



Job Description and Person Specification

PASTORAL LEAD (DSL)

Location:	School-Based
Hours of Work:	Monday to Friday, 08:15 to 16:00 Term Time plus Staff Directive Days
Salary:	£24,800 (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 and committed Pastoral Lead to lead safeguarding, attendance and pastoral practice within the school. You will act as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, working closely with pupils, families, colleagues and external professionals to ensure children feel safe, supported and able to engage successfully in education.

This is an exciting opportunity to play a key role in creating a safe, supportive and consistent environment where pupils feel protected, understood and able to achieve their potential.

Role Overview

The Pastoral Lead (DSL) is responsible for leading safeguarding, attendance and pastoral practice within the school, helping to ensure every child and young person is safe, supported and able to access education successfully.

As the Designated Safeguarding Lead, you will lead on safeguarding concerns, referrals and child protection records, provide advice and guidance to colleagues and work closely with families and multi-agency professionals. You will help maintain a strong safeguarding culture where pupils feel safe, listened to and confident that concerns will be acted upon.

You will also take a lead role in attendance and engagement, monitoring attendance, identifying patterns and emerging concerns and working with pupils and families to understand and overcome barriers. Alongside this, you will provide pastoral support to pupils and work closely with SEND colleagues to ensure support is coordinated around individual needs.

Core Purpose of the Role

To provide effective safeguarding and pastoral leadership, ensuring children and young people feel safe, listened to and supported while removing barriers to their engagement in education.

The role will provide professional oversight of safeguarding, child protection, attendance and pastoral practice, ensuring concerns are identified and responded to appropriately and that staff have the knowledge, confidence and support to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

Through strong relationships with pupils, families, colleagues and external professionals, the Pastoral Lead (DSL) will contribute to a safe, calm and inclusive school environment where pupils with SEND and complex needs can engage, develop and achieve their potential.

Key Responsibilities

Safeguarding and Child Protection (DSL)

- Act as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensuring safeguarding is central to all aspects of school life.
- Maintain a strong safeguarding culture where pupils feel safe, listened to, and believed.
- Lead on managing safeguarding concerns, referrals, and child protection records with accuracy and confidentiality.
- 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, procedures, and practice reflect statutory guidance and First Steps Together's relational ethos.
- Lead high-quality safeguarding reporting and represent the school at multi-agency meetings, case 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 monitoring of attendance, understanding the barriers faced by children with SEND and complex needs.
- Analyse attendance data to identify trends, patterns, and emerging risks, informing targeted intervention and support.
- Develop personalised attendance support plans that balance challenge with relational, solution-focused strategies.
- Work closely with pupils, families, and external partners to address practical, emotional, and contextual barriers to attendance.
- Provide regular updates to the Senior Leadership Team and contribute to strategic attendance improvement planning.

Pastoral Support and SEND Collaboration

- Provide consistent, relational pastoral support to pupils, responding to emotional, behavioural, and sensory needs.
- Support pupils through periods of dysregulation, transition, or change, using trauma-informed and calming strategies.
- Work closely with the SEND team to coordinate joined-up support for pupils with complex profiles or needs.
- Contribute to individual support plans, risk assessments, behaviour plans, and multi-agency documents.
- Build strong, trusting relationships with pupils as a significant adult who offers safety, structure, and encouragement.

Staff Training and Development

- Deliver and support high-quality staff training on safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing, and pastoral practice.
- Promote reflective practice and encourage staff to engage in discussion, learning, and professional curiosity.
- Ensure all staff feel confident, supported, and informed in identifying and responding to safeguarding or pastoral concerns.
- Provide coaching and modelling to help staff develop consistent relational and trauma-informed approaches.

Leadership and Whole-School Practice

- Work collaboratively with the Senior Leadership Team to support inclusive, safe, and consistent daily practice.
- Contribute to policy development and review, ensuring policies reflect statutory guidance and First Steps Together's ethos.
- Act as a trusted point of contact for pupils, families, and staff, offering support that is calm, clear, and professional.

- Model positive behaviours, relational approaches, and the values of the school in all interactions.
- Contribute to strategic planning around safeguarding, attendance, wellbeing, and wider pastoral priorities.

Success Criteria

- Safeguarding concerns are identified, recorded and acted upon promptly and effectively.
- Safeguarding records and systems are accurate, compliant and inspection ready.
- Pupils feel safe, listened to and confident seeking support.
- Attendance concerns are identified early and effectively addressed.
- Staff demonstrate confidence and consistency in safeguarding practice.
- Effective relationships are maintained with families and external agencies.
- Safeguarding, attendance and pastoral practice demonstrate continuous improvement.

Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Substantial experience working with children and young people, including those with SEND, SEMH or complex needs	✓	
Proven experience managing safeguarding concerns, referrals, child protection records and multi-agency working	✓	
Experience monitoring attendance, identifying concerns and implementing appropriate interventions	✓	
Strong knowledge of safeguarding legislation, thresholds, child protection processes and KCSIE	✓	
Ability to build and maintain a strong safeguarding culture where pupils feel safe, listened to and supported	✓	
Ability to advise and support staff, challenge practice and escalate safeguarding concerns appropriately	✓	
Experience developing positive relationships with pupils and families to overcome barriers to engagement	✓	
Ability to analyse safeguarding and attendance information and use this to inform action	✓	
Strong communication, organisation, professional judgement and record-keeping skills	✓	
Ability to remain calm, professional and effective when managing sensitive or complex situations	✓	
Understanding of trauma-informed, relational and neuro-affirming practice	✓	
Previous experience as a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL		✓
Experience within specialist SEND, alternative provision or independent education		✓
Experience coordinating complex multi-agency safeguarding responses		✓
Experience delivering safeguarding, attendance or pastoral training to staff		✓
Experience auditing and improving safeguarding systems and practice		✓
Knowledge of the SEND Code of Practice, Early Help and multi-agency support pathways		✓
Relevant qualification in education, safeguarding, youth work, social care or a related field		✓

Personal Attributes

The successful candidate will demonstrate:

- A calm, resilient and consistent approach to 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
- The confidence to challenge appropriately 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 rewarding school-based role with responsibility for leading your own area of practice
- 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 and develop safeguarding and pastoral practice within the school
- 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.