursery works effectively with families and safeguarding agencies
  - safe recruitment and safe working practices are followed
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### 3. Legal Framework

This policy is guided by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Prevent Duty Guidance (2015)

Detailed definitions of abuse, safeguarding thresholds and statutory procedures are contained within the documents referenced in the **Safeguarding Framework Statement**.

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### 4. Safeguarding Leadership and Contacts

#### Designated Safeguarding Lead

**Little Waltham:** Susie Tsui-Lucas

**The Barn:** Maxine Talbot

**Terling:** Becki Fitt

#### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

**Little Waltham:** Daniela Young and Abigail Southall

**The Barn:** Daniela Young

**Terling:** Donna Harrington

Deputy DSLs support the DSL and take responsibility for safeguarding matters when the DSL is unavailable.

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### Safeguarding Contacts

#### Essex Children and Families Hub

Telephone: **0345 603 7627**

Opening hours:

Monday–Thursday: 8:45am–5:00pm

Friday: 8:45am–4:15pm

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## **Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service**

Telephone: **0345 606 1212**

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### **Police**

Emergency: **999**

Non-emergency: **101**

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### **Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

Telephone: **03330 139 797**

Email: [lado@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lado@essex.gov.uk)

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### **NSPCC Helpline**

0808 800 5000

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## **5. Responsibilities of Educators**

All educators have a responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Educators must:

- remain vigilant to signs of abuse or neglect
- listen carefully to children and take their concerns seriously
- report safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL
- record concerns accurately and factually
- follow safeguarding procedures without delay
- maintain professional boundaries with children and families

Safeguarding concerns must never be ignored.

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## **6. Recognising Signs of Abuse**

Educators receive safeguarding training that enables them to recognise possible indicators of abuse or neglect.

Detailed definitions of abuse and indicators of concern are provided within:

Working Together to Safeguard Children

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Essex Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures

<https://www.escb.co.uk/working-with-children>

Educators must report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL.

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## 7. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If an educator has concerns about a child's welfare they must:

- report the concern immediately to the DSL
- record the concern clearly and factually
- avoid asking leading questions
- maintain confidentiality

The DSL will determine the appropriate action, which may include:

- monitoring the situation
- discussing concerns with parents where appropriate
- seeking advice from safeguarding professionals
- making a referral to Essex Children's Social Care

If a child is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted.

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## 8. Early Help and Effective Support

Hillside Gems follows the **Essex Effective Support framework** when identifying children and families who may require additional support.

Guidance on support levels can be found here:

Essex Effective Support Windscreen

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/support-for-children-and-families>

Educators should speak with the DSL if they believe a child or family may benefit from Early Help support.

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## 9. Allegations Against Staff

Allegations about adults working with children must be taken seriously.

Any concern that an educator or adult has:

- harmed a child
- behaved in a way that may harm a child
- behaved in a way that suggests they may pose a risk to children

must be reported immediately to the DSL or Nursery Manager.

The nursery will contact the **Essex LADO** for advice before taking further action.

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## 10. Safer Recruitment

Hillside Gems follows safer recruitment practices to ensure that all adults working with children are suitable.

This includes:

- enhanced DBS checks
- identity verification
- reference checks
- safeguarding interview questions
- staff supervision and monitoring

Further information can be found in the **Safer Recruitment Policy**.

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## 11. Online Safety

Children may be exposed to digital technology within early years settings.

Hillside Gems ensures that:

- digital devices are used safely
- children are supervised when using technology
- online safety forms part of staff safeguarding awareness

Further guidance can be found in:

UK Safer Internet Centre

<https://saferinternet.org.uk>

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## 12. Prevent Duty

Hillside Gems follows the Prevent Duty to safeguard children from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.

Educators receive training on recognising vulnerability and reporting concerns.

Further guidance is available here:

Prevent Duty Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

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## 13. Working with Families

Hillside Gems works in partnership with families to support children's wellbeing.

However, the safety of the child will always remain the nursery's primary concern.

In certain situations, safeguarding concerns may need to be shared with external agencies without parental consent where necessary to protect the child.

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## 14. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding information is shared on a **need-to-know basis** in order to protect children.

Information sharing follows the guidance set out in:

Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

Safeguarding records are stored securely and separately from general nursery records.

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## 15. Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively.

This includes:

- monitoring safeguarding concerns and records
- ensuring educators receive safeguarding training
- reviewing safeguarding practices within the setting
- ensuring compliance with national and local safeguarding guidance

This policy will be **reviewed annually** or sooner if safeguarding guidance changes.

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## Appendix A – Related Safeguarding Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following Hillside Gems policies:

- Staff Code of Conduct
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Low Level Concerns Policy
  - Safer Recruitment Policy
  - Behaviour and Relationships Policy
  - SEND Policy
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## **Appendix B – Key Safeguarding Guidance**

Early Years Foundation Stage

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Essex Safeguarding Children Partnership

<https://www.escb.co.uk>

Essex Effective Support

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/support-for-children-and-families>

Prevent Duty Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

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Created by S.T-L, March 2026, Review March 2027



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## A2. Specific Safeguarding Risks Policy

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### Prevent Duty, FGM and Related Safeguarding Risks

This policy outlines how Hillside Gems safeguards children from specific risks including radicalisation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and other forms of harm, ensuring our practice remains vigilant, informed and rooted in our commitment to protecting every child's safety, wellbeing and sense of belonging.

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### Prevent Duty (Radicalisation and Extremism)

Hillside Gems recognises that protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities.

Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support extremist views or terrorism. Although rare in early years, building strong foundations of belonging, identity and respect is key to prevention.

At Hillside Gems, our Five Gems Values actively support the Prevent Duty:

- Belonging – Every child and family feels welcomed, included and valued, reducing isolation and vulnerability
- Kindness – We model empathy, respect and care for others
- Respect – We celebrate differences, cultures, beliefs and perspectives
- Confidence – Children are encouraged to express themselves, ask questions and develop their own voice
- Curiosity – Children are supported to explore the world around them in a safe, guided and open way

Through these values, we promote British Values in an age-appropriate way:

- Democracy (taking turns, sharing, having a voice)
- Rule of law (understanding rules and boundaries)
- Individual liberty (making choices safely)
- Mutual respect and tolerance

We will:

- Ensure all staff understand the Prevent Duty
- Provide training to identify vulnerability to radicalisation
- Maintain a safe and inclusive environment

Any concerns will be:

- Reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Managed in line with safeguarding procedures  
Referred to appropriate external agencies if required

We follow:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Prevent Duty Guidance

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## **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM is a form of child abuse and is illegal in the UK. It involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

At Hillside Gems:

- Staff are aware of the signs and risk factors
- All concerns or disclosures are taken seriously
- Concerns are reported immediately to the DSL

Possible indicators include:

- Discussion of a special ceremony or procedure
- Extended absence, particularly following travel abroad
- Changes in behaviour, withdrawal or distress

All concerns will be referred in line with safeguarding procedures and external agencies where necessary.

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## **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

While more commonly associated with older children, early identification of vulnerability is essential.

Children may be at risk where there is:

- Exposure to unsafe adults or environments
- Family vulnerability, including neglect or instability
- Changes in behaviour, fearfulness or withdrawal

Staff will:

- Remain vigilant to early warning signs
  - Record and report concerns immediately to the DSL
- 

## **Domestic Abuse**

Children living in households where domestic abuse occurs are at risk of emotional and psychological harm.

At Hillside Gems we recognise that:

- Domestic abuse can impact a child's behaviour, wellbeing and development
- Children may witness, hear or be directly affected

Possible indicators include:

- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, anxious, aggressive)
- Tiredness or poor concentration
- Reluctance to go home

All concerns will be:

- Recorded clearly and factually
  - Reported to the DSL immediately
- 

## **Other Relevant Safeguarding Risks in Early Years**

Staff are trained to recognise and respond to:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse

- Online safety risks, including exposure to inappropriate or AI-generated content
  - Honour-based abuse and forced marriage (where relevant to family context)
  - Fabricated or induced illness (FII)
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## Staff Responsibilities

All staff at Hillside Gems:

- Have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Must report all concerns, however small
- Must not investigate concerns themselves
- Must record concerns clearly and factually
- Must follow safeguarding procedures at all times

The Department for Education has a dedicated helpline (0207 340 7264) to enable people to raise concerns relating to extremism directly, or in non-emergency situations, they can be emailed at: [counter.extremism@education.g-si.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.g-si.gov.uk)

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## Staff Action Flowchart

Staff should follow Hillside's Safeguarding Flowchart:

### 1. Concern Arises

- You notice something
  - A child discloses information
  - You observe behaviour, injury, or have a gut feeling
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### 2. Immediate Action (Staff Responsibility)

- Stay calm, listen, and reassure
- Do **not** promise confidentiality
- Do **not** investigate or ask leading questions

### Record Immediately

- Write clear, factual notes
- Include:
  - Date
  - Time
  - Location

- Exact words (where possible)

## Type of Record

- Cause for Concern Form
- 

## 3. Report to DSL (Same Day – Immediately if Urgent)

### Little Waltham Site

- DSL: **Susie**
- Deputy DSL: **Daniela and Abigail**

### Barn Site

- DSL: **Max**
- Deputy DSL: **Daniela**

### Terling Site

- DSL: **Becki**
  - Deputy DSL: **Donna**
- 

## 4. If DSL is Unavailable

- Report to **Deputy DSL**

If neither is available and concern is urgent:

- Contact **Essex Children's Social Care / MASH directly**
  - **Inform DSL** as soon as possible after
  - If child at immediate risk - Call 999
- 

## 5. Action by DSL

- Monitor internally  
OR
- Speak to parents (if appropriate)  
OR
- Make referral

## 6. Referral (if required)

<b>Area</b>	<b>Report to</b>
Prevent duty	DSL → Channel Programme / Essex Police: 101
Domestic Abuse	DSL → MASH (Children's Social Care)
FGM	DSL → MASH / Essex Police: 101
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	DSL → MASH / Children's Social Care

## **Key Principle**

Prevent is safeguarding. All concerns must be reported to the DSL immediately.

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Created by S.T-L, March 2026, Review March 2027



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## A3. Safer Recruitment Policy

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### 1. Hillside Gems Philosophy

At Hillside Gems the safety and wellbeing of children is our highest priority. Ensuring that all adults working with children are suitable, trustworthy and professionally competent is a fundamental part of safeguarding.

Recruitment processes are designed not only to identify skilled educators but also to ensure that individuals demonstrate the attitudes and professional behaviours required to work safely with children.

Our approach to recruitment reflects the **three pillars that guide practice at Hillside Gems**:

#### **Purpose**

We approach our work with clear responsibility and intention. Safeguarding children is central to every role within the nursery.

#### **Positivity**

We foster a respectful and supportive environment where educators work collaboratively and maintain positive relationships with children, families and colleagues.

#### **Playfulness**

We recognise that early childhood environments should be joyful, engaging and responsive to children's curiosity. Educators support children's development through playful exploration while maintaining safe professional practice.

Through careful recruitment, clear safeguarding expectations and thorough vetting procedures, Hillside Gems aims to build a professional team that reflects these principles and is committed to protecting and nurturing the children in our care.

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### 2. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Hillside Gems follows safe recruitment practices when employing staff, students and volunteers.

This policy aims to:

- prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children
- ensure safeguarding considerations are embedded within recruitment processes
- promote transparency and fairness in recruitment decisions
- ensure compliance with safeguarding and employment legislation

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
  - Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
- 

### **3. Legal Framework**

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Keeping Children Safe in Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-guidance-on-the-rehabilitation-of-offenders-act-1974>

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### **4. Our Practice at Hillside Gems**

Hillside Gems follows a safer recruitment process to ensure that all adults working within the setting are suitable to work with children.

Recruitment procedures include:

- clearly written job descriptions and person specifications
- safeguarding responsibilities included in job advertisements
- safeguarding questions during interviews
- verification of identity and qualifications
- obtaining appropriate references
- enhanced DBS checks where required

Applicants are informed that safeguarding is a priority within the setting and that all staff share responsibility for protecting children.

Recruitment decisions are based not only on professional competence but also on an individual's suitability to work with children and their commitment to maintaining a safe environment.

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## **5. Vetting and Suitability Checks**

Before an individual begins working with children, the nursery will complete the necessary suitability checks.

These may include:

- enhanced DBS check with barred list check where appropriate
- verification of identity
- verification of relevant qualifications
- obtaining at least two references
- confirmation of employment history

All recruitment checks will be recorded and maintained in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

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## **6. Induction and Safeguarding Training**

All new educators will receive an induction to ensure they understand safeguarding responsibilities and nursery procedures.

Induction will include:

- safeguarding procedures
- the Staff Code of Conduct
- whistleblowing procedures
- professional expectations within the setting

Educators will also receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

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## **7. Ongoing Suitability**

Suitability to work with children is an ongoing responsibility.

Educators are expected to inform the Nursery Manager if there are any changes that may affect their suitability to work with children.

This may include:

- criminal convictions

- police investigations
- changes to DBS status

The nursery monitors ongoing suitability through supervision, safeguarding training and professional development.

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## 8. Students, Volunteers, Agency Staff and Visitors

Students, volunteers and agency staff may occasionally support the nursery.

Hillside Gems will ensure that:

- appropriate safeguarding and suitability checks are carried out where required
- individuals who have not completed the full recruitment checks are supervised appropriately
- safeguarding expectations are clearly explained before working with children

Any adult whose safeguarding or recruitment checks have not been fully completed will **not be left unsupervised with children**.

To ensure that staff and children can clearly recognise individuals within the setting, visitors and adults whose checks have not been completed will wear a **coloured visitor lanyard or badge** while on site.

This allows educators and children to identify visitors and ensures that appropriate supervision is maintained at all times.

Educators are responsible for politely challenging unfamiliar adults who are not wearing identification within the nursery.

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## 9. Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager is responsible for ensuring that recruitment procedures are followed and safeguarding requirements are met.

This includes:

- reviewing recruitment processes
- ensuring appropriate checks are completed
- maintaining records of staff suitability

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if safeguarding guidance changes.

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## **A4. Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Policy**

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### **1. Our Philosophy**

At Hillside Gems, the safety and wellbeing of children is our highest priority. All adults working within the nursery share a responsibility to create a safe, respectful and nurturing environment where children feel secure, valued and protected.

Educators play a vital role in modelling positive behaviour, maintaining professional boundaries and upholding the highest standards of conduct.

This policy sets out the professional expectations for all educators, staff, students and volunteers working within Hillside Gems. Clear guidance on professional behaviour helps protect children and ensures that educators themselves are protected from misunderstandings or allegations.

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### **2. Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all adults working within the nursery maintain safe and appropriate professional conduct.

This policy aims to:

- protect children from harm
- ensure safe professional behaviour
- maintain appropriate boundaries between adults and children
- promote a culture of openness and accountability
- ensure concerns about adult behaviour are addressed early

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Safer Recruitment Policy
-

### 3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the following statutory guidance:

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Keeping Children Safe in Education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

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### 4. Professional Behaviour Expectations

All educators are expected to demonstrate high standards of professional behaviour at all times.

Educators must:

- prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children
- treat children with dignity and respect
- act as positive role models
- maintain professional boundaries with children and families
- follow nursery policies and safeguarding procedures
- act with honesty and integrity

Educators must never behave in ways that could place children or themselves at risk.

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### 5. Professional Boundaries

Educators must maintain clear professional boundaries when working with children and families.

Educators must:

- avoid favouritism or exclusive relationships with children
- avoid behaviour that could be misinterpreted
- communicate respectfully with families
- maintain professional relationships at all times

Relationships with families must never compromise professional judgement or safeguarding responsibilities.

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## **6. Physical Contact**

Appropriate physical contact may be necessary when caring for young children.

Examples may include:

- comforting a distressed child
- supporting personal care routines
- assisting with physical activities

All physical contact must:

- respond to the needs of the child
- be appropriate and proportionate
- respect the child's dignity

Physical punishment is never permitted.

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## **7. Communication with Children**

Educators must communicate with children in a respectful and supportive manner.

Educators must not:

- shout in anger
- use humiliating or degrading language
- make inappropriate jokes or comments
- use threatening behaviour

Educators should model positive communication and support children in expressing their needs appropriately.

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## **8. Social Media and Online Conduct**

Educators must use social media responsibly.

Educators must not:

- share photographs or information about children online
- discuss nursery matters on personal social media
- accept social media connections with parents where this may compromise professional boundaries

Online behaviour must reflect the professional standards expected of staff working with children.

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## **9. Mobile Phones and Personal Devices**

Personal mobile phones must not be used in areas where children are present unless authorised.

Photographs of children may only be taken using nursery devices in accordance with the nursery's photography procedures.

This protects children's privacy and safeguarding.

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## **10. Low Level Concerns About Adult Behaviour**

Hillside Gems promotes a culture where concerns about adult behaviour can be raised openly and safely.

A low level concern is any behaviour by an adult that may not meet the expected standards set out in this Code of Conduct but does not meet the threshold of a safeguarding allegation.

Examples may include:

- being overly familiar with a child
- using inappropriate language around children
- not following nursery procedures
- behaviour that could be misinterpreted
- minor boundary issues

Low level concerns may arise from a single incident or a pattern of behaviour over time.

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## **11. Reporting Low Level Concerns**

All educators have a responsibility to report concerns about adult behaviour.

If an educator observes behaviour that may not meet professional standards, they should:

- report the concern to the Nursery Manager or DSL
- provide a clear and factual description of the behaviour observed
- avoid making assumptions or accusations

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible so they can be reviewed appropriately.

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## **12. Recording Low Level Concerns**

Low level concerns will be recorded by the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Records will include:

- the date of the concern
- a factual description of the behaviour observed
- the action taken in response
- any follow-up discussions or outcomes

Records will be stored securely in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

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## **13. Escalation of Concerns**

Where a concern suggests that an adult may have:

- harmed a child
- behaved in a way that may harm a child
- committed a criminal offence involving a child
- behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk to children

the concern will be managed in line with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and may involve consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

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## **14. Whistleblowing**

Hillside Gems encourages educators to raise concerns about unsafe or inappropriate practice.

Where an educator feels unable to raise concerns internally, they may follow the procedures outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy.

Educators must never ignore behaviour that could place children at risk.

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## **15. Monitoring and Review**

The Nursery Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively.

This includes:

- promoting a culture of professional accountability
- ensuring educators understand professional expectations
- monitoring concerns about conduct
- reviewing the policy regularly

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if guidance changes.



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## A5. Whistleblowing Policy

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### 1. Our Philosophy

At Hillside Gems we believe that safeguarding children depends on a culture of openness, honesty and professional responsibility.

Educators work closely together to create a safe and nurturing environment for children. Maintaining this environment requires adults to feel confident speaking up if they are concerned about unsafe practice, wrongdoing or behaviour that may place children at risk.

Our community is guided by the **5 Gems Values**, particularly **Kindness & Supportiveness** and **Community & Responsibility**. Raising concerns is not viewed as criticism of colleagues, but as a professional responsibility that helps protect children and maintain the integrity of the setting.

Leaders at Hillside Gems are committed to listening carefully to concerns and responding respectfully so that educators feel supported in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities.

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### 2. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear procedure for educators and staff to raise serious concerns about practice within the nursery.

This policy ensures that:

- staff feel confident raising concerns about unsafe or unlawful practice
- concerns about safeguarding or professional conduct are addressed promptly
- staff are protected when reporting concerns in good faith
- children remain protected from harm

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
  - Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Behaviour Policy
  - Safer Recruitment Policy
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### 3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/23/contents>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

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### 4. Our Practice at Hillside Gems

Hillside Gems encourages educators to raise concerns openly where possible. Many issues can be resolved through professional discussion with colleagues or leadership.

However, when concerns relate to safeguarding, unsafe practice, or serious wrongdoing, they must be raised formally so that they can be addressed appropriately.

Concerns may include:

- safeguarding failures
- behaviour that places children at risk
- unsafe or unlawful practice
- breaches of professional standards
- attempts to conceal safeguarding concerns

In most situations, concerns should be raised with our **Nursery Manager, Designated Safeguarding Lead or Director**.

Where a concern relates to the Nursery Manager or where an educator feels unable to raise the issue internally, concerns may be reported to external organisations.

Staff may contact:

**Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline**

0300 123 3155

[whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)

**NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**

0800 028 0285

[help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

These services provide confidential advice for professionals who have concerns about safeguarding practice.

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## 5. Staff Responsibilities

All educators and staff have a professional responsibility to act if they believe children may be at risk.

Educators should:

- raise concerns promptly
- provide clear and factual information where possible
- act in good faith when reporting concerns
- prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children

Hillside Gems will ensure that educators who raise genuine concerns are treated fairly and supported appropriately.

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## 6. Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager is responsible for ensuring that staff understand the whistleblowing procedures and feel able to raise concerns safely.

This includes:

- promoting an open and reflective professional culture
- responding appropriately to concerns raised by staff
- ensuring concerns are investigated fairly and promptly

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if safeguarding guidance changes.

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Created by S.T-L, March 2026, Review March 2027



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## A6. Information Sharing Policy

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### 1. Purpose of this Policy

At Hillside Gems, we recognise that effective information sharing is essential to safeguarding children, promoting their welfare and supporting high-quality early education.

This policy sets out how we collect, use, store and share information in line with statutory requirements, ensuring that safeguarding is always our priority.

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### 2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is guided by:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (2025)
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
  - Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR
  - Children Act 1989 & 2004
  - Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners (DfE)
  - Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures
- 

### 3. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Safeguarding Flowcharts
  - Data Protection, Information Sharing and Digital Media Policy (for information on retention of data)
- 

### 4. Hillside Gems Approach to Information Sharing

At Hillside Gems, we:

- Place children's safety above confidentiality
  - Share information clearly, promptly and appropriately
  - Ensure all staff understand when and how to share concerns
  - Maintain a culture of openness, vigilance and professional curiosity
- 

## 5. Key EYFS 2025 Requirements

In line with EYFS 2025, Hillside Gems ensures:

### 5.1 Safeguarding Communication

- All staff understand how to report concerns to the DSL immediately
- Safeguarding information is shared consistently across all sites
- Training is embedded into daily practice

### 5.2 Absence Monitoring

- Unexplained or prolonged absences are followed up promptly
- Concerns are escalated where safeguarding risks are identified

### 5.3 Emergency Contacts

- Each child has at least two emergency contacts where possible
- Contact information is regularly checked and updated

### 5.4 Safer Recruitment Information

- Staff suitability information is recorded and stored securely
- References and safeguarding checks are handled appropriately

### 5.5 Whistleblowing

- Staff have clear routes to report unsafe practice
  - Concerns are taken seriously and acted upon
- 

## 6. Principles of Information Sharing

We follow the **seven golden rules of information sharing** and ensure:

- We are open with families about how information is used
  - We share only what is necessary
  - Information is shared with the right people at the right time
  - Records are accurate, factual and secure
  - Safeguarding always takes priority over confidentiality
-

## 7. When We Share Information

### Safeguarding and Child Protection

Information will be shared **without consent** where necessary to:

- Protect a child
- Prevent harm
- Support safeguarding investigations

This includes referrals to:

- Children's Social Care (MASH)
  - Police
  - Other safeguarding agencies
- 

### Internal Communication (Hillside Structure)

Across all Hillside Gems sites:

- Concerns must be reported to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately**
- If unavailable, staff must go to the **Deputy DSL**
- Staff must follow the **Hillside Safeguarding Flowchart**

Safeguarding information shared internally includes:

- Welfare concerns
  - Attendance concerns
  - Medical/allergy information
  - Behaviour or emotional wellbeing concerns
- 

### Site-Based DSL Structure

- **Little Waltham:** DSL – Susie | Deputy – Dani & Abi
- **Barn:** DSL – Max | Deputy – Dani
- **Terling:** DSL – Becki | Deputy – Donna

Information must flow **clearly between sites where relevant**, ensuring continuity of care and safeguarding oversight.

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### External Professionals

We may share information with:

- Health visitors

- Speech and language therapists
  - Early Help teams
  - Inclusion services
  - Social care
- 

## Ofsted and Regulatory Bodies

We will share information with Ofsted when required, including:

- Notifiable incidents
  - Safeguarding concerns
- 

## 8. How We Share Information

Information may be shared through:

- Secure email
- Phone calls
- Written records and referrals
- Safeguarding meetings
- Multi-agency meetings
- Approved digital systems (e.g. Tapestry where appropriate)

All sharing follows GDPR and safeguarding requirements.

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## 9. Consent

We will seek parental consent unless:

- A child is at risk
- It may affect a safeguarding investigation
- It is not appropriate or possible

Where consent is not obtained, decisions will always be made in the **child's best interests**.

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## 10. Storage and Security of Information

At Hillside Gems:

- Records are stored securely (digital and/or locked systems)
- Access is restricted to authorised staff
- Safeguarding files are kept confidential and separate where required

- Digital systems (including Google Drive) are used in line with GDPR and access controls
- 

## 11. Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- Understand this policy
- Share concerns immediately
- Record information clearly and factually
- Maintain confidentiality appropriately

The **DSL** is responsible for:

- Making decisions about information sharing
  - Ensuring records are accurate and secure
  - Monitoring safeguarding communication
- 

## 12. Whistleblowing

If staff believe:

- Information is not being shared appropriately
- Safeguarding concerns are not acted upon

They must follow the **Hillside Gems Whistleblowing Policy**.

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## 13. Parental Rights

Parents/carers have the right to:

- Know what information is held
  - Request corrections
  - Access records (with safeguarding exceptions)
- 

## 14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
  - Following updates to statutory guidance
  - After any safeguarding incident
-



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## A7. Absence and Missing Child Policy

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### 1. Purpose of this Policy

At Hillside Gems, we recognise that monitoring attendance and responding swiftly to missing children are critical safeguarding responsibilities.

This policy outlines how we:

- Monitor and respond to child absence
- Identify and escalate safeguarding concerns linked to attendance
- Act immediately and effectively in the event of a missing child

Attendance expectations are also shared with families in the **Hillside Gems Parent Handbook**.

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### 2. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is guided by:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (2025)
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
  - Children Act 1989 and 2004
  - Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures
- 

### 3. Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
  - Information Sharing Policy
  - Risk Assessment Policy
  - Health & Safety Policy
  - Outings Policy
  - Parent Handbook
-

## 4. Safeguarding Approach

At Hillside Gems:

- A child's absence may be an indicator of risk or harm
  - All attendance concerns are treated with professional curiosity
  - Safeguarding always takes priority over routine procedures
  - Information is shared in line with the Information Sharing Policy
- 

## 5. Recording Attendance

- Attendance is recorded for every child, every session
- Registers include arrival and departure times
- Any absences are clearly documented

Registers must be:

- Accurate
  - Completed promptly
  - Available for safeguarding review
- 

## 6. Absence Procedures

### 6.1 Expected Absence

Parents/carers must inform the setting if their child will be absent.

Reasons for absence are recorded.

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### 6.2 Unexplained Absence (Same Day Response)

If a child is absent without explanation:

- Parents/carers are contacted on the same day
- Contact may include phone, message or email
- All attempts are recorded

If no contact is made:

- The concern is reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
  - Further attempts are made
- 

### 6.3 Ongoing or Repeated Absence

Where absence becomes a pattern or concern:

- The DSL will review attendance records
- Concerns will be discussed with parents/carers where appropriate
- Safeguarding risk will be considered

Where necessary, information may be shared with:

- Children's Social Care (MASH)
  - Early Help services
  - Local authority teams
- 

## **6.4 Escalation**

Concerns will be escalated immediately if:

- There are safeguarding concerns linked to the child or family
- A child cannot be located or contact cannot be made
- Absence is unusual or unexplained

The DSL will follow local safeguarding procedures.

---

## **7. Missing Child Procedures (On Site)**

### **Immediate Actions**

If a child is identified as missing:

- Staff must remain calm and act immediately
- The DSL is informed without delay
- A full headcount is conducted

Staff will search:

- All indoor areas
  - Outdoor spaces
  - Toilets and enclosed areas
- 

### **If the Child is Not Found Quickly**

If the child is not located within a short period:

- The DSL will:
  - Lead and coordinate the response
  - Contact the police
  - Inform parents/carers

- Staff will:
    - Continue searching
    - Ensure remaining children are safe and supervised
- 

## **8. Missing Child Procedures (Off Site / Forest School / Outings)**

If a child goes missing during an outing:

- The group is gathered immediately
- A headcount is taken
- Staff search the immediate area

If the child is not found quickly:

- Emergency services are contacted
- The DSL is informed immediately
- Parents/carers are informed

Staff must:

- Remain with the group
  - Maintain supervision and ratios
- 

## **9. After a Missing Child Incident**

Following any missing child incident:

- The incident is fully recorded
- Ofsted is notified where required
- Parents/carers are supported and kept informed
- A full review is conducted

This includes:

- Reviewing supervision and ratios
  - Updating risk assessments
  - Identifying any learning or improvements
- 

## **10. Preventative Measures**

Hillside Gems reduces the risk of missing child incidents by:

- Maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios
- Carrying out regular headcounts
- Ensuring secure entrances and exits

- Supervising children closely at all times
  - Completing thorough risk assessments
  - Following robust arrival and collection procedures
- 

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **All Staff**

- Monitor attendance daily
  - Report concerns immediately
  - Follow procedures without delay
  - Maintain vigilance and supervision
- 

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The DSL is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance patterns
  - Making safeguarding decisions
  - Escalating concerns to external agencies
  - Leading the response to missing child incidents
- 

## **12. Information Sharing**

Information relating to absence and missing child incidents will be shared appropriately to safeguard children.

This may include sharing information:

- Within the staff team
- With parents/carers
- With external agencies such as Children's Social Care or the police

All information sharing is carried out in line with the Hillside Gems Information Sharing Policy, with the child's safety as the overriding priority.

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## **13. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
  - Following any safeguarding incident
  - In line with updates to statutory guidance
-



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## A8. Looked After Children Policy

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### 1. Purpose

At Hillside Gems, we are committed to supporting Looked After Children by providing a safe, nurturing and consistent environment where they feel secure, valued and able to thrive.

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### 2. Definition

A Looked After Child (LAC) is a child who is:

- In the care of the local authority or
  - Provided with accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989
- 

### 3. Legal Framework

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
  - EYFS Framework (2025)
  - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- 

### 4. Key Principles

We will:

- Prioritise emotional security and attachment
  - Provide consistent routines and familiar adults
  - Promote belonging, confidence and stability
  - Work in partnership with carers and professionals
  - Respond to each child's individual needs
- 

### 5. Designated Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Act as the main point of contact
  - Oversee support and wellbeing
  - Ensure appropriate information sharing
- 

## 6. Working in Partnership

We will work with:

- Foster carers / key carers
- Social workers
- Virtual School and other professionals

We will:

- Share relevant information
  - Attend meetings including **Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings**
- 

## 7. One Plan and PEP

Where appropriate, support for Looked After Children will be recorded within a **One Plan**.

- The One Plan reflects day-to-day strategies used by staff
  - Key targets from the **PEP (Personal Education Plan)** will be incorporated where relevant
  - This ensures consistency between external planning and daily practice
- 

## 8. PEP Meeting Contribution (Checklist)

When contributing to a PEP meeting, Hillside Gems will provide:

- Child's **current development and progress**
  - Information on **emotional wellbeing and behaviour**
  - Strengths, interests and engagement
  - Any **areas of need or concern**
  - Strategies currently in place (e.g. from One Plan)
  - Impact of support provided
  - Any recommended next steps
- 

## 9. Safeguarding and Confidentiality

- Looked After Children are considered particularly vulnerable
- All concerns will be reported in line with safeguarding procedures

- Information is shared on a need-to-know basis
- 

## **10. Transitions**

We will support transitions by:

- Sharing relevant information with new settings
  - Working with carers and professionals
  - Maintaining consistency where possible
- 

## **11. Staff Awareness**

Staff will:

- Be supported to understand the needs of Looked After Children
  - Follow guidance from the DSL
- 

## **12. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
  - Following any significant safeguarding updates
- 

Created by S.T-L, March 2026, Review March 2027

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## A9. Safer Handling (Positive Handling) Policy

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### Purpose

At Hillside Gems, we are committed to creating a safe, respectful and nurturing environment where children are supported to manage their emotions and behaviour.

We prioritise **positive relationships, co-regulation and early intervention** to prevent situations from escalating. Physical intervention is used **only when absolutely necessary**, and always in the best interests of the child.

This policy should be read alongside our:

- **Behaviour and Relationships Policy**
- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**

This policy is guided by:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (2024)**
- **Children Act 1989 and 2004**
- **Human Rights Act 1998**
- **Use of Reasonable Force Guidance (DfE, 2013)**

---

### Legal Framework

Under Section 93 of the **Education and Inspections Act 2006**, staff may use **reasonable force** to prevent a child from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Causing serious damage to property
- Committing a criminal offence

The use of force must always be:

- Reasonable
- Proportionate
- Necessary

The **EYFS (2024)** states that:

“Physical intervention should only be used to manage a child’s behaviour if it is necessary to prevent personal injury to the child, other children or an adult, or serious damage to property.”

All actions must respect the child's dignity and rights under the **Human Rights Act 1998**.

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## **Our Approach to Behaviour and Relationships**

At Hillside Gems, our approach is rooted in our values of **Belonging, Kindness, Respect, Confidence and Curiosity**.

We understand that:

- Behaviour is a form of communication
- Children need support to regulate emotions
- Strong relationships reduce the need for physical intervention

In line with our **Behaviour and Relationships Policy**, staff will:

- Build warm, consistent relationships
  - Use calm, clear boundaries
  - Support co-regulation and emotional development
  - Use distraction, redirection and positive language
  - Provide predictable routines and environments
- 

## **Use of Physical Intervention**

Physical intervention (safer handling) will **only be used as a last resort** when:

- A child is at risk of harming themselves
- A child is at risk of harming others
- There is a risk of serious damage to property

Any intervention must be:

- **Proportionate** to the level of risk
  - **Reasonable and necessary**
  - **Minimal and for the shortest time possible**
- 

## **Acceptable Practice**

Staff may:

- Gently guide a child by the hand or arm
- Comfort or hold a child to keep them safe
- Physically intervene to prevent immediate harm

All actions must be:

- Calm

- Respectful
  - Non-punitive
- 

## Unacceptable Practice

Staff must never:

- Use physical force as punishment
  - Use excessive or unreasonable force
  - Cause pain, fear or humiliation
  - Restrain a child in a way that restricts breathing
- 

## Corporal Punishment and Parental Behaviour

Hillside Gems promotes positive, respectful approaches to behaviour and does not support the use of corporal punishment within the setting.

If a member of staff witnesses a parent or carer using physical punishment (e.g. smacking, hitting or rough handling) on the premises, they must:

- Remain calm and professional
- Prioritise the immediate safety of the child
- Not physically intervene unless necessary to prevent immediate harm
- Report the concern immediately to the DSL

The incident must be:

- Recorded factually, including what was seen and heard
- Passed to the DSL without delay

The DSL will:

- Assess the concern in line with safeguarding procedures
- Consider whether a referral to **Children's Social Care (MASH)** is required
- Record all actions taken

Where appropriate, the DSL may:

- Speak with the parent/carer in a supportive and non-confrontational manner
  - Reinforce the setting's approach to positive behaviour, in line with the **Behaviour and Relationships Policy**
- 

## After an Incident

Following any physical intervention:

- The child will be supported to calm and feel safe
  - The incident will be recorded clearly and factually
  - Parents/carers will be informed on the same day
  - The situation will be reviewed to prevent recurrence
- 

## Recording and Monitoring

All incidents of physical intervention must:

- Be recorded with date, time and context
- Include what led to the incident and actions taken
- Be signed by staff and shared with parents

The Manager/DSL will:

- Monitor patterns and frequency
  - Review practice and provide guidance
  - Ensure appropriate support is in place
- 

## Supporting Children

Where a child requires additional support:

- Individual strategies will be developed
  - A One Plan or behaviour support plan may be implemented
  - Parents and relevant professionals will be involved
- 

## Staff Training

All staff will:

- Receive guidance on behaviour support and safer handling
  - Understand their responsibilities and professional boundaries
  - Be supported to reflect on and improve practice
- 

## Key Principle

Physical intervention is always a last resort.

At Hillside Gems, we prioritise **connection, understanding and prevention** to support children's behaviour safely and respectfully.

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