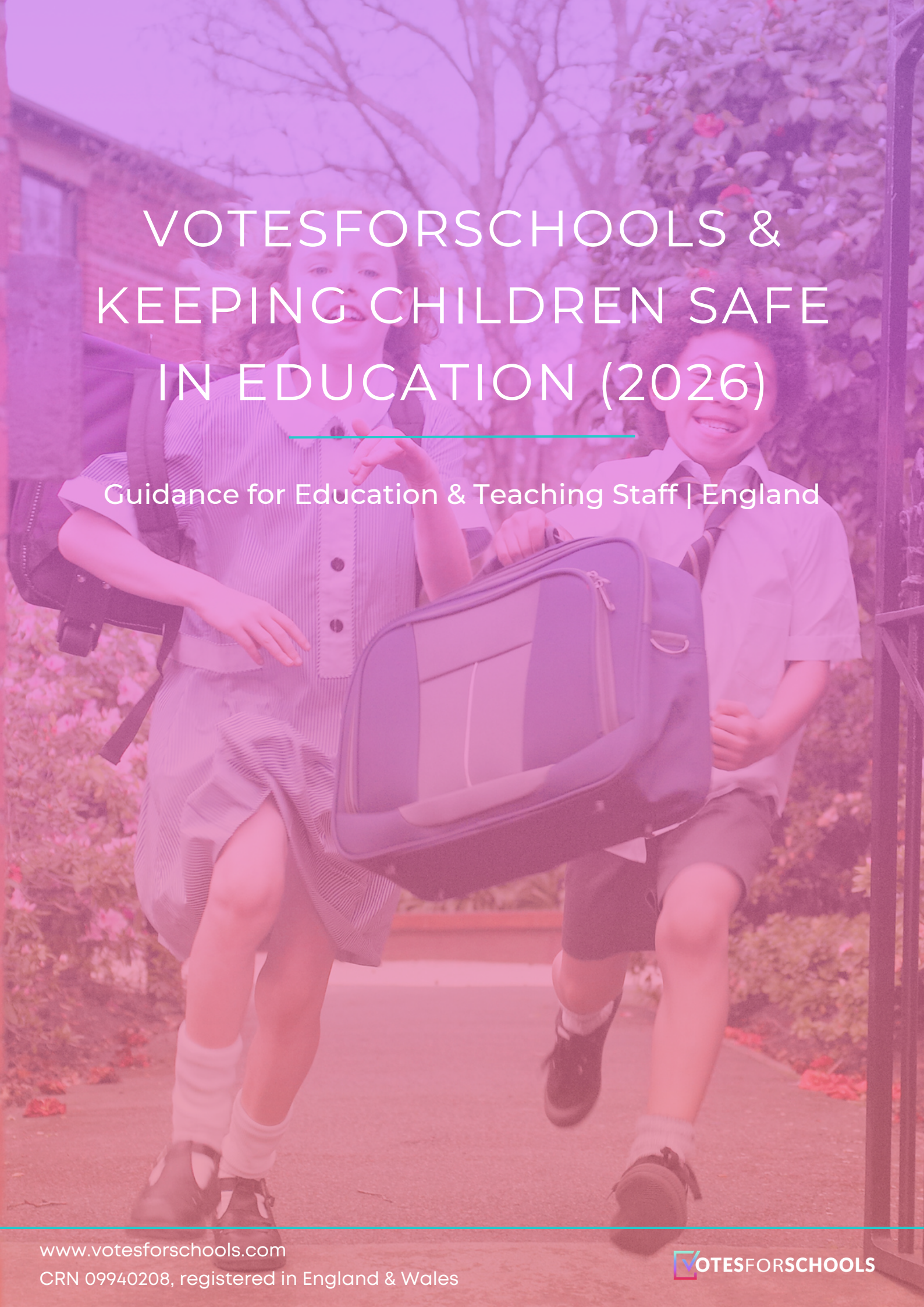


A photograph of two school children, a girl and a boy, running happily outdoors. The girl is in the foreground, wearing a grey school dress and carrying a large black school bag. The boy is slightly behind her, wearing a white shirt and tie, also carrying a school bag. They are running on a paved path with trees and bushes in the background. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

VOTESFORSCHOOLS & KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION (2026)

Guidance for Education & Teaching Staff | England

CONTENTS

The Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) is statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England outlining their legal duties regarding safeguarding of children. It was last updated in July 2026.

This document outlines how VotesforSchools can support teachers in upholding their responsibilities as outlined in KCSIE.

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VotesforSchools supports a range of curriculum and policy areas; more information about these areas, which include SMSC, British Values, Prevent and accessibility in schools, can be found on your Teacher Dashboard.

WHAT WE MEAN

Upholding and promoting the safety and wellbeing of students is imperative for all staff and schools. As a whole-school solution, we see it as our responsibility too.

In a rapidly changing world, staff cannot always be in all places at once when it comes to keeping students safe - this is especially true online and outside of school. But, there is much that students can do to keep themselves as safe as possible across a range of adverse experiences or scenarios.

The skills and tools needed to “self-safeguard” are precisely what VotesforSchools proactively instills in students through a range of approaches, which will be elaborated on in this document.



Safety



WHAT WE DO

VotesforSchools exists to provide children and young people with a voice on the issues they care about. Whether 15 minutes in tutor time, or a designated 60-minute PSHE session, we believe that there should always be time for young people to talk about the real-life issues that matter to them in an age-appropriate and relatable way. Through our VoteTopics, students (and staff) can participate in open, informed and balanced classroom discussions about live issues and the impact these may have on them and their communities, including their personal safety.

Following these discussions, voters decide where they stand on each issue and their reasons why. Their vote results and comments are later passed on to figures and organisations of influence, who provide feedback and insight on how their voices are making a difference to policy, attitudes, and awareness. This empowers voters to speak out and assures them that their voices are being heard.

WHY WE DO IT

All our topics give voters the relevant context they need to understand the big issues and to consider how they relate to the world in which they live. As a result, this helps them to recognise when something is not right.

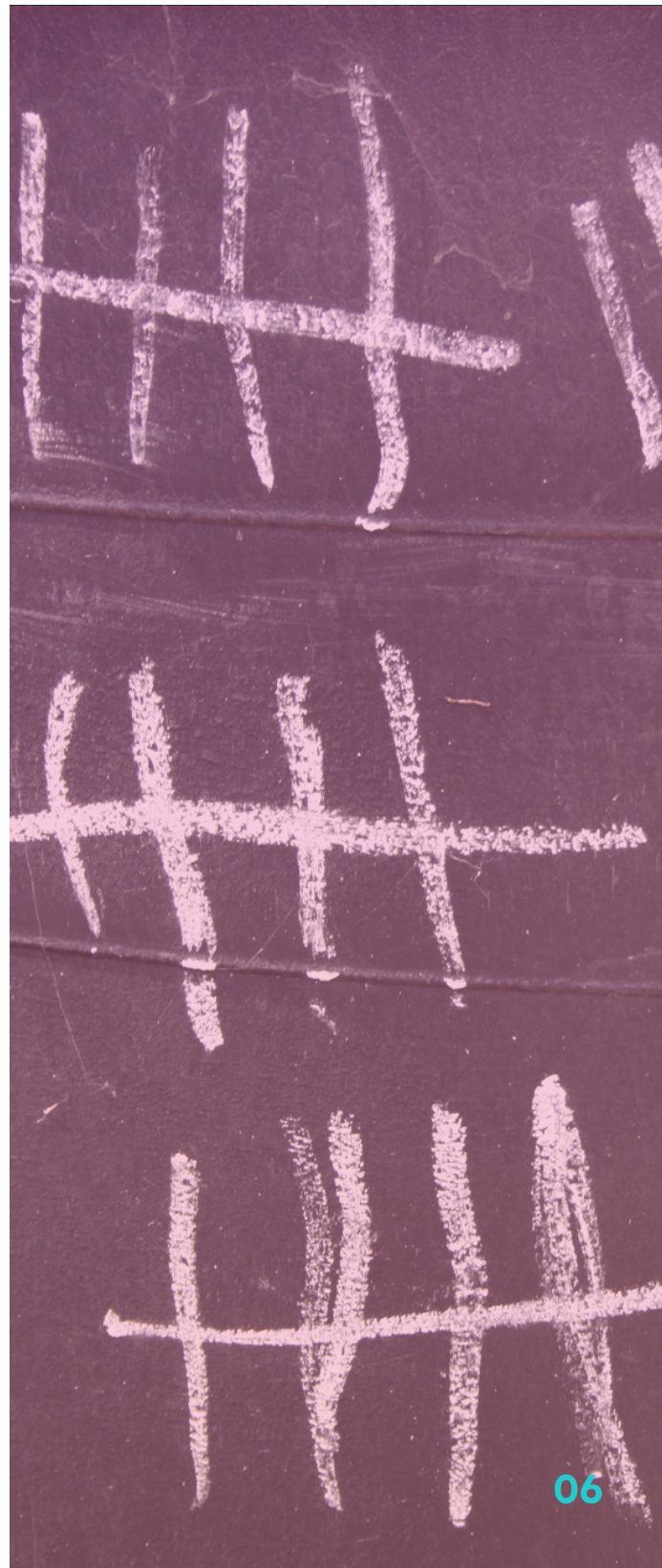
When young people can advocate for others and for themselves, they become more resilient to external threats and adverse influences. By empowering students to speak up about things that are important, difficult, or both, they understand that their voices matter, that what they have to say adds value and that they can create positive change. They also learn to have courage in their convictions, which is a vital life skill that transcends personal safety.



HOW WE DO IT

There are five key ways in which the VotesforSchools programme supports KCSIE. Please use the headings below to jump to the specific sections.

- 1 STUDENT VOICE & PARTICIPATION
- 2 CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING
- 3 ONLINE SAFETY & DIGITAL LITERACY
- 4 PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION
- 5 STAFF TRAINING & SUPPORT



STUDENT VOICE & PARTICIPATION

VotesforSchools provides regular opportunities for students to share their views and concerns, supporting KCSIE's emphasis on ensuring children's voices are heard, listened to, and acted upon.

The bespoke voting platform which students use to log their votes on the topic questions creates a structured way for students to express their opinions on real-life, often sensitive, issues. This helps schools to identify potential safeguarding issues based on the outcome of the class discussion and vote. Voting data is broken down in real-time, giving schools a direct and contemporary insight into the views and concerns of their student body.

Giving students a voice and showing them that people are listening is the best way to empower them to self-safeguard, to be able to speak up, and to articulate if something is wrong.





CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

Weekly topics ask students to actively question and reflect on local and national safeguarding concerns, from knife crime to nicotine pouches, county lines to incel culture. VotesforSchools resources do not shy away from topics that need to be talked about and better understood - by students and staff alike.

The resources themselves help students to recognise the risks in their community and wider society. Given the editable nature of the resources, staff can alter the content in order to position the conversation within an even more localised context if required.

Students' views on the topics are also shared on a local level (as well as nationally): the likes of Birmingham City Council, the London Tobacco Alliance and the Metropolitan Police have all had direct insight into the thoughts of students in their area, and have used this to help formulate better solutions to enduring social problems. Not only does this help to improve community cohesion and safety for all - both outside of and within schools - but it also helps to bridge the gap between those in a position of influence and students with lived experience.

ONLINE SAFETY & DIGITAL LITERACY

There is no doubt that the boundaries between the online and offline world are becoming increasingly blurred, even with new legislation in place to remove phones from schools and restrict under-16s' social media use. The promotion of online safety and digital literacy is embedded in the VotesforSchools programme.



Students regularly learn about current online risks, responsible internet use, and how to report concerns. Using engaging, relevant stories, online safety education is projected in a different way to the “traditional” methods. This makes it easier for students to understand their role in different scenarios and therefore feel prepared to handle a range of situations.

What's more, VotesforSchools often works with digital literacy and online safety experts to create resources that are current and reflective of the dangers posed to children and young people in the here and now, from scams to online anonymity to AI-generated deepfakes.

PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION

The weekly VotesforSchools topics cover key safeguarding themes explicitly, including online networks, healthy relationships, mental health, and exploitation. This ensures that students are exposed to difficult conversations regularly, helping to normalise these sorts of discussions and encourage students to open up.

On a practical level, these consistent discussions also help students recognise unsafe situations and build their confidence in seeking help from staff. Peer learning plays a significant role in (re)confirming what is safe or unsafe, but the resources are also quality-assured: they are accessible, non-judgmental and fact-checked. Students are constantly encouraged to critically analyse information sources or ideas and to better understand the impact of fake news, misinformation, disinformation and deepfakes on their own and others' safety.

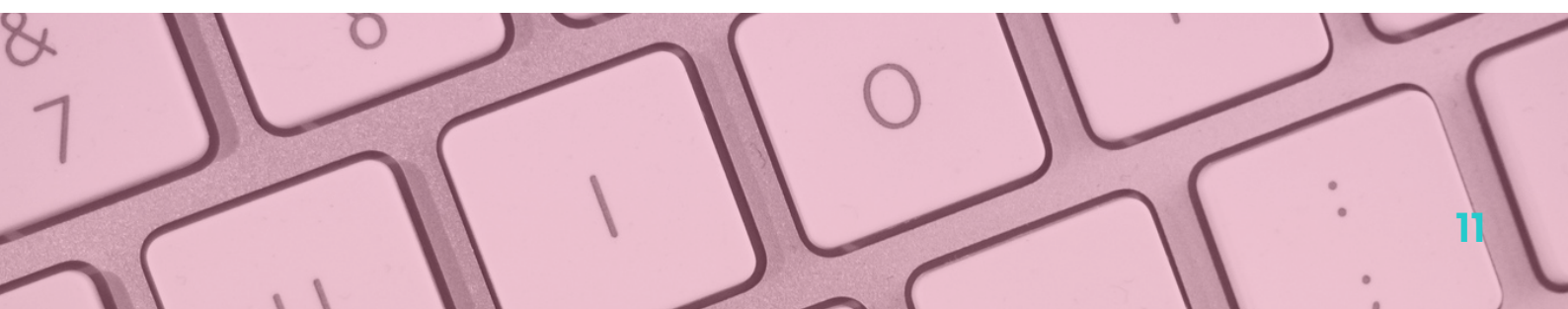


STAFF TRAINING & SUPPORT

The resources provided each week as part of VotesforSchools are not only for students' benefit: in a climate where staff preparation time is limited, having well-researched, politically impartial, and engaging resources to kickstart informed discussions about sensitive safeguarding issues is all the more important.

By reducing barriers to access through its zero-prep approach, VotesforSchools provides all staff across the whole school the chance to start a conversation with students that meets them where they are at. Staff are given any necessary context around the topic ahead of time so that they do not begin the lesson on the back foot, but the resources are also geared towards students “educating” staff about their own experiences of issues such as knife crime or ghosting. This helps to build rapport and trust between students and staff, which only serves to improve safeguarding overall.

In terms of identifying those at risk and responding to disclosures, VotesforSchools can be a good catalyst for wider staff discussions on how to handle different situations or how to modify a school safeguarding approach so it is fit for a rapidly changing educational landscape. In covering tricky topics, VotesforSchools also gives staff the impetus to (re)familiarise themselves with their safeguarding responsibilities and how to take proactive steps to protect those in their care.





A NOTE ON PHONES IN SCHOOLS

One of the most significant recent safeguarding changes is the statutory requirement that schools in England are “phone-free” environments. This will be in place from 1st September 2026 and will be assessed as part of future school inspections.

When it comes to casting votes, the VotesforSchools platform includes an option where students can vote on behalf of themselves. **We wanted to reassure you that access to personal devices are not fundamental to the voting process.** In order to keep classrooms phone-free, staff can cast votes on behalf of students if they do not have access to desktop computers or iPads in order to cast their own votes. This will ensure schools are upholding the statutory phone-free requirements for their classrooms.

You can find out more about different approaches to classroom voting in [our blog](#).

WHERE TO FIND US

If you would like to know more about the information outlined above, please contact us:



info@votesforschools.com



www.votesforschools.com



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