

Safeguarding Tier Matrix 2026

Approved by: Group Board of
Directors

Last reviewed on: July 2026

Date: 27 July 2026

**Next review due
by:** Annual or Following
Critical Incident

Allegations, Concerns & Escalation Procedures

Protecting Every Child, In Every School, Across Every Jurisdiction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Field	Detail
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This is a controlled document. Always refer to the Global Designated Safeguarding Lead for the current approved version.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	27 July 2026	Interim Global DSL	Initial Document

About this document

This matrix sets out Ariston Education's group-wide framework for categorising, responding to, and escalating safeguarding concerns across all schools in the portfolio.

It applies to all forms of safeguarding concern, including child protection, allegations against staff (including low-level concerns), child-on-child harm, self-harm and suicide, mental health, online safety, radicalisation, FGM, honour-based abuse, trafficking, and adults at risk.

Mandatory reporting obligations vary across Ariston's operating jurisdictions. The Global DSL must be consulted in all Tier 3 and Tier 4 cases to confirm applicable local statutory requirements. There will be a level 3 trained Board member with specific safeguarding responsibilities.

Key principles

- Use common sense and professional judgement. Consult the Global DSL or Director of Education if in doubt.
- Deal with all concerns quickly, fairly, and consistently.
- Protect any children or adults affected and support the staff member subject to an allegation.
- Do not investigate before making the required referrals at Tier 3 and above.
- Confidentiality must be maintained throughout. Information shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- Concerns about a member of staff must be reported to the Head of School / Principal.
- Concerns about the Principal must be reported directly to the Global DSL — not via the Principal.

Key roles and contacts

Abbreviation	Role	Responsibility
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	School-level lead for all safeguarding concerns
HoS/ Principal	Head of School / Principal	School leader; authorises staff suspension at Tier 3+
RHoS	Regional Head of Schools	Regional oversight; formal notification at Tier 2+
GDSL	Global DSL	Group-level safeguarding lead; statutory referrals and cross-border coordination
DoE	Director of Education	Informed at Tier 3+; leads post-incident review
Regional CEO	Regional Chief Executive	Overall responsible for Safeguarding in the Region
Group CEO	Group Chief Executive	Overall responsible for Safeguarding across the Group
Group ExCo	Group Executive Committee	Notified for awareness at Tier 4 (via Group CEO)
Board SGC	Board Safeguarding Committee	Oversees safeguarding across the group (policies, monitoring, enforcement, improvement) with ultimate accountability.

Abbreviation	Role	Responsibility
Troika	Advisory body	Limited group comprising shareholders, Board Chair and Group CEO.

Tier 1 — Minor concern

No immediate harm. Unverified concern; pattern monitoring required. DSL judgment can contain at school level.

 Response within 48 hours

Applies to

- **Child protection (unverified / second-hand)**
- **Staff conduct — single low-level concerns (any adult behaviour towards a child that does not meet the harm threshold but is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, causing a "nagging doubt".)**
- **Child-on-child — isolated unkind comment or minor incident**
- **Online safety — isolated inappropriate content access**
- **Self-harm / mental health — general distress, no active harm disclosed**
- **Adult at risk — personal wellbeing concern, no student impact**

Examples by category (produced internally and subject to review)

Category	Example indicators
Child protection	Parent reports child is upset about a sanction, with no corroborating evidence of harm. Second-hand allegation where the professional was not present.
Staff conduct	Single parental complaint about a teacher's tone; no prior record or pattern. Behaviour: Being over-friendly with children, favoring specific students, or using inappropriate, sarcastic, or humiliating language. Digital/Physical: Taking photos on personal devices, engaging in one-to-one, unmonitored communication (physical or digital). Context: It includes behaviours that do not meet the "harm threshold" (which is potential criminal offense, serious misconduct, or risk of harm)

Category	Example indicators
Child-on-child	Isolated aggressive/ offensive comment (e.g., racist, misogynistic, sectarian) between pupils in class; no injury or sustained behaviour.
Self-harm / mental health	Student appears withdrawn or expresses general unhappiness; no active self-harm or suicidal ideation disclosed.
Online safety	Student found accessing inappropriate website once; no grooming indicators present.
Adult at risk	Concern about a staff member's personal wellbeing; no evidence of impact on students or colleagues.

Required actions

- DSL records as low-level concern on CPOMS (or group-approved system). Date-stamp, name, and initial assessment noted.
- DSL informs Principal verbally. No formal referral required at this stage.
- Monitor for pattern. If two or more Tier 1 concerns involving the same adult or child arise within one term, escalate to Tier 2.
- Include in Principal's monthly safeguarding report to Regional Head of Schools (number of incidents required rather than details of all Tier 1 cases).
- Include in annual safeguarding report to Global DSL.

Tier 2 — Moderate concern

Credible concern but below immediate harm threshold. Internal investigation required. Police referral would be disproportionate at this stage.

 **Response within 24 hours**

Applies to

- **Physical harm — ambiguous; context suggests redirection or accident**
- **Emotional abuse / neglect — pattern emerging**
- **Staff boundary breach — inappropriate but not predatory**
- **Child-on-child — sustained unkind behaviour or low-level physical aggression**
- **Self-harm — disclosed past or current self-harm; no active suicidal intent**
- **Suicide ideation — passive ('I wish I wasn't here'); no active plan**
- **Online safety — staff messaging students on non-school platforms (no sexual content)**
- **Adult at risk — pattern of concern; no direct student risk identified**

Examples by category (produced internally and subject to review)

Category	Example indicators
Physical	Child accuses teacher of pushing when context suggests redirection. Nursery worker seen pulling child from confrontation — intent unclear.
Staff conduct	Staff member makes an inappropriate remark that appears naive rather than predatory; single professional boundary lapse with no injury or prior record.
Child-on-child	Sustained unkind behaviour between students; low-level physical aggression with no significant injury.
Self-harm	Student discloses past or current self-harm (e.g. cutting) without immediate medical emergency; no active suicidal intent disclosed.
Suicide / mental health	Student expresses passive suicidal thoughts; no active plan. First disclosure with no prior indicators.
Online safety	Staff member sending informal, personal (non-sexual) messages to students via non-school platforms.
Emotional abuse	Teacher heard raising voice inappropriately at students on a single occasion at end of term. Single derogatory remark witnessed by others.

Required actions

- DSL records full detail immediately. Informs Principal.
- Principal s/he should appoint a senior member of staff (normally, deputy/ Head of Section with relevant L3 training) to lead an internal investigation. DSL supports. Unless there is an extraordinary reason for doing so, the Principal should not lead investigations. Strict confidentiality maintained throughout.
- Regional Head of Schools informed in writing within 24 hours.
- Global DSL consulted if cross-jurisdiction guidance is needed or if a staff conduct concern involves a repeat pattern.
- DSL ensures any affected children are supported. Parents informed where appropriate.
- Outcome documented: on personnel file (staff concerns) or CPOMS (child concerns) as a low-level concern with outcome noted.
- For self-harm / passive suicidal ideation: apply Ariston Safe Messaging Protocol. Inform parents unless doing so increases risk. Refer for pastoral or therapeutic support.
- Include in Principal's monthly report and annual safeguarding report to Global DSL.

Tier 3 — Serious concern

Credible risk of harm or significant breach of trust. Full formal referral required. Police referral likely. Staff suspension probable.

 **Response within 4 hours**

Applies to

- **Physical harm — credible disclosure; restraint causing injury; witnessed physical exchange**
- **Sexual — grooming indicators; inappropriate contact or messages with sexual overtones**
- **Child-on-child — sexual harassment or assault; sustained bullying causing measurable harm**
- **Self-harm — active self-harm with injury requiring first aid or medical attention**
- **Suicide — active ideation with a specific plan disclosed**
- **Radicalisation — student or staff expressing extremist views or signs of radicalisation**
- **FGM / Honour-based abuse — fear of FGM, forced marriage, or HBA disclosed**
- **Trafficking — indicators of child sexual exploitation or trafficking**
- **Adult at risk — serious domestic abuse or coercive control impairing ability to protect students**

Examples by category (produced internally and subject to review)

Category	Example indicators
Physical	Credible disclosure by a child using the words 'hit' or 'hurt'. Restraint that caused injury. Witnessed physical exchange between staff and pupil; intent unclear.
Sexual	Member of staff alleged to have touched child inappropriately. Staff member arranging to meet students outside school or making contact via social media with sexual overtones.
Child-on-child	Sexual harassment or assault by one student on another. Sustained bullying causing measurable psychological harm. Alleged rape between students.
Self-harm / suicide	Active self-harm with injury requiring first aid or medical attention. Student discloses a specific suicide plan.
Radicalisation	Student or staff member expressing extremist views or showing signs of being drawn into radicalisation. Unexplained connections to extremist material.

Category	Example indicators
FGM / HBA	Student discloses fear of FGM, forced marriage, or honour-based abuse. School holiday presenting credible risk period.
Adult at risk	Staff member's personal circumstances indicate serious domestic abuse or coercive control that may impair their capacity to protect students.

Required actions

- DSL acts immediately. Full written record completed on CPOMS within 1 hour of disclosure.
- Principal informed. Staff member subject to allegation considered for immediate suspension on full pay pending investigation.
- Formal written notification by DSL / Principal to Regional Head of Schools, Global DSL and Director of Education (allowing for reasonable adjustments where different timezones or holidays are involved)
- DSL consider referral to local statutory authority (social care / child protection services) per local jurisdiction procedures.
- Consider referral to police. Mandatory in some jurisdictions and for specific concern categories (FGM, trafficking). Global DSL advises.
- DSL ensures all affected children are protected and supported. Global DSL advise on cross-border cases.
- Parents informed unless doing so places the child at greater immediate risk (e.g. HBA, FGM). Global DSL advises.
- For active self-harm with injury or specific suicide plan: activate Ariston Crisis Protocol. Ensure 1:1 supervision. Seek medical assessment. Contact parents immediately.
- Full investigation with clear documented outcome. Outcome communicated to the individual. Referral outcome may appear on future suitability / DBS / police clearance checks.
- Incident logged on Risk Register. Included in Principal's monthly report and annual report to Global DSL.

Tier 4 – Critical / immediate

Child or adult has been harmed or is in immediate danger. Immediate suspension, mandatory police referral, and Group CEO notification required. Group CEO to notify ExCom and Board Chair

 **Response: immediate — within 1 hour**

Applies to

- **Physical harm — child injured or at serious risk of injury as direct result of staff action**
- **Sexual assault — any physical sexual contact between staff and student; sexual assault between students**

- **Child-on-child — serious assault, rape, or gang-related violence on or near school premises**
- **Attempted or completed suicide — emergency medical response required**
- **Life-threatening self-harm — immediate medical emergency**
- **Trafficking / CSE — confirmed commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking of a student**
- **FGM — confirmed; mandatory police report in applicable jurisdictions (e.g. England, Wales)**
- **Honour-based violence — active threat or confirmed violence**
- **Radicalisation — credible active threat; confirmed extremist contact**
- **Multiple victims or systemic abuse — evidence of pattern or organisational failure**
- **Staff arrested or facing criminal charge related to their role**
- **Adult at risk — severe harm confirmed or imminent**

Examples by category (produced internally and subject to review)

Category	Example indicators
Physical	Child injured as a direct result of a staff member's actions. Any use of force that causes harm.
Sexual assault	Any physical sexual contact between a staff member and a student. Sexual assault or rape by one student on another. Confirmed sharing of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).
Child-on-child	Serious assault, rape, or sexual violence. Organised or gang-related violence on or near school premises.
Suicide / self-harm	Attempted suicide requiring emergency medical response. Student found having carried out life-threatening self-harm.
Trafficking / CSE	Confirmed or strongly evidenced commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking. Immediate police referral mandatory.
FGM	Student confirmed to have undergone FGM. Mandatory police report in applicable jurisdictions (e.g. England and Wales).
Radicalisation	Credible active threat. Confirmed contact with terrorist or extremist groups by staff member or student.
Systemic abuse	Evidence of abuse by more than one perpetrator, or of more than one victim; pattern suggesting systemic failure or organisational cover-up.

Required actions

- DSL calls emergency services immediately if there is risk to life. Child or adult made safe first — documentation follows without delay.
- Principal authorises immediate suspension of the staff member subject to the allegation (full pay, pending investigation). Do not conduct an internal investigation before suspension. Unless there is an extraordinary reason for doing so, the Principal should not lead investigations. S/he should appoint a senior member of staff with L3 training.
- DSL completes formal written referral to Regional Head of Schools, Global DSL, and Director of Education, within 1 hour.
- Global DSL notifies Regional CEO and Group CEO via email within 2 hrs of receiving notification.
- Regional CEO notifies Group CEO on the same day. No exceptions.
- Police referral made. Mandatory in all Tier 4 cases involving physical or sexual harm. Global DSL advises on local jurisdictional requirements.
- Referral to local statutory child / adult protection authority under local jurisdiction. Global DSL leads all cross-border coordination.
- DSL ensures all affected children and adults are protected, physically separated from the alleged perpetrator, and supported. informs Global DSL immediately.
- Parents / guardians informed unless doing so places the child at greater immediate risk. Global DSL advises on timing and approach.
- Regulatory notifications considered: inspection bodies, employer barring lists, teaching councils, as applicable per jurisdiction. Global DSL leads.
- Full case file created and maintained. Incident logged on Risk Register. Group CEO briefed on outcome. Annual return to Global DSL.
- Post-incident review conducted within 4 weeks: lessons learned, policy update if required. Findings reported to Director of Education.
- Full report on the incident provided to the Board Safeguarding Committee once resolved.

Escalation chain by tier

Each cell shows the notification timing and brief action for that role at that tier. “-” indicates no formal action required.

Note: If concern involves the Principal: report directly to the RHoS, DoE and Global DSL. Global DSL informs Regional CEO and Group CEO.

*All serious Tier 3 cases, where a police referral or criminal investigation is involved, will be escalated to the Group CEO and Regional CEO, similar to a Tier 4 incident

Role	CPOMS	Tier 1 (48h response)	Tier 2 (24h response)	Tier 3 (4h response)*	Tier 4 (1h response)
DSL	DSL to Director of Education will receive immediate updates	Records incident on CPOMS upon receipt, and responds	Records full details immediately on CPOMS and informs	Acts immediately; Records full details immediately (within 1 hr of	Acts immediately, and leads emergency response;

	from CPOMs upon entry and upon subsequent updates	within 48 hrs if required	Principal immediately; Assess and investigate	disclosure) on CPOMS; Informs principal immediately; Informs RHOS, GDSDL, DoE within 4 hrs via email	Records full details immediately after response without delay; Informs principal immediately; Informs RHOS, GDSDL, and DoE via email within 1 hr
Principal / HoS		Informed verbally within 48 hrs; no formal action needed	Appoints L3-trained staff to lead investigation within 24 hrs	Oversees matter and consider / authorises immediate suspension of alleged staff	Informed immediately, oversees matter and consider / authorises immediate suspension; Informs RHOS immediately via phone
Regional Head of Schools		Reviewed as part of Principal's Monthly Safeguarding Report	Informed via CPOMs within 24 hrs; Reviewed as part of Principal's Monthly Safeguarding Report	Formally informed via email within 4 hrs	Informed immediately via phone and email from DSL
Global DSL		Reviewed as part of Annual Safeguarding Report	Consulted if cross-jurisdiction or repeat pattern; Reviewed as part of Annual Safeguarding Report	Formally informed within 4 hrs with full briefing; Leads group response and advises on police referral/	Formally informed via email from DSL within 1 hr with full briefing; Leads group response and advises on police referral/

				cross-border cases;	cross-border cases; Notifies Regional CEO, Group CEO via email within 2 hrs of receiving notification, subject to timezone practicalities
Director of Education		-	-	Formally informed within 4 hrs by DSL	Formally informed via email from DSL within 1 hr
Regional CEO		-	-	Reviewed as part of Bi-weekly CPOMS report	Formally informed by Global DSL via email and notifies Group CEO
Group CEO		-	-	Reviewed as part of Bi-weekly CPOMS report	Formally informed by Global DSL via email and Regional CEO; Informs Group ExCo, Board Safeguarding Committee, and Troika within 24 hrs. Call to be scheduled with Troika within 72 hrs.
Group ExCo		-	-	-	Informed on the same day (via Group CEO)

Board Safeguarding Committee		-	-	Reviewed as part of Monthly CPOMS report	Informed via Group CEO within 24 hrs; receives full report upon resolution
Troika		-	-	-	Informed via Group CEO within 24 hrs (with up-to- date information); receives full report upon resolution