



**LEIGHTON PARK**  
FOUNDED 1890

**Safeguarding**

**and**

**Child Protection Policy**

**Including Children Absent From  
Education**

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## KEY EXTERNAL CONTACT DETAILS

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<b>Local Authority Children's Social Services</b>	TEL: 0118 937 3641 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org">cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org</a> OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM TEL: 01344 351999 (This includes out of hours contact details)
<b>Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnerships</b>	Support Team email: <a href="mailto:BWSCP@brighterfuturesforchildren.org">BWSCP@brighterfuturesforchildren.org</a>
<b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub</b>	TEL: 0118 9373641 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org">cspoa@brighterfuturesforchildren.org</a>
<b>Support and Advice about Extremism/PREVENT</b>	<b>Police</b> Thames Valley Police EMERGENCY: 999 NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER: 101 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:preventreferrals@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk">preventreferrals@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk</a> <b>Department for Education</b> NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER: 020 7340 7264 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk">counter.extremism@education.gov.uk</a>
<b>NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line</b>	ADDRESS: Weston House 42 Curtain Road London EC2A 3NH TEL: 0800 028 0285 (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm; weekends between 9am and 6pm) EMAIL: <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a>
<b>NSPCC Report Abuse in Education Advice Line</b>	TEL: 0800 136 663 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a>
<b>Disclosure and Barring Service</b>	ADDRESS: DBS customer services PO Box 3961 Royal Wootton Bassett SN4 4HF TEL: 03000 200 190 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:customerservices@db.gov.uk">customerservices@db.gov.uk</a>
<b>Teaching Regulation Agency</b>	ADDRESS: Teacher Regulation Agency

	<p>Cheylesmore House 5 Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT TEL: 0207 593 5393 EMAIL: TRA.Caseworker@education.gov.uk</p>
<b>OFSTED Safeguarding Children</b>	<p>TEL: 0300 123 4666 (Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm) EMAIL: <a href="mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk">enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Independent Schools Inspectorate</b>	<p>TEL: 0207 6000 100 EMAIL: info@isi.net</p>

## KEY SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Governors</b>	<p><b>Chair of Governors</b> Eme Dean-Lewis EMAIL: <a href="mailto:emedean-lewis@leightonpark.com">emedean-lewis@leightonpark.com</a></p> <p><b>Nominated Safeguarding Governor</b> Matt Winkless EMAIL: <a href="mailto:mattwinkless@leightonpark.com">mattwinkless@leightonpark.com</a></p> <p><b>Nominated Deputy Safeguarding Governor</b> Gwenan Sykes EMAIL: <a href="mailto:gwenansykes@leightonpark.com">gwenansykes@leightonpark.com</a></p>
<b>Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") and Deputy Designed Safeguarding Lead ("DDSL"). Together these form the Designated Safeguarding Team (DST)</b>	<p><b>Main DSL for the School</b> Elaine Newall TEL: 0118 9879 508 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:elainenewall@leightonpark.com">elainenewall@leightonpark.com</a></p> <p><b>Deputy DSLs (DDSLs)</b></p> <p>Eddie Falshaw TEL: 0118 9879 604 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:edwardfalshaw@leightonpark.com">edwardfalshaw@leightonpark.com</a></p> <p>Rachel Barnard TEL: 0118 9879578 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:rachelbarnard@leightonpark.com">rachelbarnard@leightonpark.com</a></p> <p>Tash Coccia TEL: 0118 9879540 EMAIL: <a href="mailto:natashacoccia@leightonpark.com">natashacoccia@leightonpark.com</a></p>

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<b>Designated Teacher for Looked After Children</b>	<p>Elaine Newall  TEL: 0118 9879508  EMAIL: <a href="mailto:elainenewall@leightonpark.com">elainenewall@leightonpark.com</a></p>
<b>Head</b>	<p>Luke Walters  TEL: 0118 9879602  EMAIL: <a href="mailto:lukewalters@leightonpark.com">lukewalters@leightonpark.com</a></p>

## POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to Leighton Park ("the School"). This policy is reviewed and updated annually (as a minimum) and is available on the School website or hard copies are available from the School office.

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (September 2025) ("KCSIE")
  - *KCSIE incorporates the additional statutory guidance Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (September 2018)*
  - *KCSIE also provides links to various toolkits and additional advice and support*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (March 2026) ("WT")
  - *WT refers to the non-statutory advice: Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers (May 2024)*
  - *Prevent Duty Guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales (December 2023) ("Prevent"). Prevent is supplemented by a briefing note: How social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq (July 2015)*
- *Relationships education, relationships, and sex education (RSE) and health education* (December 2025)
- *Behaviour in schools* (February 2024)
- *Working together to improve school attendance: statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities* (August 2024)
- *Children Missing Education* (September 2025)

- *Digital and technology standards in schools and colleges* (February 2026)
- *The Charity Commission Guidance Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees* (June 2022)
- *After school clubs, community activities, and tuition (safeguarding guidance for providers)* (February 2026)
- *The National Minimum Standards for boarding schools* (September 2022)

This policy also considers the procedures and practice of the local children's services of and their designated officers. The three boroughs of Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire have worked closely together for many years, with a shared Independent Chair and a number of shared sub-groups. These boroughs have come together to create the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership: details may be seen at <https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/MASA>; & [Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).

At Leighton Park School we are committed to safeguarding children and young people, and we expect everyone who works in our school to share this commitment. Adults in our school take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage children and young people to talk to us about anything that worries them. We will always act in the best interest of the child.

The Schools safeguarding aims and the purpose of this policy are:

- To support the child's physical and mental development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident, and know how to approach adults if they are in difficulties, believing they will be effectively listened to.
- To provide and promote systems for students as well as staff which are easily understood and readily accessible so that anyone may confidently report abuse knowing that concerns will be treated seriously.
- To raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse; specifically: to ensure that staff know: how to identify the signs of abuse and neglect: how to pass on and record concerns about a student; that they have an individual responsibility to be alert to the signs and indicators of abuse and for referring child protection concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Team, (DST); that they have a responsibility to provide a safe environment where children can learn.
- To provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm or in need of early intervention and support, and to ensure that the School contributes to assessments of need and support plans for those children.

- To ensure excellent levels of communication amongst staff on pastoral and safeguarding matters.
- To emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff on pastoral and on safeguarding matters.
- To develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.
- To develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially the Police and other appropriate external children's services.
- To ensure that all staff including supply staff and volunteers working within the school who have substantial access to children have been checked prior to their starting dates as to their suitability, including verification of their identity, qualifications, and a DBS check, and a central record is kept for audit.
- To ensure that all students are provided with the guidance they need to keep themselves safe including when online.
- In order to further promote the welfare and safety of students, to safeguard the protected characteristics of students under the Equality Act 2010, including:
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - race
  - religion or belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation.
- To ensure that the safeguarding policy is up-to-date, incorporating the most recent DfE and local authority guidance, and is suitable for its purposes.
- To recognise the importance of the role of the DST and ensure they have the time, training and support necessary to undertake their duties which include, providing advice and support to staff, students' online safety, taking part in inter-agency meetings and contributing to the assessment of children in need.
- To maintain confidentiality with regard to safeguarding matters: The Head and DST will disclose information about a child to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only.
- To ensure through a whole-School approach including teaching, training and curriculum planning that all students are provided with the guidance they need to keep themselves safe including when online.

## **EQUALITY ACT 2010**

The School understands and recognises their obligations under the Equality Act and that the school must not discriminate against pupils because of a protected characteristic including sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, or sexual orientation. In the context of safeguarding, the School will consider how to support pupils with regard to particular protected characteristics in order to meet their specific needs. The School will also consider their duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

The School also complies with its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, including putting special provision in place to support dialogue with children who may not be able to convey their wishes and feelings as they may want to. This might include, for example, those who have communication difficulties and those who do not speak English or for whom English is not their first language.

## **CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD**

The School has a duty to consider at all times the best interests of the student and take action to enable all students to achieve the best outcomes. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. The School adopts a 'whole school' approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the School and ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development.

Parents are encouraged to raise any concerns directly with the School, if necessary, using this safeguarding policy for concerns about the safety and/or welfare of children. Parents may contact the ISI directly if they wish.

The School has arrangements for listening to children and providing early help, and the pastoral teamwork with key staff to do so, including making referrals for support where necessary.

## **Definitions of child protection and safeguarding and types and signs of abuse**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge; protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online; preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and is defined as activity that is undertaken to protect children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Abuse is a form 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 (e.g. via the internet). 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 by another child or children. Abuse can be:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse; and/or
- neglect.

Staff are referred to Appendix 1 of this policy for further detail of the types of abuse and possible signs of abuse, as well as further information regarding specific safeguarding issues such as child criminal and/or sexual exploitation

## PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD

If staff suspect or hear any allegation or complaint of abuse, exploitation, or neglect from a child or any third party, they must act immediately and follow the relevant procedure below. Staff should not assume that somebody else will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.

The guidance, *Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers* (May 2024) supports staff who have to make decisions about sharing information. The governing body recognises the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies, including ensuring arrangements for sharing information within the School and with local authority children's social care, the safeguarding partners and other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required. Fears regarding sharing information under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation ("UK GDPR") must not be allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and neither the DPA 2018 nor the UK GDPR prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. If in doubt about what information can and should be shared, staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL").

The governing body will ensure that staff understand the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, including:

- being confident of the processing conditions which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information, which is sensitive and personal and should be treated as 'special category personal data'
- understanding that 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows the sharing of special category personal data, including without consent where there is good reason to do so. For example, information may be shared without consent where: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent; and gaining consent would place a child at risk
- not providing students' personal data where the serious harm test is met (\* see note)

All staff should:

- listen carefully
- avoid asking leading questions
- observe their behaviour
- reassure the individual that the allegation/complaint will be taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- ensure that the individual is not made to feel ashamed for making the report or given the impression that they are creating a problem by making the report
- not guarantee absolute confidentiality (as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child) and explain that the information needs to be passed to the appropriate person who will ensure that the correct action is taken
- be aware that the individual may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected, and/or may not recognise their

experiences as harmful. Staff should exercise professional curiosity and speak to the DSL if they have concerns

- determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication

All concerns, discussions, and decisions (including the rationale for those decisions) made under these procedures should be recorded in writing. This includes instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency, such as children's social care or the Prevent programme. This will help if/when responding to any complaint about the way a case has been handled. The record should include a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved and a note of any action taken, the decision reached and the outcome. The information should be kept confidential and stored securely, ensuring that the file is only accessible to those who need to see it, and is shared in accordance with the guidance set out in Parts one and two of *KCSIE*.

*(\* The "serious harm test" is an exemption to the right of access to personal data. For example, if someone has requested access to their (or their child's) personal data held by the school, the school must consider whether disclosing the data would cause serious harm to anyone's mental or physical health. This exemption only applies to health data (where a health professional has confirmed the exemption applies), social work data and, importantly for schools, education data.)*

Where the allegation relates to harmful sexual behaviours, if possible, the disclosure should be managed with two members of staff present (preferably one of them being the DSL or their deputy).

Where there is a safeguarding concern, the School will ensure the student's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. This is particularly important in the context of harmful behaviours, such as sexual harassment and sexual violence. The School manages this by ensuring that there are systems in place, that are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback. The School implements a child-centred approach to safeguarding. Whilst the School is committed to working collaboratively, and in partnership, with parents and carers as far as possible, the wishes and feelings of the child and what is in their best interest is always central to the School's decision-making process.

## **Contextual Safeguarding**

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the School and can occur between children outside School. All staff, but especially the members of the DST, should consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. The School will as part of the wider assessment of children, consider whether environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. The School will share as much information with Children's Social Care as possible as part of the referral process to enable consideration of all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

## Early Help

Any child may benefit from early help, but all staff should be particularly alert to 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, care or from home
- Has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, or in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, and/or sexual or criminal exploitation
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
- Is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- Is a privately fostered child

Early help is support for children of all ages that improves resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. Early help may be appropriate for children who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable.

The School has effective measures in place to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual pupils. All staff undertake appropriate training to ensure that they know when to share information with other agencies and what action to take to support early identification and assessments.

In the first instance, staff who consider that a student may benefit from early help should discuss this with the School's DSL. If appropriate, the DSL will work with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership to undertake an assessment of the need for early help. The DSL will support staff in liaising with external agencies and professionals in an inter-agency assessment, as appropriate. Further guidance on effective assessment of the need for early help can be found in WT.

If early help is appropriate, the matter will be kept under review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care if the student's situation does not appear to be improving.

### **What staff should do if they have concerns about a child**

If staff (including governors, supply staff, agency staff and volunteers) have any concerns about a child (as opposed to a child being in immediate danger), they should, where possible, speak with the School's DSL to agree a course of action, although staff can make a direct referral to children's social care. As set out above, staff should not assume that somebody else will take action and share information that might be critical to keep a child safe; they should maintain an attitude of "it could happen here". If anyone other than the DSL makes a referral, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible that a referral has been made. If a child's situation does not appear to be improving, the DSL should press children's social care for reconsideration. Staff should challenge any inaction and follow this up with the DSL and children's social care as appropriate. All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing.

### **What staff should do if a child is in danger or at risk of harm**

If staff (including governors, supply staff, agency staff and volunteers) believe that a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, they should make an immediate referral to children's social care and/or the police. Anyone can make a referral. Any such referral must be made immediately and in any event within 24 hours (one working day) of staff being aware of the risk. Parental consent is not needed for referrals to statutory agencies such as the police and children's social care. If anyone other than the DSL makes a referral, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible that a referral has been made. The local authority social worker should acknowledge receipt to the referrer within 24 hours and make a decision about the next steps and type of response required. Staff should challenge any inaction and follow this up with the DSL and children's social care as appropriate. All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing.

The School's Local Safeguarding Children Board is the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership. A full copy of their local procedures can be found at <https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp>.

### **What staff should do if a child is seen as at risk of radicalisation**

Staff should follow the School's normal referral processes when there are concerns about children who may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. This may include a Prevent referral or referral to children's social care depending on the level of risk. However, if staff have concerns that there is an immediate/significant risk of a child being drawn into terrorism they must call 101 and ask for the Special Branch Sergeant or call 999 if it is an emergency. Advice and support can also be sought from children's social care.

The School, in recognition that students may be susceptible to being drawn into terrorism or other forms of extremism, carries out appropriate risk assessments

(following consultation with local partners, such as the police) which assess how their learners or staff may be at risk of being radicalised into terrorism, including online. Such risk assessments are discussed with the Head, DSL and DST to ensure the School's safeguarding arrangements are sufficiently robust to ensure that those at risk of radicalisation are identified and appropriate support is provided and is regularly revised as needed.

Members of staff complete an online general awareness training module on Prevent that includes information on when it is appropriate to make a referral. Staff training covers the increased risk of online radicalisation. Those members of staff with designated responsibilities for preventing radicalisation will receive more in-depth training. Suitable IT filtering/screening and monitoring is in place on the School's computer system.

Visiting speakers will be vetted so that the School can be satisfied that the information provided by speakers will be aligned to the ethos and values of the school and to British values. More generally, the School will use its curriculum to try to build resilience against radicalisation.

### **What staff should do if they discover an act of Female Genital Mutilation ("FGM")**

Staff must report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the member of staff has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate. Staff are referred to Appendix 1 of this policy for the procedure to be followed where they suspect that a student may be at risk of FGM.

### **What staff should do if they have concerns that children are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime**

All staff should be aware of the indicators which may signal that 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, signs of assault or unexplained injuries.

If staff have any concerns about a child (as opposed to a child being in immediate danger), they should, where possible, speak with the School's DSL to agree a course of action, although staff can make a direct referral to children's social care.

### **How should staff respond to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared by students**

All members of staff in an education setting have a duty to recognise and refer any incidents involving nudes and semi-nudes and will be equipped with the necessary safeguarding training and support to enable them to recognise concerns.

For this purpose, 'sharing nudes/semi-nudes' means the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams by persons under the age of 18 online. This could be via social media (including Snapchat), gaming platforms, chat apps (including WhatsApp and iMessage) or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may happen publicly online, in 1:1 messaging or via group chats and/or via closed social media accounts. The images, videos or live streams may include more than one child. The term 'nudes' is used as it is most commonly recognised by young people and more appropriately covers all types of image sharing incidents. Alternative terms used by children and young people may include 'dick pics' or 'pics'.

Many professionals may refer to 'nudes and semi-nudes' as:

- youth produced sexual imagery or 'youth involved' sexual imagery
- indecent imagery. This is the legal term used to define nude or semi-nude images and videos of children and young people under the age of 18.
- 'sexting'. Many adults may use this term, however some young people interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know' rather than sharing images
- image-based sexual abuse. This term may be used when referring to the nonconsensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes

Terms such as 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting' are also used to refer to specific incidents of nudes and semi-nudes being shared. However, these terms are more often used in the context of adult-to-adult non-consensual image sharing offences outlined in s.33-35 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 and s.67A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Terms such as 'deep fakes' and 'deep nudes' may also be used by adults and young people to refer to digitally manipulated and AI-generated nudes and semi-nudes. Any direct disclosure by a child will be taken seriously and staff will ensure the child is feeling comfortable and will only ask appropriate and sensitive questions, in order to minimise further distress or trauma to them.

If staff are notified or become aware of an incident of nudes or semi-nudes being shared by a student or of a student, they should refer the incident to the DSL as soon as possible.

The DSL will follow the DDMSC / UKIS guidance "*Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people*" (March 2024) when responding to a report of sharing nudes and/or semi-nudes. This will include:

- Holding an initial review meeting with appropriate staff. This may include the staff member(s) who heard the disclosure and the safeguarding or leadership team who deal with safeguarding concerns.
- Carrying out interviews with the children involved (if appropriate).
- Informing parents and carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process in order to best support the student unless there is good reason to believe

that involving them would put the child at risk of harm. Any decision not to inform them should be made in conjunction with other services such as children's social care and/or the police, who would take the lead in deciding when they should be informed.

- Carrying out a risk assessment to determine whether there is a concern that a child has been harmed or is at risk of immediate harm at any point in the process

An immediate referral to police and/or children's social care through MASH or equivalent will be made if any of the following points apply:

- The incident involves an adult. Where an adult poses as a child to groom or exploit a child or young person, the incident may first present as a child-on-child incident.
- There is reason to believe that a child or young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs).
- The images or videos suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent.
- The images involves sexual acts and any child or young person in the images or videos is under 13.
- There is reason to believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, for example, they are presenting as suicidal or self-harming.

If none of the above apply, the School may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. All incidents relating to nudes and semi-nudes being shared need to be recorded, whether they have been referred externally or not. The decision to respond to an incident without involving the police or children's social care will only be made in cases where the DSL (or equivalent) is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to any child or young person involved and the risks can be managed within the School's pastoral support and disciplinary framework. Any decision in this regard will be made by the DSL with input from the Head. The decision will be made and recorded in line with this policy and will be based on consideration of the best interests of any child or young person involved. Any decision will take into account proportionality as well as the welfare and protection of any child or young person. The decision will be reviewed throughout the process of responding to the incident. If doubts remain, local safeguarding arrangements will be followed.

This guidance does not apply to the sharing of images of persons under 18 by an adult over 18 as this constitutes child sexual abuse. In the event that staff become aware of such an incident, they should notify the DSL immediately, who should always inform the police as a matter of urgency.

### **What staff should do if a child is absent from education**

Children who are absent from education, particularly persistently, can be a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect and child sexual and/or criminal exploitation, particularly county lines. It is therefore important that the School's response

to such absence supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them being absent from education in the future. The School's procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education are set out in the School's policy on Children Absent From Education, and involve actively searching for children who are unexpectedly absent, including working with the police where appropriate. Any child subject to a Multi-Agency Child Protection Plan who is absent without satisfactory explanation will be reported to their Key Social Worker as soon as possible and within two days in any case. Staff will monitor students' attendance through their daily register and will inform senior staff who in turn will be in touch with the local children's services for students who are regularly absent from school or have missed 10 school days or more without permission. Further detail can also be found at Appendix 1 of this policy.

Where reasonably possible, the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each student to provide the School with additional options to make contact with a responsible adult particularly when a child absent from education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Staff will monitor students' attendance through their daily register and will inform senior staff who in turn will be in touch with the local children's services for students who are regularly absent from school or have missed 10 school days or more without permission.

When working with local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns the School will have regard to the DfE guidance *'Working together to improve school attendance: statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (August 2024)*.

### **What staff should do if a child needs a social worker (Children in Need and Child Protection Plans)**

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect, exploitation and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of 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.

Local authorities should share the fact a child has a social worker, and the DSL should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine.

Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence from education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services).

### **What staff should do if a child requires mental health support**

The School has an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its students. 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. The School aims to prevent health problems by promoting resilience as part of a whole school approach to social and emotional wellbeing of our students.

Staff can access a range of advice to help them identify children in need of extra mental health support, this includes working with external agencies. More information can be found in the DfE *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* guidance. Public Health England has produced a range of resources to support schoolteachers to promote positive health, wellbeing, and resilience among young people.

Staff should refer to the Mental Health and Well-Being Policy for more detailed guidance on how to support pupils with their mental health.

### **What staff should do if they have safeguarding concerns about another staff member**

If staff have safeguarding concerns about another staff member (including supply staff, agency staff, volunteers and contractors), then this should be referred to the Head. Where there are concerns about the Head, this should be referred to the Chair of Governors. In the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Head, staff are referred to the procedures below regarding managing allegations of abuse against staff (including supply staff, agency staff, volunteers, and contractors) and staff refer the matter directly to the designated officers for Brighter Futures For Children in Reading.

### **What staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding practices in the School**

The School aims to ensure there is a culture of safety and raising concerns and an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Where staff have concerns about poor or unsafe practices and potential failures in the School's safeguarding systems, these should be raised in accordance with the School's whistleblowing procedures which can be found on the School's website. There will be no disciplinary action taken against a member of staff for making such a report provided that it is done in good faith.

If staff and volunteers feel unable to raise an issue with the School or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may use other whistleblowing channels, such as the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line. Contact details for the NSPCC helpline can be found on the Key Contacts page at the start of this policy.

## **What should staff do if they have concerns about Online Safety, Filtering or Monitoring**

The school is following guidance from the DfE (March 2023) and the Online Safety Policy outlines the school's commitment to monitoring and filtering standards.

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH CHILD ON CHILD ALLEGATIONS (INCLUDING CHILD ON CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT)**

Child on child abuse is abuse by one or more children against another child. It can be standalone or as part of wider abuse and can happen both inside and outside of school, and online. It can manifest itself in many ways and can include abuse within intimate partner relationships, bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying), abuse within intimate partner relationships between peers, physical abuse (such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm), initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, upskirting, sexting, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and/or semi-nudes, sexual assault, gender-based issues, sexual behaviours including child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, 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. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

These arrangements apply to all reports and concerns of child on child abuse, whether they have happened in school or outside of it, and/or online. Abuse that occurs online or outside of school should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously.

Staff will address inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) to help prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. The School takes a zero-tolerance approach and abusive comments and interactions should never be passed off or dismissed as "banter" or "part of growing up". Nor will harmful sexual behaviours, including sexual comments, remarks or jokes and online sexual harassment, be dismissed as the same or "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys". Staff will also challenge physical behaviours (that are potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

The School acknowledges that even if there have been no reported cases of child on child abuse in relation to students within the School, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. The School will ensure that children are aware of how they can report abuse, and that they are aware of the procedures that the School will follow once a report has been made. These procedures will be well promoted and in a format that is easily accessible and easily understood by children.

The School recognises that a child is likely to disclose an allegation to someone they trust: this could be any member of staff. By making such a disclosure the student is likely to feel that the member of staff is in a position of trust. The School also recognises that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally and that instead they may show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to. It is also recognised that an incident may come to a member of staff's attention through a report of a friend, or by overhearing conversations. It is therefore important that all staff are clear on the School's policy and procedures with regards to child on child abuse and can recognise the indicators and signs of child on child abuse and know how to identify it and how to respond to reports.

The School recognises that a first disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported. It is not necessarily representative of a singular incident. Staff will take all reports of abuse seriously regardless of how long it has taken for the child to come forward. Staff will act immediately and will support the victim when they raise a concern.

The School recognises that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions are three times more likely to be abused by their peers, can face additional safeguarding challenges and may be more prone to child-on-child group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children. The School will consider extra pastoral support for those children and further details of the processes for safeguarding students with SEND are set out in Appendix 1. The School also recognises that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident of abuse because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.

The School recognises that children can be particularly vulnerable in residential settings and are alert to the potential for child on child abuse. A designated member of the governing body will take a particular interest in boarding and in the safeguarding needs of students who board and will liaise with the boarding staff to this end. Staff with boarding duties are required to recognise the additional responsibilities arising from boarding education and around the clock care. The School's record of known and alleged bullying incidents specifically specifies which are boarding-related to assist the School in identifying patterns and boarding-related problems. The School will comply with its obligations as set out in the National Minimum Standards in relation to safeguarding at all times.

The school will take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of child on child abuse, including through PSHE, relationship and sex education programmes, and specific actions promoted through the school's student behaviour and anti-bullying programmes. Relationships and Sex Education and PSHE teach students about respectful, positive, safe and healthy relationships and consent. The School takes particular note of the potential impact of child on child abuse on the mental health of students and the PSHE and wellbeing programmes are designed to minimise the risk of such abuse.

Where an issue of student behaviour or bullying gives 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm', staff should follow the procedures below rather than the School's Anti-Bullying and Behaviour and Discipline policies:

A student against whom an allegation of abuse has been made may be suspended from the School during the investigation. The School will take advice from Brighter Futures for Children on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved including the alleged victim and perpetrator(s). If it is necessary for a student to be interviewed by the police in relation to allegations of abuse, the School will ensure that, subject to the advice of the Local Authority (Brighter Futures for Children and Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership), parents are informed as soon as possible and that the students involved are supported during the interview by an appropriate adult and until the investigation is completed. Confidentiality will be an important consideration for the School and advice will be sought as necessary from the Local Authority where the child resides, such as Brighter Futures for Children; Reading LA and/or the police as appropriate. The School will have regard to the procedures set out in *KCSIE* at all times.

The victim may ask the School not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. Advice should be sought from the DSL who should consider. Parents or carers should normally be informed unless doing so would put the victim at greater risk; the basic safeguarding principle that if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care; and whether a crime has been committed. Ultimately, the DSL will balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.

Police may be informed of any harmful sexual behaviours which are potentially criminal in nature, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia. Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults will be passed to the police. Where a report has been made to the police, the School will 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. If the DSL decides to make a referral to children's social care and/or a report to the police against a victim's wishes, the reasons should be explained to the student and appropriate specialist support offered. The DSL may also decide that the children involved may benefit from early help and may make the necessary referral in accordance with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership referral process.

The School will follow the DDMSC / UKIS guidance "Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people" (February 2024) when responding to an allegation that nudes and/or semi-nudes have been shared. Further guidance on how the processes to be followed in the event of suspected sexting involving students is set out above under "How should staff respond to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared by students".

In the event of disclosures about child on child abuse, all children involved (both victim(s) and perpetrator(s)) will be treated as being at risk, and safeguarding procedures in accordance with this policy will be followed. Victims will be supported by the School

through the pastoral team. Support may include referral to the School's student counsellor. The School may also devise a student welfare risk assessment and add them to our internal Pastoral Watch list, so that key staff can offer the correct bespoke support. The child's wishes will be central to the support offered by the School. Support from external agencies will be sought, as appropriate.

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL will 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;
- whether there may have been other victims;
- the alleged perpetrator(s); and
- all the other children (and, if appropriate, staff) at the School especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

Risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronic) and kept under review. In relation to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, the DSL (and indeed all staff) will reassure any victim that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. The victim will never be made to feel ashamed for making a report nor will they be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment; nor would a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report or have their experience minimised. The School will explain to the child in a way that avoids alarming or distressing them that the law is in place to protect children rather than to criminalise them. The School will consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse. The School acknowledges 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 DSL will consider the risks posed to students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe and to ensure their educational attainment is not adversely affected as far as is possible. This may include careful consideration of the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing School premises (including during any before or after school-based activities), and School transport. The School will also consider the risks posed to the victim from other health needs, including physical, mental and sexual health problems, as well as unwanted pregnancy which may arise as a result of the incident, and will consider recommending additional support.

The School will consider intra familial harms and whether any support for siblings is necessary following an incident.

The School will keep a written record of all concerns, discussions and decisions made.

The School will reflect on reported concerns, including the decisions made and actions taken, in order to identify any patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour which may indicate an unacceptable culture, or any weaknesses in the

School's safeguarding system which may require additional training or amendments to relevant policies. Where a pattern is identified the School will decide on an appropriate course of action.

In the event that a report is proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious, the DSL will 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 Head will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it in accordance with the School's behaviour policy.

## **DEALING WITH SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS MADE ABOUT STAFF INCLUDING SUPPLY TEACHERS, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS**

*The School's* procedures for managing concerns or allegations against staff (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) who are currently working in the School whether in a paid or unpaid capacity follows DfE statutory guidance and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements and applies when staff (including volunteers) have (or are alleged to have):

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicated that they may pose a risk of harm if they were to work regularly or closely with children; and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children, including behaviour that may have happened outside of school.

In this section reference to 'allegations' also covers concerns. Allegations that do not meet the above harm test should be dealt with using the School's procedure for handling low level concerns set out below.

Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police. Historical (non-recent) allegations of abuse should be referred to the police and also the LADO. Non-recent allegations made by a child will be reported to the LADO in line with the local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations. The LADO will coordinate with children social care and the police.

If an allegation is made against anyone working with children in the School, before contacting the LADO, the School will conduct a basic enquiry in line with local procedures to establish the facts in order to determine whether there appears to be any foundation to the allegation. The School should not undertake their own investigation of the allegation(s) without prior consultation with the LADO or, in the most serious

cases, the police, so as not to jeopardise statutory investigations. In borderline cases, the School may discuss informally with the LADO on a no-names basis.

When dealing with an allegation about a staff member the School will apply common sense and judgment, deal with allegations quickly, fairly and consistently and will support the person subject to the allegation.

1. Allegations which appear to meet the above reporting criteria are to be reported straight away to the 'case manager' who is the Head. Where the Head is absent or is the subject of the allegation, reports should be made to the Chair of Governors. Where the Head is the subject of the allegation, the Head must not be informed of the allegation prior to contact with the Chair of Governors and LADO. However, staff may consider discussing any concerns/allegations with the DSL and may make any referral via them.
2. The case manager should immediately discuss the allegation with the LADO and consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action including any involvement of the police. (Where the case manager deems there to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence, or it is an emergency situation, the case manager should contact children's social care and as appropriate the police immediately). All discussions should be recorded in writing, and any communication with both the individual and the parents of the child(ren) agreed. The LADO should be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to the School's attention and appear to meet the criteria or that are made directly to the police and/or children's social care. The DSL is responsible for ensuring the child is not at risk.
3. Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community, or the member of staff's family, they will discuss these concerns with the LADO and make a risk assessment of the situation. It may be necessary for the LADO to make a referral to children's social care.
4. When to inform the individual who is the subject of the allegation will be considered on a case-by-case basis and with guidance from the LADO, and if appropriate, the police and/or children's social care. Subject to any objection, the case manager will ensure that the individual who is subject of the allegation is informed as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course or action. The case manager will appoint a named representative to keep the individual informed of the progress of the case and will consider what other support is appropriate for the individual.
5. The case manager should give careful consideration as to whether the circumstances of the case warrant suspension from contact with children at the School or whether alternative arrangements should be put in place until the allegation is resolved. The following alternative arrangements should be considered by the case manager before suspending a member of staff:

- redeployment within the School so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned;
- providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children;
- redeploying to alternative work in the School so the individual does not have unsupervised access to children;
- moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the member of staff, but this decision should only be made if it is in the best interest of the child or children concerned and takes accounts of their views. It should be made making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted; or,
- temporarily redeploying the member of staff to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school where available.

These alternatives allow time for an informed decision regarding the suspension, this will, however, depend upon the nature of the allegation.

Suspension should not be an automatic response when an allegation is reported. It should be considered only in cases where there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the School is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. The case manager will give due weight to the views of the LADO, *WT* and *KCSIE* when making a decision about suspension (including with respect to considering alternatives). Where the individual is suspended, the case manager will confirm the decision within one working day and will ensure they know who their point of contact is in the School and shall provide them with their contact details. The case manager will also record the rationale and justification for the suspension, including what alternatives were considered and why they were rejected.

6. Where a member of boarding staff is suspended pending an investigation, the case manager will consider whether arrangements for alternative accommodation away from children should be made.
7. Where further enquiries are required to enable a decision about how to proceed, the LADO and case manager should discuss how and by whom the investigation will be undertaken. The LADO will provide advice and guidance to the School to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out. In straightforward cases, the investigation should usually be undertaken by a senior member of staff at the School. Where there is lack of resource, or the nature or complexity of the allegation requires it, an independent investigator may be appointed to undertake the investigation.
8. The case manager will ensure that parents are informed as soon as possible and kept informed about progress of the case, subject to any advice from children's social care or the police. Parents and others will be made aware that there are

restrictions on publishing information which may lead to the identification of the teacher subject to the allegation.

9. The case manager will monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible in a thorough and fair process. The outcome of the investigation of an allegation will record whether it is substantiated (sufficient evidence to prove it), unsubstantiated (insufficient evidence either to prove or disprove it), false (sufficient evidence to disprove it), malicious (sufficient evidence to disprove it and that there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation) or unfounded (to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made).
10. Reviews are conducted at fortnightly or monthly intervals, depending on the complexity of the case. The first review will take place no later than four weeks after the initial assessment and subsequent review dates will be set at the review meeting.
11. The case manager will discuss with the LADO whether a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Teaching Regulation Agency should be made where an allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or the School ceases to use their services, or the person resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services. The School has a legal obligation to report promptly to the Disclosure and Barring Service any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or a student) who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or if there is reason to believe the member of staff has committed one of a number of listed offences, and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left. Further, or in the alternative, if an investigation leads to the dismissal or resignation prior to dismissal of a member of teaching staff specifically, the School must consider making a referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency and a prohibition order may be appropriate (because that teacher has displayed unacceptable professional conduct, conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute or a conviction at any time for a relevant offence).
12. On conclusion of the case, the case manager should review the circumstances of the case with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the School's safeguarding procedures or practices to help prevent similar events in the future. Learning lessons where the allegation is concluded to be either, unfounded, false, malicious or unsubstantiated, the case manager (and if they have been involved, the LADO) should consider the facts and determine whether any lessons can be learned and if improvements can be made.

Where an individual is removed from regulated activity, or would have been removed had the individual not left, including when they are suspended, redeployed to work that is not regulated activity, are dismissed, or have resigned, and the individual has engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children and/or adults, and/or satisfied the harm test in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults, and/or been cautioned or convicted of a

relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence, the School will make a referral to the DBS.

The School has a duty of care to its staff, and whilst the welfare of a child is paramount, the School must offer appropriate welfare support to the adult subject to the investigation and potentially their family. The School will also make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity whilst an allegation is being investigated or considered. Information will also not ordinarily be shared with other staff or with children or parents who are not directly involved in the investigation.

Where initial discussions lead to no further action, the case manager and the LADO should record the decision and justification for it and agree on what information should be put in writing to the individual concerned, and by whom.

Allegations found to be malicious or false will be removed from the individual's personnel records unless the individual gives consent for retention of the information. In all other circumstances a written record will be made of the decision and retained on the individual's personnel file in accordance with *KCSIE* and a copy will only be provided to the individual concerned. The information to be kept on file includes a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcomes, and a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference. All records should be retained until the accused has reached pension age, or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is longer. Records should be reviewed at the end of the retention period in case it is necessary to keep it for longer.

Allegations proven to be false, unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious will not be included in employer references. If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the DSL 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 Head will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against a student who made it in accordance with the School's behaviour policy; or whether the police should be asked to consider if action might be appropriate against the person responsible even if they are not a student.

In all cases where there are concerns or allegations of abuse, the School will make a serious incident report to the Charity Commission whenever the Commission's guidelines deem it appropriate to do so.

## **DEALING WITH SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND ALLEGATIONS ABOUT SUPPLY TEACHERS AND CONTRACTORS**

The School's procedures for managing allegations against staff above also apply to staff not directly employed by the School, for example, supply teachers provided by an employment agency or business ('the agency'). The School will usually take the lead but

agencies should be fully involved (because they have their own policies and procedures) and co-operate with any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or children's social care.

In no circumstances will the School decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising with the LADO to determine a suitable outcome. The School will discuss with the agency (or agencies where the supply teacher is working across a number of schools) whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply teacher, or redeploy them to another part of the school, whilst they carry out their investigation.

The School will advise supply teachers being investigated to contact their trade union representative if they have one, or a colleague for support. 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.

When using an agency, the School should inform the agency of its process for managing allegations but also take account of the agency's policies and their duty to refer to the DBS as personnel suppliers. This should include inviting the agency's human resource manager or equivalent to meetings and keeping them up to date with information about its policies.

Where the agency dismisses or ceases to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct or might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left the School first, the School must consider whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State (via the Teaching Regulation Agency).

## **DEALING WITH CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS (THAT DO NOT MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD)**

A low-level concern is any concern that an adult working in or on behalf of the School 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 allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

A 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A concern may be a low-level concern, no matter how small, even if it does no more than give a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt'. 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 (for example, grooming-type behaviours).

The School takes all concerns about safeguarding seriously and recognises that addressing even low-level concerns is important to create and embed a culture of

openness, trust and transparency in which the School's values and expected behaviour of its staff are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff.

The School has a separate Low-Level Concerns Policy which enables all staff to share concerns – no matter how small – about their own or another member of staff's behaviour.

The School's code of conduct can be found on the School's website. The aim of the code of conduct is to provide clear guidance about the standards of appropriate behaviour and actions of its staff so as to not place students or staff at risk of harm or of allegation of harm to a student. All staff are expected to comply with the standards contained within the code of conduct at all times.

The procedure for sharing confidentially any such concerns is set out in the Low-Level Concerns Policy. The Head is the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns.

Staff must share all concerns with the Head without delay so that it can be recorded and dealt with appropriately, sensitively, and proportionately and in a timely manner. Where a low-level concern is raised about the Head, it should be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Staff are also encouraged to self-refer in the event that they have found themselves in a situation which may be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in a way that may be considered to fall below the expected professional standard. All concerns will be handled sensitively and will be dealt with appropriately and proportionately.

If a concern is raised by a third party, the Head will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking to the person who has raised the concern (if known), to the individual involved and any witnesses. The concern will be recorded in accordance with this policy, in the usual way.

The School will address unprofessional behaviour at an early stage and will support the individual to correct it.

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. The record will include details of the concern, the context within which the concern arose, and details of the action taken. The name of the reporting individual should also be included, unless they have asked to remain anonymous, which will be respected as far as reasonably possible. The records will be kept confidential, will be held securely and in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR at all times. The information will be retained in accordance with the Data Retention Policy (which is available on the School's website), or until the individual has left employment, whichever is longer.

Low-level concerns will not be included in references unless they relate to issues which would normally be disclosed, for example, misconduct or poor performance.

The School will also reflect on reported concerns in order to identify any patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour which may indicate an unacceptable culture, or any weaknesses in the School's safeguarding system which may require additional training or modified policies. Where a pattern is identified, the School will decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures, or, where the pattern moved from a concern to meeting the harms threshold, it will follow the above procedure and refer the matter to the LADO.

Where a low-level concern relates to a person employed by a supply agency or a contractor, the individual's employer will be notified about the concern, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If the School is in any doubt as to whether a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, the Head will consult with the LADO and take a more collaborative decision-making approach.

## **SAFER RECRUITMENT**

The School is committed to safer recruitment processes to create a culture that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children in the School whilst deterring and preventing people who are unsuitable to work with children from applying or securing employment, or volunteering opportunities, within the School.

Members of the teaching and non-teaching staff at the School including part-time staff, temporary and supply staff, and visiting staff, such as musicians and sports coaches are subject to the necessary statutory child protection checks before starting work, for example, right to work checks, additional overseas checks (if necessary), verifying identity, taking up references, checking work history and confirming medical fitness for the role. For most appointments, an enhanced DBS check with 'barred list' information will be appropriate. A DBS certificate will be obtained from the candidate before or as soon as practicable after appointment. Alternatively, if the applicant has subscribed to it and gives permission, the School may undertake an online update check through the DBS Update Service.

As part of the shortlisting process, the School will also consider carrying out an online search on shortlisted candidates as part of its due diligence. This may help to identify any incidents or issues that have happened and are publicly available online, which the School may want to explore with an applicant at interview. This forms part of the School's wider safeguarding due diligence which aims to prevent and/or deter individuals who may be unsuitable to work with children from working in a school environment.

Full details of the School's safer recruitment procedures for checking the suitability of staff, Governors', and volunteers to work with children and young people are set out in the School's Safer Recruitment Policy, which is available on the School's website.

The School's protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or students themselves, are suitable and appropriately supervised is set out in the School's Visiting Speaker Policy, which is available on the School's website.

The DST liaising with the HR Department will take a risk-assessed view as to the safeguarding guidance provided for contractors and community users of the school facilities and as to how this is managed in practice.

## **MANAGEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING**

### **The Designated Safeguarding Team**

The School's DSL is Elaine Newall who is a member of the leadership team.

Eddie Falshaw, Rachel Barnard, Tash Coccia, Alex Leighton, Lee Carter and Sally Saunders are the DDSLs. The DSL and DDSLs make up the DST. In the absence of the DSL, reports should be made to one of the DDSLs. This ensures there is the required cover for the role at all times.

The contact details for the DST can be found on the Key Contacts page at the start of this policy.

The DSL's role is to take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection matters in the School including online safety and monitoring and filtering systems. The DSL's responsibility is to maintain an overview of safeguarding within the School, to open channels of communication with local statutory agencies, refer incidents to third parties (including the local authority children's services, the DBS, Channel and the police) where appropriate, to support staff in carrying out their safeguarding duties and to monitor the effectiveness of the School's policies and procedures in practice. The DSL will also take lead responsibility for online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes the School have in place. The DSL works with the governors to review and update the School's safeguarding policy.

The DSL will be responsible to the Head and to the governors for the effective discharge of the safeguarding responsibilities of the DST. The DSL will liaise with the Head and governors as required and at least on a termly basis.

Where a student leaves the School, including for in-year transfers, the DSL will also ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school (separately from the main student file) 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. The DSL will ensure secure transit and obtain confirmation of receipt. In addition to the child protection file, the DSL should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new school in advance of a child leaving to help them put in place the right support to safeguard this child and to help the child thrive in the school.

The DSL regularly reviews the School's and their own practices and concerns about welfare and safeguarding matters. This includes the personal and professional duty of

all staff to report welfare and safeguarding concerns to the DSL, or in the absence of action, directly to local children's services.

During term time, the DSL and/or a DDSL will always be available in person (during school hours) for staff in the School to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DST is sufficiently large to ensure that at least one member of the team will be on site at all times when students are present providing cover for any illnesses and related absences, e.g. through quarantine and sickness. Should all members of the team be affected, then the Head liaising with the local authority will take extraordinary action to ensure that safeguarding matters are handled effectively.

The DST should liaise with the safeguarding partners and work with other agencies in line with *WT*. "*NPCC – When to call the police: guidance for schools and colleges*" ([npcc.police.uk](http://npcc.police.uk)) can assist the DST to understand when they should consider calling the police and what to expect when they do. If the School has questions about any police investigation, it will ask the police. The DST will also be responsible for liaising with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the Mental Health Support Team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health. The DST should be confident as to what local specialist support is available to support all children involved in sexual violence and sexual harassment and be confident as to how to access this support when required.

Whilst the Head should ensure that the policies and procedures adopted, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse, exploitation and neglect, are understood and followed by all staff, and the Governors are ultimately responsible for ensuring staff are competent, supported and regularly reviewed in relation to safeguarding, the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection remains with the DSL and this responsibility should not be delegated.

The DST will welcome feedback from students and respond to this appropriately.

The School will provide a suitably detailed job description for each member of the DST. Full details of the DSL's role can be found at Annex C of *KCSIE*.

### **Senior Leadership and Head**

The senior leadership will include the designated safeguarding lead. The senior leadership must monitor and challenge the Designated Safeguarding Team (DST) in an appropriate manner to ensure that it discharges its duties effectively. At least once each term, the Head will meet with the DST as a whole.

The senior leadership shall receive an annual safeguarding audit from the DST.

The senior leadership shall ensure that all members of the DST are effectively trained and that this training is up-to-date.

The senior leadership should ensure that the DST and members of staff generally understand and act appropriately with regard to students with particular vulnerabilities and sensitivities and needs including boarders, and those with SEND and EAL, those who

are looked after or who are being supported by local agencies, LGBTQ+ students and these students with mental health concerns.

The senior leadership will ensure that they have a secure understanding of child on child abuse and how the school should deal with allegations of sexual harassment and abuse.

The senior leadership shall ensure that all members of staff understand the need to reassure victims of abuse or alleged abuse, including domestic abuse, that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe.

The senior leadership directly or where confidentiality is required through the DSL will scrutinise records relating to safeguarding, bullying and behaviour.

The senior leadership shall ensure that appropriate and effective systems are in place to deal with child on child abuse, bullying in all its forms, sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Ensure that staff are trained to recognise signs of abuse including child-on-child abuse and know how to respond effectively.

### **All Other Staff**

Members of staff should have a suitable understanding of KCSIE and of this safeguarding policy, of the types and signs of abuse, and of the management of disclosures, allegations child on child abuse, sexual harassment and abuse, and other safeguarding concerns.

Members of staff must understand that if there is a risk of immediate harm to a child, they should act immediately. Delay is unacceptable.

The onus is upon the member of staff to report their concerns even if the concern appears to be minor in nature or if they have a 'niggling doubt' and are uncertain about the nature of their concern.

Members of staff should follow the guidelines set down for listening to children, avoiding leading questions or avowals of belief in what is being disclosed by the child.

Members of staff must never promise confidentiality to a student when this may compromise their safety or well-being: all staff must be aware that the school has a professional as well as legal responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

Although they should understand that the DST is there to provide guidance and act on behalf of the child and the school, members of staff should be aware that anyone may make a referral to children's services or the police. However, members of staff should never contact parents themselves: this is a matter for the DST or for local agencies.

Members of staff should not assume that another colleague or professional will take action on a safeguarding matter and should contact the DSL or appropriate external agency.

Members of staff may use the school's whistleblowing policy to draw attention in good faith to any perceived failing with regard to safeguarding practice either in individual cases or concerning more general circumstances.

Every member of staff should play their part in providing a safe environment for students.

The school's code of conduct sets out our expectations of staff and is read and agreed by all staff members, with particular regard to safeguarding matters including staff/student relationships and the use of social media, but also taking note of the following requirements:

- treating all students with respect
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving students in decisions that affect them
- encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among students
- being a good listener
- being alert to changes in students' behaviour and to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- reading, understanding and putting into practice, this safeguarding and child protection policy, staff behaviour policy and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, behaviour, physical contact, sexual exploitation, extremism, e-safety and information-sharing
- asking the student's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with physical support during PE, Music or Drama or administering first aid
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between students and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some students lead to an increased risk of abuse, (contextual safeguarding)
- applying the use of reasonable force only as a last resort and in compliance with school and Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures
- referring all concerns about a student's safety and welfare to the DSL, or, if necessary, directly to police or children's social care

All members of staff should understand the need to reassure victims of abuse or alleged abuse that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe.

All members of staff will be aware that inappropriate behaviour towards students is unacceptable and that their conduct towards students must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18 or a vulnerable adult aged 18 and over, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the school staff and a student under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that student is over the age of consent. It is also viewed as an abuse of trust if there is a relationship between a member of staff and student over the age of 18.

Any member of staff leading a trip or visit outside of school should liaise with the person responsible for educational visits and the DST to ensure that all appropriate safeguards are in place.

## **Boarding Staff**

Taking note of all the above responsibilities for members of staff, those with boarding duties should recognise the additional responsibilities arising from boarding education and around the clock care.

In particular boarding staff should not put themselves at risk by failing scrupulously to adhere to the guidance provided on staff/student relationships.

## **Students**

Students should work with the school to ensure that all may enjoy a safe and productive environment.

Students should have the confidence to report any concerns, either about themselves or others, including those relating to child on child abuse and sexual harassment, to a member of staff.

Students should not put themselves at risk online, using smart or mobile technology, or in the public arena, following the guidance provided through personal, health and social education and through other elements of the educational process in the school.

## **Parents**

Parents must understand that, whilst the school will endeavour to involve them in matters relating to their children, the school may not, without proper authority to do so, relate the details or even fact of a disclosure to them: this will be the case when to do so may undermine the safety or well-being of a child: guidance is always sought from local children's services and/or the police on such occasions.

Parents are expected to support the safeguarding work of the school including regarding keeping children safe online including when using smart and mobile technology and when remote learning is necessary.

## **TRAINING**

Induction and training are in line with advice from Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership and Brighter Futures For Children; Reading.

### **All Staff**

All new staff will be provided with induction training that includes:

- the child protection and safeguarding policy (including the policy and procedures to deal with child on child abuse);
- the role and identity of the DSL and DDSLs;
- meeting with at least one member of the DST;
- the behaviour and discipline policy and the anti-bullying policy (including measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);

- the staff code of conduct including the School's whistleblowing procedure and the acceptable use of technologies policy, staff/student relationships and communications including the use of social media
- the safeguarding response to children who are absent from education;
- a copy of Part one of *KCSIE* at least (or, for staff that do not work directly with children, Annex A)
- School leaders and staff who work directly with children will also be required to read Annex B of *KCSIE* and Part five of *KCSIE*.

Copies of the above documents are provided to all staff during induction.

In addition:

- All members of staff will receive an update on safeguarding at least annually, with this including any changes to *KCSIE* and local authority guidance as well as reinforcement of key points from previous training.
- All members of staff will receive regular safeguarding updates through staff meetings, all-staff emails, and other appropriate mechanisms.
- All members of staff will be reminded at least annually of their obligations set down within the school's safeguarding policy, guidance on the acceptable use of IT and on online safety, and the staff behaviour code of conduct.
- The school recognises that the role of boarding staff is physically, emotionally and mentally difficult and appropriate training support will be provided for all such staff.
- All members of staff will receive guidance on early help and interventions and will support the pastoral and DSTs in this area.
- All members of staff will receive guidance relating to child-on-child abuse including how to deal with allegations of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or abuse.
- Staff will understand the need to reassure victims of abuse or alleged abuse that they will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe.

## **Governors**

The governing body will ensure that all governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction. This training should equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in the School are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding.

The governing body are aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA), the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR, and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Under the Human Rights Act 1998, it is unlawful for the School to act in a way that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Convention. Being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach conventions set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Convention. The Data Protection

Act 2018 and the UK GDPR place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure.

In order to ensure effective delivery of the training to governors, the following arrangements have been put in place:

- The DST will ensure that the designated members of the governing body for safeguarding receive suitable and regularly updated training for their roles.
- The DST will ensure that all members of the governing body receive suitable safeguarding training at least annually to include all relevant parts of KCSIE and other guidance from the DfE and local authority.
- The DST will ensure that the governing body review the safeguarding policy and its implementation at least annually.
- Governors must take part in mandatory safeguarding training to allow them to make a considered judgement that the leadership and management of the school have sufficient skills, training and experience to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.
- Governors must ensure their safeguarding training is regularly updated.
- The member of the Governing Body nominated to liaise with the school and local authority on child protection issues should be sufficiently well trained to be able to monitor and challenge the DST effectively and to act appropriately in the event of an allegation of abuse made against the Head.

In addition, the governing body complies with the DfE's Data Protection guidance for schools, ensuring school staff and governors know how to comply with data protection law, develop their data policies and processes, what staff and pupil data to keep and the importance of good practices for preventing personal data breaches.

## **DST**

Each member of the DST will receive updated child protection training at least every two years to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This includes local inter-agency working protocols, participation in child protection case conferences, supporting children in need, record keeping and promoting a culture of listening to children. Further details of the required training content for the DSL are set out in Annex C of *KCSIE*.

In addition to their formal training, the DSL's knowledge and skills are updated at least annually to keep up with any developments relevant to their role. In particular, the School will support the DSL in developing their knowledge and skills to understand the views of children including to encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes, as well as having an awareness of the difficulties children may face in approaching staff with a disclosure.

At least one member of the DST will be responsible for ensuring that the school takes appropriate measures to deal with its Prevent duties in accordance with the most recent anti-extremist guidance.

At least one member of the DST will be responsible for ensuring that the school takes appropriate measure to deal with looked after children in accordance with the most recent guidance from the local children's services.

The DST will be responsible for ensuring that suitable safeguarding training is provided for all members of the school community, updated at least annually. This training will include guidance on include guidance on child-on-child abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment and on early help and interventions. Training for the school community will include informal as well as formal updates and briefings orally or by email.

The DST will be responsible for ensuring that suitable records are maintained for safeguarding training both formal and informal for the DST, staff, governors, and others within the school community.

At least one member of the DST will be responsible for online safety throughout the school and as such they should receive suitable training to allow them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

At least one member of the DST will be responsible for ensuring that the senior leadership and the governing body receive suitable safeguarding training, updated at least annually.

The DST will ensure that at least one person trained in safer recruitment is a member of each appointments panel for new members of staff.

## **HR personnel**

The DST will ensure that members of the HR staff are suitably trained to ensure that pre-appointment and other safeguarding checks are carried out and that records are maintained effectively.

HR staff will be trained in procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers and to make a referral to the DBS and consider a referral to the Teachers Regulation Agency (TRA) if a person has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns or would have been had they not resigned or otherwise left the school.

The HR team will receive sufficient training to ensure effective liaison with the senior leadership prior to the starting dates of new staff.

Reading, understanding and implementing the relevant sections of the current inspectorate's (ISI) commentary on pre-appointment checks.

## **Students**

The DST will ensure that all day and boarding students receive suitable age-related guidance with regard to safeguarding matters including the action to take should they receive a disclosure or be concerned about another student.

The DST will ensure that all students will receive suitable age-related guidance on safeguarding matters including what to do if they feel unsafe.

The DST will ensure that students receive suitable age-related guidance with regard to staying safe online, the safe use of social media, PSHE and safeguarding, and relationship and sex education.

Students with responsibilities including within boarding houses have a particular responsibility to be vigilant and to report their concerns: all such students will receive appropriate safeguarding training.

Students will be guided through PSHE lessons, Collects, and other means so that they feel entirely confident in reporting their concerns about themselves or others to a member of staff or to a member of the DST team.

Students will receive appropriate guidance through PSHE and other appropriate avenues in line with DfE recommendations in <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health> and the School's approach to relationships, sex, and health education.

## **Parents**

The DST will ensure that parents are provided with suitable guidance regarding the school's approach to safeguarding.

The DST will provide from time-to-time suitable presentations for parents on safeguarding matters such as online safety.

## **OVERSIGHT OF SAFEGUARDING, INCLUDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR REVIEWING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Matt Winkless is the Safeguarding Governor designated to take a lead in relation to responsibility for the safeguarding arrangements in the School. Gwenan Sykes is the Deputy Safeguarding Governor. They are members of the governing body. At least once each term a designated member of the governing body will meet with the DST as a whole.

The School considers its obligation to review safeguarding practices a matter of its everyday concerns. A review of the School's child protection policies takes place at least annually, including an update and review of the effectiveness of procedures and their implementation, including lessons learnt. The governors shall receive and review an annual safeguarding audit from the DST.

The governors will monitor and challenge appropriately the DST and the senior leadership of the school to ensure that the safeguarding policy is effectively implemented, using as appropriate: visits to the school; discussions with staff and with

students; staff, student and parental questionnaires and surveys; scrutiny of records relating to safeguarding, bullying and behaviour, and early help and interventions.

A designated member of the governing body will take a particular interest in boarding and in the safeguarding needs of students who board and will liaise with the boarding staff to this end.

The School draws on the expertise of staff, including the DST, in shaping the School's safeguarding arrangements and policies.

The School's safeguarding policies and procedures should be transparent, clear, and easy to understand for staff, students, students, parents, and carers.

If there has been a substantiated allegation against a member of staff, the School will work with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the School's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **THE SCHOOL'S ARRANGEMENTS TO FULFIL OTHER SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Teaching children how to keep safe**

The governing body ensures that all students are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, through the curriculum and PSHE to help children to adjust their behaviours, both inside and outside of School, in order to reduce risks and build resilience, including to radicalisation and extremism. This includes teaching students about the safe use of electronic equipment and the internet and the risks posed by adults or young people, who use the internet and social media to bully, groom, abuse or radicalise other people, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults. The School recognises that a "one size fits all" approach may not be appropriate for all children, and a more personalised or contextualised approach for more vulnerable children, victims of abuse and some children with SEND might be needed.

Internet safety (including when children are online at home) is an integral part of the School's curriculum and also embedded in PSHE and Relationships and Sex Education ("RSE").

### **Filtering and monitoring**

The School has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place to safeguard children from potentially harmful and inappropriate material online when using the School's IT system. Further details on these measures for ensuring students safety are set out in detail in the School's IT and Digital Services Acceptable Use Policy, which is available on the School's website. Such systems aim to reduce the risk of children being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful materials online for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories (**content risk**); reduce the

risk of children being subjected to harmful online interaction with others including commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes (**contact risk**); restrict access to online risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams (**commerce risk**); and help manage online behaviour that can increase a child's likelihood of, or causes, harm for example 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 (**conduct risk**). The School recognises however that children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G) which means that children may consensually and/or non-consensually share indecent images, sexually harass their peers via mobile and smart technology, and view and share pornography and other harmful content whilst at school undetected.

The School ensures compliance with the DfE's '*Cyber security/filtering and monitoring standards for schools*' by;

- Identifying and assigning roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- Reviewing the filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- Blocking harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- Having effective monitoring strategies in place that meet our safeguarding needs.

The School utilises the DfE's '*plan technology for your school*' service to self-assess compliance against the filtering and monitoring standards and ensures that any recommendations are incorporated as appropriate.

The School has regard to the DfE's guidance '*Generative AI: product safety expectations*' when considering how the filtering and monitoring arrangements in place apply to the use of generative AI within education. The School ensures that any generative AI products effectively and reliably prevent access to harmful and inappropriate content by pupils by:

- integrating the highest standards of filtering possible within the product, and
- using additional filtering solutions that work on top of an AI product.

Further detail of the School's policy and procedures in relation to online safety can be found in the School's IT Acceptable Use Policy which also includes detail on the use of mobile and smart technology in School, including the School's management of the associated risks, and the School's IT arrangements to ensure that children are safe from harmful and inappropriate content, including terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet through the School's systems. These systems will be reviewed periodically.

The School will liaise with parents to reinforce the importance of children being safe online and the systems the School uses to filter and monitor online use. Parents and carers will be made aware of what their children are being asked to do online when undertaking remote learning, including the sites they will be asked to access and who from the School their child is going to be interacting with online.

### **Relationships and Sex Education (“RSE”)**

The School understands that children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships.

The School’s RSE curriculum is delivered as part of a whole-school approach to wellbeing and positive relationships that prepares children for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic, and sexual violence/harassment. The School focusses on building positive attitudes and skills, promoting healthy norms about relationships, including sexual relationships where relevant, and about health, including mental health. The School recognises that discussions about sensitive topics in Relationships Education/RSE can lead to increased safeguarding reports. All staff know what to do if they have concerns that a pupil is being neglected or abused, including those who have seen, heard or experienced the effects of domestic abuse.

The School has regard to the DfE’s statutory guidance *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education* when making arrangements for and teaching RSE.

Further information on the School’s RSE programme, curriculum content, how and when it will be taught, and who is responsible for teaching it, including any external providers the School will use, is set out in the School’s Relationships and Sex Education Policy, which is available on the School’s website. The School proactively engages and consults with parents in the development and review of this policy.

### **Looked after children**

The governing body ensures that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep safe any children on roll who are looked after by a local authority.

Looked after children in the School are supported by a designated teacher, who has responsibility for their welfare and progress. The School ensures that the designated teacher receives appropriate training in order to carry out their role.

A previously looked after child remains potentially vulnerable and, where relevant, all staff will be supported to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep him/her safe. In such a case the DSL and pastoral team would work closely with all agencies.

## **Arrangements for visiting speakers**

The School has clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers are appropriately supervised and suitable. The School's responsibility to students is to ensure that they can critically assess the information they receive as to its value to themselves, and that the information is aligned to the ethos and values of the School and the British values of democracy.

The School is required to undertake a risk assessment before agreeing to a Visiting Speaker being allowed to attend the School. A copy of the "Risk Assessment for Visiting Speaker/Event" is attached to the Visiting Speaker Policy. This will take into account any vetting requirements considered appropriate in the circumstances and may include a DBS check if relevant.

Visiting speakers will be expected to understand that, where appropriate, their session should actively promote the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and at no point undermine these. In some cases, the School may request a copy of the visiting speaker's presentation and/or footage in advance of the session being provided.

Visiting Speakers, whilst on the School site, will at all times be supervised by a School employee.

A copy of the full protocols that must be adhered to when arranging for a visiting speaker to attend the School are set out in the Visiting Speaker Policy which is available on the School's website.

## **Arrangements for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)**

The school has students with emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or challenging behaviours. The school will support staff to decide appropriate strategies that will reduce anxiety for the individual child and raise self-esteem as part of an overall behaviour support plan agreed with parents/carers.

As part of the PSHE curriculum staff will teach young people personal safety skills in an age-appropriate manner. Students will be taught on how to keep themselves safe, peer pressure and appropriate relationships.

The school is aware that students with SEND may be vulnerable to abuse because they may be finding it more difficult to express themselves to others. Instead such students may exhibit changes in behaviours or signs and indicators of abuse recognised by staff with a good knowledge of the child.

Where necessary, the school will provide additional training to staff in the use of alternate communication systems. Supervision by senior managers will be vigilant to create a protective ethos around the student.

We promote high standards of practice, including ensuring that children with disabilities know how to raise concerns, and have access to a range of adults with whom they can communicate.

Further details on the support given to students with SEND is set out in the School's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy available on the School website.

### **Arrangements for where school premises are used for non-school activities**

The School may receive an allegation or concern relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using the school premises for the purposes of running activities for children and/or vulnerable adults (for example community groups, sports associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities). As with any safeguarding allegation, the School will follow their safeguarding policy and procedures, including informing the LADO.

When services or activities at the School are provided under the direct supervision or management of school staff, this Policy will apply in relation to any safeguarding concerns or allegations. Where services or activities are not under the direct supervision or management of the School, the School will make sure appropriate arrangements are in place to keep children safe. In particular, we will:

- Assure ourselves that the hirer has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies in place;
- Ensure we put in place arrangements for the hirer to liaise with the school on these matters;
- Ensure safeguarding requirements are included in any transfer of control agreement; and
- Ensure hirers understand our expectation that they will comply with the guidance in 'After School Clubs, Community Activities, and Tuition (Safeguarding Guidance for Providers)'.

The School has arrangements in place for the use of school premises for non-school activities including the availability of the DST and how they can be contacted.

### **Operation Encompass**

The School is part of Operation Encompass, a national police and early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children who experience domestic abuse.

Through Operation Encompass the police are required to share information with the School about all police attended domestic abuse incidents which involve any of our children who are related to either of the adults involved in the incident. This sharing of information should occur prior to the start of the next school day. The notification should be sent to the DSL (known as the Key Adult) and inform us about the context of the incident and will include the child's perspective.

**The Operation Encompass notification is stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information. APPENDIX 1 – SIGNS AND TYPES OF ABUSE**

All School staff should be aware that abuse, neglect, exploitation and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot be covered by one definition or one label alone. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another, therefore staff should always be vigilant and always raise any concerns with the DSL or a member of the DST.

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 these environments. All staff, but especially the DST, should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside the home. This is often referred to as “extra-familial harm”. Extra-familial harm can occur in a range of extra-familial contexts, including in school, peer groups, or within community/public spaces, and/or online. Children may experience this type of harm from other children and/or from adults. Forms of extra-familial harm include exploitation by criminal and organised crime groups and individuals (such as county lines and financial exploitation), serious violence, modern slavery and trafficking, online harm, sexual exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, and influences of extremism which could lead to radicalisation. Children of all ages can experience extra-familial harm.

All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues and should recognise that children are at risk of abuse online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse will take place concurrently online and in daily life. Staff should be aware that children can also abuse their peers online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

**In all cases, if staff are unsure, they should always speak to the DSL or a member of the DST.**

**Physical abuse:** a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child (including through corporal punishment). Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child 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 a 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 cyberbullying), 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, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving 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 also 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. Sexual abuse also includes sexual violence and sexual harassment (see below) which can occur between two children of any sex (also known as child on child abuse). This can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence are sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, such as rape, sexual assault, and assault by penetration. Schools should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse has introduced new resources to help education professionals identify and respond to concerns of child sexual abuse and abusive behaviours. There are also the below resources available:

- Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy – Home Office policy paper
- Together we can stop child sexual abuse – HM Government campaign

**Sexual harassment:** is 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. 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. 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; or upskirting, and sharing of unwanted explicit content (for example displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature); and online sexual harassment, which might include consensual or non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos (often referred to as the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes, or sexting – see below); inappropriate sexual comments on social media; exploitation;

coercion and threats. Online sexual harassment may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

**Sexual violence:** refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault, and/or causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity, but not another, or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity. The age of consent is 16, and sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

**Child-on-child sexual violence and/or harassment:** Sexual violence and sexual harassment (as defined above) 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. It is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and harassment, and it is more likely that it will be perpetrated by boys. It can however occur between children of any sex. 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. Children who are victims of sexual violence and/or 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.

**Harmful sexual behaviour:** problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is “harmful sexual behaviour”. Harmful sexual behaviour can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years’ age difference, or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation in collaboration with the Home Office, has developed ‘Shore Space’, an online resource which works to prevent harmful sexual behaviour. Shore Space offers a confidential chat service supporting young people who are concerned about their own or someone else’s sexual thoughts and behaviour.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has developed a harmful sexual behaviour toolkit, which amongst other things, provides support, advice and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about harmful sexual behaviour by children, internet safety, sexual development and preventing child sexual abuse.

The NSPCC provides free and independent advice about harmful sexual behaviour: NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework.

Beyond Referrals | The Contextual Safeguarding programme based at the University of Durham provides a school self-assessment toolkit and guidance for addressing harmful sexual behaviour in schools.

StopItNow – Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children: provides a guide for parents, carers and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline.

**Sharing of nudes and/or semi-nudes:** the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams online by young people under the age of 18. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can happen publicly online, in 1:1 messaging or via group chats and closed social media accounts and may include images or footage of more than one child or young person.

Alternative terms used by children and young people may include 'dick pics' or 'pics' or may be referred to by adults or professionals as 'youth produced/involved sexual imagery', 'indecent imagery', 'image based sexual abuse' or 'sexting'. Terms such as 'deep fakes' and 'deep nudes' may also be used by adults and young people to refer to digitally manipulated and AI-generated nudes and semi-nudes.

The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images, videos and live streams are not always sexually or criminally motivated. Such images may be created and shared consensually by young people who are in relationships, as well as between those who are not in a relationship. It is also possible for a young person in a consensual relationship to be coerced into sharing an image with their partner. Incidents may also occur where:

- children and young people find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer
- children and young people digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online or use artificial intelligence (AI) to generate a new nude or semi-nude image of a young person
- images created or shared are used to abuse or blackmail peers. Situations could include:
  - o children and young people selling nudes or semi-nudes of others online
  - o children and young people coercing a peer into sharing a nude or semi-nude to blackmail them for money, further images, or force them into illegal activity
  - o children and young people hacking a peer's account to share images more widely without consent to publicly shame

- children and young people create and share a nude or semi-nude with an adult who has presented themselves as someone under the age of 18 to groom, sexually abuse or blackmail them.

For this reason, incidents can either be classified as 'aggravated' or 'experimental'. The DDCMS / UKIS guidance "*Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people*" (March 2024) sets out the classification of incidents, and how each should be handled.

**Upskirting:** is a criminal offence and 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. Anyone of any sex can be a victim.

**Neglect:** 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); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Serious violence:** indicators which may signal that children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime 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 staff should be aware of the associated risks which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence (for example, being male, frequent absence from school or permanently excluded from school, experienced child maltreatment or having been involved in offending) and understand the measures in place to manage these.

**Specific safeguarding issues:** behaviours linked to drug taking, alcohol abuse, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education and sexting put children in danger. Safeguarding issues can also manifest themselves via child on child abuse, such as abuse within intimate partner relationships, bullying (including cyberbullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults, sexting and upskirting. Safeguarding issues can also be linked to, for example, children being absent from education repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods; child sexual exploitation; domestic violence; fabricated or induced illness; faith abuse (including ostracism of families); female genital mutilation; forced marriage; gangs and youth violence; gender-based violence / violence against women

and girls; hate; mental health; preventing radicalisation; relationship abuse; sexting; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes; and trafficking.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE):** CSE is a form of child sexual abuse (see above) which occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants (for example, money, gifts or affection), and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. CSE can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years (including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex) who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. It can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity 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). Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

CSE can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The below CCE indicators can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends, and
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections, display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development or become pregnant.

The DfE has published guidance on this entitled "*Child sexual exploitation: guide for practitioners*". The Children's Society and Home Office have also published guidance on Preventing Child Sexual Exploitation.

CSE may occur alone, or may overlap with CCE, and/or county lines, as well as other forms of abuse.

**Child criminal exploitation (CCE):** CCE is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in any criminal activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants (for example, money, gifts or affection), and/or for the financial or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power

imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. 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 (county lines, see below), forced to shoplift or pickpocket. 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. Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals (especially when they are older children). It is important in these circumstances that the child perpetrator is also recognised as a victim.

Some of the following can be indicators of CCE:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts, money, or new possessions
- children who associate with other children 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.

The experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however 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.

CCE may occur alone, or may overlap with CSE, and/or county lines, as well as other forms of abuse.

Children who have been exploited will need additional support to help maintain them in education.

**County lines:** County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK – no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults exploited to sell drugs and move and store

drugs and money. Offenders 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 (mainstream and special), further and higher educational institutions, student referral units, children's homes and care homes. Children are increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the ways of identifying indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing (from school or home) and are subsequently found in areas away from their home;
- that have been the victim, perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime);
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs;
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection;
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity;
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters;
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing;

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office and The Children's Society's County Lines Toolkit For Professionals..

**Modern Slavery:** Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs. Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the National Referral Mechanism is available in the statutory guidance "*Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims (June 2025)*".

**Cybercrime:** is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer). Cyber-dependent crimes include:

- unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a school's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded;
- denial of Service (Dos or DDoS) attacks or 'booting'. These are attempts to make a computer, network, or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources; and,
- making, supplying, or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets, and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above.

Children with particular skill and interest in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime.

If there are concerns about a child in this area, the DSL a member of the DST, should consider referring into the Cyber Choices programme. This is a nationwide police programme supported by the Home Office and led by the National Crime Agency, working with regional and local policing. It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests. Cyber Choices does not currently cover 'cyber-enabled' crime such as fraud, purchasing of illegal drugs on-line and child sexual abuse and exploitation, nor other areas of concern such as on-line bullying or general on-line safety.

Additional advice can be found at: Cyber Choices, 'NPCC- When to call the Police' and National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.gov.uk.

**Mental health:** all staff should be 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.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff, however, 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 be at risk of developing one.

Where children have suffered abuse, exploitation and neglect, or potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance and progress at school.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following this policy, and speaking to a member of the DST.

More information can be found in the *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* guidance. Public Health England has produced a range of resources to support  
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secondary and senior schoolteachers to promote positive health, wellbeing and resilience among children.

**So called 'honour based' abuse:** encompasses 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. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take.

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. Guidance on the warning signs that FGM may be about to take place, or may have already taken place, can also be found on pages 38-41 of the Multi-agency statutory guidance on FGM. To give an example of indications that a girl has already been subjected to FGM:

- A student may have difficulty walking, sitting, or standing and may even look uncomfortable.
- A student may have frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems or spend longer than normal in the bathroom due to difficulties urinating.
- There may be prolonged or repeated absences from School and/or noticeable behaviour changes (e.g. withdrawal or depression) on the student's return.
- A student is reluctant to undergo medical examination.

**If staff have a concern that a student may be at risk of FGM, they should speak to the DSL or a member of the DST who will (where appropriate) activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and Children's Social Care.**

There is a statutory duty on teachers 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. Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate. If the teacher is unsure whether this reporting duty applies, they should discuss their concerns with the DSL in accordance with this policy. Where a teacher suspects that a student is at risk (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or it involves a student over 18, teachers should follow the School's local safeguarding procedures.

Further information can be found in the *Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation and the FGM resource pack*, particularly section 13.

**Forced marriage:** 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 communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage. 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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. Nobody under the age of 18 may legally get married. Schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage. There are a range of potential indicators that a child may be at risk of forced marriage, details of which can be found in the *Multi-agency guidelines: Handling cases of forced marriage* (last updated April 2023). Further information on forced marriage is available in guidance published on gov.uk and by the Forced Marriage Unit. School staff can also contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email [fm@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fm@fcdo.gov.uk).

**Radicalisation:** Radicalisation is the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It can also call for the death of members of the armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. 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.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism, although there are factors that may indicate concern. However, it is possible to protect people from extremist ideology and intervene to protect those at risk of radicalisation being drawn into terrorism. As with other safeguarding risks, staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be susceptible and act proportionately, which may include making a Prevent referral. Designated safeguarding leads and other senior leaders should familiarise themselves with the Prevent duty guidance especially paragraphs 141-210, which are specifically concerned with education. Staff should contact the DSL or a member of the DST, who should be aware of the local procedures in place, before making a Prevent referral.

Sharing information on radicalisation should be treated the same way as sharing information on wider safeguarding issues. In the event of a child leaving, the DSL should consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse or those who are currently receiving support through the 'Channel' programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives at the new school.

**Special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or students with certain health conditions:** Students with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These children may not outwardly show signs of abuse and/or may have difficulties in communication about abuse or neglect, or bullying.

These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration;
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- the potential for children with SEND or certain health conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying), without outwardly showing any signs;
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges;
- being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in School or the consequences of doing so.

Staff will support such students in expressing any concerns they may have and will be particularly vigilant to any signs or indicators of abuse, discussing this with the DSL as appropriate.

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning:** A child or young person being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, they can sometimes be targeted by other children. In some cases, a student who is perceived by their peers to be lesbian, gay or bisexual (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who are.

When supporting a gender questioning child, the School will take a cautious approach and consider the broad range of the pupils individual needs, in partnership with the parents (other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child), including any clinical advice that is available and how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying. The School will adopt (to the extent that it is reflected in KCSIE), the draft DfE guidance for schools and colleges in relation to Gender Questioning Children, when deciding how to proceed.

Risks can be compounded where children lack trusted adults with whom they can be open. The School endeavours to reduce the additional barriers faced and create a culture where they can speak out or share their concerns with trusted members of staff.

**Domestic abuse:** The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduces a statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory

definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members. The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including but not limited to, psychological, sexual, physical, emotional, and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be “personally connected” (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act).

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. The government will issue statutory guidance to provide further information for those working with domestic abuse victims and perpetrators, including the impact on children.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing 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.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child on child abuse is sometimes referred to as ‘teenage relationship abuse’. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of ‘domestic abuse’ (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

Domestic Abuse may lead to other safeguarding concerns and should therefore be managed under this policy.

**Operation Encompass:** operates in all police forces across England. It helps police and schools work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. The system ensures that when the police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult (usually the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy)) in school before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This ensures that the school has up to date relevant information about the child’s circumstances and can enable immediate support to be put in place, according to the child’s needs.

Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, the police and/or schools should make a referral to local authority children’s social care if they are concerned about a child’s welfare.

More information about the scheme and how schools can become involved is available on the Operation Encompass website. Operation Encompass provides an advice and helpline service for all staff members from educational settings who may be concerned about children who have experienced domestic abuse. The helpline is available 8:00 to 13:00, Monday to Friday on 0204 513 9990 (charged at local rate).

**Homelessness:** Being homeless, or at risk of homelessness presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The School should be aware of potential indicators of homelessness including household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse, and anti-social behaviour, as well as a family being asked to leave a property. If staff are made aware or suspect that a student may be at risk of homelessness, they should talk to the DSL in the first instance. Whilst referrals to the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not and should not replace a referral to the LADO where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, in accordance with this policy.

**Children who are absent from school:** A child being absent from School, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education is a potential indicator of a range of safeguarding issues including abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, CSE and CCE. It can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of FGM, so-called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Staff must follow the School's procedures for dealing with children who are absent from school, particularly persistently or for prolonged periods. The School's procedure for dealing with children who go are absent from school can be found in the School's policy on Children Absent From Education. All unexplained absences will be followed up in accordance with the policy on Children Absent From Education.

The School shall inform the local authority of any student who is going to be added to or deleted from the School's admission register at non-standard transition points in accordance with the requirements of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. This will assist the local authority to:

- a) fulfil its duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are absent from education; and
- b) follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or radicalisation.

School attendance registers are carefully monitored to identify any trends. The School will inform the local authority (and the local authority where the child is normally resident) of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the School and the local authority.

Action should be taken in accordance with this policy if any absence of a student from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare. The School's policy supports identification of abuse and provides preventative measures against the risk of the child is absent and/or becoming a child missing education in the future. This applies when

issues are first emerging as well as where children are already known to the local authority children's social care and need a social worker.

**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 a 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 (for example, as they start walking to school on their own) it is important they are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe. Many schools provide outdoor-safety lessons run by teachers or by local police staff.

It is important that lessons focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers. Further information is available at: [www.actionagainstabduction.org](http://www.actionagainstabduction.org) and [www.clevernevergoes.org](http://www.clevernevergoes.org).

**Children and the court system:** Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age appropriate guides to support children 5-11 year olds and 12-17 year olds available on the gov.uk website.

The guides explain each step of the process and support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children. The Ministry of Justice has launched an online child arrangements information tool with clear and concise information on the dispute resolution service. The School may refer some parents and carers to this service where appropriate.

**Children with family members 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.

The Prison Service will undertake a child safeguarding enquiry with children's social care for all sentenced prisoners to identify any who present an ongoing risk to children from within custody. Prisons will also decide on the level of contact, if any, they will allow between a prisoner and a child based on a child contact risk assessment.

The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

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