



North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, School Safeguarding Audit 2024 – 2025 Guidance and FAQs

What Is the Safeguarding Audit?

The School Safeguarding Audit is a statutory requirement for all schools and educational institutions to ensure they are fulfilling their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The requirements of the statutory guidance under Section 11 of the *Children Act [2004]* place duties on Local Authorities and School Governing Bodies to respond to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance, as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners.

Schools in North Yorkshire are required to complete the biennial safeguarding audit. The audit is mandated by two key pieces of legislation:

- **Section 175 of the Education Act 2002:** Applies to maintained schools, including maintained nursery schools, and further education institutions.
- **Section 157 of the Education Act 2002:** Applies to independent schools, including academies and free schools, and non-maintained special schools.

School Safeguarding audits are sometimes referred to as Section 175 / 157 audits.

Working Together to Safeguard Children [2023, p.34] states that education providers have a responsibility to play their full part in local safeguarding arrangements and that this includes responding to safeguarding audits of quality and compliance, as requested by the local authority and/or local safeguarding partners.

What Is the Purpose of the Audit?

The audit involves assessing the safeguarding compliance of educational settings, and in particular to focus on the presence and implementation of appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures, to ensure staff training and learning to prevent and respond to safeguarding concerns. This also helps foster continuous improvement, and a safer working culture.

The audits aim to ensure that policies are consistent with local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and relevant legislation and/or regulations.

Who Is Required to Complete the Audit?

All schools in North Yorkshire who are registered with the Department for Education are required to complete the safeguarding audit to evidence that they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and are under a duty to provide information to the safeguarding partners, and this includes.

- **Maintained Schools:** These are schools and further education institutions, including sixth-form colleges that are funded by the local authority.
- **Non-Maintained Schools:** These include independent schools that are not maintained by the local authority.
- **Academies:** These are publicly funded independent schools.
- **Free Schools:** These are a type of academy, which are also publicly funded but have more freedom than maintained schools.
- **Alternative Provision Academies:** These cater to children who cannot attend mainstream school.
- **Maintained Nursery Schools:** These are nursery schools maintained by the local authority.
- **Pupil Referral Units (PRUs):** These provide education for children who are not able to attend a mainstream or special school.

How Is the Audit of Benefit to Schools?

Settings can identify the overall effectiveness of their safeguarding practice and be assured that they are meeting their statutory obligations. Audits can also identify any potential risks and vulnerabilities in safeguarding practices.

- **Safeguarding is a critical aspect of Ofsted inspections.**

Understanding the extent of safeguarding arrangements can help schools provide the necessary evidence.

- **For maintained settings, audit information can guide visits with School Education Advisors, as well as similar arrangements within academies and independent schools.**

- **A safeguarding audit can assist schools in improving staff training and raising awareness of child protection issues.**

By identifying training needs and knowledge gaps, schools can offer targeted training to ensure all staff members are prepared to recognise and address safeguarding concerns effectively. This can help encourage a culture of vigilance and ensure that safeguarding remains a top priority embedded within the school community.

- **An audit can help schools build trust with parents and the wider community.**

By demonstrating a commitment to safeguarding and transparency, schools and colleges can reassure parents that their children are safe and well-protected. This can enhance a setting's reputation.

- **The audit tool allows schools to produce a forward action plan.**

Plans can be used as part of the school development plan alongside the guidance of a policies and procedures list. The audit timeline allows settings to use this information from the audit to put planning in place and make any changes for the start of the 2025 – 26 academic year.

These benefits help ensure the safety and well-being of children and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school's safeguarding practices. By ensuring robust safeguarding practices, schools create a safe environment contributing to the Being Young in North Yorkshire Strategy goals of being safe, happy, healthy, and achieving, enabling them to thrive. ([Being Young in North Yorkshire](#)).

Who Should Complete the Audit and Have Overall Responsibility for Its Completion?

The audit is led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within each educational institution. The DSL is responsible for overseeing the completion of the audit and ensuring that all safeguarding practices and policies are thoroughly reviewed and documented. The DSL should report the completion of the audit and any areas for development to their governing board.

The NYSCP recognises that all staff should know about safeguarding the children in their settings appropriate to their role, and that various members of school teams will contribute to the daily running and monitoring of practices. It is therefore encouraged that settings involve appropriate staff members in the completion of the audit where applicable to both contribute to a culture of safeguarding and safeguarding awareness, but also to gain an accurate assessment and oversight of procedures, and practices and for overall improvement. The audit provides an opportunity to test and reflect on processes, and the NYSCP encourages a collaborative approach where staff and students' voices are sought. It is essential that whoever is submitting the self-assessment is authorised to do so on behalf of the school or college, and that there is support and oversight by senior leadership including governors. The responsibility for local arrangements within schools lies with this leadership – The Local Governing Body, Trustees, or Proprietors of each school who are legally accountable for the schools they represent. Their sign-off is a crucial part of the audit process to ensure that their governance challenges and tests the audit and that they accept any actions that are identified to address areas of development.

How Is the Audit Completed?

To make the process as manageable as possible, the self-assessment is conducted using Excel which is familiar and accessible to most settings. We understand that completing the audit can be a significant undertaking for schools and colleges, therefore, the Excel tool allows colleagues to input responses, work section by section using the individual subject tabs, over time, save progress, and print or save a copy of the completed self-assessment and related action plan.

Please see [NYSCP School Safeguarding Audit 2024 - 25](#) for guidance and a video on how to use the audit tool.

What Is the NYSCP?

The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in North Yorkshire and exists to safeguard children by promoting effective multi-agency collaboration between statutory partners and relevant agencies.

The partnership does this by providing, supporting, and enabling local organisations and agencies to work together at all levels, helping professionals working with children, young people, and families, to promote children's safety and welfare.

The three statutory safeguarding partners responsible for the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in North Yorkshire are:

- Director of Children and Young People, North Yorkshire Council (NYC)
- Chief Nurse of the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Assistant Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police (NYP)

A relevant agency is any organisation or agency deemed necessary by the safeguarding partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. This includes schools, early years and education providers, voluntary, community, and social enterprises, sports clubs, and more.

The three statutory safeguarding partners combined with relevant agencies continue to work together and have agreed on Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), which sets out how the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) are achieved.

For further information about the NYSCP, the work that they do, and how they operate, please see [What is the NYSCP?](#)

What Is the Key Legislation and Guidance?

Through the audit questionnaire, there is reference guidance documentation to support schools as they commit their responses as well as links to useful information and key legislation.

HM Government Guidance referenced includes but is not limited to:

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#) - Referenced as KCSIE
- [Early Years Foundation Stage](#) - Referenced as EYFS
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#)
- [Information Sharing \(Advice for Practitioners\)](#)
- [Maintained Schools Governance Guide \(Gov.uk\)](#)
- [Academy Trust Governance Guide \(Gov.uk\)](#)

What Is the Grading Classification – How does It work?

When identifying a score, each school needs to consider whether the minimum standards for addressing safeguarding needs have been achieved.

1	2	3	4	5
This line of enquiry is not applicable to the school. There are no safeguarding concerns.	Not in operation. No action plan has been identified to address this at present.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school aims to create an action plan at senior level to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school has an action plan agreed by senior management to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding has been addressed and the school is compliant with statutory requirements. There are no safeguarding concerns.

Answers given are on a scale of 1 to 5 with corresponding colours given for each number, this allows settings to easily see an overview of common answers and whether they as an establishment adhere to safeguarding requirements, or where improvements can be made. Participants are asked to enter their grading per question into the audit spreadsheet. Please see the NYSCP website -[NYSCP School Safeguarding Audit 2024 - 25](#) for guidance and a video on how to use the audit tool.

Each answer given requires supporting evidence, and this is to be entered in the *Evidence* field. If answers given are a 2,3 or 4, further action is required, this must also be entered into the questionnaire under the *Actions Required* field. This in turn will populate the *Audit Process Tracker* tab to produce a running total and then a final count of actions.

Please do not enter any text (i.e., “No Action Required”) in the *Actions Required* field if there is no action, as this will falsely record an action on the *Audit Progress Tracker* page.

If you want to add a new paragraph in the *Evidence* or *Actions Required* field, please select Alt and Enter for a carriage return, do not add rows.

Why Develop an Action Plan?

An action plan is essential to address the findings of the audit and ensure continuous improvement in safeguarding practices.

An action plan can specify what actions are to be taken, who is responsible, and timeframes for completion. If an area of high risk is identified, immediate remedial action should be taken and recorded together with any long-term actions to address concerns.

The School Safeguarding Audit has been designed to allow for the easy recording of any actions and to assist settings in the recording of this information. When accepted, the actions should be transferred to the school development plan and managed via the school's governance procedures.

How do I Produce an Action Plan?

1	2	3	4	5
This line of enquiry is not applicable to the school. There are no safeguarding concerns..	Not in operation. No action plan has been identified to address this at present.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school aims to create an action plan at senior level to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school has an action plan agreed by senior management to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding has been addressed and the school is compliant with statutory requirements. There are no safeguarding concerns.

					0		Section not complete
Questions left to grade		5		Questions with identified actions:		Submission Status	
Section 4 - Management of Risk							
Key Questions	Guidance Notes	Grading	Evidence	Actions Required	Action Owner	Timescale	

Actions can be copied and pasted from each tab/section and copied into the *Actions* tab to produce an action plan for future use. This is the only section where you can add columns and/ or rows to the worksheet to record information as appropriate, and to add comments that are relevant to your setting. See [School Safeguarding Audit Tool Video Guide 2024 - YouTube](#) for further information.

What are the Key Targets and Timeframes for the Audit?

The NYSCP School Safeguarding Audit is carried out between November 4th, 2024, and February 28th, 2025. All schools must submit their final response, approved by their Local Governing Body, Trustee(s), or proprietor(s) no later than February 28th, 2025.

The School Safeguarding Audit Tool must have been approved by the Local Governing Board, Trustees, or proprietors before submission.

Why Does the Audit Require the Local Governing Body/Trustee/ Proprietor to Sign Off?

The NYSCP is responsible for supporting local organisations and agencies to work together in a system that ensures children are safeguarded and their welfare is promoted. However, the responsibility for the local arrangements within schools lies with the Local Governing Body/Trustee(s)/Proprietor(s) of each school who are legally responsible for the school they represent. Additionally, they are responsible for acceptance of the findings of the audit and any actions they identify to address any areas of development.

My school Has Already Completed a Different Audit Tool Produced by My Academy or Proprietor. Can This Be Submitted?

While it is appreciated that some schools, academies, and independent/private schools may have developed their own Safeguarding Audit Tools, these tools will vary across the different schools we have in the county, and therefore the NYSCP is Each number corresponds to the colours shown above with the tool being designed to immediately show the status of each answer.

To complete the self-assessment, establishments should consider each statement and assign a self-assessed grade that is believed to most accurately reflect how the setting's arrangements comply with the statement at the time of completing the audit. For each category of question, schools are requested to identify evidence that will support their answers. This does not include providing copies of evidence but should refer to what evidence is available to how participants have arrived at their grading. E.g., the name/location of a policy that supports a specific category and the date it was last reviewed.

What Is the Grading Classification – How Does It Work?

The audit grading classification operated on a scale of 1 to 5. When identifying a score, each school needs to consider whether the minimum standards for addressing safeguarding needs have been achieved.

1	2	3	4	5
This line of enquiry is not applicable to the school. There are no safeguarding concerns..	Not in operation. No action plan has been identified to address this at present.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school aims to create an action plan at senior level to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding areas for development have been identified and the school has an action plan agreed by senior management to focus on these areas.	Safeguarding has been addressed and the school is compliant with statutory requirements. There are no safeguarding concerns.

Each number corresponds to the colours shown above with the tool being designed to immediately show the status of each answer.

To complete the self-assessment, establishments should consider each statement and assign a self-assessed grade that is believed to most accurately reflect how the setting's arrangements comply with the statement at the time of completing the audit. For each category of question, schools are requested to identify evidence that will support their answers. This does not include providing copies of evidence but should refer to what evidence is available to how participants have arrived at their grading. E.g., the name/location of a policy that supports a specific category and the date it was last reviewed.

It is not appropriate to state that a requirement is "not applicable" only because the current cohort of children within the school does not fit certain criteria. If a school believes that a requirement is not applicable and selects 1, a full rationale must be provided to explain why the requirement does not apply. For example, if a school is not aware of any private fostering arrangements it is not appropriate to select 1 (not applicable) because no children currently meet these criteria. Arrangements must be in place should this change in the future.

Please note, for most requirements the not applicable option has been removed.

Should further actions be identified (irrespective of the grading given), please type in the Actions Required field, which will in turn populate the *Audit Progress Tracker* tab to produce a running total and then a final count of actions.

If you want to add a new paragraph in the *Evidence or Actions Required* field, please select **Alt and Enter** for a carriage return.

My school is part of a Multi-Academy Trust/Federation, do I Need to Submit a Separate Safeguarding Audit for each School?

Yes. If your school is part of a federation or a multi-academy trust you must submit a separate completed school safeguarding audit for each school with a DfE Unique Reference Number. While it is understood that federations and multi-academy trusts will most likely share policies, and procedures, to standardise the approach across the federation/trust, the level of implementation will be different in each school, especially for those schools which have recently converted. The audit must reflect the uniqueness and current safeguarding arrangements in each school.

The NYSCP recognises that schools and college staff have limited time and we have therefore devised new audit questions with education partners, keeping the thoroughness and integrity of previous audits and making the audit increasingly useful and relevant.

Where Can I Access Help Completing the Audit?

Should you need support in completing the audit, there are drop-in sessions to help with specific topics in addition to the FAQ's, videos, and written guidance. Should you have further queries please email nyscp@northyorks.gov.uk

Do I Have to Complete All of It?

The audit is a statutory requirement for all schools and educational institutions to ensure they are fulfilling their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Completion of the whole audit by each school gives the NYSCP a full picture and a greater understanding of the safeguarding processes in schools across North Yorkshire and allows both schools and the NYSCP to better identify actions based on this data. Incomplete audits could mean missing critical compliance issues and could lead to incorrect conclusions or recommendations.

Why Is There a Policy List?

The NYSCP has introduced a policy list to assist establishments to assist with assurance purposes. The list includes both mandatory and advisory policies allowing settings to have confidence that they have policies in place, that have staff read and understand them, and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, with any changes passed on. A comprehensive policy list helps schools adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and educational standards and directs them to key documents.

I Have Completed the Audit – What Do I Do Now?

Please submit your completed and ratified response with full governing body sign-off in Excel format on the Safeguarding Audit for Schools 2024/2025 tool. Please do not convert the tool to any other format including PDF.

Ensure that the tool is attached to an email and is not a link to a cloud-shared drive.

Completed responses should be sent to nyscp@northyorks.gov.uk no later than 28th February 2025.

Please note that once the self-assessment has been submitted, it is no longer possible to make further changes.

What Happens Now?

The NYSCP Business Unit will combine and analyse the results of individual school audits and work with the School Improvement Service to create a report based on the answers given to give a picture of the current state of safeguarding in North Yorkshire schools. The report will highlight common themes and issues faced by schools across the county.

NYSCP representatives will invite a small sample of schools to discuss their audits to ensure consistent interpretation of the audit process. This is planned to occur at the end of June to the beginning of July after examinations/testing.

The final report will be submitted to the NYSCP Practice Learning Subgroup for approval and to identify necessary actions. Priorities and areas for improvement are identified, with progress tracked and monitored.

The audit results will be shared with all schools via a Seven Point Briefing, the DSL Network Webinars, and the DSL conference in September 2025.

Why Have a Forum (formally Panel) After Audit Completion?

The forum will be used to help ensure accurate benchmarking of results and to identify themes and common issues found in the audit. The discussion will also comprise of showing examples safeguarding practice and supporting evidence, to encourage a two-way dialogue between establishments and the NYSCP and aims to highlight areas where policies and procedures may be lacking and how the partnership can be more effective in its support.

The NYSCP Business Unit will conduct a randomised sample of all returned safeguarding audit responses, selecting at least 3% of schools to attend a forum and roundtable discussion with NYSCP representatives.

Discussion forums will be composed of up to three members, including representatives from the Local Authority, Police, and/or Health sectors. Forum members will be chosen by the NYSCP.

Selected settings will be invited by email to the Headteacher with forum visits being held at their own school setting for a wider discussion around audit results and to answer any related questions.