ETHOS Academy Trust

# Safeguarding Strategy

## 2023-2026

**ETH⊙S**
ACADEMY TRUST

Nurturing inclusive learning communities

# Foreword

**Ethos Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that safeguarding practice is exemplary and that all stakeholders are safe and confident within each of the individual settings.**

Ethos Academy Trust is a forward-thinking and innovative organisation and the aim of this strategy is to ensure that all our stakeholders are confident in and assured by existing practice, whilst continuously refining systems, policies and procedures to sustain improvement and remain at the cutting edge of outstanding safeguarding practice. Stakeholders include pupils, families, staff, Trustees and external partners. The views of the stakeholders are captured regularly and analysed, with actions taken to address any concerns.

This three-year plan has been developed in consultation with several internal and external partners who are equally committed to safeguarding within Multi-Academy Trusts. These stakeholders include the Headteachers of all the academies within Ethos Academy Trust, Executive Leaders, Trustees, and the People and Culture Lead. Work has also been undertaken with colleagues from other Academy Trusts and wider services.

Underpinning this Strategy are Ethos Academy Trust's **vision**, mission and core values. Our vision at Ethos Academy Trust is to create **Nurturing Inclusive Learning Communities.**

To enable us to achieve this **mission**, Ethos Academy Trust will draw upon the expertise of our specialist staff and wider partners to provide timely, personalised support, intervention and provision to maximise the life chances of all children and young people, informed by a thorough understanding of their strengths and needs.

**Underpinning our mission and vision are our core values:**

# Core Values

## Leading
**with integrity**
· Championing honesty and transparency
· Building trusting relationships

## Encouraging
**freedom and responsibility**
· Working collaboratively
· Investing in effective partnerships

## Thinking
**innovatively**
· Finding creative solutions
· Meeting individual needs

## Improving
**continuously**
· Raising standards
· Developing strong and effective leaders

## Celebrating
**achievement**
· Improving academic progress
· Enriching personal development

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# Safeguarding Strategic Objectives

Ethos Academy Trust Board and Executive leaders have identified three key strategic safeguarding objectives that will inform our priority developments over the next three years. These are to:

**1**

## Further develop and continuously refine rigorous quality assurance, accountability and reporting processes.

We will ensure that all QA and reporting systems both challenge and support academy leaders, securing robust accountability processes via timely reporting to key stakeholders.



**2**

## Become innovators in safeguarding practice.

We will position ourselves at the forefront of safeguarding initiatives and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure that policy and practice are exemplary and shared with wider partners.

**3**

## Develop expert safeguarding practitioners.

Ethos Academy Trust will invest in and further develop a strong workforce of expert safeguarding leaders and practitioners, committed to supporting the welfare of all stakeholders.

We have a range of Trust-wide strategies and other documents that link and contribute to our three-year safeguarding strategy:

- **Trust Strategic Development Plan 2021-2026**

- **School Improvement Strategy**

- **Trust Business Plan**

- **Delivery Plans (eg Board and Academy Performance Review Committee (APRC) Work Plans)**

- **Academy Self-evaluation and Strategic Development Plans**

- **People Strategy**

- **Regularly reviewed policies, procedures and risk registers**

**Strategic Objective 1:**

**Further develop and continuously refine rigorous quality assurance, accountability and reporting processes.**

## Why is it important?

It is vital that leaders are challenged and supported to continually improve and refine practice, ensuring that all stakeholders are confident in and assured of safeguarding systems across all our schools. To ensure that practice in all settings is of an equal and consistently high standard, it is necessary to ensure that processes are regularly and systematically audited to enable timely identification of areas requiring development followed by swift action.

## How will we meet this objective?

We will further develop and standardise reporting, audit and quality assurance processes that enable those responsible for the leadership of safeguarding to be confident within their own settings and across the Trust. Safeguarding Leads will be empowered to work collaboratively to gain knowledge about systems and structures in other academies in order to effectively share and further develop best practice. Standardised systems for reporting to the APRCs and Trust Board will be developed, providing information that enables leaders to be held effectively to account.

## Success Criteria Year 1

Review and refine all safeguarding audit processes (internal and external), evaluating the effectiveness and impact of current audit tools, through liaison with key safeguarding colleagues to gather feedback about the current system.

Proposed new audit systems are piloted and quality assured to ensure that the needs of the Trust and its community are fully accounted for and met.

Refined audit processes serve to proactively inform practice and ensure that policies are fully and consistently embedded through procedures in **all** academies.

Cumulative and quantitative data from the audits is used effectively to inform the strategic development of safeguarding within individual academies and at Trust-level.

Establish APRC and Board reporting requirements, including what information needs to be reported and how and when it is shared.

## Success Criteria Years 2 and 3

Embed revised safeguarding audit tools and processes, ensuring that all key staff are fully trained and confident in meeting the required standard. Regular feedback will be collated and ongoing refinements implemented.

The quality assurance process in all academies is consistently robust and rigorous.

Reporting systems to APRCs and the Trust Board will be standardised, whilst allowing for continuous development.

The Trust Board and APRCs will be assured of the rigour of, and accountability within, safeguarding audit systems and processes. Priority areas for development at academy or Trust level will be shared with Trustees and APRC representatives and actioned in a timely manner.

The viability of developing safeguarding audits as a commissioned service is established and piloted.

**Strategic Objective 2:**

# Become innovators in safeguarding practice.

## Why is it important?

In order to become an exemplary Trust in the field of safeguarding, it is necessary to innovate internally whilst also looking outwardly. Establishing strategic links with quality external partners will enable us to:

· remain at the cutting edge of best practice;
· position ourselves effectively as innovative leaders in the field of safeguarding;
· contribute to the development of effective policy, practice and provision at a local, regional and national level

## How will we meet this objective?

Close working relationships will be further developed with key strategic networks and partners, including other Trusts, with professionals who are able to support and enhance the development and implementation of our innovative practices and procedures. The identification of colleagues from within and beyond the Trust who have the skills, experience and expertise to be able to drive and implement continuous improvement will be key.

Information sharing systems will be refined to ensure that Safeguarding Leads are actively engaging with key external safeguarding professionals and organisations. These professional partnerships will provide the vehicle through which transformative thinking and practice is developed.

We will aim to share best practice not only within but beyond the Trust. Providing support to partner settings and agencies will ensure that our exemplary safeguarding practices directly impact wider stakeholders.

## Success Criteria Year 1

Recruitment of a one-year Trust Strategic Lead Role for Safeguarding, creating capacity to undertake research, establish key strategic links, and develop the strategy and associated action plan, whilst building sustainable internal expertise and capacity within the Trust.

Ensure that the roles of DSLs and their teams are standardised and fully understood (particularly in the newer academies), in order to develop the necessary capacity and expertise to deliver consistently exemplary safeguarding provision and practice across the Trust.

Refine and embed regular opportunities for Safeguarding Leads to develop professionally and feel confident in their own practice and that of their peers, e.g. through planned and formalised engagement in cascading of learning, and collaboration on new developments within and beyond the Trust.

## Success Criteria Years 2 to 3

Development of, and involvement in, all safeguarding quality assurance processes will empower new Safeguarding Leads to feel confident to work across the Trust in continuously refining and driving best safeguarding practice.

Staff training and recruitment in specialist safeguarding roles will ensure that the Trust can continuously deliver safeguarding excellence within a robust structure.

Ethos Academy Trust will gain national recognition for being leaders in innovative safeguarding practice.

Formalised models for commissioning and sharing safeguarding expertise will be implemented, to support and lead the development of effective practice in wider education settings and organisations.

Further develop the lead safeguarding role to ensure the delivery of the objectives and to maintain strategic overview of practice within the Trust.

**Strategic Objective 3:**

# Develop expert safeguarding practitioners.

## Why is it important?

Investment in the development of our staff is vital to enable us to continuously safeguard all stakeholders to an exemplary standard and contribute to strategic developments in safeguarding at a local, regional and national level. Having highly trained, skilled and committed staff will be crucial to facilitate the delivery of a consistently outstanding safeguarding service to all stakeholders. A rigorous, forward-thinking, pro-active approach to recruitment and retention, aligned to the Trust's People Strategy, will enable us to:

i.   attract high calibre candidates with high levels of safeguarding knowledge and expertise;

ii.  invest in the further professional development of staff to ensure that they become expert and talented practitioners with a firm commitment to safeguarding all stakeholders, thus improving the education opportunities and life chances for all pupils.

## How will we meet this objective?

We will offer recruitment opportunities that attract a wide range of professionals, not only with a breadth of safeguarding backgrounds and expertise but also with wider complimentary skillsets to continuously enhance the quality of the holistic safeguarding offer across the Trust. As the Trust's brand profile and reputation grows, this will widen prospective candidate pools. As an employer of choice, staff will feel valued and invested in, choosing to remain within the Trust, and pursuing internal career development opportunities. Our expert practitioners will be empowered to become leaders and innovators within specific areas of safeguarding policy and practice within and beyond the Trust.

## Success Criteria Year 1

Audit of current Trust workforce profile and safeguarding expertise to identify strengths, skills gaps, training or recruitment needs, with a view to further enhancing current safeguarding practice and introducing new and innovative ways of working.

Undertake SWOT analysis of the existing safeguarding teams, identifying areas of strength and development priorities.

Review roles and responsibilities within existing safeguarding teams, seeking to identify priority areas in which to further develop our expert practitioners strategically, whilst ensuring individual settings are effectively supported.

Ensure that high quality, targeted CPD is effectively planned and coordinated across the Trust, empowering all staff to feel valued and invested in, ensuring that this can then be disseminated effectively to increase knowledge and understanding amongst all teams.

## Success Criteria Years 2 to 3

Ongoing training and recruitment of staff focuses on effective approaches for professional development, with a relentless commitment to sourcing and retaining the highest quality staff.

High quality training provision is effectively targeted to need and embedded across all tiers of the Trust, including governance.

Recognition and development of localised talent will be promoted, with the ability to mobilise staff to target need across the Trust.

Safeguarding teams will develop areas of specialism, with the ability to disseminate training efficiently across the Trust and to external partners.

The Trust makes good progress towards becoming an employer of choice with benefits that attract and retain the best possible employees with a high level of commitment to, and expertise in, safeguarding.

There are clear and identifiable lines of career progression for staff, enabling non-teaching colleagues to be able to progress within this key area of provision.

Wider therapeutic bespoke roles are developed that enhance the safeguarding core offer, aligned to priority Trust-wide needs.

# Outcomes

- Ethos Academy Trust becomes a leader in safeguarding with all academies' practice being exemplary.

- Employees of Ethos Academy Trust are confident, pro-active safeguarding practitioners, responsive to the needs of communities within and beyond the Trust.

- Ethos Academy Trust is recognised as a leader in safeguarding provision and practice, contributing to strategic safeguarding policy, practice and wider developments at a local, regional and national level.

# Audit, Plan, Do Review

Our 3-year strategic plan will be translated on an annual basis into our Trust Safeguarding Action Plan, with progress in each area reported to the Trust board on an annual basis. This action plan will detail levels of responsibility for all key staff with identifiable timescales/costs and the person/s responsible.

We will ensure that a clear understanding of the needs of all stakeholders is identified and consult with key partners to develop and embed plans. We will deliver on these plans in a timely manner, continuously evaluating our progress and impact. Embedded systems and processes (including safeguarding audits, SCR reviews and stakeholder surveys) will monitor progress and compliance.

# Risk Management

We recognise risk as a part of everyday life which cannot be avoided, only mitigated. Where necessary, external expertise is sourced to enhance our capacity to analyse, understand and mitigate risk. Supervision structures are implemented to ensure that all staff are effectively supported. A culture of openness throughout the whole Trust is crucial to securing and sustaining a shared purpose and collective responsibility. Clear reporting, communication, accountabilities and responsibilities will all be designed to ensure transparency.

# Our Partnerships

We recognise the key role our external partners play in enabling Ethos Academy Trust to succeed and thrive in order to safeguard and maximise the life chances of all our children and young people. Our partnerships inform and support our on-going development. We enter into partnerships with a commitment to have a positive impact on the lives of children and families. Within this spirit, we welcome dialogue with schools, organisations and individuals who would like to work with us in a variety of ways.

# Nurturing

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