VISION for EDUCATION .smart. teachers

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE



ISSUE: 16 **April 2026**



We hope that you had a well-rested Easter break and have felt refreshed upon returning. As term is progressing, please read this issue of our termly Safeguarding and Child Protection Update. We hope you find the update useful, and we appreciate you taking the time to read it in full.

Online safety update

Over the past decade, accessing reliable information has become more challenging. What was once relatively straightforward is now influenced by algorithms, misinformation, and AI-generated content, making it harder to separate fact from fiction.

In response, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and the Department for Education have published A Safe, Informed Digital Nation, outlining a national strategy to strengthen media literacy. The paper emphasises the important role schools and parents play in helping children to navigate online information safely and critically.

You can read the full strategy here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-safe-informed-digital-nation

It is hoped that this approach will not only support children but that it will also empower adults, including parents, to build their own confidence in engaging with digital information.





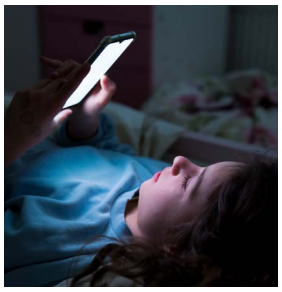
Online Safety Consultation

The Government has launched the "Growing Up in the Online World" consultation, focusing on improving children's safety and wellbeing online. The aim of the consultation is to gather information to learn how to better protect children and families in the online world.

The consultation aims to strengthen protections around social media, gaming, and online content and is linked to wider work under the Online Safety Act.

The consultation seeks input from professionals working with children and young people and will look at key points such as:

- Social media age limits
- Addictive design
- Digital age of consent
- AI and Chatbots
- Sleep and wellbeing
- Mobile phones in schools



What staff can do

- Reflect on your experience of pupils' online lives
- Consider how effectively we support online safety and wellbeing
- Engage with the consultation if you are interested in doing so

This is an opportunity for professionals, parents and carers, and children and young people to shape the digital legislation which will guide the current and future generations. Responses need to be submitted by 26th May 2026.

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/growing-up-in-the-online-world-a-national-consultation

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

SEND reforms in schools: key changes set out in the government's Schools White Paper

In February 2026, the UK Government published its Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, outlining its long-term vision for education in England. A key focus of the paper is reform of support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The proposed changes aim to improve how SEND support is delivered in schools and are likely to influence planning, provision, and everyday classroom practice. These developments are important for all schools, including those working closely with local authorities or supporting pupils with additional needs.

You can find the government publication below:

LINK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving

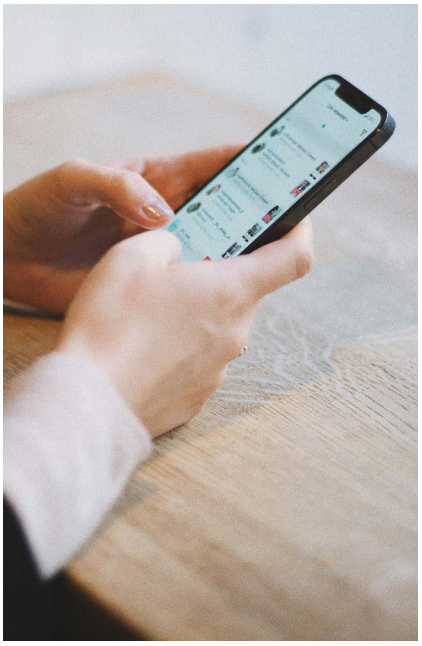
You can also review an overview of the key changes which are set out in the article below: https://www.farrer.co.uk/news-and-insights/send-reforms-in-schools-key-changes-in-the-governments-schools-white-paper/



Please note that many of the proposals are still at an early stage and will require further consultation and policy development before they are put into practice. Some changes may also need new legislation before they can be introduced.

The Department for Education will lead this work, and schools can expect further guidance, consultations, and updates over the coming years.

Legislation changes



Mobile phones in schools guidance

The Department for Education (DfE) has released updated materials to support its January 2026 guidance on mobile phones in schools. This non-statutory guidance took effect from 1 April 2026 and sets the expectation that schools should operate as mobile phone-free environments by default.

The previous toolkit has been replaced with a new resource designed to help schools clearly communicate their mobile phone policies to parents. In addition, new case studies have been published, offering practical examples of how schools have successfully implemented and maintained phone-free approaches.

There are no new compliance requirements. However, all staff should be aware of the document when working across sites and settings in the education sector.

LINK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phones-in-schools

All staff should consistently enforce the school's policy on the use of mobile phones.

Staff should not use their own mobile phone for personal reasons in front of pupils throughout the school day. This will empower staff to better challenge pupils to meet the school expectations and effectively enforce the prohibition of mobile phones throughout the school day. There may be occasions where it is appropriate for a teacher to use a mobile phone or similar device, for instance to issue homework, issue rewards and sanctions or use multi-factor authentication. Please seek out the school's policy if you are unsure of expectations.

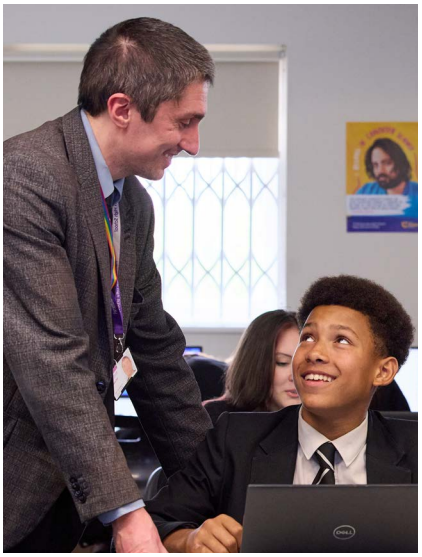
Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE) From Wednesday 1st April 2026, all schools in England must comply with updated statutory requirements on restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force. These changes apply to maintained schools, academies and independent schools.

What has changed?

- New legal duties to record and report incidents involving reasonable force, seclusion and restraint (including non-force restraint), with records completed the same day.
- Mandatory information for parents, with written notification provided wherever possible on the same day, even where interventions are part of an agreed plan.
- Clearer statutory guidance on what must be recorded, why interventions were necessary, and what de-escalation was attempted first.
- New national guidance on seclusion, which was not previously covered.
- Stronger emphasis on prevention and de-escalation, reducing reliance on restrictive interventions.
- Greater focus on SEND, safeguarding and leadership oversight, including analysis of incident patterns and disproportionate impact.

Further guidance can be found below:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-reasonable-force-in-schools





Please note that this information is provided to keep you informed of recent legislation changes for schools. Within your supply role, physical intervention/restraint should not be used unless you are trained to do so, and with the agreement of the specific setting for your role. Our general advice and expectations for agency workers on physical contact can be found later in this bulletin below.

Working together to safeguard children 2026: summary of changes

The Department for Education (DfE) published a new edition of its statutory guidance **Working together to safeguard children in March 2026.** This 2026 edition replaces Working together to safeguard children 2023.

The guidance outlines what organisations and agencies must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all babies, children and young people under the age of 18 in England.

The NSPCC has produced a briefing which can be found below, and which outlines the main changes in the 2026 edition of the document, including around:

- Identifying, understanding and challenging racism and discrimination,
- Recognising the specific needs and experiences of babies
- Understanding the impact of domestic abuse on children and families
- Consideration of children experiencing simultaneous harms or multiple harms
- Strengthened inclusion of children in care
- The link between online harm and harm experienced in person

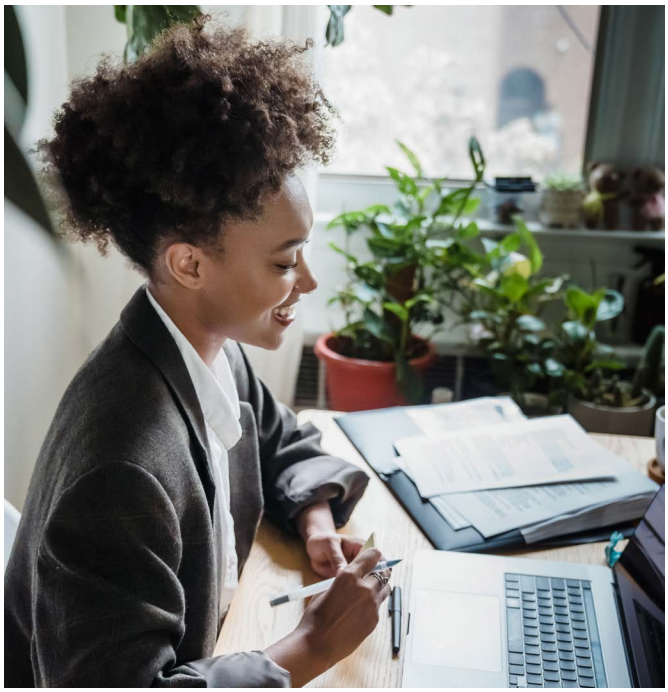
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2026/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2026-summary-of-changes

Staff conduct reminders

Professional boundaries

Social media can be a brilliant and powerful tool for learning and communication, but it is important to remember that online conduct is equally as important as real-life conduct for those in the education sector. It is crucial that you remain professional online. You can learn more about our expectations for appropriate boundaries online in our Social Networking Policy, which is found within the Staff Code of Conduct (Appendix 2)

https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/view_pdf/code-of-conduct



Privacy settings

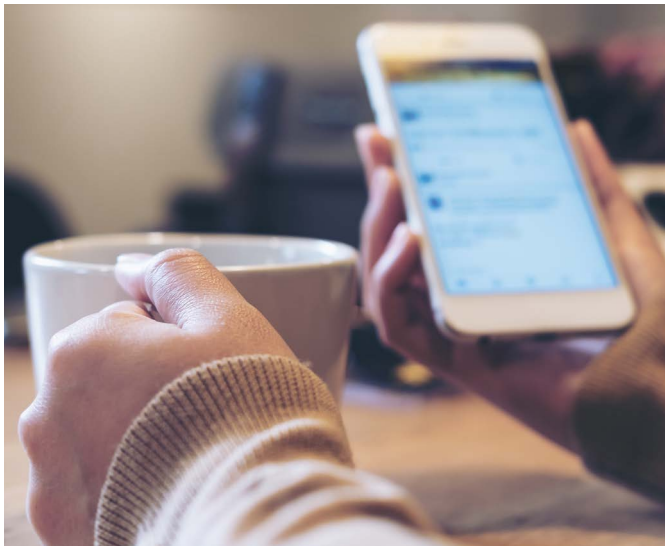
We would encourage you to review your social media profiles and privacy settings at regular intervals to ensure that you portray yourself online in the most appropriate way. Different platforms can be used for different purposes, eg LinkedIn for your professional life and Facebook for your personal life. You should consider how you use each platform and make sure that your privacy settings align.

The South West Grid for Learning Trust provide some great social media checklists to help you manage your settings on popular apps – www.swgfl.org.uk/resources/checklists.

It's important to remember that even with a limited friends list, anything you post online can be turned into a lasting record via a screenshot (also known as a 'screengrab' or 'screencap'). This is a record that can then be saved, duplicated and shared by another user. This also applies to encrypted messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, where you may assume that your content is private. Your photos, thoughts and words may reach a wider audience than you intend, including the school that you are working in.

Just as with social media platforms, it is also important that you maintain professional boundaries in relation to gaming profiles. You should adhere to the same rules as you would for social media and be aware that your position of trust within education settings prohibits you from 'friending', 'following' or interacting with students via these channels.





Whilst working in regulated activity, you must maintain professionalism in your work and personal life. Please see below guidance from our code of conduct relating to appropriate social media usage:

- Headteachers, parents, pupils and prospective employers may look you up on social media. Ask yourself if you would be comfortable about your content being viewed. If not, remove any dubious material.
- Do not engage in online activities that may bring yourself, the school or alternative provision, or the agency into disrepute. Derogatory, defamatory or offensive comments about pupils, parents and carers or colleagues must not be posted.
- Do not create, or be involved in the creation or distribution, of any content that would be considered indecent, inappropriate and/or unsuitable to be associated with a professional working in a position of trust with children and young people.
- Always maintain a professional tone online. Use of expletives, sexual content or any form of discrimination or harassment is always unacceptable.

If you do post your opinions online, make it clear that these are your personal views and not those of your agency by adding a statement to that effect. Staff must be aware that their online presence may be interpreted as an indication of their character, so if anything deemed as inappropriate is brought to our attention by a member of the public, we may need to review your file.

Please see our code of conduct below for the full guidance:
https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/view_pdf/code-of-conduct

Physical contact

We operate a no-contact policy for supply staff with students, which should always be adhered to except in the following circumstances:

- If a student is at risk of harming themselves or others.
- When providing personal care as part of your agreed job role. You should always carry out the task with sensitivity and respect, and ensure another appropriate adult is in the vicinity and aware of the task to be undertaken.
- Supply staff who are Team Teach trained or equivalent (please provide your consultant with proof of qualification if you have not already done so).
- Supply staff who are first aid trained and, in a situation where first aid is required (please provide your consultant with current proof of qualification if you have not already done so).

If physical contact is necessary, always be mindful that physical contact and/or close physical proximity with a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted and may leave you open to scrutiny.

Generally, you should never be alone with a child. If unavoidable, make sure you keep the classroom door open and do not block any exits.



Communication in the classroom

Teaching is all about communication and teachers must communicate well to teach effectively and build rapport with students. We understand that this can be a tricky balance to strike. Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in educational settings offers the following advice regarding language in schools:

- Staff should not use inappropriate language to or in the presence of pupils.
- The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children is completely unacceptable.
- Avoid shouting at children other than as a warning in an emergency/safety situation.

Training resources

It's important to keep your training record with us up to date. If you have completed any recent safeguarding or child protection training via schools, voluntary roles or other agencies, please email copies of your certificates to your agency at:

visionadminbox@visionforeducation.co.uk

smartadminbox@smartteachers.co.uk

If you haven't completed a safeguarding course within the last 12 months, please see below for available courses:

FREE training courses available: Safeguarding Training

WEB LINK: Vision for Education: https://www.candidatego.com/take/pUdjTghJ

WEB LINK: Smart Teachers: https://www.candidatego.com/take/GpNyFMwX

Behaviour Management Training

WEB LINK: Vision for Education: https://www.candidatego.com/take/kbTdEbKT

WEB LINK: Smart Teachers: https://www.candidatego.com/take/RxXVeCbB

PREVENT training

Learn how to support people susceptible to radicalisation. At the end of the course, you will be provided with a certificate of completion which you should forward to your consultant to be added to your training record.

WEB LINK: .GOV website: **PREVENT training online course https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal**

Online CPD sessions

Visit our website for more information on our upcoming training sessions. Led by experienced practitioners, the training is free of charge, but spaces are limited. Please ensure that any sessions you wish to attend are relevant to your role and the needs of the students you work with before signing up.

WEB LINK: **Vision for Education:**

FREE online CPD
https://www.visionforeducation.co.uk/training-and-events

WEB LINK: **Smart Teachers:**

FREE online CPD
https://www.smartteachers.co.uk/training-and-events

GDPR



Protecting your data is important to us. Find out more about how we comply with legislation in the Privacy section on our websites.

- **www.visionforeducation.co.uk/privacy-policy**
- **www.smartteachers.co.uk/privacy-policy**

Please note that some of the resources detailed in this bulletin are from third-party providers which are not part of Edwin (Vision for Education/ABC Teachers/Smart Teachers) and should be used at your own discretion.

