



Job Description and Person Specification

SENIOR PASTORAL LEAD (DSL)

Location:	School-Based
Hours of Work:	Monday to Friday, 08:15 to 16:00 Term Time plus Staff Directive Days
Salary:	£30,800 (Actual)
Line Manager:	Headteacher/School Leadership Team

First Steps Together Group is a growing and ambitious group of independent schools committed to transforming outcomes for children and young people through exceptional education, relational practice and high expectations.

Our schools provide highly supportive, inclusive and aspirational learning environments for pupils with a range of additional needs, including SEND, SEMH and complex presentations. We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and are committed to creating calm, consistent environments where pupils are supported to overcome barriers, develop positive behaviours for learning and engage successfully in education.

We are seeking an experienced Senior Pastoral Lead to provide strategic and operational leadership for safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing, family engagement and pastoral provision. As the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, you will lead the pastoral team and work closely with the Headteacher to ensure pupils receive coordinated, effective support.

This is an opportunity to shape whole-school pastoral practice, develop colleagues and contribute directly to school improvement within our specialist SEND provision.

Role Overview

The Senior Pastoral Lead (DSL) provides strategic and operational leadership for safeguarding, child protection, attendance, wellbeing, family engagement and pastoral support across the school. Reporting to the Headteacher, the postholder leads, supervises and develops Pastoral Leads and wider pastoral staff, ensuring consistent, accountable and effective practice.

As Designated Safeguarding Lead, you will oversee safeguarding decisions, referrals, records and multi-agency working, ensuring compliance with statutory guidance. You will quality assure safeguarding systems and help create a culture where pupils feel safe, heard and protected.

Working alongside the Headteacher, you will contribute to day-to-day school leadership, self-evaluation and improvement planning. You will receive professional guidance and challenge from the Head of Pastoral and implement group-wide priorities in safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, wellbeing and pastoral practice.

Core Purpose of the Role

To lead and continuously improve the school's safeguarding and pastoral provision so that pupils with SEND, SEMH and complex needs are safe, included and able to engage in education.

To provide strategic oversight and operational accountability for safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing and family engagement, while leading a capable pastoral team and contributing to whole-school leadership and improvement.

Through close partnership with pupils, families, staff, external agencies, the Headteacher and the Head of Pastoral, the Senior Pastoral Lead will translate First Steps Together's relational and trauma-informed values into consistent school-wide practice.

Key Responsibilities

Safeguarding and Child Protection (DSL)

- Serve as the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, providing strategic and operational leadership of safeguarding and child protection.
- Maintain a strong safeguarding culture where pupils feel safe, listened to, and believed.
- Oversee the effective management, escalation and quality assurance of safeguarding concerns, referrals and child protection records.
- Work proactively with families, external agencies, and multi-agency professionals to secure positive outcomes for pupils.
- Provide clear advice, guidance, and support to staff when managing safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.
- Ensure safeguarding policies and practice comply with statutory guidance and align with First Steps Together's relational ethos.
- Lead safeguarding reporting, analysis and representation at relevant multi-agency meetings, conferences and reviews.

Building a Safeguarding Culture

- Promote a proactive, whole-school safeguarding culture built on openness, trust, and shared responsibility.
- Lead regular staff briefings, updates, and reflective discussions that strengthen safeguarding confidence and practice.
- Ensure all staff recognise early signs of risk, need, or vulnerability and respond promptly and appropriately.
- Embed safeguarding awareness into everyday systems, routines, and environments across the school.
- Foster a culture where pupils feel able to share worries, seek help, and know that adults will respond with care and consistency.
- Work with leaders to ensure safeguarding is fully integrated into curriculum, pastoral systems, and wider school policy.
- Model professional curiosity, high expectations, and a calm, relational approach when supporting safeguarding matters.

Attendance and Engagement

- Lead the school's attendance strategy, monitoring patterns and barriers affecting pupils with SEND and complex needs.
- Analyse attendance data, evaluate interventions and provide recommendations to the Headteacher and wider leadership.
- Oversee personalised attendance support and intervention plans, ensuring consistency, impact and appropriate challenge.
- Work closely with pupils, families, and external partners to address practical, emotional, and contextual barriers to attendance.
- Report on attendance performance and contribute to school improvement priorities.

Pastoral Support and SEND Collaboration

- Lead and quality assure pastoral support and interventions, ensuring responsive, relational practice for pupils with emotional, behavioural and sensory needs.
- Oversee coordinated support during dysregulation, transition or change, ensuring staff apply trauma-informed approaches consistently.
- Work closely with the SEND team to coordinate joined-up support for pupils with complex profiles or needs.
- Oversee the quality and implementation of pupil support plans, risk assessments, behaviour plans and multi-agency documentation.
- Build strong, trusting relationships with pupils as a significant adult who offers safety, structure, and encouragement.

Staff Training and Development

- Lead training, coaching and professional development for Pastoral Leads and wider pastoral staff.
- Line manage, supervise and develop pastoral colleagues, setting clear expectations, reviewing performance and promoting reflective practice.
- Build an accountable and compassionate pastoral team with consistent safeguarding and wellbeing practice.
- Model effective approaches and provide constructive feedback, challenge and support to strengthen staff practice.

Leadership and Whole-School Practice

- Work in partnership with the Headteacher to support day-to-day operations, school leadership and effective pastoral systems.

- Contribute to school self-evaluation, policy development, quality assurance and improvement planning.
- Act as the key link between school-based pastoral provision and the wider First Steps Together leadership structure.
- Work collaboratively with the Head of Pastoral to implement and evaluate group-wide priorities and quality standards.
- Provide strategic reports, analysis and recommendations on safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing and pastoral effectiveness.

General Responsibilities

- Uphold First Steps Together's values and expected standards of professional conduct at all times.
- Promote and uphold safeguarding responsibilities, remaining alert to concerns and reporting or escalating them promptly in accordance with Group procedures.
- Comply with all relevant policies, procedures, statutory and regulatory requirements, including health and safety, confidentiality and data protection.
- Promote equality, diversity, inclusion and respectful professional relationships.
- Complete required training and maintain the knowledge and competence necessary for the role.
- Maintain accurate records and information as required.
- Undertake other duties reasonably required and commensurate with the nature and level of the role.

Success Criteria

- Safeguarding concerns are identified, escalated and managed promptly, effectively and consistently.
- Safeguarding records, quality assurance and reporting are accurate, compliant and inspection-ready.
- Pupils feel safe, heard, supported and able to access appropriate pastoral support.
- Attendance strategy and targeted interventions demonstrate measurable improvement.
- Pastoral Leads and wider staff receive effective supervision, development and clear accountability.
- Positive and effective partnerships are maintained with families and external agencies.
- Safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing and pastoral systems are evaluated and continuously improved.

Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Substantial experience supporting children and young people, ideally with SEND, SEMH or complex needs	✓	
Proven experience leading safeguarding concerns, referrals, records and multi-agency responses	✓	
Strong knowledge of safeguarding legislation, thresholds, child protection processes and KCSIE	✓	
Experience leading or coordinating pastoral provision and evaluating pupil interventions	✓	
Ability to line manage, supervise, coach and develop pastoral staff	✓	
Experience analysing attendance and safeguarding information to inform improvement	✓	
Ability to contribute to school improvement planning, quality assurance and policy development	✓	
Ability to advise, challenge and support staff and make sound safeguarding decisions	✓	
Strong communication, organisation, reporting and professional judgement	✓	
Ability to build effective partnerships with pupils, families and external agencies	✓	
Understanding of relational, trauma-informed and neuro-affirming practice	✓	
Experience as a Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL		✓
Experience in specialist SEND, alternative provision or independent education		✓
Experience coordinating complex multi-agency safeguarding responses		✓
Experience delivering safeguarding, attendance or pastoral training		✓
Experience auditing safeguarding and pastoral systems and implementing improvements		✓

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge of the SEND Code of Practice, Early Help and multi-agency pathways		✓
Relevant qualification in education, safeguarding, youth work, social care or related field		✓

Personal Attributes

The successful candidate will demonstrate:

- A calm, resilient and consistent approach to senior leadership and relationships
- High expectations for pupils and a strong belief in their capacity to succeed
- Empathy, patience and professional curiosity when working with pupils and families
- Sound judgement and confidence when responding to complex or sensitive situations
- Confidence to challenge practice, manage staff and make difficult decisions when required
- Reliability, flexibility and a strong sense of personal accountability
- High levels of integrity, discretion and professional boundaries
- A commitment to inclusion, dignity, safeguarding and positive outcomes for children and young people

What We Offer

- A senior school-based leadership role with responsibility for leading and developing pastoral provision
- Competitive salary and term-time working
- Comprehensive induction and ongoing support
- Training and development in safeguarding, SEND, attendance and pastoral practice
- The opportunity to shape whole-school safeguarding, attendance and pastoral practice
- Supportive school leadership and a collaborative staff team
- Ongoing professional development and opportunities for career progression
- The opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting difference to children and young people

Safeguarding Commitment

First Steps Together Group is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. All appointments are subject to pre-employment checks including an Enhanced DBS, satisfactory references, online checks and overseas police checks (where required).

The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding, inclusion and the wellbeing of children and young people at all times.