



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Introduction

St Hilda's College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable individuals in its community. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear guidelines for staff, students, volunteers, schools, and prospective applicants regarding safeguarding practices.
- Outline procedures for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns.

2. Scope

This policy covers all events and activities that may involve children or young people under the age of 18 or adults who may be considered vulnerable, including but not limited to:

- on-course students under the age of 18;
- all Outreach and Access events organised by the College including but not limited to taster days, study days, workshops, conferences, and college tours involving children;
- admissions processes;
- any employees or work experience students under the age of 18.

3. Legal Context and Definitions

- Child/Young Person: Any individual under the age of 18.
- Vulnerable Adult: A person aged 18 or over who is at risk of harm or abuse because of their situation or circumstances (including when specific circumstances may make them vulnerable for a temporary period). Someone who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is providing that care); is at risk of abuse or neglect (whether physical, emotional, financial, sexual, or other forms); is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of harm due to their needs.
- Duty of Care: St Hilda's College is not required to act in *loco parentis* but holds an enhanced duty of care to safeguard minors.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): The College's Academic Registrar is the designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Safeguarding Officer: the HR Manager for employees or children undertaking work experience; the Academic Registrar for on-course students and applicants.

4. Training and checks

The HR office will keep records and monitor compliance.

4.1. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

The following checks will be undertaken.

- Senior Tutor
- Academic Registrar
- Undergraduate Outreach Officer
- Undergraduate Admissions Officer

5. Outreach and Access Events

5.1. Procedures

The Undergraduate Outreach Officer will conduct a risk assessment for each category of event to identify potential safeguarding issues and implement appropriate measures to mitigate risks.

5.1.1. Events involving school groups:

- All school groups must always be accompanied by their teachers, as well as College staff and volunteers.
- Groups accompanied by their schoolteachers will not usually have their own safeguarding processes superseded by the College.

5.1.2. Events involving individual participants:

- Events involving individual participants, such as residential study days, will have a clear registration process, including obtaining parental consent where necessary.
- Participants not coming as school groups will agree to a code of conduct as a condition of attendance and registration.
- Groups will be accompanied throughout, by staff or ambassadors, and one-to-one situations avoided.
- Proactive mitigation will be in place, briefing relevant staff including Lodge staff and College Bar (which will be off-limits to participants).

5.1.3. Events that are off-site:

- When visiting schools the Undergraduate Outreach Officer will adhere to the schools' procedures including reporting any concerns immediately to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- When hosting or co-hosting off-site events we will undertake our own risk assessment and obtain a risk assessment from our partner.

5.2. Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately to the Undergraduate Outreach Officer. In the absence of the Undergraduate Outreach Officer, reports should be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Undergraduate Outreach Officer will ensure that all parts of this process are followed and will escalate any issues to the Academic Registrar as DSL.

6. Admissions of Under-18 Students

6.1. Approach

- The College treats all its students as independent, mature individuals. Applicants under the age of 18 must be aware that they are applying to study in an adult environment. To preserve the character and status of the College as an adult institution and to ensure that we are able to fulfil safeguarding obligations, the College will not admit students until they are at least 17 years old.
- The College strongly recommends that any student under the age of 18 (and their parent or guardian) consider carefully whether attending the College whilst under the age of 18 is appropriate for the student and whether it will allow the student to fully engage with both the academic and social demands associated with the College.
- Students aged 17 may be admitted if they demonstrate the necessary maturity.
- For Medicine, applications will not be shortlisted unless the student will be at least 18 years old on the 1 November of their first term. The clinical contact in the Oxford programme starts

in the first term and means that younger students would not be able to take part in required elements of the course.

6.2. Interviewing younger candidates

- Younger candidates (those who would be younger than 17 were they to enroll in the following year) may be interviewed for admission, provided that, if an offer is made, the start date is subject to the College being able to fulfil all of its obligations towards the candidate, and others enrolled at the College, including its duty of care obligations. Depending on a review of the College's obligations in this regard, this will require the candidate to defer enrolment until such time as they have turned 17.

6.3. Responsibilities to and of Parents and Students:

- The College will write to any incoming under-age students, outlining the provisions that will be made for them and their responsibilities.
- The College reserves the right to specify additional responsibilities or obligations required of either the student, and their parent or guardian, in order to fulfil its legal and safeguarding obligations.
- The students' parent or guardian will be sent a note outlining the provisions that will be made for the students and their responsibilities. They will also be asked to complete an authorisation form. The student will not be permitted to take up residence or be enrolled in College until this authorisation form is received.

7. On-course Students

7.1. Responsibilities

- If under 18, the College may specify additional responsibilities or obligations required of either the student, and/or their parent or guardian, in order to fulfil its legal and safeguarding obligations.
- The student's parent or guardian will be sent a note outlining the provisions that will be made for the student and their responsibilities.
- The parents/guardian will also be asked to complete an authorisation form. The student will not be permitted to take up residence or be enrolled in college until this authorisation form is received.
- Students under the age of 18 are not permitted to take up residence in the College before the arrival of other first years in Freshers' Week, nor are they permitted to take up vacation residence unless for the purpose of examinations or extended terms.

7.2. Procedures

7.2.1. When offer of place is confirmed (late August)

- The Undergraduate Admissions Officer will confirm to the Academic Registrar which students will be under 18 when they commence their course of study.
- After the offer of a place at St Hilda's College has been confirmed by the Undergraduate Admissions Officer, the Academic Registrar will then contact any under-18s, outlining the provisions that will be made for them and their responsibilities, together with a copy of the parent/guardian authorisation form, to be returned by the student by the end of the first week of September.
- Individuals under the age of 18 will not be permitted to take up their offer of a place unless their authorisation form has been received before the start of their course.

7.2.2. Before arrival

- The Academic Registrar will send the name of the under-age student, a copy of their headshot, their age, confirmation of when they will turn 18, and any other relevant information to the following key members of staff: Domestic Bursar, Lodge Manager and Lodge staff, Welfare Lead, IT Manager, Principal and tutors as relevant.
- The Academic Registrar will notify tutors that one-to-one tutorials should not be undertaken with their students until they turn 18. If this is not possible, the Academic Registrar will ensure that the tutors concerned have been DBS checked.

7.2.3. Thereafter

- The Welfare Lead will invite the student to attend an introductory meeting during Week 0 or Week 1.
- The Welfare Lead will make contact with students under the age of 18 every term and offer a support meeting; there is no requirement for the student to take up these meetings.

7.3. Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately to the Academic Registrar, or, in their absence, reports should be made to the Senior Tutor.

Note that members of the College Welfare Team may be required to override confidentiality in cases where there are safeguarding concerns. This reflects a lower threshold for information-sharing where any disclosure is made by or about a person under the age of 18 to ensure appropriate protection and support are in place.

8. Safeguarding Young Workers and children Undertaking Work Experience at the College

8.1 Young Workers

A young person (defined by law as anyone under 18) has a greater susceptibility to danger than adults. The College is mindful that young people may have reduced capability, limited awareness of risk, and inexperience, and as a result we have additional safeguards for young workers that take into account their physical and psychological vulnerabilities to ensure their safety when working for the College.

These additional safety precautions include:

Risk Assessment:

- The College will conduct a tailored risk assessment before allowing a young person to begin work for us. The College is mindful that the young worker may lack experience, risk awareness and be physically less mature than an adult.
- The College will assess whether certain tasks or equipment pose additional risks due to their age and ensure that all risks are minimised as far as reasonably practicable.
- The College will prevent young people from using certain hazardous equipment, and those with legal age restrictions.
- The College will avoid assigning tasks that may exceed their physical or psychological capabilities of the young person, such as manual handling tasks requiring significant strength.

Supervision and Training:

- The College will provide competent supervision and job-specific training. We recognise that young people often lack experience and may not recognise obvious risks, when compared to an adult.
- The College will provide health and safety training tailored to the activities the young person will undertake, considering their age and learning ability.

- The College will communicate emergency procedures, including fire safety and first aid measures, ensuring they are inclusive of young workers.
- The College will communicate the processes for reporting concerns, inappropriate behaviour, bullying, harassment or welfare issues.
- Line managers are aware that they should tailor instructions to their level of maturity and ability, ensuring they understand safety procedures and can raise concerns confidently.
- Line managers will adjust tasks to match the level of supervision and support that they can provide.

Rest Breaks and Working Hours:

- The College will adhere to legal requirements concerning rest breaks, working hours, and night work restrictions for young workers under the age of 18.

8.2 Children undertaking work experience at the College

Thirteen is the normal minimum age for work experience, including in Oxfordshire, and child work permits are not required for work experience.

Normally the child's school will administer the work experience arrangements with the College through an agreed process, including conducting their own risk assessments and holding valid insurance coverage for this type of activity. However, the College's employer liability insurance will cover work experience placements for children, provided a thorough risk assessment has been undertaken by the College.

DBS checks will not normally be required for staff who supervise children undertaking work experience placements, unless requested by the school.

As with young workers, a tailored risk assessment for the child will be conducted in advance of the work experience placement.

The work experience placement will involve shadowing and observing only and should not involve work, including use of tools or machinery, or anything that could be deemed a material risk.

The child undertaking the work experience placement will be closely supervised by assigned members of staff.

As with young workers, the College will provide health and safety training tailored to the activities the child will undertake, considering their age and learning ability; the College will communicate emergency procedures, including fire safety and first aid measures; and the College will communicate the processes for reporting concerns, inappropriate behaviour, bullying, harassment or welfare issues.

9. Reporting and Record Keeping

9.1. Duty to Report Safeguarding Concerns to the Local Authority

The DSL, or other Safeguarding Officer in the DSL's absence, must ensure that any child protection and/or safeguarding concerns are shared immediately with the relevant local authority. Where the concern is about suspected harm or risk of harm to a young person, the referral should be made to the local authority for the area where the student lives. Where the concern is an allegation about a member of staff in a setting, or another type of safeguarding issue affecting young people in a setting, the matter should be referred to the local authority in which the setting is located. When a student is under 18, parents are usually made aware of concerns and their

consent is sought in accordance with local procedures unless doing so may increase the risk of or actual harm to a child or young person.

9.2. Record Keeping

The DSL and Safeguarding Officer will ensure that a record of any referral is retained and there is evidence that any agreed action following the referral has been taken promptly to protect the student from further harm.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed as appropriate by Governing Body to ensure its effectiveness and to incorporate any changes in legislation or best practices.

*Agreed by Governing Body
June 2026*