

# **Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre**

## **A Safeguarding Health Check and Compliance Report**

by **Cornerstone Safeguarding**

**January 2026**



**Created by Cornerstone Safeguarding Ltd.**

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## Introduction

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre is an inclusive, maintained nursery school based in Guildford, Surrey, operating across two sites at York Road and Hazel Avenue. The organisation provides maintained early years education for children aged two to five and operates two Early Years registered settings for babies and children under the age of two, alongside integrated Family Centre services that support families with children up to the age of 18.

The nursery is distinguished by its Froebelian approach, a unique educational philosophy that views children as capable, autonomous learners who flourish through play, self-activity, and a close connection to nature.

This approach is evidenced by the way staff sit at the child's level, seek permission before offering physical comfort, and encourage children to build resilience rather than simply "fixing" problems for them. By combining this expert pedagogy with a robust culture of safeguarding and professional curiosity, Guildford Nursery School ensures a nurturing environment where young learners thrive within healthy routines and a supportive community framework.

## Report purpose

Guildford Nursery School has commissioned this report with the primary vision to enhance and streamline all aspects of their safeguarding compliance requirements to better meet operational and legislative needs, ensuring that their vision, mission and purpose is carried out efficiently and effectively.

Chris East from Cornerstone Safeguarding Ltd conducted a comprehensive review of the safeguarding structure in January 2026.

### **This report examines the following areas:**

- Website Review
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Incident Reporting Mechanisms & Response
- Staff and Volunteer Training, Induction & Awareness
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead; Support and Supervision
- Safer Recruitment
- Risk Assessment and Management
- Record Keeping and Documentation
- Continuous Improvement & Safeguarding Culture
- Safety and Security

Each section will examine the current status of safeguarding provision, present observations from the initial review, and offer our recommendations for continuous improvement.

By addressing the key areas detailed above, the report aims to ensure that Guildford Nursery School's safeguarding practices are robust, effective, and aligned with best practices, thereby supporting the organisation's overarching mission to serve and uplift their pupils, staff and local community.

## **Safeguarding History**

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre has a long-standing history of robust safeguarding and child welfare practice. At its most recent ungraded Ofsted inspection in November 2021, the nursery school remained Good. Inspectors specifically noted that safeguarding was effective and that staff were particularly alert to changes in children's behaviour that might indicate a safeguarding concern.

Historically, the nursery has maintained a high standard of care across both its York Road and Hazel Avenue sites, with inspections in 2016, 2012 and 2009 consistently identifying safeguarding as a core strength.

Although not the primary focus of this Safeguarding Health Check, it is also worth noting that the Family Centre at Hazel Avenue underwent a separate inspection in 2010, where it was graded Outstanding. This further evidences the organisation's capability in managing complex family support and child protection work.

There have been no reported regulatory breaches or significant safeguarding failures within the last decade, and the organisation remains a trusted provider within the Surrey County Council framework.

## **Location Crime Statistics**

### **York Road (Guildford Town Centre)**

The York Road site is located within the Guildford Town policing neighbourhood. As a town centre location, this area experiences higher volumes of reported crime than residential parts of the borough, largely associated with retail activity, transport links, and the night-time economy. Over the past two years, the most commonly reported offences in this vicinity have included violence and sexual offences, anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, and public order incidents.

Recent publicly available crime data indicates that the overall crime rate within the wider town centre area is higher than the Surrey average, at approximately 86 crimes per 1,000 residents.

While this figure reflects aggregated town-level data rather than street-specific analysis, it provides relevant contextual insight into the operating environment surrounding the York Road site.

This contextual risk profile supports the robust access control and site security measures currently in place at the nursery.

### **Hazel Avenue (Westborough and Bellfields)**

The Hazel Avenue site is situated within the Westborough ward, a predominantly residential area which has historically recorded higher reported crime levels than some other parts of Guildford. Publicly available local crime data indicates that, over the past two years, crime levels in this area have remained broadly consistent and above the Surrey average, with the most commonly reported offences including violence and sexual offences, anti-social behaviour, and criminal damage.

While the area is generally considered low to medium risk when compared with national averages, the specific location of the Hazel Avenue site presents additional considerations. As the nursery school is on the same site as the Family Centre for the community, it is located within an environment where there is higher risk of public order incidents to occur, more than what would typically be expected for a standalone early years setting. The context supports the identified need for enhanced front-of-house security measures and hostile-act awareness training, as discussed with the Senior Leadership Team during the visit and detailed within this report.

# Safeguarding Health Check Summary

The safeguarding culture at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre is highly positive and represents one of the most robust and genuinely child-centred environments observed by Cornerstone Safeguarding.

Strong leadership under Sally Cave, alongside the effective oversight of Governor Sue Heath, ensures safeguarding is embedded in daily practice rather than treated as a compliance exercise. By blending a Froebelian approach with professional curiosity and transparent leadership, the nursery has created an environment where staff and children feel empowered, respected, and safe.

While operating at a high level of compliance, the recommendations within this report are intended to further strengthen systems and resilience. As outlined throughout this report, streamlining digital processes, formalising audit feedback loops, and enhancing front-of-house security at Hazel Avenue will support continued best practice in line with local risk patterns and anticipated legislative developments.

The welfare of the child remains the nursery school's clear and unwavering priority. By implementing these continuous improvement actions, the organisation will be exceptionally well positioned for future inspections and its ongoing role supporting children and families within the local community.

# **Guildford Nursery School Safeguarding Compliance Report**

The following report outlines the current safeguarding measures in place, identifies areas requiring improvement to enhance compliance, and recommends additional actions to surpass basic compliance requirements

## **Website Review**

The website for Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre functions as a primary portal for both compliance and community engagement. It is structured to provide clear, factual information, with written and video content designed to communicate safety and care procedures transparently.

Key safeguarding policies and procedures are located on a dedicated Policies page, making them easy for parents, staff and regulatory bodies to access. This digital infrastructure supports the nursery's commitment to openness. However, there is a strategic opportunity to further strengthen accessibility and visibility by including direct links to the Safeguarding Policy and standalone Whistleblowing Policy within the footer of the home page.

## **Safeguarding Policy and Procedure**

### **Compliance Statement**

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre has developed comprehensive safeguarding policies that proactively address key safeguarding and related areas, demonstrating a strong commitment to meeting statutory and legal requirements.

### **Observations**

Safeguarding policies and procedures are easy to locate via a dedicated page on the website, within a shared internal drive, and in hard copy on request.

The majority of staff demonstrated a clear understanding of where to access the policies and were able to articulate their content. A number of staff members are actively involved in the regular review and updating of policies, and relevant staff expressed confidence in making amendments in response to changes in legislation or statutory guidance.

Where policies were not immediately available digitally, staff were clear about how and where to request access. The policies were further evidenced in practice through observation of daily routines, behaviours, and decision-making.

# Incident Reporting Mechanisms & Response

## Compliance Statement

Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre has effectively implemented multiple mechanisms for reporting incidents and concerns, including an accessible online platform (CPOMS) alongside verbal reporting routes, enabling timely and appropriate communication.

## Observations

Staff expressed high levels of confidence in reporting concerns and reported feeling well supported by the Senior Leadership Team and the safeguarding team.

CPOMS is used effectively across all staff roles, with regular references to its use observed throughout the day.

All staff have received appropriate training in how to record concerns, including guidance on follow-up actions. The safeguarding team responds promptly when concerns are raised. This was evidenced through discussion and review of concerns that had been logged and were actively being managed on the day of our visit.

# Staff Training, Induction & Awareness

## Compliance Statement

Training provision covers a range of key areas, including safeguarding, female genital mutilation (FGM), GDPR, first aid, and food hygiene. Staff receive regular update training during INSET days and are also offered ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the academic year.

## Observations

The induction process is thorough and extends over a sustained period of time, ensuring staff are well supported as they settle into their roles. Training is proactive and responsive to local trends and emerging themes. Careful consideration is given to training content, and where topics are sensitive in nature, staff are given advance notice and offered the option to opt out where appropriate.

Staff reported feeling well supported in their continued professional development and appreciated the training opportunities provided. Ongoing safeguarding awareness is regularly reinforced through internal communications, including newsletters. Training programmes, external courses, and relevant providers are actively sought, demonstrating a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding learning and development.

It was confirmed that training has recently been provided in areas including professional boundaries, managing difficult conversations, and restorative communication. Through discussions with staff, some responses suggested that further consolidation of this learning would be beneficial, highlighting an opportunity to re-visit key messages to ensure full confidence and consistency across the team. This observation does not arise from any specific concerns and reflects individual variation rather than a systemic training gap.

A small degree of inconsistency was also identified among some staff regarding procedures for following up on non-contact in relation to attendance concerns, indicating a need for further standardised training in this area.

# The DSL; Support and Supervision

## Compliance Statement

A Designated Safeguarding Lead, supported by two Deputies, is in place to oversee all safeguarding matters. The safeguarding leads manage their responsibilities effectively and are supported by an appointed Governor who provides regular oversight. All Designated Safeguarding Leads and relevant Governors receive enhanced safeguarding training.

## Observations

The safeguarding provision for Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre is overseen by Charlotte Bate, she provides essential oversight applying her deep expertise and supportive approach clearly evidencing an inclusive, safe, and effective organisational culture. The Safeguarding team are fully qualified, highly experienced, and communicate well as a team. They action concerns promptly and the safeguarding culture is consistently evidenced. All staff spoke highly of the team and reported that they feel confident to approach them should they have any concerns or require support.

While internal systems and peer support are strong, external supervision would provide an additional layer of independent challenge and reflective space, aligning with best practice for complex safeguarding environments.

Key staff members have direct contact with the Local Authority for Team Around the Family (TAF), Child Protection (CP), and Child in Need (CIN) meetings. This approach reduces the burden on the safeguarding team and has proven beneficial for children in their care. Oversight is maintained throughout by the safeguarding team, who provide support to staff before, during, and after the management of concerns.

Specific mention is warranted regarding the significant contribution made by Sue Heath, the Governor appointed as Safeguarding Liaison. The thorough termly audits she conducts provide an effective feedback loop to the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body, ensuring safeguarding remains a priority and is reviewed regularly. The high level of trust and respect for this role was evident through discussions with staff across the organisation.

# Safer Recruitment

## Compliance Statement

A thorough safer recruitment process, supported by meticulous attention to detail, was clearly evidenced. The highly experienced and qualified HR department demonstrated strong capability in managing all aspects of safer recruitment, ensuring that each stage of the process is conducted in line with statutory guidance and best practice.

## Observations

Specific recognition is given to the staff member responsible for safer recruitment, who consistently demonstrated professional curiosity and the confidence to halt recruitment processes where concerns were identified through evidence or professional judgement. This proactive approach ensures that practice exceeds basic compliance standards in all areas of safer recruitment.

The management of recruitment processes was clear, accurate, and aligned with current legislation, guidance, and best practice. The onboarding process is well supported and provides a practical demonstration of the nursery's safeguarding culture and wider organisational ethos.

The Single Central Record is managed efficiently. Confidence in its accuracy, regular updating, and effective use was evident, alongside a clear commitment to completing tasks thoroughly and maintaining high professional standards through ongoing development.

# Risk Assessment and Management

## Compliance Statement

Risk assessments are conducted across all areas of operation. Staff complete daily checks and record any identified concerns, which are addressed promptly and effectively. Staff-to-child ratios consistently exceed statutory requirements.

## Observations

Risk assessment is actively managed throughout the day at both sites. Allergy information, including photographs of children, is displayed in staff-only areas, and safe food preparation practices (for example, cutting food) are undertaken with high levels of competence. This was evidenced by consistent staff practice observed throughout the day.

Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how to complete risk assessments, how to raise concerns, and how to follow up on identified issues. This knowledge was evident across both locations.

During the visit, several minor hazards were identified. At Hazel Avenue, allergy information was visible to parents during child collection times. At the York Road site, a yellow stand positioned at the base of a bookshelf presented a potential trip hazard, and a mop and bucket were stored adjacent to a toilet area. At both locations, decorative fairy lights were observed with low-hanging wires accessible to young children.

# Record Keeping and Documentation

## Compliance Statement

All records are stored securely and confidentially. Staff demonstrated confidence in maintaining effective record-keeping systems and managing documentation related to safeguarding activities, supporting accountability and transparency.

## Observations

Documentation is thorough and accessible to relevant staff. However, there is an over-reliance on multiple trackers and spreadsheets, which has caused some confusion for staff when managing daily operational tasks. This increases the risk of duplication and information being missed.

The communication process between front of house staff and teaching staff is very good. It was noted during discussion that some staff experienced a slight delay at the Hazel Avenue site in receiving information regarding new children joining the nursery, particularly in relation to contact details, passwords, dietary requirements, and photo permissions. A review of the communication approach at this location would further support timely and consistent information sharing.

Safeguarding concerns are well documented, with clear processes in place from initial recording through to closure. Personal mobile phones are not permitted within the nursery; however, work phones are provided for key staff. These contain essential information, including emergency contact numbers, and provide an effective contingency in the event of an emergency or digital system failure.

# Safety and Security

## Compliance Statement

Both locations are secured by high walls and/or fencing. Gates and doors are fitted with magnetic locks and require access via key card or controlled entry through reception. CCTV is in place across both sites and is currently being upgraded.

## Observations

ID checks and a strict no-phone policy are clearly communicated and consistently enforced on entry to both buildings. Security arrangements at the York Road site are generally robust; yet there is an opportunity to further strengthen the enclosure around the external exit button to provide additional reassurance.

At the Hazel Avenue site, reception staff are at increased risk due to the absence of a silent alarm or a designated safe space to retreat to in the event of an emergency. Across both locations, internal doors would benefit from the installation of twist locks, particularly in light of emerging guidance and anticipated requirements linked to the Prevent Duty, Martyn's Law, and counter-terrorism recommendations. While lockdown procedures are already well practised, consideration should be given to ensuring that existing lockdown response arrangements are aligned with the expectations of Martyn's Law. Some staff expressed uncertainty about the actions to take in the event of a hostile act once an intruder had gained entry to the building.

At the York Road site, there is a clear line of sight from the main road into parts of the building. It was observed that the intimate care area could be visible externally if deliberately viewed. To mitigate this privacy risk and strengthen safeguarding during personal care routines, the installation of privacy frosting or tinted glazing to road-facing windows was discussed on the day.

These findings indicate that while baseline security is strong, additional measures are required to support preparedness for hostile incidents

# Continuous Improvement & Safeguarding Culture

## Compliance Statement

The safeguarding culture at Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre is exceptional and represents one of the strongest safeguarding cultures observed by Cornerstone Safeguarding. Staff at all levels consistently demonstrate their contribution to creating a safe, healthy, and supportive environment.

## Observations

The child's voice is captured effectively through age-appropriate methods, including songs, images, and active listening. Staff reported feeling trusted and empowered to raise concerns, ask questions, and respectfully challenge decisions where necessary. A culture of kindness, respect, understanding, and mutual support is clearly embedded across the organisation.

In challenging situations, staff demonstrated how they work collectively to support one another, maintaining this support until colleagues feel ready to return to their usual duties. Reflective practice was also evident, including instances where concerns about practice were discussed openly and constructively during end-of-day review meetings. This demonstrates a strong learning culture and a commitment to continual improvement.

Specific recognition is warranted for the leadership of Sally Cave, Headteacher. Her leadership is characterised by a genuine commitment to the wellbeing and development of both staff and children. During the visit, she spoke openly about the pressures and challenges of the role, while consistently reinforcing that child welfare, safeguarding culture, and staff wellbeing are the school's core priorities. Her integrity, transparency, and values-led leadership were notable strengths of the review.

# Staff Questionnaire Feedback

Staff feedback from the Safeguarding Health Check questionnaire indicates a strong and positive baseline of safeguarding knowledge and practice.

All respondents (100%) confirmed they have received safeguarding training within the past 12 months and are clear about the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and how to contact the safeguarding team. The majority of staff reported knowing exactly where to access safeguarding policies and having read and understood them. A small minority indicated they only know “roughly” where policies are located, or have a general understanding of procedures, with one respondent unsure of the location. This suggests a minor need for refresher guidance on document accessibility rather than knowledge gaps.

Safeguarding culture was rated very positively. Most respondents scored their confidence in raising concerns at 5 out of 5, and all staff reported feeling “very supported” in their safeguarding role. Trust in safeguarding processes is exceptionally strong, with almost all respondents stating they have “complete trust” that concerns will be handled appropriately and confidentially. One respondent reported “some trust”; however, the overall picture is of a safe, open, and supportive culture.

Ongoing safeguarding practices, including termly governor audits, regular safeguarding newsletters, and revisiting Keeping Children Safe in Education, were highlighted positively. While most staff reported knowing exactly what to do in relation to online and in-person exploitation, a notable proportion indicated they have only a “general idea”, suggesting a need for targeted, scenario-based training.

Awareness of recent policy updates was generally strong. Responses indicated that where policies were updated staff were made aware through training or internal communication.



# *Certificate*

## of Safeguarding Compliance

This certificate is awarded to

## **Guildford Nursery School and Family Centre**

In recognition of robust safeguarding arrangements and a strong safeguarding culture, evidenced through an independent Safeguarding Health Check conducted by Cornerstone Safeguarding Ltd.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris East".

**Cornerstone Safeguarding Director  
and Safeguarding Consultant**

**The Safeguarding Health Check**  
was completed on  
6<sup>th</sup> January 2026 by  
**Cornerstone Safeguarding Ltd**



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