



Safeguarding Code of Conduct – Open the Book (England & Wales)

Volunteer storytellers are expected to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

Bible Society requires each church to ensure that each of its Storytellers has been appropriately vetted and is suitable for OtB work prior to the commencement of their role.

It is recommended that Storytellers should receive a clear DBS¹ check in accordance with current DBS guidelines before attending any school as part of their work as an Open the Book (OtB) Storyteller.

For the purposes of this Code, a 'clear DBS check' means that the results of a DBS check reveal no information which would, in the view of the church conducting the vetting, make the individual unsuitable for the Storyteller role.

An individual Storyteller should not be left with children on their own. School staff should always be present at each assembly/act of collective worship.

Within each primary school a person, often the head teacher, will be responsible for safeguarding within the school. They are referred to as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in England or Designated Senior Person (DSP) in Wales.

Each Storyteller should know who this person is. OtB Team Leaders should be kept up to date by the school on their Safeguarding Policy and procedures and share this information with the Storytellers. The update should include:

- How to operate when on school premises as a storytelling team e.g. the agreed procedure to collect and rehearse children to be part of the assembly/act of collective worship
- The procedure for reporting any concerns about individual children
- The procedure for reporting any inappropriate behaviour of Storytellers
- The procedure for reporting an incident which happens outside of school premises
- And anything else the school's DSL /DSP feels is appropriate to protect all parties.

¹ In England and Wales. Storytellers in the Isle of Man or Channel Islands should be cleared by their local safeguarding vetting authority.

OtB will do all it can to promote good practice of behaviour around children through our written communication, training and follow-up workshops.

Some dioceses, church organisations and Social Services will run Safeguarding courses or training days. Schools may also run these for their volunteers. We encourage all Storytellers to enquire about these and attend wherever possible. New teams are encouraged to undergo initial training either through approved trainers or using the training DVD. New Team Leaders should contact Open the Book for support and advice. Existing team training will include Safeguarding and established teams are encouraged to attend training annually. We also recommend that Storytellers attend their church/denomination's Safeguarding training and a session with the school's DSL/DSP.

All those who work with children or who have significant contact with them on behalf of the church are in positions of trust. They will be seen as role models by the children, with whom they are in contact, including when they are 'off duty'. All Storytellers should, therefore, conduct themselves in accordance with the reasonable expectations of someone who represents the church.

Guidelines for storytellers:

1. Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
2. Always share concerns about a child with the school's DSL /DSP. Always share concerns about the behaviour of another storyteller with the relevant Church / Denominational Safeguarding Officer and notify the Human Resources Manager at Bible Society.
3. Seek to minimise situations where you could be alone with an individual child in school. Ensure there is always another Storyteller or member of staff with you. For example:
 - Do not hide out of sight on your own with a child even to make a surprise appearance in a story.
 - Do not collect an individual child on your own from a classroom to bring to the assembly hall.
 - Do not dress children in a separate room without other adults present.
 - Avoid the accidental encounter with a child in the corridor by staying with the rest of the team when you move around the school.
 - Always use the staff toilets and never the children's.
4. Ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful.
5. If any activity requires physical contact, ensure that the child and the teachers or parents are aware of this and its nature beforehand.
6. Obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed.

We are aware that children may seek out OtB Storytellers outside the school premises. Please remember that it is not your place to form an individual relationship with a child. Without being rude or frightening, avoid long conversations especially if there is no other adult present. If you have concerns that there may be a child protection issue, you must refer it to the school's DSL/DSP without delay. If this happens out of school hours, contact the relevant Church / Denominational Safeguarding Officer immediately. Do not deal with it yourself.

Where concerns arise in relation either to a child's safety or the behaviour of another Storyteller, these concerns should be disclosed only in compliance with the relevant law and in line with the safeguarding policies of the relevant school, the relevant church and Bible Society. Such concerns should not be discussed with others, including other Storytellers.

Where possible a child's confidentiality should be respected, but it is important that Storytellers appreciate that confidentiality cannot be maintained if there are known concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of a child. Concerns regarding confidentiality should never be allowed to prevent the appropriate reporting of concerns regarding child welfare.