Essential safeguarding
Questions to ask

Approving policies:
- What safeguarding risks are pupils facing (or likely to face) in your school?
- Do policies reflect local context — type of school, location, pupil demographics, emerging trends?
- What message do your policies send to staff and parents about safeguarding?
- Have staff with relevant expertise and experience had input into policy development?

Monitoring implementation:
- What does your data reveal about safeguarding (attendance, exclusions, incidents, looked-after pupils)?
- What is your first-hand experience of safeguarding culture — are staff approachable, is training evident?
- What do parents, pupils, and staff say about how safeguarding works in practice?
- Are policies and procedures understood, practical, and manageable?
- Is safeguarding a standing agenda item and discussed in all key decisions?
- How do we ensure key information is clearly communicated to families and that consideration is given to how families are equipped to support the school's safeguarding culture

The Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Is the DSL part of the senior leadership team, with the authority, visibility, and access to influence safeguarding strategy?
- Does the DSL have sufficient capacity – including trained deputies, cover for absence, and protected time?
- Are we receiving regular, anonymised safeguarding updates (at least termly) showing patterns, trends, training activity, and capacity risks – without pupil names or case-level details?
- Is the safeguarding link governor meeting the DSL between board meetings, visiting the school, and feeding back insights to the full board?
- How is the DSL being supported and developed? Are there measures to prevent burnout, such as supervision, CPD, and peer support?
- Is safeguarding leadership distributed beyond one person, with clear responsibilities and confident staff across the school?
- How resilient is our safeguarding leadership? Will it remain effective during change or under pressure?

Data
- What concerns aren't we seeing — and why might that be?
- How do we know staff feel confident raising concerns?

NGA Learning Link

Essential safeguarding
Questions to ask

- Are all pupils equally visible and protected in our data?
- What might this data be masking – and how do we know?
- Are pupil voices being heard? Are barriers to disclosure being addressed?
- Are there trends by pupil group (e.g. higher exclusions among pupils with SEND or from certain ethnic groups)?
- Are safeguarding concerns concentrated in specific year groups or times of year?
- Is attendance dipping before a safeguarding disclosure?
- Are there links between behaviour incidents and mental health referrals?
- How is this data shaping the DSL's priorities?
- What interventions have been put in place – and are they working?
- How do we know safeguarding messages are reaching pupils and families?
- Compare termly or annual trends
- Look for "data silence" (e.g. no reported incidents in a context where you'd expect them)
- Ensure pupil and parent voice is influencing safeguarding practice

The local context

- What risks are emerging locally?
- Are we linked into the local safeguarding partnership?
- How is intelligence shared with school leaders?
- What does this risk look like in our school(s)?
- Is there data that signals a concern?
- Are we seeing patterns?
- Do staff know about this issue?
- Has training been updated?
- Is the DSL confident in staff awareness?
- Would a random staff member know what to look for?
- Would they know what to do?
- How is this tested?
- Is the curriculum supporting safety?
- Are children aware and empowered?
- Do they know who to go to?
- Are we asking about context-specific risks?
- Are we triangulating evidence?
- What tells us policies are being enacted?

The Prevent Duty

- Do our safeguarding and behaviour policies explicitly include Prevent, and are they reviewed in response to emerging threats?
- What do our latest Prevent-related risk assessments show? How are these risks shaped by our local context, online behaviours, or incidents?

Essential safeguarding
Questions to ask

- Have all staff (and the board) received Prevent training? Do they understand referral routes and feel confident in using them?
- Which pupil groups may be more vulnerable to extremist narratives, and how are we supporting them (e.g. pupils with SEMH needs or SEND)?
- How is resilience to extremist narratives taught across the curriculum – beyond PSHE or RSE, for example through assemblies, debate clubs, or critical media literacy?
- Are we analysing anonymised safeguarding and behaviour data for indicators of Prevent-related risks?
- How are we working with local Prevent leads, children's services, and the police to manage risk and access support?