



# Habs Aspire Programme Safeguarding Policy

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## 1. Context

All Sixth Form students at Haberdasher schools can participate in Aspire, an online mentoring programme taking place over Microsoft Teams messaging and video calls. Students will be paired with mentors from the school community, alumni body or Haberdashers' membership. They will meet on Microsoft Teams at least four times a year. They may be in contact more frequently through chat functions within Teams.

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's responsibility and the welfare of students in paramount**. All volunteers (including mentors) have a duty to remain alert to the needs of students and any risks of harm.

This policy has been created for the Aspire Programme and is not designed for wider application. The school safeguarding policies includes a specific breakdown of roles and responsibilities and can be referred to for further detail.



## 2. Purpose

The primary aim of this policy is to ensure students can participate safely and effectively in the Aspire Programme. It should also facilitate a positive and productive experience for participating mentors.

As a result of this policy mentors should understand that they have a duty to keep students safe and promote their mental and physical wellbeing and welfare. They should also understand the boundaries of the role of the mentor, and the importance of maintaining safe, appropriate relationships with children and young people.

## 3. Definitions

References to students or mentees within this document indicate children aged 16 – 18. It is important to remember that all students (including those post 16) are legally children and deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential and remain safe from harm.

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** means:

- 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; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

**Child protection** is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Abuse** is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm.

**Neglect** is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

**Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes** (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) is where children share nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams.

**Children** includes everyone under the age of 18.

**Matching** refers to the process where a mentor and mentee are introduced.

**DSL** refers to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who takes responsibility for safeguarding within school.

**Aspire Coordinator** is the member of staff with oversight of the Aspire Programme.

## 4. Data protection and confidentiality

Information on schools' data protection policies should be referred to if further detail is needed.

Timely sharing of information is essential to effective safeguarding and fears about sharing information **must not override the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children**. The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. You must never promise a child that you



will not share information for the purposes of keeping them safe, and this is not in their best interest.

Conversations between mentors and mentees will be monitored, and all video calls must be recorded, only for the purposes of safeguarding monitoring and maintaining the welfare of children. Mentors should not share the recording with any third party or host the recording anywhere other than the Teams environment. If there is any intention for conversations to be shared in other contexts by the school or Haberdashers' Company, for example to promote the mentoring programme or gain information on its impact, written consent will be sought from the mentor and mentee.

## 5. Safer recruitment and onboarding

### a) Mentor onboarding:

All Aspire Coordinators have undertaken safer recruitment training.

All mentors must have a clear enhanced DBS certificate to participate in the programme, **and no communication between mentors and mentees will take place before this is received**. In cases of repeat mentors, a new check will be processed every three years. These will be held in a clear record system with detail of any other vetting completed.

Before being matched with a student, mentors will complete a video call with the Aspire Coordinator to assess their suitability for the programme. They will also participate in an online training session which will include:

- Aspire programme overview
- The role of the mentor
- Communicating effectively with young people
- Safeguarding guidelines and referral examples

If at any stage concerns are raised about a mentor, or the Aspire Coordinator has reason to believe that a mentor will not comply with this policy, their participation in the programme will be terminated.

### b) Mentee (student) onboarding:

The student onboarding process will include the following processes to reduce the risk of harm and ensure successful engagement.

- Written permission from parents/guardians – including guidance on supporting their child to engage
- Information and guidance on productive and appropriate mentor/mentee relationships and maintaining professional boundaries
- Information and guidance on reporting concerns: including safeguarding concerns

## 6. Platform monitoring and moderation

Mentors and mentees will be invited to a dedicated Teams space which will be used for all communications. Communication must not take place through any other platform, including over email, and contact details must not be shared. Video calls should be arranged within Teams chat areas and take place using Teams meetings. These meetings should be logged on Teams, with the Aspire Coordinator always listed as an 'optional attendee'. The Aspire Coordinator will not



generally attend calls between mentors and mentees, but must have oversight of when they are taking place.

**Video calls must be recorded** and the auto-record feature should be switched on to ensure this takes place. Communications will be periodically monitored by the Aspire Coordinator and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead, including viewing video call recordings. This is to maintain the safety of students and mentors.

## 7. Code of conduct for mentors

This is designed to support you to engage safely and appropriately with your mentee. If you realise you or your mentee have breached the code of conduct, you should speak to the Aspire Coordinator as soon as possible so that reparative action can be taken. The Aspire Coordinator reserves the right to pause or suspend mentor-mentee relationships in cases where the code of conduct is breached.

### c) Video call conduct:

All communication must take place in the Teams environment and should be recorded. Whilst you may provide opportunities in your workplace (referenced below), it is never appropriate to meet your mentee at your home and mentoring sessions should not take place in person. You should not screenshot video calls or host recordings anywhere other than the Teams environment.

When conducting video calls, you should blur your background and ask your mentee to blur their background. You should nonetheless make sure that your background and attire are appropriate, and you are speaking in an appropriate setting. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Being conscious of any items or artwork in the background, making sure these are not of a sexual nature and do not include any swearing or adult references.
- Ensuring you are always fully dressed and do not wear any clothing which depicts images of a sexual nature or include swearing or adult references.
- Speaking to your mentee in a private space where your conversation cannot be interrupted and there is not significant background noise. Although the call will be recorded, it is important that mentees feel able to speak to you without interruption.

### d) Online communication with children:

When speaking to your mentee you should listen to and respect them. Do not use prejudicial or discriminatory language and you must respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief.

You should be conscious of different communication styles and take an open-minded approach to communication with your mentee who may communicate differently to your own preference. If you spot any differences in patterns or tone of conversation you should discuss this with the Aspire Coordinator. For example, if your mentee suddenly becomes less responsive and only offers short responses with a hostile tone. As well as exploring the possibility that this could indicate a safeguarding concern, the mentee will be offered support to engage more effectively.

Do not refer to or discuss adult topics (any behaviours or activities which are not legal or recommended for a child to participate in) and be conscious of the relevance of what you are



discussing. For example, it is not appropriate to discuss drunkenness or romantic relationships.

Before you discuss a topic reflect on how this relates to the purpose of the programme, to support students in their career and pathway choices. This does not mean you cannot refer to your personal life, and discussing common interests (such as TV shows, films and sports teams) is a useful way to build rapport.

e) Sharing contact details:

You must not share any contact details with students or accept any requests to connect on social media whilst they are still students at the school. Communication whilst the mentee is still a student at the school (even in cases where they are over the age of 18) must only take place within the agreed Teams environment. A plan should be agreed with the mentee and the Aspire Coordinator to continue communication safely and appropriately after the mentee leaves school.

If a mentee shares contact details with you, or sends a request on social media, please politely remind them of the boundaries of the programme and notify the Aspire Coordinator.

f) Providing additional opportunities for mentees:

One of the benefits of mentoring is the network it provides for young people, and we do not want to prevent students from engaging in opportunities or activities which benefit them. However, the safety and wellbeing of children is paramount. Any such opportunities taking place whilst the mentee is still a student at the school must therefore be arranged in conversation with the Aspire Coordinator. This might include (but is not limited to):

- Work experience placements
- In-person mock interviews or assessment centres
- Workplace visits

g) Ongoing contact after the mentee leaves school:

Any unsupervised communication must only occur after **all** of the following conditions are met:

- Approach for ongoing communication agreed with the Aspire Coordinator
- Mentee is over the age of 18
- Mentee has left school
- Mentee has consented to ongoing support

Ongoing conversations should be for the purpose of continuation of the mentor-mentee relationship only, or other forms of career and pathway support, and professional boundaries must still be maintained. This must include following the code of conduct outlined in this document for a minimum of three years after the mentee has left school and turned 18.

Examples of ongoing contact may include:

- Staying in touch over email for occasional advice and guidance
- Continuation of video call mentoring sessions
- Providing workplace opportunities such as those outlined above



If you become concerned about your mentee after they have left school, you may contact [safeguarding@haberdashers.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@haberdashers.co.uk) and/or contact the statutory bodies and charities outlined below and in section 10 for advice and guidance. If you believe they are at immediate risk of harm you should contact the emergency services.

If a mentee becomes concerned about the conduct of their mentor after they have left school, they may contact [safeguarding@haberdashers.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@haberdashers.co.uk) for advice and guidance. They may also wish to contact the statutory bodies and charities outlined below and in section 10.

## 8. Identifying concerns

Further detail on identifying and responding to specific types of concern can be found in the full school safeguarding policy for the mentees school.

### h) Types of abuse

Abuse does not only refer to actions or words from an adult but also by a child towards another child. Further information and definitions of the types of abuse can be found on [the NSPCC website](https://www.nspcc.org.uk).

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Criminal exploitation and gangs
- Domestic abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Grooming
- Neglect
- Online abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

### i) Common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour. But these should be referred through the processes outlined below to ensure the child is not experiencing harm and they are able to gain support.

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- changes in performance at school
- seeming frightened of a person
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- struggle to control strong emotions
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any



- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- regularly referencing being hungry
- referring to unsuitable living conditions
- a long holiday abroad and/or reference to a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- signs of physical injury: bruises, broken bones, bite marks, burns
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

## 9. Referral process

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Aspire Coordinator are responsible for safeguarding children in the Aspire Programme. If you are ever uncertain about the safety of your mentee, or have any questions about the below processes, you can seek support from the relevant Aspire Coordinator.

In cases where you refer a concern you will usually not receive an update on the referral. However, the Aspire Coordinator may agree a set of actions with you to continue to support your mentee within the boundaries of the programme.

a) If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger:

Make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm or is in immediate danger. **Anyone can make a referral.**

Reporting child abuse to your local council: <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

Tell the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

j) If a child makes a disclosure to you

- Listen and take their concerns seriously.
- Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions.
- Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset.
- Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner.
- Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret.
- Write up your conversation as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts and do not put your own judgement on it.
- Sign and date the write-up and pass it on to the DSL. Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police directly and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so.
- Aside from these people, do not disclose the information to anyone else unless told to do so by a relevant authority involved in the safeguarding process.

k) If you have concerns about a child (but do not believe they are in immediate danger)

- Speak to the Aspire Coordinator and agree a course of action.
- Follow the same principles outlined in b)



- If the Aspire Coordinator is not available, you should contact an alternate member of the safeguarding team for your mentees school, this information can be found on the school website
- If you come to believe that your mentee is at risk of harm or immediate danger, you should follow the process outlined above.

## **10. Statutory services and other useful information**

- **Educate against hate:** <https://www.educateagainsthate.com/>
- **NCVO:** <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>
- **NSPCC:** <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
- **Reporting abuse to a local council:** <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>