

# ASTON FIELDS MIDDLE SCHOOL

## “KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION”

### SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(Including Child-On -Child. See also Radicalisation  
and Extremism Policy, which includes PREVENT)

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 (Draft awaiting ratification by Chair of Governors )

Signature .....

Date of Review: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026

**KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION  
(SEPT 2025)**

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# **Aston Fields Middle School Safeguarding Children Policy**

## **(including Child Protection)**

### **School Details**

**Governors' Committee Responsible: Full Governing Body**

**Governor Lead: Mr G. Wigley**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead of Staff: Mrs H Mynott**

**Deputy Safeguarding Leads: Mr J Brooks/Mrs L Wildsmith/Mr G Hall**

**Prevent Lead: Mrs H Mynott**

**Child Exploitation GET SAFE lead: Mrs H Mynott**

**Status & Review Cycle: Statutory Annual**

**Next Review Date: Reviewed annually in September and ratified by Governors**

### **Safeguarding Statement**

Aston Fields Middle School recognises our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice. Child protection forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

## Key Personnel:

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### The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mrs H Mynott

Email: [office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

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### The deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Mr J Brooks, Mrs L Wildsmith and

#### Mr G Hall

Email: [office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

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### The nominated Safeguarding Governor is Mr G Wigley

Email: [clerktogovs@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:clerktogovs@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

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### The Headteacher is Mrs A Hales

Email: [office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

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### The Chair of Governors is Mrs J Richardson

Email: [clerktogovs@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:clerktogovs@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

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### Designated Teacher for Children in Care is Mr J Brooks

Email: [office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:office@astonfields.worcs.sch.uk)

Telephone: 01527 876026

## External Contact

Children's Services Family Front Door **01905 822666**

(Email: [childrensteam@worcestershires.gov.uk](mailto:childrensteam@worcestershires.gov.uk))

Emergency Duty Team (EDT) – out of hours **01905 768020**

Community Social Work Team **01905 846057**

Local Authority Designated Officer **01905 846221**

(Email: [lado@worcestershires.gov.uk](mailto:lado@worcestershires.gov.uk))

Education Adviser – Safeguarding: **01905 844436**

Denise Hannibal Email: [dhannibal@worcestershires.gov.uk](mailto:dhannibal@worcestershires.gov.uk)

Channel Chair Paul Kinsella, Advanced Health Practitioner .....**0800 0113764**

Ofsted .....**0300 123 1231**

Childline .....**0800 1111**

Women's Aid (24hr. Helpline) .....**0800 980 3331**

West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) .....**01905 724514**

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 amendment; the Children and Families Act 2014, S 175 of the Education Act 2002; and in line with government publications the Teachers' Standards 2012, [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) work and ['Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2025](#), the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, Serious Crime Act 2015, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the County-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

1.2 Aston Fields Middle School fully recognises our moral and statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.

1.3 We will ensure that we comply with our duties under all relevant legislation. We will ensure this policy and our procedures are effective and comply with the law at all times, this includes training for all staff.

1.4 Our policy applies to all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to the school. We recognise that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play and should therefore consider, at all times, what is in the **best interests** of the child.

1.5 There are five main elements to our policy:

- Ensuring we practise safer recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. **A Single Central Record (SCR)** is kept by the school. This is monitored monthly by the Governor responsible for Safeguarding and half-termly by the DSL. All staff will have completed an enhanced DBS check.

Visitors who spend less than 3 days in the school (not including an overnight event) will receive the school's Safeguarding Advice pamphlet and will be accompanied at all times, unless they can prove (and we can check) they are already DBS registered. The school will continue to maintain its SCR according to Government guidelines.

- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse;
- Supporting pupils who have been identified as in need of early help or at risk of harm in accordance with his/her agreed Child Protection, Child in Need or Early Help plan, supporting other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment;
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

1.6 We recognise that because of the day to day contact with children, school staff are well placed to identify concerns early, observe the outward signs of abuse, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating. The school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel safe, secure, valued and respected and are encouraged to talk, believing they will be listened to;
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried and reinforce the school mantra of "Tell an adult you trust";
- Include opportunities in the curriculum, specifically through PSHE and Computing, for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse (including online) and to know who they should turn to for help, following DfE Statutory Guidance "Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

(July 2025) and DfE non-statutory guidance 'Teaching Online Safety in Schools' (June 2019).

- Particularly focus on the three highest crimes committed within our local area as shown in statistics from May 2025. These were violence and sexual offences, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage and arson. Data taken from <https://www.crime-statistics.co.uk>

1.7 We seek to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect children from harm. To this end we will:

- Ensure there are systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback e.g. through school/class councils, safety questionnaires, participation in anti-bullying and online safety events;
- Ensure that the child's thoughts/wishes and feelings are sought and recorded on all referrals.

## 2. Procedures

2.1 We will follow the [West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures](#) as required by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP) and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE).

2.2 The school will:

- Ensure it has a senior leader nominated as Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who has received appropriate training and support for this role;
- Ensure it has at least one member of staff who will act in the absence of the DSL (deputy DSL);
- Ensure it has a nominated governor who will take the safeguarding leadership responsibility for the school's safeguarding arrangements;
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary and supply staff and volunteers) and the governing body knows the name of the DSL and any deputies and understands their role;
- Ensure that the DSL and/or a deputy DSL is always available to speak during school hours and has made adequate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term time activities;
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are alert to the potential need for early help and aware of those children whose vulnerabilities may indicate a greater need and are aware of the role they may play in supporting other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment;
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including the specific issues of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Children Missing from Education (CME), Radicalisation and Extremism (Prevent) and Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment, and maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here';
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibility for referring any concerns to the DSL, deputy DSLs or other members of the senior leadership team in a timely manner and are aware that they may raise concerns directly with Children's Social Care Services if they believe their concerns have not been listened to or acted upon;
- Ensure that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the school prospectus and ensuring its policy is signposted via the school website and available to parents/carers on request;
- Work with social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm;

- Operate a lettings policy which ensures the suitability of adults working with children on school sites at any time;
- Ensure that community users organising activities for children are aware of, and understand the need for compliance with, the school's child protection guidelines and procedures;
- Ensure that the duty of care towards its pupils and staff is promoted by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and unwise behaviour and assist staff to monitor their own standards and practice;
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and are aware of whistleblowing procedures and helplines;
- Be aware of and follow procedures set out by the DfE and the WSCP where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff or volunteer, including making a referral to the local authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Ensure that a referral is made to the DBS and/or Teaching Regulation Agency if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or suspended or removed from regulated activity where the harm criteria is met, or would have been had they not resigned;
- Operate safer recruitment practice, ensuring that at least one member on every recruitment panel has completed safer recruitment training.
- Ensure that we will contribute to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, given the pivotal role we play in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Understand our local safeguarding arrangements and work with partners from Worcestershire Children's safeguarding partnership WSCP to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs. The Worcestershire Children First (WCF) Head Teacher Safeguarding Steering Group which is represented by all phases of education are part of our WSCP and make all schools aware and follow the local arrangements for local protocol and assessment policies and procedures. We are also prepared to supply information as requested by the safeguarding partners.

[Worcestershire County Council Safeguarding](#)

- Ensure we work with WCC social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a coordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans to provide additional support to children subject to child protection plans.
- Ensure we allow access for children's social care from the host local authority and, where appropriate, from a placing local authority, for that authority to conduct, or to consider whether to conduct, a section 17 or a section 47 assessment.

2.3 Our procedures will be regularly reviewed and updated.

## Human Rights Act

Aston Fields Middle School fully recognises the fundamental rights and freedoms, as set out in The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA), that everyone in the UK is entitled to and contains the Articles and protocols of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the Convention) that are deemed to apply in the UK. As a public organisation, Aston Fields Middle School will ensure we respect and protect an individual's human rights when we make individual decisions about them.

Aston Fields Middle School recognises that being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of these rights, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances. Further information (including on absolute and qualified rights) can be found at Human Rights | Equality and Human Rights Commission ([equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com)).

## Equality Act

The school will use the guidance provided by the government on how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the act, which can be found at Equality Act 2010: advice for schools - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). Further information can also be found in Equality Act guidance | Equality and Human Rights Commission ([equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com)).

### 3. Safeguarding in the Curriculum

3.1 At Aston Fields Middle School, pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, through various teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum. Our pupils are taught to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help. Moreover, the school assesses the risks and issues in the wider community when considering the wellbeing and safety of our pupils.

3.2 The following areas are among those addressed in PSHE/SRE and in the wider curriculum. The culture and ethos of Aston Fields Middle School is positive and is proactive in its approach and welcomes opportunities to promote safeguarding and emotional health and wellbeing through the formal and informal curriculum. Mandatory Education and Relationships (KS2) and Sex Education (KS3) for all pupils and explicit Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons provide an important opportunity to embed wellbeing and resilience into the curriculum. These lessons form part of a wider “whole school approach”. The delivery of Personal, Social and Health Education is fundamental to our promotion of emotional health. Through the planned programmes and informal curriculum, opportunities exist to explore issues appropriate to pupils’ ages and stages of development.

3.3 The following areas are among those addressed in PSHE/STRE and in the wider curriculum.

#### **Bullying/Cyber Bullying**

Anti-bullying work is embedded in the everyday practice of the school. We are fully immersed in the Anti-Bullying Week campaign and our pupils receive regular assemblies on bullying and hate crime. The school uses a range of resources from the Anti-Bullying Alliance to help support and educate our pupils.

#### **Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

Aston Fields Middle School uses a range of resources to teach about Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse through our PSHE curriculum and Personal Development Programme.

#### **Online Safety / Mobile technologies**

All pupils, across all year groups, participate in a specific unit of work at the start of each academic year in computing to help to keep them safe

### 4. Training

4.1 When staff join our school they will be informed of the safeguarding children arrangements in place. They will be given a copy of this policy, including its Appendices and the school’s safeguarding response to children who go missing from education, the behaviour policy (including measures to prevent bullying, cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying), Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (and Annex B for school leaders and those who work directly with children), the school's code of conduct and the leaflet 'Safer Working Practice for Staff in Education Settings' and told who the DSL is, who acts in their absence and what this role includes

- 4.2 All staff will receive induction in safeguarding children. The induction programme will include basic child protection information relating to signs and symptoms of abuse, how to manage a disclosure from a child, when and how to record a concern about the welfare of a child and advice on safe working practice. The training will also include online safety and an understanding of the role and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring.
- 4.3 All volunteers, supply staff and regular visitors to our school will be told where our policy is kept, given the name of the DSL and informed of the school's procedures in reporting concerns.
- 4.4 All staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and safe working practice (including online safety and the understanding of the expectations, roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring), updated at least annually. Training will include signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as CSE, CCE, FGM, Domestic Abuse, Prevent, Online safety and Child on Child abuse, including sexting and sexual violence and sexual harassment. Training will also include how to record and report abuse both within school and to Children's Social Care.
- 4.5 In addition, staff will receive safeguarding and child protection (including Online Safety) updates (through email, e-bulletins and staff meetings) from the DSL as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively
- 4.6 Staff with specific responsibility for safeguarding children will undertake both single and inter-agency training at a level suitable to their role and responsibilities, updated at least every two years. In addition to formal training the DSL and deputies will update their knowledge and skills via WSCP newsletters, briefings, network meetings and seminars, at regular intervals, at least annually.
- 4.7 Staff with leadership responsibilities will undertake further relevant training in safeguarding related issues such as CSE, FGM, Radicalisation (WRAP training), Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment, Management of Allegations of Abuse and cascade the learning from this training to the rest of the staff.
- 4.8 We will ensure that **all** governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training at induction. This training will equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place at Aston Fields Middle School are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding. This training will be updated at least annually.

## 5 Responsibilities

- 5.1 In accordance with the statutory guidance "Keeping Children safe in Education - September 2025", the Governing Body at Aston Fields Middle School will nominate a member to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding children who will liaise with the DSL and/or Headteacher/Senior Leadership team in matters relating to safeguarding. It will ensure that:
- child protection/safeguarding policy, procedures and training in place are always effective and comply with the law. The policy is made available publicly.
  - the policy will be reviewed at least annually or more often, for example in the event of new guidance or a significant incident.
  - Governors have an enhanced criminal records certificate from the DBS.
  - we check if a person we recruit as a governor is barred because of being subject to a Section 128 direction.
  - we operate safer recruitment practices, including appropriate use of references and checks on new staff and volunteers. Furthermore, the Head Teacher, a nominated Governor and other staff involved in the recruitment process have undertaken Safer Recruitment Training.

- procedures are in place for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers/ people in a position of trust.
- there is a senior member of Aston Fields Middle School's leadership team who is designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with child protection (the "Designated Safeguarding Lead") and there is always cover for this role (at least one deputy) with appropriate arrangements for before/after school and out of term activities.
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead undertakes effective Local Authority training (in addition to basic child protection training) and this is refreshed annually. In addition to this formal training, their knowledge and skills are updated at regular intervals (at least annually) via safeguarding e-briefings etc. The DSL takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) and does not delegate this responsibility;
- the DSL is given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters and to take part in strategy discussions and other inter-agency meetings;
- there are Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads who have been trained the same as our DSL. Whilst the activities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding cannot.
- the DSL and deputy DSL role is explicit in the role holders' post;
- the Senior Mental Health Lead for the school will take part in the DfE training <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/research-and-practice/the-link-programme/>
- the Headteacher, and all other staff and volunteers who work with children, undertake appropriate training which is regularly updated (at least every year); and that new staff and volunteers who work with children are **made** aware of the school's arrangements for child protection and their responsibilities (including this policy and Part 1 and Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 ) Training includes Online Safety, FGM/Prevent and Child Exploitation.
- any deficiencies or weaknesses in these arrangements brought to the attention of the Governing Body will be rectified without delay.
- the Chair of Governors (Mrs J Richardson) (or, in the absence of a Chair, the Vice Chair, Mr G Wigley) deals with any allegations of abuse made against the Head Teacher, with advice and guidance from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- effective policies and procedures are in place and updated annually including a behaviour "code of conduct" for staff and volunteers -
- [Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those who work with children in education settings 2022](#).
- information is provided to the Local Authority (on behalf of the WSCP) when requested, for example through the Annual Safeguarding Return (e.g. section 175 audit)
- children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety. This is part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.
- there is an individual member of the Governing Body, Mr G Wigley, who will champion issues to do with safeguarding children and child protection within the school, liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and provide information and reports to the Governing Body.
- Aston Fields Middle School contributes to inter-agency working in line with statutory guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023) including providing a co-ordinated offer of Early Help for children who require this. Early Help may be offered directly through our school early help provision or via referral to an external support agency. Safeguarding arrangements take into account the procedures and practice of the local authority and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (WCSP).

[Early Help Family Support | Worcestershire County Council](#)

- among other obligations, the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and the GDPR place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information we hold safe and secure. [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#)
- Aston Fields Middle School complies with all legislative safeguarding duties, including the duty to report suspected or known cases of FGM and the duty to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism. In conjunction with the Headteacher and DSL they should assess the level of risk within the school and put actions in place to reduce that risk
- safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, available to parents/carers via the school website or by other means and reviewed at least annually;
- safeguarding responses are put in place in cases where children go missing from education;
- mechanisms are in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025;
- termly reports on the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures are presented to the governing body;
- any returns requested by the LA/WSCP (e.g. 175/157 audit, CSE audit) are completed in a timely manner to enable the WSCP to meet its statutory duties;
- ensure appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to safeguard children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material.

5.2 The Headteacher and/or Senior Leadership Team will ensure that:

- the Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully implemented and followed by all staff;
- sufficient funding, support, time and resources are allocated to enable the DSL and other staff to discharge their responsibilities with regard to child protection;
- all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that these are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistleblowing procedures;
- all allegations of abuse against staff are reported to the LADO in a timely manner.

5.3 The DSL will co-ordinate action on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children within the school setting. The DSL is responsible for:

- Organising child protection induction training for all newly appointed staff and whole staff training, refreshed at least annually with further updates as required;
- Ensuring the school's safeguarding and child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately;
- Ensuring the school's safeguarding and child protection policy is reviewed annually and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly;
- Ensuring the safeguarding and child protection policy is available publicly and parents/carers are aware that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made;
- Helping promote educational outcomes by sharing information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children (including children with a social worker) are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school leadership staff, so that teaching staff are aware of the challenges that children in this group may face and can therefore offer additional academic support and adjustments, if required;
- Providing a mechanism to ensure that all staff understand and are able to discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Undertaking, in conjunction with the Headteacher and Safeguarding Governor, an annual audit of safeguarding procedures, using the county's 175/157 audit or similar;
- Making use of the Levels of Need guidance about whether or not the threshold for Early Help or Children's Social Care intervention is met;

- Referring a child to the Family Front Door, when there are concerns about possible abuse and neglect.
- Supporting staff who make referrals to the Family Front Door;
- Referring a child to the Channel programme when there are concerns about possible radicalisation or involvement in extremist groups;
- Supporting staff who make referrals to the Channel programme;
- Referring cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required;
- Referring cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/2020/when-to-call-the-police--guidance-for-schools-and-colleges.pdf>
- Acting as a point of contact with the three safeguarding partners (the local authority, the clinical commissioning group for our area within the LA, and the chief officer of police for our area);
- Liaising with the Headteacher to ensure they are informed of all child protection issues, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations;
- Liaising with other staff (for example pastoral support staff, school nurses or mentors, IT technicians or e-safety co-ordinators, SENDCOs and Looked After Children Co-ordinators) on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies;
- Keeping written records of concerns about children, including the use of body maps, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately;
- Ensuring all child protection records are kept securely, separate from the main pupil file, and in locked/password protected locations;
- Ensuring that all child protection files are transferred in a safe and timely manner when a child moves settings, both between and across phases, within and out of county and that a receipt of transfer is obtained and that any appropriate information with the new school is shared in advance of leaving, if appropriate;
- Notifying the key worker if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is subject to a child protection plan;
- Monitoring unauthorised absence, supported by the attendance officer, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions, reporting concerns in line with 'missing children' procedures;
- Developing effective links with relevant agencies and other professionals and co-operating as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters including co-operation with serious case reviews, attendance at strategy meetings, initial and review child protection conferences, core group and child in need review meetings;
- Contributing to assessments and providing a report to initial and review conferences which has been shared with parents/carers first, whenever possible;
- Co-ordinating a programme of safety, health and well-being through the curriculum, including issues of protective behaviours, healthy relationships, staying safe on-line, and the promotion of fundamental British values.
- Acting as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.
- During term time, the designated safeguarding lead and/or deputies should always be available (during school hours whilst pupils are on site) for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns.
- DSL and deputies will undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role, and this will be updated at least every two years.
- In addition to the formal training, DSL and deputies will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals through more informal means such as e-bulletins, reading of SCR and/or attending termly DSL network meetings to keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

## 6. Procedures for Managing Concerns (What staff will do if they have a concern about a child)

- 6.1 Our school adheres to child protection procedures that have been agreed locally through the [Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) (WSCP). Where we identify children and families in need of support, we will carry out our responsibilities in accordance with the [West Mercia Consortium inter-agency procedures](#) and the [WSCP Levels of Need Guidance](#)
- 6.2 Every member of staff, including volunteers working with children at our school, is advised to maintain an attitude of '*it could happen here*' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child and have a responsibility to take action as outlined in this policy. They should not assume a colleague or other professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.
- 6.3 All staff should be aware of indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection (see Appendix 3).
- 6.4 All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
- 6.5 All staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of this environment. All staff should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside of their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and serious youth violence.
- 6.6 All staff are encouraged to report any concerns that they have and not see these as insignificant. On occasions, a referral is justified by a single incident such as an injury or disclosure of abuse. More often however, concerns accumulate over a period of time and are evidenced by building up a picture of harm over time; this is particularly true in cases of emotional abuse and neglect. In these circumstances, it is crucial that staff record and pass on concerns in accordance with this policy to allow the DSL to build up a picture and access support for the child at the earliest opportunity. These should be reported without delay and in writing using the agreed template on CPOMS. A reliance on memory without accurate and contemporaneous records of concern could lead to a failure to protect.
- 6.7 It is *not* the responsibility of school staff to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. All staff, however, have a duty to recognise concerns and pass the information on in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- 6.8 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should be used as a first point of contact for concerns and queries regarding any safeguarding concern in our school. Any member of staff or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure of abuse or suspects that a child is at risk of harm must report it immediately to the DSL or, if unavailable, to the deputy designated lead. In the absence of either of the above, the matter should be brought to the attention of the most senior member of staff or Children's Social Care.

- 6.9 All concerns about a child or young person should be reported without delay and recorded, using the online system CPOMS. (Annex 1) or Form 1.
- 6.10 Following receipt of any information raising concern, the DSL will consider what action to take. This could include;
- managing any support for the child internally via the school's own pastoral support process, including referral to the SEMH team for 1:1 support with a learning mentor
  - undertaking an Early Help assessment;
  - making a referral to external services, including statutory services
  - and seek advice from Children's Services as required.
- All information and actions taken, including the reasons for any decisions made, will be fully documented.
- 6.11 All referrals will be made in line with [local procedures](#) as detailed on the [Worcestershire County Council's Website](#) .
- 6.12 If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral should be made to Children's Services immediately. Anybody can make a referral. If the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the staff member with concerns should press for re-consideration by raising concerns again with the DSL and/or the Headteacher. Concerns should always lead to help for the child at some point.
- 6.13 Staff should always follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy in the first instance. However, they may also share information directly with Children's Services, or the police if:
- the situation is an emergency and the designated senior person, their deputy and the Headteacher are all unavailable;
  - they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the pupil's safety.
- 6.14 Any member of staff who does not feel that concerns about a child have been responded to appropriately and in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy should raise their concerns with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. If any member of staff does not feel the situation has been addressed appropriately at this point they should contact Children's Services directly with their concerns.

## Managing a Disclosure

- 6.15 Teachers and other staff in schools are in a unique position to observe children's behaviour over time and often develop close and trusting relationships with pupils. If a child discloses directly to a member of staff, the following procedures will be followed:
- Listen carefully to what is said;
  - Ask only open questions such as:
    - 'Tell me what happened.'
    - 'Please explain what you mean when you say .....
    - 'Can you describe the person?' or 'Can you describe the place?'
  - Do not ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, e.g. 'Did your Dad hit you?'
  - Do not force the child to repeat what he/she said in front of another person;
  - Do not begin an investigation – for example by asking the child to record what happened in writing or taking a photograph of any injuries;
  - Never promise a child that you will not share this information, as this ultimately may not be in their best interests;
  - Do reassure the child that you are taking their disclosure seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are

creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a disclosure.

- Report immediately to the DSL and complete a record as soon after the disclosure as possible and in any case within 24 hours, using the child's words as far as possible. Use body maps to record any observed injuries (this can be handwritten on Form 1 or recorded on CPOMS).

## 7. Specific Safeguarding Issues

### 7.1 Child Missing Education (CME)

We recognise that a child going missing from education, particularly persistently absent, is a potential indicator to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse and/or neglect, which may also include sexual abuse or exploitation and can be a sign of Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation including involvement in County Lines. It may also indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of FGM or forced marriage.

Our procedures for dealing with children missing from education are based on the [Children Missing Education \(CME\) - Worcestershire Children First Education Services](#) and [Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures](#). Staff are made aware of these procedures at induction and through our Attendance Policy. We will make every attempt to obtain more than one emergency contact number for each child registered at the school to ensure we are able to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing from education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

School will also work alongside the guidance in [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

We will ensure that we inform the local authority when removing a child from the school role at standard and non-standard transition points in line with [the DfE guidance on Children Missing Education](#).

We will ensure that we follow these procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their ongoing missing in the future.

We will ensure that we report children missing education to the LA CME officer, in line with statutory requirements.

Children at risk of missing in education are:

Children of compulsory school age who are:

- not on a school roll
- not being educated other than at school
- identified as having been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (4 weeks)

Children go missing from education for a number of reasons including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system
- they are removed by their parents
- behaviour and/or attendance difficulties
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area
- the family move home regularly

- problems at home

The law requires all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to be in full time education.

- If a pupil who is identified as CLA is absent and this is an unauthorised absence the school will contact the Social Worker without delay

### **Procedures for a Missing Child during the School Day (8:50-3:30 + out of hours learning)**

If a child has attended school and been registered as present and subsequently is reported as missing, for example, has failed to attend a lesson or has been observed leaving the site, the following procedure must be adopted immediately:

- DSL or Deputy must be notified immediately it is known a child is missing.  
 DSL or Deputy will ascertain where a child was last seen and whether it is thought they may have left the site without permission. (Office signing out book to be checked first). If it is assumed a child has left the site without permission, parents/carers will be contacted immediately and advice given to contact the police. If it is assumed that the child is still within the school site, the DSL or Deputy will organise an immediate search of the school. If the pupil is not found within 10 minutes (this is deemed a reasonable amount of time to conduct a search of this site), then parents/carers and police will be contacted.
- For Out of Hours learning, the member of staff leading the activity will complete an attendance register provided by the school office. (Parents'/carers permission will always be obtained before a child is permitted to attend extra-curricular activities and therefore producing a register should not be burdensome for staff). **If a member of staff identifies that child expected to be attending is missing from the extra-curricular activity, parents/carers must be called immediately by the office staff to identify whether the pupil is safe and whereabouts are known. NOTE: registers must be kept for extra-curricular activities and kept in the school office. This is especially important in case of fire out of normal school hours.** In the event of a fire out of hours, it is the responsibility of the relevant member of staff leading the activity to take the register to the fire evacuation point (main playground) and register the pupils according to the Fire Policy.

### **Elective Home Educated**

7.2

Many home educated children have an overwhelmingly positive learning experience. At Aston Fields Middle School we expect the parents' decision to home educate to be made with their child's best education at the heart of the decision. However, we know this is not the case for all, and home education can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs.

From September 2016 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended, we must inform our LA of all deletions from our admission register when a child is taken off roll.

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, we will work together to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible.

Ideally, this would be before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child. This is particularly important where a child has SEND, is vulnerable, and/or has a social worker. DfE guidance for local authorities on Elective home education sets out the role and responsibilities of LAs and their powers to engage with parents in relation to EHE. Although this is primarily aimed at LAs, schools should also be familiar with this

[Worcestershire children first home education](#)

### **7.3 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – see Annex 4**

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse involving criminal behaviours against children and young people. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

CSE can affect any child, who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

We recognise that CSE can have a long-lasting adverse impact on a child's physical and emotional health. Sexual exploitation involves an individual or group of adults taking advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or groups of children or young people. Victims can be boys or girls. Children and young people are often unwittingly drawn into sexual exploitation through the offer of friendship and care, gifts, drugs and alcohol, and sometimes accommodation. It may also be linked to child trafficking.

The school addresses the risks of sexual exploitation in the PSHE and SRE curriculum. A common feature of sexual exploitation is that the child often doesn't recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and doesn't see themselves as a victim. The child may initially resent what they perceive as interference by staff, but staff must act on their concerns, as they would for any other type of abuse.

All staff, volunteers and governors are made aware of the indicators of sexual exploitation, the fact that the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual and that it does not always involve physical contact but can occur through the use of technology. All concerns are reported immediately to the DSL

### **7.4 Child Criminal Exploitation – County Lines – see Annex 5**

This is where children and young people are being exploited and drawn into drug related activity by criminal gangs, groups or individuals. Typically, the gang exploits young or vulnerable people to store and/or supply drugs, move cash and to secure the use of homes belonging to vulnerable adults. There is a cross over between CSE and County Lines and young people are sometimes required to offer sex in order to pay off perceived debts. Concerns about young people being possibly involved should be passed to the DSL who will refer to Police and Family Front Door.

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however all staff should be aware

that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

We may identify a child may be at risk of exploitation and the Designate Safeguarding Lead will work with and support and consider completion of a GET SAFE risk assessment which will be referred to Worcestershire Children First GET SAFE team for further assessment and support. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also consider referral to Worcestershire Children First Family Front Door as part of our schools and local safeguarding procedures. More information can be found: [Get Safe - keeping children and young people safe from criminal exploitation](#)

## 7.5 Domestic Abuse –see Annex 6

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse/violence in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. We recognise that exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships as well as in the context of their home life.

At Aston Fields Middle School, where we identify a victim of domestic abuse being high risk, we will consider a referral to MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference). The purpose of MARAC is to share information and establish a multi-agency action plan to support the victim and to make links with other public protection procedures, particularly safeguarding children, vulnerable adults and the management of offenders. We will continue to provide help and support in order to safeguard children. This will usually be led by the designated safeguarding lead. MARAC does not replace a referral to children social care. [Worcestershire children first Domestic abuse guidance](#)

### Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is used to highlight that a Domestic Abuse Incident has taken place and the police have been called or visited the family home. We ensure we are keeping an eye on changed behaviour and logging anything out of the ordinary. Aston Fields receives Operation Encompass notifications via WCC Children's Portal daily from West Mercia Police. All parents have received a letter informing them on how we use Operation Encompass notifications. (See more in Annex 6)

We will ensure that our pupils are educated to ensure they understand what a healthy Relationship looks like, for example the [WSCP Healthy Relationships – a whole school approach](#) and resources from the [WCC Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence website](#). [Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence | Worcestershire County Council](#)

All concerns regarding Domestic Abuse will be reported to the DSL, who will ensure that appropriate support is available to the young people and make referrals to the Family Front Door where the threshold for social care intervention is met.

## 7.6 Radicalisation and Extremism – see Annex 9

We recognise that children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. We recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation and extremism is no different to safeguarding against any other vulnerability in today's society. We will ensure that:

- Through training, staff, volunteers and governors have an understanding of what radicalisation and extremism is, why we need to be vigilant in school and how to respond when concerns arise.
- There are systems in place for keeping pupils safe from extremist material when accessing the internet in our school by using effective filtering and usage policies and monitoring systems.
- The DSL has received Prevent training and will act as the point of contact within our school for any concerns relating to radicalisation and extremism.
- The DSL will make referrals in accordance with [West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures](#). Prevent referrals may be passed to Channel panel and will represent our school at Channel meetings as required to discuss this assessment. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.
- Through our curriculum, we will promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. We encourage pupils to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in the school and where political issues are brought to the attention of the pupils, reasonably practicable steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to pupils.
- We value freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs/ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Both pupils and teachers have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility and free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued. Free speech is not an unqualified privilege; it is subject to laws and policies governing equality, human rights, community safety and community cohesion.
- We seek to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to those linked to Islamist ideology, Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.
- We will use relevant information, tools and resources to help our staff and parents/carers recognise and address extremism and radicalisation in young people, for example the [Educate Against Hate Educate Against Hate - Prevent Radicalisation & Extremism website](#).

## 7.7 'Honour Based' Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – see Annex 7 and Annex 8

We recognise that our staff are well placed to identify concerns and take action to prevent children from becoming victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other forms of so-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) and provide guidance on these issues through our safeguarding training. If staff have a concern regarding a child that might be at risk of HBA they should inform the DSL who will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multiagency liaison with police and children's social care.

Where FGM has taken place, since 31 October 2015 there has been a mandatory reporting duty placed on teachers (persons employed or engaged to carry out teaching work). Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime

Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers in England and Wales, to personally report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils or students, but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting applies. We will provide guidance and support to our teachers on this requirement and further information on when and how to make a report can be found in the following Home Office guidance: [Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation- procedural information](#) .

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological.

A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices as a way to coerce a person into marriage. Staff in our school understand we could potentially play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage. The Forced Marriage Unit has published [statutory guidance](#) and [Multi-agency guidelines](#), of which focus on the role of schools and colleges. Our staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email [fm@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fm@fco.gov.uk).

In addition, since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial ‘marriages’ as well as legal marriages.

## **7.8 Modern Slavery**

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places a new statutory duty on public authorities, including schools, to notify the National Crime Agency (NCA) (section 52 of the Act) on observing signs or receiving intelligence relating to modern slavery. The public authority (including schools) bears this obligation where it has ‘reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking’. Staff need to be aware of this duty and inform the DSL should they suspect or receive information that either parents/carers or their children may be victims of modern slavery. The DSL will then contact the [NCA](#).

## **7.9 Child Abduction and Community Safety Incidents**

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances) and by strangers.

Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of the school can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation.

As children get older and are granted more independence (e.g. walking to school on their own) we provide practical advice on how to keep themselves safe, delivered by teachers during form time and by senior leaders during assembly times.

## 7.10 Child on child abuse(including sexual violence and sexual harassment) –see Annex10

- Staff at Aston Fields Middle School know that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child on child abuse). It can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child on child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.
- Even if there are no reports in school it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have **any** concerns regarding child on child abuse, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy).
- All staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boy being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.
- Child on Child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:
  - bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
  - abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
  - physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
  - sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;(this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
  - sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
  - causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
  - consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes’ images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
  - upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
  - initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- All our staff are clear as to the school’s policy and procedures with regards to child on child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.
- Staff will be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.
- All our staff are aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office’s [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance.](#)

## Child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.
- Aston Fields Middle School will respond to reports of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment. All staff have received updated training and will have read the Child on Child Policy detailing the response to reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.

## Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

- Aston Fields Middle School carefully considers any report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the school's initial response. Important considerations will include:
  - the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. We will support victims to be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect other children;
  - the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
  - the ages of the children involved;
  - the developmental stages of the children involved;
  - any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
  - if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature).
  - Aston Fields Middle School recognises the term '**victim**' to refer to those who have been subjected to abuse. But we recognise that not every victim will view themselves as such, also we use the term '**alleged perpetrator(s)**' and where appropriate '**perpetrator(s)**.' Though they caution the use of this term as in some cases the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well

## Children sharing a classroom: Initial considerations when the report is made

- Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim.
- However, reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim, and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator(s) is likely to be especially distressing. Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be removed from any classes they share with the victim. The school should also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) a reasonable distance apart on school premises (including during any before or after school-based activities) and on transport to and from the school, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of all children involved and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s).

- For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing school premises and school or transport, should be considered immediately.
- In all cases, the initial report should be carefully evaluated, reflecting the considerations. The wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children in the school or college will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

### **Options to manage the report**

- Aston Fields Middle School will consider every report on a case-by-case basis (as per paragraph 489 of KCSIE 2025). When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that will be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, school will speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not us from taking immediate action to safeguard children, where required. There are four likely scenarios to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.
  - that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers.
  - the importance of understanding intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
  - are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and
  - other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

### **Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s)**

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s):

- School have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education, school will safeguard and support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions.
- School will consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s) and nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- School will consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The alleged perpetrator(s) may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police.
- If an alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), we will inform the new educational institution of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The designated safeguarding lead will take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file.
- The National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA) provides support for professionals involved in work with, or related to, sexual offending.

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

We understand the importance that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff are aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. We know that evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

Staff are aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

### **Upskirting**

The Voyeurism (offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. ‘Upskirting’ typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and/or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

Reports of incidents of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be responded to in line with Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

Support for the victims of abuse will be in line with support outlined in the school’s Behaviour and Anti-bullying policies. All victims will be reassured that they are being taken seriously and they will be supported and kept safe. No victim will ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report or feel that they are creating a problem by making a report. For victims of sexual abuse, the school should follow advice given by Children’s Social Care and consider using external agencies, such as Early Help or [West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre](#) to support any strategies that they may be able to provide within school.

Depending on the nature of abuse, the school may need to consider providing measures to protect and support the victim, the alleged perpetrator and other pupils and/or staff in the school by means of a risk assessment. The risk assessment should be recorded and kept under review

## **7.11 Children with Family in Prison**

- Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. [NICCO](#) provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.
- Staff at Aston Fields Middle School will monitor closely any pupil who has a family member in prison and will offer extra support, initially through Personal Development and Academic guidance 1:1 sessions with the form tutor and/or the Director of Year Group. If further support is required a referral will be made to the SEMH team for discussion and allocation.

## 7.12 Homelessness

- Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The DSL (and any deputies) are aware of contact details and referral routes in to the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. The following factsheets usefully summarise the new duties: [Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets](#). The new duties shift focus to early intervention and encourage those at risk to seek support as soon as possible, before they are facing a homelessness crisis.
- In most cases, school staff will consider homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are on the provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation

## 7.13 Children Requiring Mental Health Support

**Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organisation)**

- As a school we know we have an important part to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and to this end, we have clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, clear referral systems and routes for escalation. We are also aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- At our school, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our staff and pupil body. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. In an average classroom, at least three children will be suffering from a diagnosable mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health strategies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by mental ill health.
- Mental health disorders are emotional and behavioural problems that are "outside the normal range" for a child or young person's age or gender. To be considered a mental health disorder, the problem will be particularly severe or persistent over time, or the child will experience multiple problems at the same time.
- Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a pupil should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the pupil is in danger of immediate harm then the normal school child protection procedures should be followed with an immediate referral to the Designated Safeguarding

Lead/Deputy DSL. If the pupil presents a medical emergency then the normal procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including alerting the first aid staff and contacting the emergency services if necessary.

- The school recognises that only trained professionals should attempt to make a formal diagnosis of a mental health condition. We do, however, have trained staff who are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or at risk of developing one.
- The school will use a number of possible support strategies such as intervention from one of the school's learning mentors, consulting our educational psychologist, or for more complex cases, referring to CAMHS CAST or CAMHS.
- Where severe problems are identified, a pupil will be referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). This will be done in consultation with the DSL, SENDCO, the pupil and their parents/carers.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) CAMHS is used as a term for all services that work with children who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing. Services vary depending on local authority. Most CAHMS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals and contact numbers.
- The skills, knowledge and understanding needed by our pupils to keep themselves and others physically and mentally healthy and safe are included as part of our developmental PSHE curriculum and within Learning for Life Curriculum. The specific content of lessons will be determined by the specific needs of the cohort we're teaching but there will always be an emphasis on enabling pupils to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.
- We will follow the PSHE Association Guidance to ensure that we teach mental health and emotional wellbeing issues in a safe and sensitive manner which helps rather than harms.
- Mental health is a broad issue and includes a wide range of disorders. Therefore, a large spectrum of symptoms is possible. Note that behavioural changes do not necessarily point to mental health problems – they may be temporary and caused by a negative experience or distressing life event. However, persistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviour can indicate an underlying problem.

### **Warning signs**

- School staff may become aware of warning signs which indicate a pupil is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and staff observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Possible warning signs include:
  - Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
  - Changes in eating/sleeping habits
  - Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
  - Changes in activity and mood
  - Lowering of academic achievement
  - Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
  - Abusing drugs or alcohol
  - Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
  - Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
  - Secretive behaviour
  - Skipping PE or getting changed secretly
  - Lateness to or absence from school
  - Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
  - An increase in lateness or absenteeism

## **Risk factors**

Certain individuals and groups are more at risk of developing mental health problems, these include, but are not limited to:

- Children looked after
- Children with learning difficulties
- Children on the autism spectrum
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds

There are also risk factors within the family such as abuse, bereavement, and parental psychiatric illness or other traumatic adverse childhood experiences. These can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Staff should also be mindful of risks within the school environment such as bullying, poor relationships and discrimination.

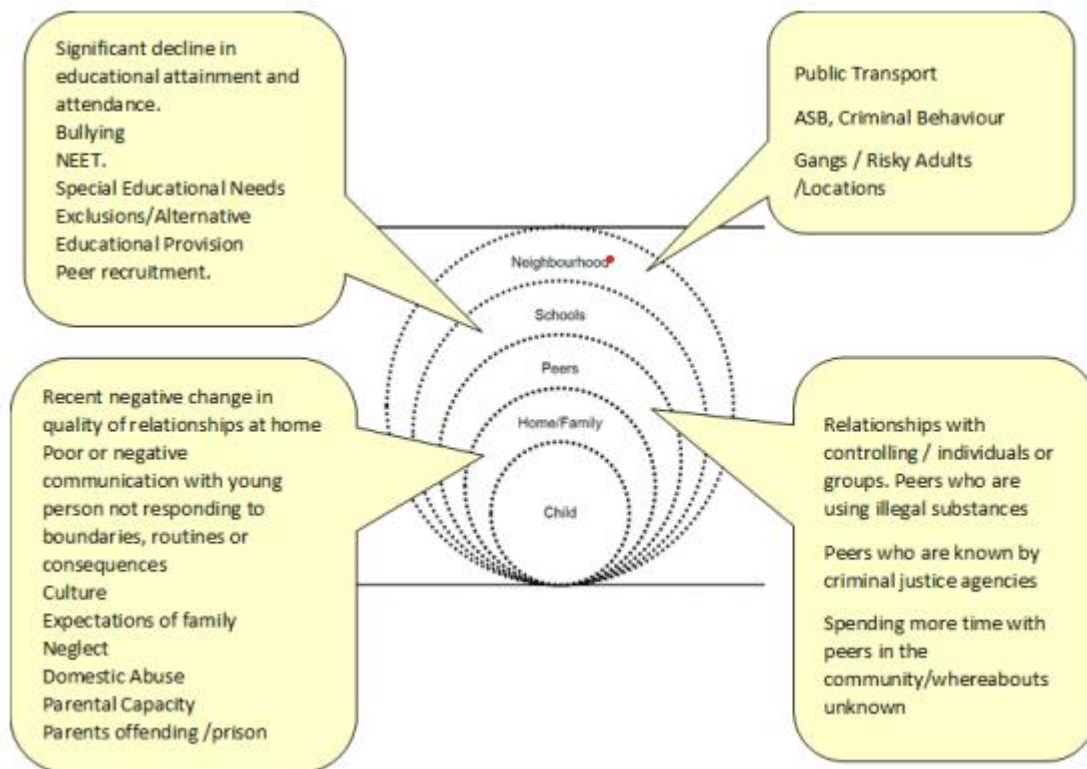
### **7.14 Children with Additional Vulnerabilities**

There are many children who have additional needs or whose living arrangements may mean that they are more vulnerable to harm, for example children with special educational needs, disabled children, children in public care or privately fostered children. It is essential that the school knows who shares parental responsibility for children and has effective relationships with partner agencies in relation to these children (for example, Virtual School for Children in Care).

Aston Fields Middle School will ensure that staff have sufficient knowledge and guidance so that they are aware of the additional challenges faced by these children and the impact of their additional vulnerabilities. These can include: assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child's disability without further exploration; no single point of contact for the school as a child has a number of care-givers and involved professionals; assumptions that state approved care-givers are providing safe care for the child; communication needs of a child which can lead to over reliance on parental accounts and interpretations.

## **8 Contextualised Safeguarding**

All staff will be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and serious youth violence.



## 9. Racist Incidents

9.1 Our policy on racist incidents is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that repeated racist incidents or a single serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. We maintain a log of racist incidents in school.

## 10. Anti-Bullying

10.1 Our policy on anti-bullying acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying, sexting, racist, homophobic and gender related bullying, will be dealt with in accordance with our anti-bullying policy. We recognise that children with special needs and/or disabilities are more susceptible to being bullied. We maintain a log of bullying incidents in school.

10.2 We recognise that there will be occasions when bullying incidents will fall within child protection procedures or may be deemed criminal activity and that it may be necessary to report the concerns to the Family Front Door or to the Police.

## 11. Positive Physical Intervention

11.1 Our policy on positive handling is set out in our Positive Physical Intervention Policy and acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury or damage to property.

11.2 We acknowledge that when applying reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEND or disabilities or with medical conditions, it is important to recognise their additional vulnerability and make every effort to reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

11.3 We understand that physical intervention of a nature that causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under management of allegations or disciplinary procedures.

11.4 Staff who are likely to need to use physical intervention will be appropriately trained in the Team Teach technique, or equivalent.

11.5 All incidences of physical intervention will be recorded in accordance with the Team Teach recommended procedures.

11.6 We recognise that touch is appropriate in the context of working with children and all staff have been given 'safe working practice' guidance to ensure they are clear about their professional boundaries.

11.7 We recognise that the adoption of a 'no contact' policy could leave staff unable to fully support and protect our pupils.

## **12. Supporting Children**

12.1 We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame.

12.2 We acknowledge that school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

12.3 We are aware that research shows that at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn

12.4 The school will endeavour to support all children by:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness through the curriculum, as well as promoting respectful relationships, challenging bullying and humiliating behaviour;
- Promoting a positive, supportive and secure environment giving pupils a sense of being valued;
- A consistently applied school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils. The school will ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but that they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred;
- Acknowledging that children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges, including communication barriers.
- Liaising with other agencies that support the pupil such as Children's Social Care Services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Educational Psychology Service and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children;
- The use of Early Help Services, through the Family Front Door, when appropriate;
- Notifying Children's Social Care Services immediately there is a significant concern;
- Providing continuing support to a child about whom there have been concerns who leaves the school by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded under confidential cover to the child's new setting.

### **Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning identify as LGBT**

12.5 We recognise the fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that all staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

LGBT inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum and there is a range of support available to help schools counter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and abuse.

### **13. Early Help**

13.1 Any child may benefit from Early Help. Staff at Aston Fields Middle School are experienced and appropriately trained to early identify the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has a mental health need
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care
- has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- has a family member in prison, or is affected by parental offending
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- has returned home to their family from care
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is a privately fostered child

Aston Fields Middle School's Early Help Offer is accessible on our school website under the Help and Support for Parents and Families section. We will offer a graduated response to our early help support, including the following:

- extra Personal Development and Academic Guidance sessions with the form teacher and/or Director of Year Group
- referral to the SEMH team who will assess and decide the best next stage; 1:1 sessions with one of our learning mentors, accessing some specific group interventions, referral to Reach4Wellbeing etc.

[Worcestershire Children First Early Help information page](#)

### **14. Children potentially at greater risk of harm**

#### **Children who need a social worker (Child in Need or Child Protection Plans)**

14.1 Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

14.2 The DSL will hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interest of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes and will share this information, as required.

14.3 Where children have a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding (e.g. responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (e.g. offering pastoral and/or academic support, alongside statutory services).

## **15. Children Looked After and Children Previously Looked After**

- 15.1 The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. The school ensures that staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked after children safe. Appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after legal status and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility. They also have the information about the child's care arrangements, including the level of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child. The designated teacher for looked after children and the DSL have details of the child's social worker and the name and contact details of the Local Authority's Virtual Head for children in care and previously looked after children.
- 15.2 We recognise that a previously child looked after potentially remains vulnerable and therefore ensure that all staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep previously looked after children safe.
- 15.3 Our designated teacher for children looked after and children previously looked after has the appropriate training and the relevant qualifications and experience of working with this group of children.
- 15.4 The DSL will promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are looked after and of those pupils who are previously looked after (either through adoption, special guardianship arrangement orders or who were previously adopted from state care outside England and Wales).

## **16. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

16.1 We recognise that children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain medical or physical conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. We ensure staff are trained and made aware of these additional barriers that can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

These additional barriers can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying than other children;
- children with SEN and disabilities or certain medical conditions can be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- cognitive understanding – being able to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the behaviours/content in school or the consequences of doing so

16.2 Any reports of abuse involving children with SEND will therefore require close liaison with the DSL (or a deputy) and the SENCO. We consider extra pastoral support and attention for these children to address these additional challenges, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place.

- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Services (SENDIASS). SENDIASS offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. All local authorities have such a service: [Find your local IAS service \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](https://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

## 17. Information Sharing & Confidentiality

- 17.1 Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in prompting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes. At Aston Fields we recognise the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies.
- 17.2 All personal information is processed fairly and lawfully in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR and will be held safely and securely. However, we recognise that this is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child being placed at risk of harm.
- 17.3 We understand that "safeguarding of children and individuals at risk" is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of the child in a timely manner, but if it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.
- 17.3 We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.
- 17.4 The Headteacher or DSL will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need to know basis only.
- 17.5 All staff are aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children in order to safeguard them.
- 17.6 All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being.
- 17.7 When a child about whom concerns have been raised and recorded leaves the school, the DSL will consider if it would be appropriate to share information with the new school in advance of the child leaving to ensure that support is in place for when the child arrives. Safeguarding records are transferred separately from other records.

## 18. Record Keeping

- 18.1 Well kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse from a child or young person, or noticing signs or symptoms of possible abuse, will make notes as soon as possible (within the hour, if possible) writing down exactly what was said, using the child's own words as far as possible. All notes should be timed, dated and signed, with name printed alongside the signature. Concerns will be recorded using CPOMS, the school's safeguarding children recording system.
- 18.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for such records and for deciding at what point these records should be passed over to other agencies.
- 18.3 All records of a child protection nature will be passed to the DSL including case conference or core group minutes, child protection plans and written records of any concerns. Child protection records are kept securely under lock and key or password protected, with only appropriate persons having access to them.
- 18.4 Records relating to actual or alleged abuse or neglect are stored apart from normal pupil or staff records. Normal records sometimes have markers to show that there is sensitive material stored elsewhere. This is to protect individuals from accidental access to sensitive material by those who do not need to know.
- 18.5 Any referrals made to other agencies, including referrals to Children's Social Care, will be copied prior to sending and stored in the child's child protection file.
- 18.6 The DSL will maintain and regularly audit the school's child protection records, to check whether any action or updating is needed. This includes monitoring patterns of complaints or concerns about any individuals (e.g. child who repeatedly goes missing) and ensuring these are acted upon. Each computerised file has a chronology of significant events.

18.7 The DSL may copy child protection records generated by the school prior to transfer and retain for as long as is necessary (normally d.o.b.+25 years), where there is justification for believing that the records may be required as evidence of the school's involvement with the child for statutory purposes (e.g. court cases or serious case reviews). When the records are no longer required, they will be securely disposed of.

18.8 The DSL will transfer the child protection record in a safe and timely manner when a child moves school, ensuring receipt of transfer is obtained.

18.9 Where children leave Aston Fields Middle School, the DSL will ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and **within 5 days** for an in-year transfer or within the **first 5 days** of the start of a new term to allow the new school or college to have support in place for when the child arrives. The designated safeguarding lead will ensure secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained, this will be transferred separately from the main pupil file.

The receiving schools and colleges should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO's) or the named persons with oversight for special educational needs and disability (SEND) in a college, are aware as required.

18.10 A record of any allegations (proven) made against staff is kept in a confidentially by the headteacher

## 19. Communication with Parents/Carers

19.1 We recognise that good communication with parents/carers is crucial in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively.

19.2 We will always undertake appropriate discussion with parents/carers prior to involvement of another agency **unless to do so would place the child or an adult at further risk of harm or would impede a criminal investigation.**

19.3 We will ensure that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibilities placed on the school and staff to safeguard children and their duty to co-operate with other agencies in this respect.

## 20. Supporting and Supervision of Staff

20.1 We recognise that staff working in the school who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

20.2 We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support such as counselling or regular supervision, as appropriate.

20.3 We will enable supervision for the DSL through network meetings, direct consultation with the Safeguarding in Education Adviser or Consultant Social Workers in order to promote best practice and challenge unsatisfactory or poor practice.

20.4 In order to reduce the risk of allegations being made against staff, and ensure that staff are competent, confident and safe to work with children, they will be made aware of safer working practice guidance and will be given opportunities in training to develop their understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour.

## 21. Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff

21.1 The school has a written recruitment and selection policy statement and procedures linking explicitly to this policy. The statement is included in all job advertisements, publicity material, recruitment websites, and candidate information packs.

21.2 The recruitment process is robust in seeking to establish the commitment of candidates to support the school's measures to safeguard children and to identify, deter or reject people who might pose a risk of harm to children or are otherwise unsuited to work with them.

21.3 References are requested and scrutinised for all candidates prior to interviews and any discrepancies or concerns are raised and discussed during interview, including for any volunteers and internal candidates. References are always requested directly from the referee and verified as being from a senior person with appropriate authority; electronic references are checked to ensure they originate from a legitimate source. Where specific questions have not been answered satisfactorily or insufficient information is provided, the referee will be contacted directly for further clarification. Where references are not forthcoming, despite reminders, the candidate will be asked to provide an alternative referee.

In addition, as part of our shortlisting process we will consider carrying out an online search as part of our due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which we might want to explore with the applicant at interview. We will inform shortlisted candidates that online searches may be done as part of due diligence checks.

21.4 All staff working within our school who have substantial access to children have been checked as to their suitability, including verification of their identity, qualifications and a satisfactory barred list check, enhanced DBS check and a right to work in the UK.

21.5 All teachers working within our school have been checked using the [Teacher Services website](#) to ensure they have been awarded QTS, they have completed their teacher induction and that there are no problems, sanctions or restrictions in place that might prevent them from taking part in certain activities or working in specific positions, e.g. management posts.

21.6 The school seeks written assurance from supply and third-party agencies, alternative providers, initial teacher training providers and contractors that they have undertaken all appropriate checks on any of their staff that work with or have regular contact with our pupils.

21.7 Our governors are subject to an enhanced DBS check without barred list check and have been checked to ensure that they are not disqualified from holding office under a section 128 direction.

21.8 The school maintains a single central record (SCR) of recruitment checks for audit purposes.

21.9 Any member of staff working in regulated activity prior to receipt of a satisfactory DBS check will not be left unsupervised and will be subject to a risk assessment.

21.10 Volunteers who are not working in regulated activity, will be supervised at all times. A risk assessment will be undertaken to help decide whether or not an enhanced DBS check, without barred list check, is required.

## **22 Safeguarding Concern or Allegations against staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors**

22.1 At Aston Fields Middle School, we have our own procedures for dealing with allegations against a member of staff, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor. These procedures are consistent with local safeguarding procedures and practice guidance. Such allegations may include:

- Behaving in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- Behaving in a way that possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;
- having behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- having behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

22.2 If school have concerns about a staff's suitability to work with children, relevant checks will be carried out as per a new member of staff. Similarly, if a person working at the school moves from a post that is not a regulated activity into a post which is regulated, relevant checks will be carried out.

- 22.3 The school will carry out its legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm to a child, including historic allegations.
- 22.4 We acknowledge that a member of staff/or pupil may have a safeguarding concern or may make an allegation against a member of staff (including supply staff or volunteers) that might indicate they would pose a risk of harm to children.
- 22.5 If such an allegation is made, which meets the criteria as identified in Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Headteacher and DSL, unless the allegation concerns the Headteacher, in which case the Chair of Governors will be informed immediately.
- 22.6 The Headteacher (or Chair of Governors acting in the Headteacher's absence) on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the LA's Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education or the LADO, prior to undertaking any investigation.
- 22.7 The school will follow the DfE, [West Midlands Safeguarding Children](#) and [LA procedures](#) for managing allegations against staff (including supply teachers and volunteers), a copy of which is readily available in the school.
- 22.8 The case manager will be guided by the Senior Adviser and/or LADO in all matters relating to the case, including suspension, sharing of information and any follow up investigation.
- 22.9 The school will provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation, and where the school is not the employer (including supply teachers and volunteers) it will still ensure allegations are dealt with appropriately and will liaise with relevant parties/agencies.
- 22.10 Any allegations of abuse against a teacher (including supply teachers), or other member of staff or volunteer will be dealt with quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and, at the same time, supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.
- 22.11 This guidance should be followed where it is alleged that anyone working in the school that provides education for children under 18 years of age, including supply teachers and volunteers has:
- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
  - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
  - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
  - behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

This part of the guidance relates to members of staff, supply staff and volunteers who are currently working in any school regardless of whether the school is where the alleged abuse took place. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.

22.12 In some circumstances the schools will have to consider an allegation against an individual not directly employed by them, for example, supply teachers. Whilst we are not the employer of supply teachers, we should ensure allegations are dealt with properly. In no circumstances should we decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the local authority designated officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome. The Governing body should discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply teacher, or redeploy them to another part of the school, whilst they carry out their investigation.

22.13 Agencies should be fully involved and co-operate in any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or Children's Social Services. Supply teachers, whilst not employed by the school, are under the supervision, direction and control of the governing body or proprietor when working in the school or college. They should be advised to contact their trade union representative if they have one, or a

colleague for support.

22.14 The allegations management meeting which is often arranged by the LADO should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account by the school during the investigation.

## **Concerns and or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold**

At Aston Fields Middle School, we have policies and processes to deal with any concerns (including allegations) which do not meet the harm threshold, referred to as 'low-level' concerns.

### **Low Level concerns**

22.15 Aston Fields Middle School promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of our school or college (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

22.16 Creating a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person (the Headteacher), recorded and dealt with appropriately, is critical. If implemented correctly, this should:

- encourage an open and transparent culture
- enable us to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early
- minimise the risk of abuse and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the school.

### **22.17 What is a low-level concern?**

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO. Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:
- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating pupils.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources. For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

22.18 It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf of schools and colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings

## **23 Allegations of abuse made against other children**

23.1 Staff recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to speak out and 'Tell an Adult You Trust' in addition to work done in PSHE and the Computing curriculum, promoting an environment where pupils are encouraged to speak out and it is made clear that abuse is abuse and will not be tolerated as 'banter' or 'part of

growing up' This includes such activities as name-calling, gender issues, texting (or sexting) and bullying online. (Guidance on dealing with Sexting in Schools is available from the 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people' document provided by UK Council for Child Internet Safety)

- 23.2 Pupils who perpetrate acts of abuse will face a range of actions from reflective work with school learning mentors, meeting with parents/carers, to direct referrals to police or social care, dependent on the seriousness and intent of the incident. Parents/carers should be informed of any inappropriate behaviour towards another pupil.

## **24 Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting)**

- 24.1 We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.
- 24.2 All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues using the school's confidential reporting (whistleblowing) policy.
- 24.3 Whistleblowing concerns about the Headteacher should be raised with the Chair of Governors.
- 24.4 Staff will be made aware that if they feel unable to raise a child protection failure internally, they can contact the [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](#).

## **25 Complaints or Concerns expressed by Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff or Volunteers**

- 25.1 We recognise that listening to children is an important and essential part of safeguarding them against abuse and neglect. To this end, any expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child will be listened to and acted upon in order to safeguard his/her welfare.
- 25.2 We will also seek to ensure that the child or adult who makes a complaint is informed not only about the action the school will take but also the length of time that will be required to resolve the complaint. The school will also endeavour to keep the child or adult regularly informed as to the progress of his/her complaint.

## **26 Prevention**

We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our pupils by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The school will therefore:

- 26.1 Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are always listened to;
- 26.2 Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty;
- 26.3 Include in the curriculum opportunities that equip children with the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

## **27 Abuse of Position of Trust**

- 27.1 We recognise that as adults working in the school, we are in a relationship of trust with the pupils in our care and acknowledge that it could be considered a criminal offence to abuse that trust.
- 27.2 We acknowledge that the principle of equality embedded in the legislation of the Sexual Offenders Act 2003 applies irrespective of sexual orientation: neither homosexual nor heterosexual relationships are acceptable within a position of trust. *'It is an offence for a person aged 18 and over to intentionally behave in certain sexual ways in relation to a child under 18, where s/he (the adult) is in a position of trust in respect of the child.'*

- 27.3 We recognise that the legislation is intended to protect young people in education who are over the age of consent but under 18 years of age.

### **Staff/pupil relationships**

- 27.4 IMPORTANT** It is important that all staff understand that it is against the law to have a relationship with a child under the age of 18 connected with the school. This would be deemed an abuse of trust and liable to incur disciplinary action and/or child protection investigation and possible police action. This includes inappropriate use of social networking sites, e-mail, texting and giving our personal details (such as address and phone number) to children under 18. If a child contacts a member of staff through a social networking site or by other electronic means for social purposes, it should be reported immediately to DSL. For official school purposes, eg Homework, learning blogs etc, staff should only use their school email address – pupils should not be emailing staff on personal accounts.

## **28 Online safety**

28.1 It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. An effective whole school and college approach to online safety empowers a school or college to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate. All staff are aware that abuse can take place solely online.

The DSL takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection including online safety and understanding filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place. The DSL understands the unique risks associated with online safety that are presented to children and has the relevant knowledge and up to date capability to keep children safe whilst they are online at school.

28.2 The Governing Body do all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the above risks from the school's IT system, including ensuring that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place.

28.3 The DSL is able to recognise the additional risks that children with SEND and disabilities face online, for example from online grooming and radicalisation and has the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online.

28.4 All members of staff are trained in and receive regular updates in online safety and recognising and reporting concerns. The breadth of issues classified within online safety can be categorised into four areas of risk:

**Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content e.g. pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories.

**Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users (e.g. peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes)

**Conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm eg making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying

**Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group [AWPG](#)

28.4 Our Acceptable Use policy recognises that online safety is a whole school responsibility (staff, pupils, parents/carers).

- 28.5 Children and young people may expose themselves to danger, whether knowingly or unknowingly, when using the internet and other technologies. Additionally, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal. The school operates a monitoring system to monitor behaviour on the internet. The AUP policy stipulates sanctions for those who do not adhere to the safe use of the internet.
- 28.6 We therefore recognise our responsibility to educate our pupils, teaching them the appropriate behaviours and critical thinking skills to enable them to remain both safe and legal when using the internet and related technologies.
- 28.7 We will ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to ensure the limit of children's exposure to the risks from the school's IT system. We will monitor the use of the school network and internet to ensure that any pupil or staff member attempting to access inappropriate, abusive or harmful material is appropriately advised and/or supported. The filter and monitoring systems are regularly reviewed for effectiveness by the DSL and Governing Body. Staff have an awareness and understanding of these provisions and manage them effectively and know how to escalate and record concerns when identified.

To support in meeting this duty, Aston Fields Middle School use the Department for Education published [Filtering and Monitoring Standards](#) set out that schools and colleges should:

- Identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- Review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- Block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- Have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs

28.8 We have a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology. We understand the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e., 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content. We have carefully considered how this is managed on our premises. To mitigate these risks pupils at Aston Fields are not allowed items such as mobile phones, iPads, tablets, smart watches and activity trackers. If it is felt a parent/carer feels in an emergency their child needs a mobile phone, it is handed to their teacher at the start of the school day and collected at 3:30pm

28.9 Where children are asked to learn online at home, the school has taken advice from [safeguarding-and-remote-learning-education](#). Pupils only access their remote learning through Google Classroom and other Government websites.

28.10

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini.

Our School recognises that AI has many uses, including enhancing teaching and learning, and in helping to protect and safeguard pupils. However, AI may also have the potential to facilitate abuse (e.g. bullying and grooming) and/or expose pupils to harmful content. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

We will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully pupils in line with this policy and our anti-bullying policy.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools while they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the school. Our requirements for filtering and monitoring also apply to the use of AI, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education. And where any indecent images have been shared that are AI-generated, we will follow the guidance of the UKCIS on

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes.

## 29 Photography and use of images

- 29.1 The welfare and protection of our children is paramount and consideration should always be given to whether the use of photography will place our children at risk. Images may be used to harm children, for example as a preliminary to 'grooming' or by displaying them inappropriately on the internet, particularly social networking sites.
- 29.2 For this reason consent is always sought when photographing children using any means and including school issued iPads, smart phones or cameras and additional consideration given to photographing vulnerable children, particularly Children Looked After or those known to be fleeing domestic violence. Consent must be sought from those with parental responsibility (this may include the Local Authority in the case of Children Looked After). The school asks parents/carers to complete a Use of Images Consent Form, as advised by the Local Authority, and a record of parental preferences is kept by the administration team. Taking photographs at school events (concerts, productions etc) is permissible but solely for the use of the child's parents/carers only. Such photographs must not be distributed in a wider format (eg on social networking sites) in case another child is inadvertently/accidentally present in the photograph. If in doubt, do not take the photograph. The police may be contacted if parents/carers do not follow these guidelines. It is strongly advised that children's full names (putting first name and surname together) are not used or linked to any photograph that is distributed on social networking sites or the internet or material for general publication.
- 29.3 Many pupils own or have access to hand held devices and parents/carers are encouraged to consider measures to keep their children safe when using the internet and social media at home and in the community.

## 30 Health & Safety

Our Health & Safety policy, set out in a separate document, reflects the consideration we give to the safeguarding of our children both within the school environment and when away from the school, for example when undertaking school trips and visits.

Risk Assessments are undertaken and reviewed regularly, in respect of site security, risk of children being drawn into terrorism or exposed to extremist behaviour, risk to and from children displaying harmful behaviour

## 31 Safe Environment

- 31.1 The school undertakes appropriate risk assessments and checks in respect of all equipment and of the building and grounds in line with local and national guidance and regulations concerning health and safety.
- 31.2 The school has adequate security arrangements in place in respect of the use of its grounds and buildings by visitors both in and out of school hours. During the school day no adult (or unknown child) will be given access to the school site without first reporting to the school's reception and completing the school's safeguarding checks. Adults (or unknown children) who access the school site without doing this will be challenged by school staff and the Police may be called. For out of hours usage of the school's facilities including accessing the school site, permission must first be given by the Governing Body. Access requests should be submitted in writing for consideration by the Governing Body. This will be done at the next available Governors' meeting.
- 31.3 Visitors to the school, for example visiting speakers, theatre groups or curriculum specialists, will be appropriately checked and vetted, to ensure they are not linked to extremist groups or promoting extremist or other harmful material.

## Use of School Premises

Aston Fields Middle School will ensure that when/if it hires out our school facilities/premises to organisations or individuals (for example to community groups, sports associations and service providers to run community or extra-curricular activities) we will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep children safe.

When services or activities are provided by Aston Fields Middle School under the direct supervision or management of our school the arrangements for child protection will apply.

Where an external body is providing community or extra-curricular activities, Aston Fields Middle School will seek assurance that appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place (including inspecting these as needed); and ensure that there are arrangements to liaise with Aston Fields Middle School on these matters where appropriate. Aston Fields Middle School will ensure safeguarding requirements are included in any transfer of control agreement (i.e. lease or hire agreement), as a condition of use and occupation of the premises; and that failure to comply with this would lead to termination of the agreement.

## **32 Private fostering arrangements**

- 32.1 A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or close relative cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents/carers. It applies to children under the age of 16, or aged under 18 if the child is disabled. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodation them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer. Children looked after by the local authority or who are placed in a residential school, children's home or hospital are not considered to be privately fostered
- 32.2 Private fostering occurs in all cultures, including British culture and children may be privately fostered at any age.
- 32.3 Most privately fostered children remain safe and well but safeguarding concerns have been raised in some cases so it is important that schools are alert to possible safeguarding issues, including the possibility that a child has been trafficked into this country.
- 32.4 By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify Children's Services as soon as possible.
- 32.5 If we become aware of a private fostering arrangement, we will check that Children's Services have been informed to ensure they have been able to check the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child.

## **33 Challenge and Escalation**

- 33.1 We recognise that professional disagreements may arise between any agencies and resolving problems is an integral part of co-operation and joint working to safeguard children.
- 33.2 As part of our responsibility for safeguarding children, we acknowledge that we must be prepared to challenge each other if we feel that responses to concerns, assessments or the way in which plans are implemented are not safeguarding the child and promoting their welfare.
- 33.3 We are aware of the WSCP escalation procedures for raising concerns in respect of poor practice and recognise our responsibility to utilise these as and when necessary, in the interests of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

## **34. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 34.1 Our Safeguarding Children policy and procedures will be monitored and evaluated by:
- Completion of the annual safeguarding audit;
  - Completion and return to the LA/WSCP of the annual safeguarding report to the Governing Body;
  - Pupil surveys and questionnaires;
  - Discussions with children and staff;
  - Scrutiny of data and risk assessments;
  - Scrutiny of the school's single central record of recruitment checks;
  - Monitoring of logs of bullying/racist/behaviour incidents and PPI records;
  - Supervision of staff involved in child protection;
  - Case file audits undertaken by the DSL and the LA.

### **35. Publicising the Policy and Relevant Procedures**

- 35.1 An annual letter will be sent to all new parents/carers at the start of the Academic Year, making them aware of this policy and relevant procedures. In addition, a copy of the letter will also be included in the School Prospectus. This policy is available for inspection upon request and via the school's website. This will be made known to parents/carers in the above mentioned letter.

### **36. Other Relevant Policies**

- 36.1 The Governing Body's statutory responsibility for safeguarding the welfare of children goes beyond basic child protection procedures.
- 36.2 The duty is now to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activity and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other policies, for instance:
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
  - Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and other Staff
  - Special Educational Needs
  - Behaviour for Learning Policy
  - Child on Child Abuse Policy
  - Anti-Bullying, including cyber-bullying
  - Complaints Procedure
  - Educational Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom Policy
  - First Aid Policy
  - Medical Conditions Policy
  - Health and Safety
  - Sex and Relationships Education
  - Use of Images in School
  - Equality Policy
  - Acceptable Use Policy and E-Safety Guidelines
  - Whistleblowing (Confidential Reporting)
  - Radicalisation and Extremism Policy
  - GDPR Policy
- 36.3 The above list is not exhaustive but when undertaking development or planning of any kind the school will need to consider safeguarding matters.



# Appendix 1

## CPOMS Incident Form and Form 1

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://sbromsgrove.cpoms.net/incidents/new>. The page title is "Add Incident - CPOMS". The browser's address bar shows the URL. The page header includes navigation links: "CPOMS Website", "CPOMS User Guide", "Contact Support", and "CPOMS FAQ". A warning message states: "It is your responsibility to input and protect the security of student information." The header also contains utility links: "REMINDE", "HIDE NAMES", and "BLANK SCREEN". The main navigation bar for "South Bromsgrove High School" includes "Dashboard", "Reporting", "Planner", "Library", "Admin", and "Account Settings". On the right side of the navigation bar, there are links for "Add Incident", a bell icon, and "LOGOUT".

### Add Incident

[Back](#)

**Student**  
Begin typing a student's name

**Incident**

**Categories**  
 CAHS Letter  CN  CME  CP  Disclosure  ICPC  LAC  LGBT+  MWRAC  Prevent

**Linked student(s)**  
Begin typing a student's name  
Type a student's name to link them to this incident

**Body map**

**Date/Time**  
Mon (1 October 2019) 12:07PM

**Alert Staff Members**  
Begin typing a staff member's name  
DSUs  
Type a colleague's name or select an alert group to alert them to this incident. Colleagues highlighted in red would not normally be able to view this incident.  
Who should I alert?

**Files**  
  
Click to browse or drag a file to upload

**Agency Involved**  
[Select Agencies](#)

**FORM 1**

**Logging a Concern about a Child's Safety and Welfare – staff and visitors**

Pupil's Name:	D.O.B:	Year Group:
Date:	Time:	
Name (Print):	Signature:	
Position:		
Note the reason(s) for recording the incident:		
Details of concern/incident – record the who/what/when factually (continue on reverse of sheet if necessary):		
Any other relevant information (witnesses, immediate action taken):		
Action taken:		
Reporting staff signature: ..... Date: .....		
DSL – Response/Outcome:		
DSL signature: ..... Date: .....		

Check to make sure your report is clear now – and will also be clear to a stranger reading it next year.

**PLEASE PASS THIS FORM TO A MEMBER OF THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

**Continuation Sheet**

**Incident/Concern; other relevant information; Action Taken; Outcome**

**Pupil Name:**

**Details:**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Governing bodies, proprietors and management committees should ensure an appropriate senior member of staff, from the school or college leadership team, is appointed to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description. This person should have the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post. They should be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and/or to support other staff to do so, and to contribute to the assessment of children.

#### **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads**

It is a matter for individual schools and colleges as to whether they choose to have one or more deputy designated safeguarding leads. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead and the role should be explicit in their job description. Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the designated safeguarding lead, this lead responsibility should not be delegated.

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:

- refer cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children's social care as required;
- support staff who make referrals to local authority children's social care;
- refer cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required;
- support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme;
- refer cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required; and
- refer cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. Work with others

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:

- act as a point of contact with the three safeguarding partners;
- liaise with the headteacher or principal to inform him or her of issues- especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations;
- as required, liaise with the "case manager" (as per Part four) and the designated officer(s) at the local authority for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member;
- liaise with staff (especially pastoral support staff, school nurses, IT Technicians, and SENCOs, or the named person with oversight for SEN in a college and Senior Mental Health Leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies; and
- act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.
- Take lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place

Training

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least annually. The designated safeguarding lead should undertake Prevent awareness training. Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care, so they:

- understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements.
- have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so;
- ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school's or college's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff;
- are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers;
- understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation;
- understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with the three safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners;
- are able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals;
- understand and support the school or college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation;
- are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college;
- can recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online;
- obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses; and
- encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other designated safeguarding leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

#### Raise Awareness

The designated safeguarding lead should:

- ensure the school's or college's child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately;
- ensure the school's or college's child protection policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with governing bodies or proprietors regarding this;
- ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school or college in this; and

- link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements.
- help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare safeguarding and child protection issues that children, including children with a social worker, are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school and college leadership staff.

Their role could include ensuring that the school or college, and their staff, know who these children are, understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; supporting teaching staff to identify the challenges that children in this group might face and the additional academic support and adjustments that they could make to best support these children.

### Child Protection files

Where children leave the school or college (including for in-year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained.

Receiving schools and colleges should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEN in colleges, are aware as required.

In addition to the child protection file, the designated safeguarding lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving.

For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

### Availability

During term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to define what "available" means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or other such media is acceptable.

It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Recognition & Identification of Abuse**

*Definitions taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Appendix A*

#### **What is abuse?**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

#### **Categories of Abuse**

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse (including Domestic Abuse)
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

#### **Indicators of abuse**

Caution should be used when referring to lists of signs and symptoms of abuse. Although the signs and symptoms listed below may be indicative of abuse there may be alternative explanations. In assessing the circumstances of any child any of these indicators should be viewed within the overall context of the child's individual situation, including any disability.

#### **Signs of Abuse in Children**

The following non-specific signs may indicate something is wrong:

- Significant change in behaviour
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour
- Suspicious bruises with unsatisfactory explanations
- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-injury
- Depression
- Age inappropriate sexual behaviour

#### **Risk Indicators**

The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm

- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with designated/named/ lead person, manager, (or in the absence of all those individuals, an experienced colleague)
- May require consultation with and/or referral to Children's Services

The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.

In an abusive relationship the child may:

- Appear frightened of the parent/s
- Act in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development (though full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and different ethnic groups)

The parent or carer may:

- Persistently avoid child health promotion services and treatment of the child's episodic illnesses
- Have unrealistic expectations of the child
- Frequently complain about/to the child and may fail to provide attention or praise (high criticism/low warmth environment)
- Be absent or misusing substances
- Persistently refuse to allow access on home visits
- Be involved in domestic abuse

Staff should be aware of the potential risk to children when individuals, previously known or suspected to have abused children, move into the household

## **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

When dealing with concerns regarding physical abuse, refer any suspected non-accidental injury to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay so that they are able to seek appropriate guidance from the police and/or Children's Services in order to safeguard the child.

Staff must be alert to:

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns; improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries;
- Injuries that are not consistent with the story: too many, too severe, wrong place or pattern, child too young for the activity described.

## **Physical signs:**

- Bald patches
- Bruises, black eyes and broken
- Untreated or inadequately treated injuries
- Injuries to parts of the body where accidents are unlikely, such as thighs, back, abdomen
- Scalds and burns
- General appearance and behaviour of the child may include:
  - Concurrent failure to thrive: measure height, weight and, in the younger child, head circumference;
  - Frozen watchfulness: impassive facial appearance of the abused child who carefully tracks the examiner with his eyes.
- Bruising
  - Bruising patterns can suggest gripping (finger marks), slapping or beating with an object.
  - Bruising on the cheeks, head or around the ear and black eyes can be the result of non-accidental injury.
- Other injuries
  - Bite marks may be evident from an impression of teeth

- Small circular burns on the skin suggest cigarette burns
- Scalding inflicted by immersion in hot water often affects buttocks or feet and legs symmetrically
- Red lines occur with ligature injuries
- Retinal haemorrhages can occur with head injury and vigorous shaking of the baby
- Tearing of the frenulum of the upper lip can occur with force-feeding. However, any injury of this type must be assessed in the context of the explanation given, the child's developmental stage, a full examination and other relevant investigations as appropriate.
- Fractured ribs: rib fractures in a young child are suggestive of non-accidental injury
- Other fractures: spiral fractures of the long bones are suggestive of non-accidental injury

### **Behavioural signs:**

- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Refusal to undress for gym
- Chronic running away
- Fear of medical help or examination
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive (such as a child being beaten every night to 'make him study')
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted
- Injuries that the child cannot explain or explains unconvincingly
- Become sad, withdrawn or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping
- Behaving aggressively or be disruptive
- Showing fear of certain adults
- Having a lack of confidence and low self-esteem
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Repetitive pattern of attendance: recurrent visits, repeated injuries
- Excessive compliance
- Hyper-vigilance

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- Emotional abuse is difficult to:
  - define
  - identify/recognise
  - prove.

- Emotional abuse is chronic and cumulative and has a long-term impact. Indicators may include:
- Physical, mental and emotional development lags
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-depreciation ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc.')
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain ('I deserve this')
- Unusual physical behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation) - consider within the context of any form of disability such as autism
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Children suffering from emotional abuse may be withdrawn and emotionally flat. One reaction is for the child to seek attention constantly or to be over-familiar. Lack of self-esteem and developmental delay are again likely to be present
- Babies – feeding difficulties, crying, poor sleep patterns, delayed development, irritable, non-cuddly, apathetic, non-demanding
- Toddler/Pre-School – head banging, rocking, bad temper, 'violent', clingy. From overactive to apathetic, noisy to quiet. Developmental delay – especially language and social skills
- School age – Wetting and soiling, relationship difficulties, poor performance at school, non-attendance, antisocial behaviour. Feels worthless, unloved, inadequate, frightened, isolated, corrupted and terrorised
- Adolescent – depression, self-harm, substance abuse, eating disorder, poor self-esteem, oppositional, aggressive and delinquent behaviour
- Child may be underweight and/or stunted
- Child may fail to achieve milestones, fail to thrive, experience academic failure or under achievement
- Also consider a child's difficulties in expressing their emotions and what they are experiencing and whether this has been impacted on by factors such as age, language barriers or disability:

## **NEGLECT**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

There are occasions when nearly all parents/carers find it difficult to cope with the many demands of caring for children. But this does not mean that their children are being neglected. Neglect involves ongoing failure to meet a child's needs.

Neglect can often fit into six forms which are:

- Medical – the withholding of medical care including health and dental.
- Emotional – lack of emotional warmth, touch and nurture
- Nutritional – either through lack of access to a proper diet which can affect in their development.
- Educational – failing to ensure regular school attendance that prevents the child reaching their full potential academically
- Physical – failure to meet the child's physical needs

- Lack of supervision and guidance – meaning the child is in dangerous situations without the ability to risk assess the danger.<sup>1</sup>

### Common Concerns:

- With regard to the child, some of the regular concerns are:
- The child's development in all areas including educational attainment
- Cleanliness
- Health
- Children left at home alone and accidents related to this
- Taking on unreasonable care for others
- Young carers

Neglect can often be an indicator of further maltreatment and is often identified as an issue in serious case reviews as being present in the lead up to the death of the child or young person. It is important to recognise that the most frequent issues and concerns regarding the family in relation to neglect relate to parental capability. This can be a consequence of:

- Poor health, including mental health or mental illness
- Disability, including learning difficulties
- Substance misuse and addiction
- Domestic violence

School staff need to consider both acts of *commission* (where a parent/carer deliberately neglects the child) and acts of *omission* (where a parent's failure to act is causing the neglect). This is a key consideration with regard to school attendance where parents/carers are not ensuring their child attend school regularly.

Many of the signs of neglect are visible. However, school staff may not instinctively know how to recognise signs of neglect or know how to respond effectively when they suspect a pupil is being neglected. Children spend considerable time in school, so staff have opportunities to identify patterns over time and recognise and respond to concerns about their safety and welfare. All concerns should be recorded and reflected upon, not simply placed in a file.

Here are some signs of possible neglect:

- Physical signs:
- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Emaciation
- Untreated medical problems
- The child seems underweight and is very small for their age
- The child is poorly clothed, with inadequate protection from the weather
- Neglect can lead to failure to thrive, manifest by a fall away from initial centile lines in weight, height and head circumference. Repeated growth measurements are crucially important
- Signs of malnutrition include wasted muscles and poor condition of skin and hair. It is important not to miss an organic cause of failure to thrive; if this is suspected, further investigations will be required
- Infants and children with neglect often show rapid growth catch-up and improved emotional response in a hospital environment

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Horwath, J (2007): Child neglect: identification and assessment: Palgrave Macmillan

- Failure to thrive through lack of understanding of dietary needs of a child or inability to provide an appropriate diet; or may present with obesity through inadequate attention to the child's diet
- Being too hot or too cold – red, swollen and cold hands and feet or they may be dressed in inappropriate clothing
- Consequences arising from situations of danger – accidents, assaults, poisoning
- Unusually severe but preventable physical conditions owing to lack of awareness of preventative health care or failure to treat minor conditions
- Health problems associated with lack of basic facilities such as heating
- Neglect can also include failure to care for the individual needs of the child including any additional support the child may need as a result of any disability
- **Behavioural signs:**
- No social relationships
- Compulsive scavenging
- Destructive tendencies
- If they are often absent from school for no apparent reason
- If they are regularly left alone, or in charge of younger brothers or sisters
- Lack of stimulation can result in developmental delay, for example, speech delay, and this may be picked up opportunistically or at formal development checks
- Craving attention or ambivalent towards adults, or may be very withdrawn
- Delayed development and failing at school (poor stimulation and opportunity to learn)
- Difficult or challenging behaviour

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

Sexual abuse is usually perpetrated by people who are known to and trusted by the child – e.g. relatives, family friends, neighbours, people working with the child in school or through other activities.

### **Characteristics of child sexual abuse:**

- It is usually planned and systematic – people do not sexually abuse children by accident, though sexual abuse can be opportunistic;
- Grooming the child – people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent. This can be done in person or via the internet through chat-rooms and social networking sites;
- Grooming the child's environment – abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives. Again, this can be done in person or via the internet through chat-rooms and social networking sites.

**In young children behavioural changes may include:**

- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Being overly affectionate - desiring high levels of physical contact and signs of affection such as hugs and kisses
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a babysitter or child minder
- They may start using sexually explicit behaviour or language, particularly if the behaviour or language is not appropriate for their age
- Starting to wet again, day or night/nightmares

**In older children behavioural changes may include:**

- Extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Become worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism
- Genital discharge or urinary tract infections
- Marked changes in the child's general behaviour. For example, they may become unusually quiet and withdrawn, or unusually aggressive. Or they may start suffering from what may seem to be physical ailments, but which can't be explained medically
- The child may refuse to attend school or start to have difficulty concentrating so that their schoolwork is affected
- They may show unexpected fear or distrust of a particular adult or refuse to continue with their usual social activities
- The child may describe receiving special attention from a particular adult, or refer to a new, "secret" friendship with an adult or young person
- Children who have been sexually abused may demonstrate inappropriate sexualised knowledge and behaviour
- Low self-esteem, depression and self-harm are all associated with sexual abuse

**Physical signs and symptoms for any age child could be:**

- Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases
- Stomach pains or discomfort walking or sitting
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Any features that suggest interference with the genitalia. These may include bruising, swelling, abrasions or tears
- Soreness, itching or unexplained bleeding from penis, vagina or anus
- Sexual abuse may lead to secondary enuresis or faecal soiling and retention
- Symptoms of a sexually transmitted disease such as vaginal discharge or genital warts, or pregnancy in adolescent girls

## Sexual Abuse by Young People

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers or children.

Developmental Sexual Activity encompasses those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour can be inappropriate socially, inappropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person. It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. it may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed.

If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity includes any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base.

## Assessment

In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration. The presence of exploitation in terms of:

- **Equality** – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies
- **Consent** – agreement including all the following:
  - Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience
  - Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed
  - Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives
  - Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally
  - Voluntary decision
  - Mental competence
- **Coercion** – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance.

In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of abuse which involves children (male and female, of different ethnic origins and of different ages) receiving something in exchange for sexual activity. 'Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.' (DfE – February 2017)

The definition and further guidelines can be found in the DfE document : [Child sexual exploitation - Definition and a guide for practitioners](#)

#### **Who is at risk?**

Child sexual exploitation can happen to any young person from any background. Although the research suggests that the females are more vulnerable to CSE, boys and young men are also victims of this type of abuse.

The characteristics common to all victims of CSE are not those of age, ethnicity or gender, rather their powerlessness and vulnerability. Victims often do not recognise that they are being exploited because they will have been groomed by their abuser(s). As a result, victims do not make informed choices to enter into, or remain involved in, sexually exploitative situations but do so from coercion, enticement, manipulation or fear. Sexual exploitation can happen face to face and it can happen online and may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g. through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media). It can also occur between young people.

In all its forms, CSE is child abuse and should be treated as a child protection issue.

#### **WARNING SIGNS AND VULNERABILITIES CHECKLIST<sup>2</sup>**

The evidence available points to several factors that can increase a child's vulnerability to being sexually exploited. The following are typical **vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse**:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality)
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang-associated CSE only)
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited
- Learning disabilities
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited
- Homeless
- Lacking friends from the same age group
- Living in a gang neighbourhood
- Living in residential care

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<sup>2</sup> The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) Interim Report - Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Group and Gangs.

- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence
- Young carer

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are **already being sexually exploited**:

- Missing from home or care
- Physical injuries
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Involvement in offending
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations
- Absent from school
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites
- Estranged from their family
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations
- Poor mental health
- Self-harm
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation.

All schools should ensure that there is a dedicated lead person with responsibility for implementing local guidance in respect of child sexual exploitation. This would normally be the DSL.

The DSL must ensure they are aware of the guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation on the WSCB website [Child Sexual Exploitation information for professionals | Child Sexual Exploitation information for professionals | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The DSL must ensure that all staff are aware of signs and symptoms of CSE and know that these must be reported and recorded as child protection concerns. The DSL must follow the Worcestershire Pathway for dealing with issues of CSE, including completion of the screening tool.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Child Criminal Exploitation – County Lines**

#### **What is Child Criminal Exploitation?**

CCE is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

CCE can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country, forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Some of the following can be indicators of CCE:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; • children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being; • children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

#### **What is County Lines?**

County Lines is a very serious issue where criminal gangs set up a drug dealing operation in a place outside their usual operating area. Gangs will move their drug dealing from big cities (e.g. London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool etc.) to smaller towns and rural areas in order to make more money. This can have a really big effect on the community who live there and bring with it serious criminal behaviour.

The UK Government defines county lines as:

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into

county lines in a number of locations including schools, further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, special educational needs schools, children's homes and care homes. Children are often recruited to move drugs and money between locations and are known to be exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

One of the ways of identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes (both from home and school), when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs.

## **Crimes Associated with County Lines**

### **Drugs**

County lines commonly involves the illegal distribution and dealing of seriously dangerous drugs from one city/town to another. The most common drugs involved are heroin and cocaine (crack and powder), but also MDMA, cannabis, amphetamines and spice.

### **Violence**

Gangs sometimes use violence to threaten children and young people when recruiting them. Gangs also violently assault children and young people working for them if they find their drugs or money to be missing. Weapons such as firearms, knives, bats, acid are sometimes used to make violent threats.

### **Exploitation**

Gangs recruit and use children and young people to move drugs and money for them. Children as young as 11 years old are recruited, often using social media. They are exploited and forced to carry drugs between locations, usually on trains or coaches. They are also forced to sell drugs to local users.

### **Sexual Exploitation**

Young girls are often groomed and forced into relationships with gang members and are made to perform sexual acts.

### **Signs to look out for**

A young person's involvement in county lines activity often leaves signs. A person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member or as an associate of a gang dealing drugs.

- Are they always going missing from school or their home?
- Are they travelling alone to places far away from home?
- Do they suddenly have lots of money/lots of new clothes/new mobile phones?
- Are they receiving much more calls or texts than usual?
- Are they carrying or selling drugs?
- Are they carrying weapons or know people that have access to weapons?
- Are they in a relationship with or hanging out with someone/people that are older and controlling?
- Do they have unexplained injuries?
- Do they seem very reserved or seem like they have something to hide?
- Do they seem scared?
- Are they self-harming?

## **Terms associated with County Lines**

Here are some words/terms that are commonly used when describing county lines activity. someone using these words might be involved in or might know of County Lines activity.

### **Cuckooing**

Cuckooing is when drug gangs take over the home of a vulnerable person through violence and intimidation, using it as their base for selling/manufacturing drugs.

Signs of cuckooing:

- An increase in people coming and going
- An increase in cars or bikes outside
- Litter outside
- Signs of drugs use
- You haven't seen the person who lives there recently or when you have, they have been anxious or distracted.

### **Going Country**

This is the most popular term that describes County Lines activity. It can also mean the act of travelling to another city/town to deliver drugs or money.

### **Trapping**

The act of selling drugs. Trapping can refer to the act of moving drugs from one town to another or the act of selling drugs in one.

### **Trap House**

A building used as a base from where drugs are sold (or sometimes manufactured). These houses usually are occupied by someone (usually adult drug users) but sometimes young people are forced to stay in trap houses.

### **Trap line**

This refers to when someone owns a mobile phone specifically for the purpose of running and selling of drugs.

## **What to do if you have concerns a young person is involved in County Lines**

Follow your normal safeguarding procedures and refer to your school's DSL. The DSL will refer on to Children's Social Care and/or the Police, if the young person is at immediate risk of harm.

Further information is available in the regional guidance of the [West Midlands Child Protection Procedures](#).

Further guidance is available in the Home Office's publication '[County Lines: criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults](#)'.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Effects of domestic abuse on children and young people**

**The impact of domestic abuse on the quality of a child's or young person's life is very significant. Children and young people who live with domestic abuse are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life.**

The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people can be wide-ranging and may include effects in any or all of the following areas:

**Physical:** Children and young people can be hurt either by trying to intervene and stopping the violence or by being injured themselves by the abuser. They may develop self-harming behaviour, or eating disorders. Their health could be affected, as they may not be being cared for appropriately. They may have suicidal thoughts or try to escape or blank out the abuse by using drugs, alcohol or by running away.

**Sexual:** There is a high risk that children and young people will be abused themselves where there is domestic abuse. In homes where living in fear is the norm, and situations are not discussed, an atmosphere of secrecy develops and this creates a climate in which sexual abuse could occur. In addition to this, children and young people may sometimes be forced to watch the sexual abuse of their mother/carer. This can have long-lasting effects on the sexual and emotional development of the child/young person.

**Economic:** The parent or carer of the child or young person may have limited control over the family finances. Therefore, there might be little or no money available for extracurricular activities, clothing or even food, impacting on their health and development.

**Emotional:** Children and young people will often be very confused about their feelings – for example, loving both parents/carers but not wanting the abuse to continue. They may be given negative messages about their own worth, which may lead to them developing low self-esteem. Many children and young people feel guilty, believing that the abuse is their fault. They are often pessimistic about their basic needs being met and can develop suicidal thoughts. Some children and young people may internalise feelings and appear passive and withdrawn or externalise their feelings in a disruptive manner.

**Isolation:** Children and young people may become withdrawn and isolated; they may not be allowed out to play; and if there is abuse in the home they are less likely to invite their friends round. Schooling may be disrupted in many ways, and this may contribute to their growing isolation. They may frequently be absent from school as they may be too scared to leave their mother alone. They may have to move away from existing friends and family – e.g. into a refuge or other safe or temporary accommodation.

**Threats:** Children and young people are likely to have heard threats to harm their mother/father. They may have been directly threatened with harm or heard threats to harm their pet. They also live under the constant and unpredictable threat of violence, resulting in feelings of intimidation, fear and vulnerability, which can lead to high anxiety, tension, confusion and stress.

#### **What you might see in school**

- Unexplained absences or lateness – either from staying at home to protect their parent or hide their injuries, or because they are prevented from attending school;
- Children and young people attending school when ill rather than staying at home;
- Children and young people not completing their homework, or making constant excuses, because of what is happening at home;

- Children and young people who are constantly tired, on edge and unable to concentrate through disturbed sleep or worrying about what is happening at home;
- Children and young people displaying difficulties in their cognitive and school performance;
- Children and young people whose behaviour and personality changes dramatically;
- Children and young people who become quiet and withdrawn and have difficulty in developing positive peer relations;
- Children and young people displaying disruptive behaviour or acting out violent thoughts with little empathy for victims;
- Children and young people who are no trouble at all.

This list is not exhaustive – this is intended to give you an idea of some of the types of behaviour that could be presented.

## What schools can do

**Schools can create an environment which both promotes their belief and commitment that domestic abuse is not acceptable, and that they are willing to discuss and challenge it.**

For many victims, the school might be the one place that they visit without their abusive partner.

It would help if schools displayed posters or had cards/pens available with information about domestic abuse and contact details for useful agencies: for example, NSPCC **0800 800 5000** and ChildLine **0800 11 11**; Parentline **0800 800 2222**; Worcestershire's Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (WFADSA) 24 hr. helpline: **0800 980 3331**, website: [Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence | Worcestershire County Council](#) and West Mercia Women's Aid 24 hr. helpline: 0800 980 3331

West Mercia Constabulary - Police Domestic Abuse Units 101.

Research shows that the repeated use of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse is one of the ways in which male power is used to control women. The underlying attitudes which legitimate and perpetuate violence against women should be challenged by schools as part of the whole school ethos.

### Schools can support individual children and young people by:

- Introducing a **whole-school philosophy** that domestic abuse is unacceptable;
- **Responding to disclosures** and potential child protection concerns; recognising that domestic abuse and forced marriage may be a child protection concern; policies and procedures must include domestic abuse;
- **Giving emotional support** – the child or young person might need referral to a more specialist service or need additional support to complete coursework, exams etc;
- **Facilitating a peer support network** – children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their problems;
- **Offering practical support** – if children or young people are new to the school they may not yet have a uniform, they may also need financial help with extra-curricular activities, or they may be unfamiliar with the syllabus, the area, where to hang out, etc;
- **Providing somewhere safe and quiet** to do their homework or just to sit and think;

**Improving the self esteem and confidence** of children and young people by:

- offering them opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities;
- offering tasks which are achievable and giving praise and encouragement;
- monitoring their behaviour and setting clear limits;
- criticising the action, not the person;
- helping them to feel a sense of control in their school lives;
- involving them in decision making;
- helping them to be more assertive;
- respecting them as individuals;
- encouraging involvement in extra-curricular activities.

### **From The Expect Respect Education Toolkit – Women’s Aid**

## **Receiving notification of a Domestic Abuse incident**

### **Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass operates in Worcestershire with West Mercia Police Force. It helps police and schools work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. The system ensures that when police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, a notification is sent to WCC. Our school receives Operation Encompass notifications via WCC Children’s Portal daily from West Mercia Police. All parents have received a letter informing them on how we use Operation Encompass notifications. For school, it is about keeping an eye on changed behaviour and logging anything out of the ordinary.

### **The DSL’s responsibility – the DSL should:**

- Access the link to the children’s portal:  
[https://capublic.worcestershire.gov.uk/Chs\\_Portal/HomePage.aspx](https://capublic.worcestershire.gov.uk/Chs_Portal/HomePage.aspx)
- View the Operation Encompass website ([www.operationencompass.org](http://www.operationencompass.org)) for further information;
- Ensure the Safeguarding Education Adviser has up to date contact information;
- Ensure the Operation Encompass referral record document is retained in the same way as other child protection documents, in a secure place;
- Identify and brief a colleague who can deputise in his/her absence;
- Ensure that all teaching staff are aware of Operation Encompass and understand the confidential nature of any information passed to them and that this information must be treated in the same way as any other child protection information;
- Inform parents/carers that the school is part of Operation Encompass;
- Inform the Governing Body that the school is part of Operation Encompass and the Governor with responsibility for safeguarding should have a working knowledge of the principles;
- Include details of Operation Encompass in the school prospectus and on the school website to ensure that all new parents/carers are informed of the school’s involvement.

### **On receiving a Domestic Abuse notification, the DSL should:**

- Complete the Operation Encompass referral record.

- Inform any staff of notification on a “need to know” only basis – e.g. form tutor/Head of Year. Form tutor to offer extra AGPD session to check on pupil’s general wellbeing – do not question pupil about the incident. Respect the child’s decision on whether or not they wish to discuss the situation.
- If there’s no change to the child’s behaviour - just monitor and log the DA
- If the child displays poor behaviour choices / seems upset/withdrawn, offer the relevant support needed.
- At this point, alert all staff who teach pupil with minimum of information – e.g. ‘This pupil may need extra support / may need extra time to complete homework’.
- Monitor pupil behaviour in school (including attendance) and should concerns arise which may be attributed to the impact of the incident, consult with Social Care through the Family Front Door as the concerns may be significant and lead to new safeguarding action, or to seek advice on how to proceed.
- Provide appropriate support for adult, **if asked** – e.g. helpline number (0800 980 3331) or website address: [Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence | Worcestershire County Council](#)

#### **Bear in mind**

- Victim of incident may be anxious that the information will be shared inappropriately.
- Notification may not give details as to which parent is the perpetrator/victim – any disclosure to the ‘wrong’ parent could heighten risk.
- Need to be aware who is ‘connected’ to the child – e.g. TA/lunchtime supervisor may be child’s relative / friend of the family.
- **Inappropriate sharing of information could heighten the risk for the victim and/or the child.**

**If in doubt, consult with the Family Front Door (01905 822666)**

## **Appendix 7**

### **“Honour-based” abuse (including Forced Marriage)**

So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

#### **Actions**

If staff have a concern regarding a child that might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). As appropriate, they will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children’s social care.

#### **Forced Marriage – a form of Domestic Abuse and a crime in England and Wales**

**Forced Marriage should be recognised as a human rights abuse – and should always invoke child protection procedures within the school.**

A forced marriage is a marriage one entered into without the full consent of one or both parties, and one where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage. A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage – in an arranged marriage the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner. The marriage is entered into freely by both people.

#### **Warning signs**

Warning signs can include a sudden drop in performance, truancy from lessons and conflicts with parents/carers over continuation of the student's education.

There may be excessive parental restrictions and control, a history of domestic abuse within the family, or extended absence through sickness or overseas commitments.

Students may also show signs of depression or self-harming, and there may be a history of older siblings leaving education early to get married.

#### **The justifications**

Most cases of forced marriage in the UK involve South Asian families. This is partially a reflection of the fact that there is a large established South Asian population in the UK. It is clear, however, that forced marriage is not a solely South Asian

phenomenon — there have been cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner coming from overseas, or a British citizen being sent abroad. Parents/carers who force their children to marry often justify it as protecting them, building stronger families and preserving cultural or religious traditions. They may not see it as wrong.

Forced marriage can never be justified on religious grounds: every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a pre-requisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriage.

## **Culture**

Often parents/carers believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home countries, when in fact practices and values there have changed. Some parents/carers come under significant pressure from their extended families to get their children married.

## **The law**

Although there is no specific criminal offence of 'forcing someone to marry' within England and Wales, forced marriage may involve criminal offences. Perpetrators — usually parents/carers or family members — could be prosecuted for offences including: threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, imprisonment and in the worse cases murder.

Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within the confines of a marriage. A girl who is forced into marriage is likely to be raped and may be raped until she becomes pregnant.

In addition, the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007) makes provision for protecting children, young people and adults from being forced into marriage without their full and free consent through Forced Marriage Protection Orders. Breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order is a criminal offence.

**Since February 2023, it is also a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, even if violence or coercion is not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages**

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence, with effect from 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, to force someone to marry. This includes:

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the marriage takes place);
- Marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured into it or not).

## **What to do if a pupil seeks help**

- The pupil should be seen immediately in a private place, where the conversation cannot be overheard.
- The pupil should be seen on her own, even if she attends with others.
- Develop a safety plan in case the pupil is seen i.e. prepare another reason why you are meeting.

- Explain all options to the pupil and recognise and respect her wishes. If the pupil does not want to be referred to Children's Services, you will need to consider whether to respect the pupil's wishes — or whether the pupil's safety requires further action to be taken. If you take action against the pupil's wishes you must inform the pupil
- Establish whether there is a family history of forced marriage — i.e. siblings forced to marry.
- Advise the pupil not to travel overseas and discuss the difficulties she may face.
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit.
- Liaise with Police and Children's Services to establish if any incidents concerning the family have been reported.
- Refer to the local Police Child Protection Unit if there is any suspicion that there has been a crime or that one may be committed.
- Refer the pupil with her consent to the appropriate local and national support groups, and counselling services.

### **What to do if the pupil is going abroad imminently**

The Forced Marriage Unit advises education professionals to gather the following information if at all possible — it will help the unit to locate the pupil and to repatriate her:

- a photocopy of the pupil's passport for retention — encourage her to keep details of her passport number and the place and date of issue
- as much information as possible about the family (this may need to be gathered discretely)
- full name and date of birth of pupil under threat
- pupil's father's name
- any addresses where the pupil may be staying overseas
- potential spouse's name
- date of the proposed wedding
- the name of the potential spouse's father if known
- addresses of the extended family in the UK and overseas

### ***Specific information***

It is also useful to take information that only the pupil would know, as this may be helpful during any interview at an embassy or British High Commission — in case another person of the same age is produced pretending to be the pupil.

Professionals should also take details of any travel plans and people likely to accompany the pupil. Note also the names and addresses of any close relatives remaining in the UK and a safe means to contact the pupil — a secret mobile telephone, for example, that will function abroad.

### **Forced marriage: what educators should not do**

- treat such allegations merely as domestic issues and send the pupil back to the family home
- ignore what the pupil has told you or dismiss the need for immediate protection

- approach the pupil's family or those with influence within the community, without the express consent of the pupil, as this will alert them to your concern and may place the pupil in danger
- contact the family in advance of any enquires by the Police, Children's Services or the Forced Marriage Unit, either by telephone or letter
- share information outside child protection information sharing protocols without the express consent of the pupil
- breach confidentiality except where necessary in order to ensure the pupil's safety
- attempt to be a mediator

Further guidance is available from The Forced Marriage Unit:

**Tel:** (+44) (0)20 7008 0151 between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday

**Emergency Duty Officer** (out of hours): (+44) (0)20 7008 1500

**E-mail:** [fmufco@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmufco@fco.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage](http://www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage)

FMU publication: *'Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage'* June 09

See also: *'The Right to Choose – Multi-Agency Guidance in relation to Forced Marriage'* Government Office - November 2008 and West Mercia regional procedures and Forced Marriage Guidance on the WSCB website – January 2016

**Ref:** WSCB local procedures [Worcestershire's Forced Marriage, Honour-Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation Protocol – April 2014](#).

[2.23 Forced marriage | West Midlands Safeguarding Children Group](#)

## Appendix 8

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Breast Ironing – a form of Human Rights Abuse

#### What is FGM?

FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

There are four known types of FGM, all of which have been found in the UK:

**Type 1** – clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris)

**Type 2** – excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are the 'lips' that surround the vagina)

**Type 3** – infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris

**Type 4** – other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

FGM is sometimes known as 'female genital cutting' or female circumcision. Communities tend to use local names for this practice, including 'sunna'.

#### Why is FGM carried out?

It is believed that:

- It brings status and respect to the girl and that it gives a girl social acceptance, especially for marriage.
- It preserves a girl's virginity/chastity.
- It is part of being a woman as a rite of passage.
- It upholds the family honour.
- It cleanses and purifies the girl.
- It gives the girl and her family a sense of belonging to the community.
- It fulfills a religious requirement believed to exist.
- It perpetuates a custom/tradition.
- It helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic.
- It is cosmetically desirable.
- It is mistakenly believed to make childbirth safer for the infant.

Religion is sometimes given as a justification for FGM. For example, some people from Muslim communities argue that the Sunna (traditions or practices undertaken or approved by the prophet Mohammed) recommends that women undergo FGM, and some women have been told that having FGM will make them 'a better Muslim'. However, senior Muslim clerics at an international conference on FGM in Egypt in 2006 pronounced that FGM is not Islamic, and the London Central Mosque has spoken out

against FGM on the grounds that it constitutes doing harm to oneself or to others, which is forbidden by Islam.

### **Within which communities is FGM known to be practised?**

According to the Home Office it is estimated that up to 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM.

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean, as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani.

Obviously, this not to say that all families from the communities listed above practise FGM, and many parents/carers will refuse to have their daughters subjected to this procedure. However, in some communities a great deal of pressure can be put on parents/carers to follow what is seen as a cultural or religious practice.

### **Is FGM harmful?**

FGM is extremely harmful and is often described as brutal because of the way it is carried out, and its short and long term effects on physical and psychological health.

FGM is carried out on children between the ages of 0 and 15, depending on the community in which they live. It is often carried out without any form of sedation and without sterile conditions. The girl or young woman is held down while the procedure of cutting takes place and survivors describe extreme pain, fear and feelings of abandonment.

Where the vagina is cut and then sewn up, only a very small opening may be left. This is often seen as a way to ensure that when the girl enters marriage, she is a virgin. In some communities the mother of the future husband and the girl's own mother will take the girl to be cut open before the wedding night.

Repeat urinary tract infections are a common problem for women who have undergone FGM, and for some, infections come from menstruation being restricted. Many women have problems during pregnancy and childbirth. The removal of the clitoris denies women physical pleasure during sexual activity and some groups will practise complete removal to ensure chastity.

### **Is it illegal?**

FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, and is illegal in most countries – including the UK. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 came into force in 2004:

The act makes it illegal to:

- practise FGM in the UK
- take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM, whether or not it is lawful in that country
- aid and abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad.

The offence carries a penalty of up to 14 years in prison, and/or a fine.

### **Signs, symptoms and indicators**

The following list of possible signs and indicators are not diagnostic, but are offered as a guide as to what kind of things should alert professionals to the possibility of FGM.

Things that may point to FGM happening:

- a child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- a family arranging a long break abroad
- a child's family being from one of the 'at-risk' communities for FGM (see above)
- knowledge that an older sibling has undergone FGM
- a young person talks of going abroad to be 'cut', or get ready for marriage.

Things that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- prolonged absence from school or other activities
- behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as the child being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- bladder or menstrual problems
- finding it difficult to sit still, and looking uncomfortable
- complaining about pain between their legs
- mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- reluctance to take part in physical activity
- repeated urinal tract infection
- disclosure.

### **Mandatory Reporting Duty**

Where FGM has taken place, since 31 October 2015 there has been a mandatory reporting duty placed on **teachers**. Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon **teachers** in England and Wales, to personally report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. Further information on when and how to make a report can be found in the following Home Office guidance: 'Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation - procedural information' (October 2015).

### **What is breast ironing?**

Breast Ironing is practised in some African countries, notably Cameroon. Girls aged between 9 and 15 have hot pestles, stones or other implements rubbed on their developing breast to stop them growing further. In the vast majority of cases breast ironing is carried out by mothers or grandmothers and the men in the family are unaware. Estimates range between 25% and 50% of girls in Cameroon are affected by breast ironing, affecting up to 3.8 million women across Africa.

### **Why does breast ironing happen?**

The practice of breast ironing is seen as a protection to girls by making them seem 'child-like' for longer and reduce the likelihood of pregnancy. Once girls' breasts have developed, they are at risk of sexual harassment, rape, forced marriage and kidnapping; consequently, breast ironing is more prevalent in cities. Cameroon has one of the highest rates of literacy in Africa and ensuring that girls remain in education is seen as an important outcome of breast ironing.

### **Breast ironing is physical abuse**

Breast ironing is a form of physical abuse that has been condemned by the United Nations and identified as Gender-based Violence. Although, countries where breast ironing is prevalent have ratified the African Charter on Human Rights to prevent harmful traditional practices, it is not against the law.

Breast ironing does not stop the breasts from growing, but development can be slowed down. Damage caused by the 'ironing' can leave women with malformed breasts, difficulty breastfeeding or producing milk, severe chest pains, infections and abscesses. In some cases, it may be related to the onset of breast cancer.

### **Breast Ironing in the UK**

Concerns have been raised that breast ironing is also to be found amongst African communities in the UK, with as many as 1000 girls at risk. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) mentions breast ironing on page 160-161, as part of the section on so-called 'honour-based' violence. Staff worried about the risk of breast ironing in their school should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. Schools need to know the risk level within their communities and tackle the risk as appropriate.

#### **What should schools do?**

Where schools have a concern about a child, they should contact Children's Social Care Services (FFD). If the concerns are based on more concrete indicators – i.e., the young person says this is going to happen to them, or disclosure that it has happened to them or to an older sister – schools should make a child protection referral and inform the Police as required by the mandatory reporting duty. Schools should not:

- contact the parents before seeking advice from children's social care;
- make any attempt to mediate between the child/young person and parents.

It is important to keep in mind that the parents may not see FGM or Breast Ironing as a form of abuse; however, they may be under a great deal of pressure from their community and or family to subject their daughters to it. Some parents from identified communities may seek advice and support as to how to resist and prevent FGM for their daughters, and education about the harmful effects of FGM and Breast Ironing may help to make parents feel stronger in resisting the pressure of others in the community. Remember that religious teaching does not support FGM or Breast Ironing.

#### **The 'one chance' rule**

In the same way that we talk about the 'one chance rule' in respect of young people coming forward with fears that they may be forced into marriage, young people disclosing fears that they are going to be sent abroad for FGM are taking the 'one chance', of seeking help.

It is essential that we take such concerns seriously and act without delay. Never underestimate the determination of parents who have decided that it is right for their daughter to undergo FGM. Attempts to mediate may place the child/young person at greater risk, and the family may feel so threatened at the news of their child's disclosure that they bring forward their plans or take action to silence her.

## Appendix 9

# Radicalisation and Extremism

### Preventing Radicalisation

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a schools' safeguarding approach.

**Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.

**Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

**Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

As defined in the Government's Counter Extremism Strategy,  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-extremism-strategy>.

As defined in the Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales,

[Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/counter-extremism-strategy)  
([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))

As defined in the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT 2000),  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents>

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

However, it is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist ideology and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being radicalised. As with other safeguarding risks, staff are alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) making a Prevent referral.

The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any deputies) are aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

### The Prevent Duty

#### What is Prevent?

Prevent is the Government's strategy to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, **in all its forms**. Prevent works at the pre-criminal stage by using early intervention to encourage individuals and communities to challenge extremist and terrorist ideology and behaviour.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015), places a duty on specified authorities, including schools and colleges, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (“the Prevent Duty”). The Prevent Duty reinforces existing duties placed upon educational establishments for keeping children safe by:

- Ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum is in place schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils;
- Assessing the risk of pupils being drawn into extremist views;
- Ensuring safeguarding arrangements by working in partnership with local authorities, police and communities;
- Training staff to provide them with the knowledge and ability to identify pupils at risk;
- Keeping pupils safe online, using effective filtering and usage policies.

### **Warning Signs/Indicators of Concern**

There is no such thing as a “typical extremist”: those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremist activity.

Pupils may become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of social, personal and environmental factors. It is vital that school staff are able to recognise those vulnerabilities. However, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all young people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism.

Factors which may make pupils more vulnerable may include:

- **Identity Crisis:** the pupil is distanced from their cultural/religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society.
- **Personal Crisis:** the pupil may be experiencing family tensions; a sense of isolation; low self-esteem; they may have dissociated from their existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends; they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.
- **Personal Circumstances:** migration; local community tensions and events affecting the pupil’s country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy.
- **Unmet Aspirations:** the pupil may have perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life.
- **Experiences of Criminality:** involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, poor resettlement or reintegration.
- **Special Educational Need:** pupils may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.

Pupils who are vulnerable to radicalisation may also be experiencing:

- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Pressure
- Influence from older people or via the Internet
- Bullying
- Domestic violence
- Race/hate crime

## **Behaviours which may indicate a child is at risk of being radicalised or exposed to extremist views could include:**

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and/or spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists;
- Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause;
- Pupils accessing extremist material online, including through social networking sites;
- Possessing or accessing materials or symbols associated with an extremist cause;
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
- Pupils voicing opinions drawn from extremist ideologies and narratives, this may include justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
- Graffiti symbols, writing or art work promoting extremist messages or images;
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour increasingly centred on an extremist ideology, group or cause;
- Changing their style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group;
- Attempts to recruit others to the group/cause;
- Using insulting to derogatory names for another group;
- Increase in prejudice-related incidents committed by that person – these may include:
  - physical or verbal assault
  - provocative behaviour
  - damage to property
  - derogatory name calling
  - possession of prejudice-related materials
  - prejudice related ridicule or name calling
  - inappropriate forms of address
  - refusal to co-operate
  - attempts to recruit to prejudice-related organisations
  - condoning or supporting violence towards others
  - Parental reports of changes in behaviour, friendship or actions and requests for assistance;
  - Partner schools, local authority services, and police reports of issues affecting pupils in other schools.

## **Referral Process**

All concerns about young people vulnerable to radicalisation should be referred to the DSL in the first instance. The DSL will follow safeguarding procedures including:

- Talking to the young person about their behaviour/views/on-line activity/friends etc;
- Discussion with parents/carers about the concerns;
- Checking out on-line activity, including social media if possible;
- Providing in-house support, if available;
- Providing Early Help targeted support if necessary.

## **Channel**

If concerns persist, then the DSL should complete the Channel Referral Form (available from the WSCB website) and submit to the Family Front Door via a Cause for Concern Notification, normally with the knowledge and consent of the young person.

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

A Prevent referral is subject to a triage process to decide whether or not it meets the threshold for a referral to Channel. If it does, the DSL should be prepared to attend the Channel Panel meeting to share the concerns and help identify any intervention required. Further feedback to the Channel Panel will be expected following intervention to decide whether there are still concerns.

Further information can be found in the [WSCB regional procedures](#).

## **Appendix 10**

### **Child on Child (including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools)**

Children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer on peer abuse). It can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of peer on peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

Even if there are no reports in school it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have **any** concerns regarding peer on peer abuse, they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

All staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boy being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Peer on peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;(this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes’ images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

All our staff are clear as to the school’s policy and procedures with regards to child on child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

Staff will be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation

All our staff are aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from

school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance](#).

### **Child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Aston Fields Middle School will respond to reports of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment. All staff have read and understood the school guidance.

### **Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment**

Aston Fields Middle School carefully considers any report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the school's initial response. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. We will support victims to be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect other children;
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- the ages of the children involved;
- the developmental stages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature).

### **Children sharing a classroom: Initial considerations when the report is made**

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim.

However, reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim, and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator(s) is likely to be especially distressing. Whilst the school/college establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be removed from any classes they share with the victim. The school or college should also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) a reasonable distance apart on school or college premises (including during any before or after school-based activities) and on transport to and from the school or college, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of all children involved and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s).

For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing school or college premises and school or college transport, should be considered immediately.

In all cases, the initial report should be carefully evaluated, reflecting the considerations set out at paragraph 490 KCSIE 2024. The wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children in the school or college will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

### **Options to manage the report**

School will consider every report on a case-by-case basis (as per paragraph 489/492 of KCSIE 2024). When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, school will speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not us from taking immediate action to safeguard children, where required. There are four likely scenarios to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.

- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers.
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) CAMHS is used as a term for all services that work with children who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural wellbeing. Services vary depending on local authority. Most CAHMS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals and contact numbers.

### **Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s)**

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s):

- School have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education, school will safeguard and support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions.
- School will consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s) and nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- School will consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The alleged perpetrator(s) may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are<sup>96</sup>) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. More information on harmful sexual behaviours can be found at paras 16-20 of the detailed advice, "Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children at Schools and Colleges". Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police.

- If an alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), we will inform the new educational institution of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The designated safeguarding lead will take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice referenced at paragraphs 92-100 will help support this process.
- The National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA) provides support for professionals involved in work with, or related to, sexual offending.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

We understand the importance that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff are aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. We know that evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

Staff are aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

What is sexual violence and sexual harassment? It is important that school and college staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual violence offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

**Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Assault by Penetration:** A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**Sexual Assault:** A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

**What is consent?** Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

## **Sexual harassment**

When referring to sexual harassment we mean ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names.
- sexual “jokes” or taunting.
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It may include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos.

- sexualised online bullying.
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media.
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats; and up skirting.

### **Upskirting**

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. ‘Upskirting’ is where someone takes a picture under a person’s clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. The initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

## **Child on child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment**

This part of the statutory guidance is about how schools and colleges should respond to all reports and concerns of child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, including those that have happened outside of the school or college premises, and or online (what to look out for, and indicators of abuse are set out in Part one of this guidance).

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. As set out in Part one of this guidance, all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’.

Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment wherever it happens, will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school

or college. As set out in Part one of this guidance, schools and colleges should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college, including intimate personal relationships (see also sections on child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation at paragraphs 33-39).

Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. But it is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Staff should be aware of Part Five  
It contains further detailed information on:

- what sexual violence and sexual harassment constitutes,
- important context to be aware of, including what is consent, power imbalances, and developmental stages,
- harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), including that a child displaying HSB maybe an indication that they are a victim of abuse themselves,
- related legal responsibilities for schools and colleges,
- advice on a whole school or college approach to preventing child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, and
- more detailed advice on responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, including safeguarding and supporting both the victim(s) and alleged perpetrator(s).

## Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

Part two of KCSIE is clear that systems should be in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

Schools and colleges not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying some behaviours related to abuse can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Pre-planning, effective training and effective policies will provide schools and colleges with the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that the school or college contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children.

This part of the guidance does not attempt to provide (nor would it be possible to provide) detailed guidance on what to do in any or every particular case. The guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for schools and colleges to consider in their decision-making process.

Ultimately, any decisions are for the school or college to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.

## **The immediate response to a report**

### **Responding to the report**

It is important to note that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report, or a member of school or college staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. As per Part one of this guidance, if staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

The school's or college's initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the school or college responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the school or college should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report or their experience minimised.

As per Part one of KCSIE, all staff should be trained to manage a report. Local policies (and training) will dictate exactly how reports should be managed. However, effective safeguarding practice includes:

- if possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy). However, this might not always be possible.
- where the report includes an online element, being aware of searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools) and UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people.

The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child.

The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.

- not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to; recognising that a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be anyone on the school or college staff. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child; recognising that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse;
- keeping in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation;

- listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child's language, being on-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc. It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was;

- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made;

- only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. Schools and colleges should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation; and

- informing the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), as soon as practically possible, if the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is not involved in the initial report.

### **Risk assessment**

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support.

- whether there may have been other victims,

- the alleged perpetrator(s); and

- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

Risk assessments should be recorded (written or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the school or college should be actively considering the risks posed to all their pupils and students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The above school or college risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the school's or college's approach to supporting and protecting their pupils and students and updating their own risk assessment.

### **Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment**

#### **What to consider**

As set out above, sexual violence and sexual abuse can happen anywhere, and all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here. Schools and colleges

should be aware of and respond appropriately to all reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or sexual harassment both online and offline, including those that have happened outside of the school/college. The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the school's or college's initial response. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the school's or college's duty and responsibilities to protect other children;
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed.
- the ages of the children involved;
- the developmental stages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?;
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature);
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers;
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff; and
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, all staff should act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, schools and colleges should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this guidance. Immediate consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).

The starting point regarding any report should always be that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and it is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated. It is especially important not to pass off any sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

### **Children sharing a classroom: Initial considerations when the report is made**

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. However, reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim, and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator(s) is likely to be especially distressing. Whilst the school or college establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be removed from any classes

they share with the victim. The school or college should also carefully consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) a reasonable distance apart on school or college premises (including during any before or after school-based activities) and on transport to and from the school or college, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of all children involved and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s).

For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing school or college premises and school or college transport, should be considered immediately.

In all cases, the initial report should be carefully evaluated, reflecting the considerations set out at paragraph 490 KCSIE 2024. The wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children in the school or college will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

### **Options to manage the report**

It is important that schools and colleges consider every report on a case-by-case basis as per 492 KCSIE 2024). When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, the school or college should speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not stop the school or college taking immediate action to safeguard their children, where required.

There are four likely scenarios for schools and colleges to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learnt. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the school or college should decide on a course of action. Consideration should be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again. The four scenarios are:

#### **1. Manage internally**

- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the school or college may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or that referrals need to be made to statutory services and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.
- Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

#### **2. Early help**

- In line with 1 above, the school or college may decide that the children involved do not require referral to statutory services but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent HSB and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. It is particularly important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) know what the Early Help process is and how and where to access support.
- More information on Early Help is set out in Part one of this guidance with full details of the early help process in Chapter one of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

- Multi-agency early help will work best when placed alongside strong school or college policies, preventative education and engagement with parents and carers.
- Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive: a school could manage internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s).
- Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that there is zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

### **3. Referrals to children's social care**

- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, schools and colleges should make a referral to local children's social care.
- At the point of referral to children's social care, schools and colleges will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of children's social care.
- If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services.
- Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the school or college (especially the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) should be working alongside, and cooperating with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator(s) and any other children that require support.
- Schools and colleges should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the school or college. It will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the school or college takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment as per paragraph 480-482 will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report and all children at the school or college should be immediate.
- In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The school or college (generally led by the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy) should be prepared to refer again if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support. •Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

### **4. Reporting to the Police**

- Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above).
- It is important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are clear about the local process for referrals and follow that process.
- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. The following advice may help schools and

colleges decide when to engage the Police and what to expect of them when they do: When to call the police.

- Where a report has been made to the police, the school or college should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

- At this stage, schools and colleges will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school or college is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

- All police forces in England have specialist units that investigate child abuse. The names and structures of these units are matters for local forces. It will be important that the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) are aware of their local arrangements.

- In some cases, it may become clear very quickly that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that the school or college continue to engage with specialist support for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required.

- Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), it will be important for the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

- If schools or colleges have questions about the investigation, they should ask the police. The police will help and support the school or college as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions).

- Whatever the response, it should be under-pinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.

- All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

### **Considering bail conditions**

- The police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm. This could involve the use of police bail with conditions, prior to a suspect appearing in court, or court bail with or without conditions after the first appearance.

- Alternatively, the person suspected of an offence could be 'released under investigation' (RUI). People released under RUI can have no conditions attached to their release from custody and it is possible for a person on bail also to have no conditions.

- Whatever arrangements are in place; the school or college will need to consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within their institution.

- Particular regard should be given to: the additional stress and trauma that might be caused to a victim within the institution; the potential for the suspected person to intimidate the victim or a witness; the need to ensure that any risk management measures strike a balance between management of risk and the rights of an unconvicted person (e.g. rights to privacy, family life, etc).

- Careful liaison with the police investigators should help to develop a balanced setoff arrangement.

### **Managing any delays in the criminal process**

- There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. Schools and colleges should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children in the school or college. The risk assessment as per paragraph 480-482 will help inform any decision.

## **The end of the criminal process**

•If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school or college should update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children at the school or college and, if it has not already, consider any suitable action in line with their behaviour policy. This process should include a review of the necessary actions to keep all parties safe and meet their needs. If the perpetrator(s) remains in the same school or college as the victim, the school or college should be very clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator(s) now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the school or college thinks are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrator(s)' timetable.

•Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils or students in the school or college. It will be important that the school or college ensure both the victim and perpetrator(s) remain protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

•Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the school or college should continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated or was withdrawn does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. Schools and colleges should discuss any decisions with the victim in this light and continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator(s) is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

## **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports**

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing.

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the designated safeguarding lead should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school or college, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

## **Ongoing response**

### **Safeguarding and supporting the victim**

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim.

•The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that the school or college is a safe space for them.

•Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse. Schools and colleges should beware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s).

- The victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.
- Schools should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre
  - Childline provides free and confidential advice for children and young people.
  - Internet Watch Foundation works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.
  - Childline / IWF: Remove a nude image shared online Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

Victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When it is clear that ongoing support will be required, schools and colleges should ask the victim if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult (for example, their form tutor or designated safeguarding lead) to talk to about their needs. The choice of any such adult should be the victim's (as far as reasonably possible). Schools and colleges should respect and support this choice.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal classroom environment. While schools and colleges should avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. This should be because the victim wants to, not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. If required, schools and colleges should provide a physical space for victims to withdraw.

It may be necessary for schools and colleges to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time. Schools and colleges should be prepared for this and should work with children's social care and other agencies as required.

It is therefore important that the designated safeguarding lead knows how and where to seek support.

It is important that the school or college do everything they reasonably can to protect the victim from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made.

Whilst they should be given all the necessary support to remain in their school or college, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another school or college should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

It is important that if the victim does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs. The designated safeguarding lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens (and should discuss with the victim and, where appropriate their parents or carers as to the most suitable way of doing this) as well as transferring the child protection file.

### **Ongoing Considerations: Victim and alleged perpetrator(s) sharing classes**

Once the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) has decided what the next steps will be in terms of progressing the report, they should carefully consider again the question of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) sharing classes and sharing space at school or college. This will inevitably

involve complex and difficult professional decisions, including considering their duty to safeguard children and their duty to educate them.

It is important each report is considered on a case-by-case basis and risk assessments are updated as appropriate. As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, the best interests of the child should come first. In all cases, schools and colleges should follow general safeguarding principles as per this guidance.

Where there is a criminal investigation into a rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be removed from any classes they share with the victim. The school or college should also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) a reasonable distance apart on school or college premises (including during before and after school-based activities) and on transport to and from school or college where appropriate. This is in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgement on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s). Close liaison with the police is essential.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, the school or college should take suitable action, if they have not already done so. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault is likely to constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator(s) to remain in the same school or college would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils or students).

Where a criminal investigation into sexual assault leads to a conviction or caution, the school or college should, if it has not already, consider any suitable sanctions in light of their behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. Where the perpetrator(s) is going to remain at the school or college, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator(s) in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on school and college premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

In all cases, schools and colleges should record and be able to justify their decision-making.

Reports of sexual assault and sexual harassment will, in some cases, not lead to a report to the police (for a variety of reasons). In some cases, rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault or sexual harassment are reported to the police and the case is not progressed or are reported to the police and ultimately result in a not guilty verdict. None of this means the offence did not happen or that the victim lied. The process will have affected both victim and alleged perpetrator(s).

Appropriate support should be provided to both as required and consideration given to sharing classes and potential contact as required on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, schools and colleges should record and be able to justify their decision-making.

All of the above should be considered with the needs and wishes of the victim at the heart of the process (supported by parents and carers as required). Any arrangements should be kept under review.

### **Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s) and children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour**

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s):

- The school or college will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions. Taking disciplinary action and still providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions. They can, and should, occur at the same time if necessary.
- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s), the nature of the allegations and frequency of allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.

Statutory Guidance for schools - Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and PRUs.

- School can be a significant protective factor for children who have displayed HSB, and continued access to school, with a comprehensive safeguarding management plan in place, is an important factor to consider before final decisions are made. It is important that if an alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The designated safeguarding lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice will help support this process.
- Stop it now - professionals looking for advice provides support for professionals in child sexual abuse prevention, so that they're well equipped to keep children safe.

## Appendix 11 Sexting

### What is sexting?

Sexting is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images, through mobile picture messages or webcams over the internet.

Sexting is often seen as flirting by children and young people who think that it's part of normal life. Often, incidents of sexting are not clear-cut or isolated; schools may encounter a variety of scenarios. Sexting incidents can be divided into two categories – aggravated and experimental<sup>3</sup>

**Aggravated incidents of sexting** involve criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation of an image. These include further elements, adult involvement or criminal or abusive behaviour by minors such as sexual abuse, extortion, threats, malicious conduct arising from personal conflicts, or creation or sending or showing of images without the knowledge or against the will of a minor who is pictured.

**Experimental incidents of sexting** involve youths taking pictures of themselves to share with established boy or girlfriends, to create romantic interest in other youth, or for reasons such as attention seeking. There is no criminal element (and certainly no criminal intent) beyond the creation and sending of the images and no apparent malice or lack of willing participation.

The consequences of sexting can be devastating for young people. In extreme cases it can result in suicide or a criminal record, isolation and vulnerability. Young people can end up being criminalised for sharing an apparently innocently image which may have, in fact, been created for exploitative reasons.

Because of the prevalence of sexting, young people are not always aware that their actions are illegal. In fact, sexting as a term is not something that is recognised by young people and the 'cultural norms' for adults can be somewhat different. Some celebrities have made comments which appear to endorse sexting – 'it's okay, as long as you hide your face' - giving the impression that sexting is normal and acceptable. However, in the context of the law it is an illegal activity and young people must be made aware of this.

**The Law** - Much of the complexity in responding to youth produced sexual imagery is due to its legal status. Making, possessing and distributing any imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent' is illegal. This includes imagery of yourself if you are under 18. 'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. For most purposes, if imagery contains a naked young person, a topless girl, and/or displays genitals or sex acts, including masturbation, then it will be considered indecent. Indecent images may also include overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear.

The law criminalising indecent images of children was created long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. It was also created to protect children and young people from adults seeking to sexually abuse them or gain pleasure from their sexual abuse. It was not intended to criminalise children. Despite this, young people who share sexual imagery of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has made clear that incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should primarily be treated as safeguarding issues. Schools may respond to incidents without involving the police. Where the police are notified of incidents of youth produced sexual imagery they are obliged, under the Home Office Counting rules and National Crime

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<sup>3</sup> Reprinted from Wolak and Finkelhor 'Sexting: a Typology' March 2011

Recording Standards, to record the incident on their crime systems. The incident will be listed as a 'crime' and the young person involved will be listed as a 'suspect.' ***This is not the same as having a criminal record.***

Every 'crime' recorded on police systems has to be assigned an outcome from a predefined list of outcome codes. As of January 2016, the Home Office launched a new outcome code (outcome 21) to help formalise the discretion available to the police when handling crimes such as youth produced sexual imagery. This means that even though a young person has broken the law and the police could provide evidence that they have done so, the police can record that they chose not to take further action as it was not in the public interest.

## **Action to take in the case of an incident of sexting**

### **Step 1 – Disclosure by a pupil**

Sexting disclosures should follow the normal safeguarding practices and protocols. A pupil is likely to be very distressed especially if the image has been circulated widely and if they don't know who has shared it, seen it or where it has ended up. They will need pastoral support during the disclosure and after the event. They may even need immediate protection or a referral to Social Care.

The following questions will help decide upon the best course of action:

- Is the pupil disclosing about themselves receiving an image, sending an image or sharing an image?
- What sort of image is it? Is it potentially illegal or is it inappropriate?
- Are the school child protection and safeguarding policies and practices being followed? For example, has the DSL been consulted and is their advice and support available?
- How widely has the image been shared and is the device in their possession?
- Is it a school device or a personal device?
- Does the pupil need immediate support and or protection?
- Are there other pupils and or young people involved?
- Do they know where the image has ended up?

This situation will need to be handled very sensitively. Whatever the nature of the incident, ensure school safeguarding and child protection policies and practices are adhered to.

### **Step 2 – Searching a device**

It is highly likely that the image will have been created and potentially shared through mobile devices. The image may not be on one single device, but may be on a website or on a multitude of devices; it may be on either a school-owned or personal device. It is important to establish the location of the image but be aware that this may be distressing for the young person involved, so be conscious of the support they may need.

When searching a mobile device the following conditions should apply:

- The action is in accordance with the school's child protection and safeguarding policies
- The search is conducted by the head teacher or a person authorised by them
- A member of the safeguarding team is present
- The search is conducted by a member of the same sex

If any illegal images of a child are found you should consider whether to inform the police. As a general rule it will almost always be proportionate to refer any incident involving "aggravated" sharing of images to the police, whereas purely "experimental" conduct may proportionately be dealt with without such referral, most particularly if it involves the child sharing images of themselves. Any conduct involving, or possibly involving, the knowledge or participation of adults should always be referred to the police.

If an "experimental" incident is not referred to the police the reasons for this should be recorded in writing.

Always put the child first. Do not search the device if this will cause additional stress to the student/person whose image has been distributed.

If there is an indecent image of a child on a website or a social networking site then you should report the image to the site hosting it. In the case of a sexting incident involving a child or young person where you feel that they may be at risk of abuse then you should report the incident directly to CEOP [www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-report](http://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-report), so that law enforcement can make an assessment, expedite the case with the relevant provider and ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard the child.

### **Step 3 – What to do and not do with the image**

If the image has been shared across a personal mobile device:

- Confiscate and secure the device;
- Don't view the image unless there is a clear reason to do so;
- Don't send, share or save the image anywhere;
- Don't allow students to view images or send, share or save them anywhere.

If the image has been shared across a school network, a website or social network:

- Block the network to all users and isolate the image;
- Don't send or print the image;
- Don't move the material from one place to another;
- Don't view the image outside of the protocols of your safeguarding policies and procedures.

### **Step 4 – Who should deal with the incident?**

Whoever the initial disclosure is made to must act in accordance with the school safeguarding policy, ensuring that the DSL or a senior member of staff is involved in dealing with the incident. The DSL should always record the incident. Senior management should also always be informed. There may be instances where the image needs to be viewed and this should be done in accordance with protocols. The best interests of the child should always come first; if viewing the image is likely to cause additional stress, staff should make a judgement about whether or not it is appropriate to do so.

### **Step 5 - Deciding on a response**

There may be a multitude of reasons why a student has engaged in sexting – it may be a romantic/sexual exploration scenario or it may be due to coercion. It is important to remember that it won't always be appropriate to inform the police; this will depend on the nature of the incident. However, as a school it is important that incidents are consistently recorded. It may also be necessary to assist the young person in removing the image from a website or elsewhere.

If indecent images of a child are found:

- Act in accordance with your child protection and safeguarding policy, e.g. notify DSL
- Store the device securely
- Carry out a risk assessment in relation to the young person (see Appendix B of the Safeguarding Children in Education Guidance for a Sexting Risk Assessment pro-forma and flow chart)
- Make a referral if needed
- Contact the police (if appropriate)
- Put the necessary safeguards in place for the student, e.g. they may need counselling support, immediate protection and parents/carers must also be informed.
- Inform parents and/or carers about the incident and how it is being managed.

### **Step 6 – Contacting other agencies (making a referral)**

If the nature of the incident is high-risk, consider contacting Children's Social Care. Depending on the nature of the incident and the response you may also consider contacting local police or referring the incident to CEOP.

Understanding the nature of the incident, whether experimental or aggravated, will help to determine the appropriate course of action. 38

### **Step 7 – Containing the incident and managing pupil reaction**

Sadly, there are cases in which victims of sexting have had to leave or change schools because of the impact the incident has had on them. The student will be anxious about who has seen the image and where it has ended up. They will seek reassurance regarding its removal from the platform on which it was shared. They are likely to need support from the school, their parents/carers and their friends. Education programmes can reinforce to all students the impact and severe consequences that this behaviour can have. Consider engaging with your local police and asking them to talk to the students.

Other staff may need to be informed of incidents and should be prepared to act if the issue is continued or referred to by other students. The school, its students and parents/carers should be on high alert, challenging behaviour and ensuring that the victim is well cared for and protected. The students' parents/carers should usually be told what has happened so that they can keep a watchful eye over their child, especially when they are online at home.

Creating a supportive environment for students in relation to the incident is very important.

### **Step 8 – Reviewing outcomes and procedures to prevent further incidences**

As with all incidents, a review process ensures that the matter has been managed effectively and that the school has the capacity to learn and improve its handling procedures. Incidents of sexting can be daunting for a school to manage, especially if the image has been widely shared between pupils in school.

Further information is available from the [NSPCC](#)

