

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Multi-Academy Trust

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Trust Mission Statement

With Christ at the centre of all that we do, we work collaboratively, openly and honestly to provide all young people within our Catholic MAT with a world-class education that enables them to be lifelong learners and fruitful contributors to our society.

Genesis 28:15 "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."

Safeguarding Statement:

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT recognise our 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 and 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 school's safeguarding responsibilities. The St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT Safeguarding Statement is available on the website: www.aquinas-cmat.org.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (DfE September 2022) contains information on what schools, including academies, 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 academies, free schools and alternative provision academies) and non-maintained special schools. In the case of academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, the proprietor will be the academy trust'*.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT is the proprietor as defined above and as such is responsible for ensuring that all staff in the CMAT academies who work directly with children read Part One plus Annex B, and those who do not work directly with children read either Part One or Annex A.

This legal requirement together with the Catholic values and principles that underpin the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT mean that it is essential that the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic

MAT ensures not only compliance at the local level but also assumes a strategic responsibility to ensure that safeguarding practices are robust and effective in safeguarding and 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' Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (DfE September 2021) defines *safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children* as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing 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 issues, for example, arrangements for meeting the medical needs of children by providing first aid, academy security, drugs and substance misuse and positive behaviour. There may also be other safeguarding issues that are specific to the local area or population.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT is wholly committed to ensuring that all children and young people are cared for in a safe, nurturing and secure environment in our academies.

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

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

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT **ensures the following in relation to its academies:**

Policy and procedure

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT academy's 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 academies. Policy and procedures are developed using Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 and Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2018 (updated July 2022) and other key Government guidance. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT will follow clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. There are clear Whistleblowing policies in place.

Additional support and challenge is present to ensure other safeguarding policies and procedures are effective such as Online Safety, Anti Bullying, Staff Code of Conduct, Pupil Behaviour and Attendance.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT expects that each academy will follow the guidance and child protection procedures provided by their Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Board 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 to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in education.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT see it is vital that there is a culture of safe recruitment and has adopted recruitment procedures that will 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 outlined:

- meet the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 are robust
- have relevant vetting and checking procedures
- include a robust induction
- provide an ongoing training infrastructure

The policy outlines the steps that St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT will take to ensure those employed in our academies are safe to work with children and young people and its main purpose is:

- to prevent unsuitable people working within our school / academy
- to attract the best possible candidates to work in our school / academy

- to create and maintain a safe workforce

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT provides clear guidance, expectations, challenge and support to all academies to maintain a single central record to provide reassurance that all staff and volunteers are recruited safely.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT responsibilities

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT 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 and a designated governor for safeguarding is present in each academy.
- 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.
- 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 for working together 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 or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review.
- Appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from education are in place.
- Fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Training

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT ensure that academies comply with training requirements as defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022;

- All school staff must undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction. This

training should be updated "regularly". It should also be in line with advice from the local Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.

- Safeguarding training during induction should give staff an awareness of the school's safeguarding systems. Induction training should also cover:
 - The Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
 - The staff behaviour policy/code of conduct (training should cover the school's whistle-blowing procedures)
 - The role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
 - Allegations and low-level concern protocols and action in the event of a child missing education
- The DSL and any deputy DSLs should undergo training that provides them with the knowledge and skills needed to perform the role. This training should be updated every two years.
- The DSL should undertake training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent. All staff, volunteers and governors receive Prevent training.
- The knowledge and skills of the DSL and deputies should be updated "at regular intervals". St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT provides termly training opportunities and regular updates to DSLs.
- Safer recruitment training is completed for required staff, governors and directors.
- Our academies are additionally required to ensure all staff, volunteers and governors have opportunities to explore learning in relation to female genital mutilation, honour based violence, other local and national priorities, managing allegations and Online Safety.
- Consider how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Appoint a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after and ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keeping looked after children safe.

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT **will also:**

- Monitor the quality of safeguarding practices and their impact on outcomes for children across the CMAT and provide regular reports to the CMAT Board of Directors.
- Work with the Local Governing Bodies of primary and secondary academies to ensure that the performance of vulnerable children is effectively monitored and that appropriate support is made available to those children who are at risk of achieving poor outcomes because they are a Child in Need, subject to Child Protection plans or who are Looked After.
- Liaise with local authority lead professionals for safeguarding, Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships Boards, Ofsted, EFSA and other agencies as required.
- Produce an annual safeguarding action plan as part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT strategic business planning arrangements.
- Commission external challenge and support where appropriate to ensure academies meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Policy in respect of safeguarding is determined primarily at national and local authority level and it is the responsibility of each academy to implement such policy. The St Thomas Aquinas

Catholic MAT 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 academies to safeguard and promote the well-being of children carries significant reputational risk for the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic MAT.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 2 2022) ; ‘The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, 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 promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.’ (paragraph 78).