Safeguarding Statement

Laetare Catholic Multi Academy Trust

Approved by:	**Board of Directors**
Date of most recent approval:	November 2026
Next review due by:	September 2027

With Christ at the centre of all that we do, Laetare Catholic Multi Academy Trust (Laetare CMAT) works collaboratively, openly and honestly to provide all young people within our family of schools with a world-class education. Rooted in Catholic values, and recognising the unique charisms of our founding religious orders, we enable our students to be lifelong learners, faithful disciples and fruitful contributors to society. Our mission is not only academic but deeply pastoral, forming the whole person in mind, body, and spirit.

The Laetare CMAT recognises its moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where all children and adults are respected and valued. We will make sure that all children and young people have the same protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children and adults receive effective support, protection and justice. We also recognise the additional needs of vulnerable children and disabled children, and the barriers they may face, especially around communication. Child protection forms part of the Trust's safeguarding responsibilities.

The Laetare CMAT Safeguarding Statement is available on the website:

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (DfE September 2026) contains information on what schools, including schools, should do and sets out the legal duties with which they must comply. This statutory guidance should be read and followed by proprietors of independent schools (including schools, free schools and alternative provision schools) and non-maintained special schools. In the case of schools, free schools and alternative provision schools, the proprietor will be the academy trust.

Laetare CMAT is the proprietor as defined above and is therefore responsible for ensuring that all staff in its schools, whether or not they work directly with children, read Part one of KCSiE 2026 in full, and that school leaders and those staff who work directly with children also read Annex A (Further information). Designated safeguarding leads and their deputies should also be familiar with Annex B (Role of the designated safeguarding lead). Copies of policies and of Part one are provided to all staff at induction.

This legal requirement, together with the Catholic values and principles that underpin Laetare CMAT, mean that it is essential that the Trust ensures not only compliance at the local level but also assumes a strategic responsibility to ensure that safeguarding practices are robust and effective in protecting the welfare of all children and young people in its care.

Local Authorities have overarching statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. However, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and young people has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (DfE, 2026) defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development

- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

Safeguarding also encompasses issues such as health and safety, bullying, and a range of other matters for example, arrangements for meeting the medical needs of children by providing first aid, academy security, drugs and substance misuse, online safety, and positive behaviour. There may also be other safeguarding issues that are specific to the local area or population.

Laetare CMAT is wholly committed to ensuring that all children and young people are cared for in a safe, nurturing and secure environment across our schools.

To fulfil this commitment, we have robust systems in place for:

- Policy and procedures
- Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers
- MAT responsibilities
- Training

Policy and Procedure

Laetare CMAT schools' Child Protection/Safeguarding policies are reviewed and agreed on an annual basis to ensure that key messages from legislation and guidance are embedded within all of our schools.

Policy and procedures are developed using:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (December 2023, as updated)
- Section 3 of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, where a school has nursery or reception provision
- Other key Government guidance

The Trust follows clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children, including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors, and for responding to low-level concerns. There are clear Whistleblowing policies in place.

Additional support and challenge is provided to ensure other safeguarding policies and procedures are effective, such as Online Safety (including filtering and monitoring and the safe use of generative AI), Mobile Phones, Anti-Bullying, Staff Code of Conduct, Pupil Behaviour and Attendance.

Each school's child protection policy sets out its approach to child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence), recognising the progression from harmful sexual behaviour through to sexual violence, and the importance of challenging misogyny and other prejudice-based behaviour. All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, including images that are digitally altered or generated by AI, require a safeguarding response, whether consensual or non-consensual.

Each school has a mobile phone policy that reflects the expectation in KCSiE 2026 that schools are mobile phone-free environments by default.

Laetare CMAT expects that each school will follow the guidance and child protection procedures provided by their local safeguarding partnership and local authority children's services departments.

Safe Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Safer recruitment is an important part of safeguarding children and is the first step in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in education.

Laetare CMAT considers it vital that there is a culture of safe recruitment and has adopted recruitment procedures that deter, reject and identify people who might be unsuitable to work with children and young people.

All elements of our Safer Recruitment Policy ensure that the recruitment and selection processes:

- meet the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)
- are robust
- have relevant vetting and checking procedures
- include a thorough induction
- provide an ongoing training infrastructure

The policy outlines the steps that Laetare CMAT will take to ensure those employed in our schools are safe to work with children and young people, with the main purposes being to:

- prevent unsuitable people working within our schools/schools
- attract the best possible candidates
- create and maintain a safe workforce

Laetare CMAT provides clear guidance, expectations, challenge and support to all schools to maintain a single central record to provide reassurance that all staff and volunteers, including trainee teachers, are recruited safely.

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 has removed the 'supervision exemption' from regulated activity. Any volunteer whose role involves teaching, training, instructing or supervising children on more than three days in a 30-day period, or overnight, is now in regulated activity and requires an enhanced DBS check with barred list information, whether or not they are supervised. The Trust ensures that each school's volunteer, work experience and single central record arrangements reflect this change.

Laetare CMAT Responsibilities

Laetare CMAT is committed to the following core safeguarding principles:

- The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, governors and directors to share this commitment.
- A designated safeguarding lead, supported by trained deputies, and a designated governor for safeguarding are in place in each school. Robust cover arrangements, such as a confidential shared mailbox, ensure that concerns are received and acted upon without delay when the DSL is unavailable.
- The Trust's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.

- Children who are safe and feel safe are better equipped to learn.
- The uniqueness of each school is respected, founded by religious orders whose charisms contribute to the richness of the Trust's Catholic mission.
- We develop a culture of listening to children and take account of their wishes and feelings.
- All staff, volunteers, governors and directors have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm at home, in the community or in an academy.
- Arrangements are in place for working with other agencies and for sharing information with other professionals.
- If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately.
- All staff members will maintain an attitude of *"It could happen here"* where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members are to always act in the interests of the child.
- Students and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support.
- Policies will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident, new legislation or updated guidance suggests the need for an interim review.
- Appropriate safeguarding responses are in place for children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods.
- The Trust fulfils all of its statutory responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Trust Safeguarding Lead. Laetare CMAT has a Trust Safeguarding Lead who provides strategic leadership and oversight of safeguarding across all of our schools. This gives directors, governors, staff and families additional assurance that:

- safeguarding practice is consistent across the Trust and in line with statutory guidance, including KCSiE 2026
- designated safeguarding leads and their deputies have access to expert advice, reflective supervision, support and challenge, including a Trust network for DSLs and deputies
- each school's safeguarding arrangements are reviewed and quality assured, with robust challenge and support where improvement is needed
- emerging risks and trends are identified across the Trust and acted upon promptly
- the Board of Directors receives regular reports on safeguarding, and the Trust Safeguarding Lead is accountable to the CEO and the link director for safeguarding

Children Potentially at Greater Risk of Harm

In line with KCSiE 2026, Laetare CMAT expects each school's child protection policy to recognise that some groups of children are potentially at greater risk of harm and may need additional support, including:

Young carers. Schools are alert to the needs of young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities can affect their attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Early identification is essential so that young carers receive support at the right time from the appropriate services, including additional support from external partners, the local authority and health services.

Children with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues. Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. Each school's child protection policy reflects the additional barriers that can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation in this group of children. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse, such as behaviour, mood and injury, relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying), and being disproportionately affected by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges, and the risk that they do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
- the need for intimate care, being isolated from others, and being more likely to depend on adults for care
- difficulties with cognitive understanding, such as being unable to tell the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content or behaviours in school, or not understanding the consequences of doing so

Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND require close liaison between the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). Schools consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children, and ensure that any appropriate support for communication is in place, drawing on the SEND Code of Practice 0 to 25 years and Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions.

Children with medical conditions. An incident relating to the management of a child's medical condition (including allergies) does not in and of itself warrant a referral to local safeguarding partners. A safeguarding referral is needed where an incident highlights concern that the child may be at increased risk of being neglected, abused or exploited, by people inside or outside their family, because of their medical condition. This might occur, for example, where relevant information about a child's medical condition is not provided to the school, or where a child is repeatedly sent to school without essential medication. Schools follow the statutory guidance Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions and Allergy Safety in Schools.

Training

Laetare CMAT ensures that schools comply with training requirements as defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026):

- All school staff must undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction. This training is updated regularly and is in line with advice from the local safeguarding partnership.
- Induction training ensures staff are aware of the academy's safeguarding systems, including:
    - The Safeguarding and Child Protection policy (including the approach to child-on-child abuse)
    - The behaviour policy (including measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
    - The staff behaviour policy/code of conduct (including whistleblowing procedures)
    - The role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
    - Allegations and low-level concerns protocols
    - The safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods
- The DSL and deputy DSLs undergo training at least every two years to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed to perform their role, and deputies are trained to the same standard as the DSL.
- DSLs also undertake training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, and all staff, volunteers and governors receive Prevent training.

- DSL knowledge and skills are updated at regular intervals. The Trust provides termly training opportunities and regular updates.
- Safer recruitment training is completed for all required staff, governors and directors.
- Our schools are also required to ensure staff, volunteers and governors have training opportunities on female genital mutilation, honour or faith-based abuse, child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence), local and national safeguarding priorities, managing allegations, and online safety, including their roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring.
- Schools consider how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Each school appoints a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after, ensuring staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep looked after children safe.

Monitoring and Accountability

Laetare CMAT will:

- Monitor the quality of safeguarding practices and their impact on outcomes for children across the Trust, and provide regular reports to the Board of Directors.
- Work with Local Governing Bodies to ensure the performance of vulnerable children is effectively monitored and appropriate support is available for those at risk of poor outcomes.
- Ensure each school reviews the effectiveness of its filtering and monitoring arrangements at least once every academic year. Reviews are led by the SLT member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the DSL and IT support, include checks that filtering works on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and are recorded.
- Liaise with local authority lead professionals for safeguarding, local safeguarding partnerships, Ofsted, the Department for Education, and other agencies as required.
- Produce an annual safeguarding action plan as part of the Trust's strategic business planning arrangements.
- Commission external challenge and support where appropriate to ensure schools meet statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

Policy in respect of safeguarding is determined primarily at national and local authority level and it is the responsibility of each school to implement such policy. Laetare CMAT is committed to ensuring adherence to national and local policy in the interests of vulnerable children and young people. Failure to implement appropriate arrangements in schools to safeguard and promote the well-being of children carries significant reputational risk for the Trust.

Data Protection and Information Sharing

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026:

"The data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children" (paragraphs 147–148).

In KCSiE 2026, 'data protection laws' means the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.