



**STOUR VALE
ACADEMY
TRUST**

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Contents

Introduction.....	4
Ethos and Values – Stour Vale Academy Trust.....	4
Ethos and Values – School.....	5
Important contacts.....	5
Aims.....	5
Legislation and statutory guidance.....	6
Definitions.....	6
Human rights.....	7
Equality statement.....	8
Roles and responsibilities.....	9
Confidentiality.....	13
Recognising abuse and taking action & Dealing with disclosures.....	13
Online safety and the use of mobile technology.....	23
Notifying parents or carers.....	24
Pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues.....	25
Pupils with a social worker.....	25
Looked-after and previously looked-after children.....	25
Physical Interventions (use of reasonable force).....	26
Safeguarding in the curriculum.....	26
Complaints and concerns which relate to safeguarding.....	27
Record-keeping.....	27
Training.....	28
Monitoring arrangements.....	29
Links with other policies.....	29
Appendix 1 – Important contacts.....	30
Appendix 2 – School’s procedures.....	32
Appendix 3 – Types of abuse.....	33
Appendix 4 – Safer recruitment and DBS checks: policy and procedures.....	34
Appendix 5 – Allegations that may meet the harms threshold against staff.....	39
Appendix 6 – Specific safeguarding issues.....	44

Introduction

This document is the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for Stour Vale Academy Trust and any extended services that it provides.

This policy applies to all staff (teaching and non-teaching), members, trustees, governors and volunteers, temporary and supply/visiting staff working in the school.

It will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board of Stour Vale Academy Trust ('Trust Board') and Local Governing Bodies, and is in line with the expectations of Ofsted/ISI which inspects safeguarding arrangements as part of the school's Leadership and Management and the requirements of the Local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy forms one part of our safeguarding responsibilities, and the principles embedded in this policy should have due regard to a range of linked policies including but not limited to: Safer Recruitment, Information sharing and Record keeping, Behaviour, Physical Intervention, Anti-Bullying, Mobile Phone Usage, Health and Safety, PSHE, Sex and Relationship Education, Equal Opportunities, Special Educational Needs, Confidentiality, Attendance, Substance Misuse (including drugs and alcohol), Racism and Homophobia, Educational visits, E-safety, Combating Extremism, School Security, Staff Code of Conduct, Managing Low-Level Concerns, Acceptable Use of Technologies and any other relevant policies as defined by statutory guidance and the school's Local Governing Body.

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. All those who come in to contact with children and their families have a role to play in keeping children safe. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively this Trust and all member schools will ensure their approach is child centred and have the best interests of the child at the heart of all action.

All schools will follow the procedures agreed by their LA Children's Safeguarding Partnership.

Ethos and Values – Stour Vale Academy Trust

Stour Vale Academy Trust holds children and young people at the heart of all that we do. We recognise that as a multi-academy trust we exist in order to advance education for the public good. Our mission, therefore, is to improve life opportunities for children and young people by both providing the best possible education and care to pupils in Stour Vale member schools and by having a positive impact across the wider education system. Our values are encapsulated in four words: Respect, Integrity, Collaboration and Excellence. Stour Vale Academy Trust is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils.

Ethos and Values – Ridgewood High School

Ridgewood High School is a small school powered by a big heart, an ambitious culture and excellent staff and student relationships. Ridgewood is happy, caring and calm; we provide students with a safe, family atmosphere where they are expected to work hard to become the best they can be in all aspects of their life. Our students prosper because we have high expectations of their academic progress as well as their personal development. They grow into confident, articulate young adults who contribute selflessly to their families and their local communities. Our students are learning to be great team-players because this will help them be excellent members of the work force as well as giving them the skills to make significant contributions to their families and communities. It is essential that our students learn how to be honest and good people who are ready to take on the challenges that life will present them, respectful of the people and situations they will encounter and in possession of a detailed knowledge of how to keep themselves safe

We have high expectations of our experienced staff who are well trained and determined to provide high quality education and pastoral care for our students. Many staff are local and are consequently ambitious to see Stourbridge students succeed. They know the difference that a great education can make to the life chances of young people. We are proud to work in Ridgewood; we know we have fantastic students who are frequently praised for their kindness and friendliness when meeting new people. They are polite, helpful and want to do well.

Ridgewood High School is committed to the safeguarding of all pupils in the school both within the school environment and outside. Our aim is to ensure that all pupils are safe in school and that measures are put in place to support any child who is at risk of harm.

Important contacts

See Appendix 1.

Aims

The Trust and all member schools aim to ensure that:

- Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities with respect to safeguarding.
- We will protect our pupils and staff by recognising signs and symptoms of pupils suffering harm or likely to suffer harm at the earliest possible moment to prevent concerns from escalating. Staff are properly trained in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues.
- We will create a culture of vigilance by maintaining a 'child-centred' approach and always acting in the best interests of the child.
- We will ensure that pupils recognise when they are at risk and know how to get help when they need it.

Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2023\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018/2020\)](#), [Safer Working Practice 2022](#) and the [Governance Handbook](#). We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

Section 175 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which places a duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils

[The School Staffing \(England\) Regulations 2009](#), which set out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirement for at least one person conducting an interview to be trained in safer recruitment techniques

Part 3 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school

[The Children Act 1989](#) (and [2004 amendment](#)), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children

Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#), which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18

[Statutory guidance on FGM](#), which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

[The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#), which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children

Schedule 4 of the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#), which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

[Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty](#), which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism

All Primary schools

The [Childcare \(Disqualification\) and Childcare \(Early Years Provision Free of Charge\) \(Extended Entitlement\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) (referred to in this policy as the '2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations') and [Childcare Act 2006](#), which set out who is disqualified from working with children

This policy also meets requirements relating to safeguarding and welfare in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)

This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

Definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- 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
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child, and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 3 explains the different types of abuse.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Appendix 3 defines neglect in more detail.

Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) is where children share nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The following 3 **safeguarding partners** are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education (and defined in the Children Act 2004, as amended by chapter 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017). They will make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs:

- the local authority (LA)
- a clinical commissioning group for an area within the LA
- the chief officer of police for a police area in the LA area

Human rights

Human Rights Act. The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to and contains the Articles and protocols of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (the Convention) that are deemed to apply in the UK. It compels public organisations to respect and protect an individual's human rights when they make individual decisions about them.

Under the HRA, it is unlawful for schools to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention. The specific convention rights applying to schools are:

- Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (an absolute right)
- Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life (a qualified right) includes a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity
- Article 14: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination, and
- Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education.

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

Equality Act 2010. Schools have obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act). According to the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

Whilst all of the above protections are important, in the context of safeguarding, this guidance, and the legal duties placed on schools in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, the Trust Board should carefully consider how member schools are supporting their pupils and students with regard to particular protected characteristics – including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race.

Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with a particular protected characteristic in order to meet their specific need, this includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people, including those with long term conditions. A school, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Guidance to help schools understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the act can be found at [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools) – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). For further information [Equality Act guidance | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/).

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is found in the Equality Act. Compliance with the PSED is a legal requirement for state-funded schools, advice on this – including on specific duties, is set out in the advice linked in the paragraph above.

The PSED places a general duty on schools to have, in the exercise of their functions, due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation (and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act), to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The duty applies to all protected characteristics and means that whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, specific consideration must be given to the equality implications of these such as, for example, the need to eliminate unlawful behaviours that relate to them such as sexual violence and sexual harassment, misogyny/misandry and racism. This is one reason why good record-keeping and monitoring of all forms of abuse and harassment is essential.

The PSED helps schools (which are subject to it) to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil and student outcomes. Some pupils or students may be more at risk of harm from specific issues such as sexual violence, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or racial discrimination. Such concerns will differ between education settings, but it is important schools are conscious of disproportionate vulnerabilities and integrate this into their safeguarding policies and procedures.

Equality statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or health conditions
- are young carers
- may experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- have English as an additional language

- are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence
- are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- are asylum seekers
- are at risk due to either their own or a family member’s mental health needs
- are looked after or previously looked after
- are missing from education
- whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated

Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone’s** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, governors, members and directors in the school and is consistent with the procedures of safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

All staff

All staff will read and understand part 1 and annex B of the Department for Education’s statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), and review this guidance at least annually.

All staff will sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have read and understand and reviewed the guidance.

The DSL will ensure that all staff are aware of:

- the systems which support safeguarding, including this safeguarding and child protection policy, the Trust’s Staff Code of Conduct, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL, the behaviour policy and online safety policy, and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
- the school’s reporting and referral procedure and the need for timely reporting
- the early help process/common assessment framework and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment
- the process for making referrals to local authority children’s social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play
- what to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child.

All staff should be aware:

- that the main categories of abuse are:
 - Physical abuse

- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- of the signs of different types of abuse and neglect, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM and radicalisation, sexual violence and harassment
- that all staff and volunteers should be concerned about a child if he/she presents with indicators of possible significant harm
- of the importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe

Appendix 4 of this policy outlines in more detail how staff are supported to do this with more detailed information on specific safeguarding areas.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The DSL is a member of the leadership team (see Appendix 1 for contact details). The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding in the school. This includes ensuring that all staff, teaching and non-teaching (including supply staff), know who the designated member of staff is and that they are aware of their individual responsibility to be alert to the signs of abuse and to consider the context within which specific safeguarding issues occur.

During term time, the DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

If a member of staff has a concern out of school hours, they are to contact the Single Point Access in the school's Local Authority on emergency out-of-hours number.

When the DSL is absent, the deputy (see Appendix 1) will act as cover.

In the absence of the DSL and the deputy DSL the most senior member of staff in school will assume responsibility for any child protection matters that arise. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead.

The DSL will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to:

- provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters
- discuss concerns as required with outside agencies e.g., specific agency for single need (e.g., speech and language, Inclusion Support), early intervention multi-agency (e.g., Early Help process) or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/existing social worker (child protection/significant harm concerns)
- take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so
- contribute to the assessment of children
- refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly
- help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children, including children with a social worker, are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school leadership staff

The DSL will also:

- keep the headteacher informed of any issues and liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate
- take lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place within the school
- access Safeguarding Supervision as stated under the Ofsted Inspection Framework and Working Together 2018
- keep the school's SLT, directors and governors, Local Authority and Social Services informed about safeguarding and child protection issues as requested

The DSL will also keep the headteacher informed of any issues and liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate.

The full responsibilities of the DSL should be set out in their job description.

The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies

The Trust Board will ensure that all members, trustees and governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety, which amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations in relation to filtering and monitoring) 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 schools are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole-school approach to safeguarding. Their training should be regularly updated.

The Local Governing Body has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard the children in their establishment. It is required that a nominated governor for child protection is appointed to take lead responsibility.

See Appendix 1 for the nominated governor and trustee for child protection.

The Trust Board and Local Governing Body will:

- facilitate a whole-school approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development
- evaluate and approve this policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation
- appoint a lead/link governor in schools to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the Local Governing Body. This is always a different person from the DSL
- ensure that safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures are in place and reviewed annually
- ensure that safe recruitment procedures are in place and reviewed annually
- ensure that all staff (paid and unpaid) have an up-to-date enhanced Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) certificate. All those carrying out teaching roles will require an additional check to ensure they are not prohibited from teaching (barred list check)
- ensure that all members, trustees and governors will be subject to an enhanced DBS with barred list check and 'Section 128' check
- ensure that a Single Central Register (SCR) is monitored to ensure it meets statutory requirements

- ensure that there is a dedicated teacher for looked-after children who has been appropriately trained. This staff member has a key role in promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children
- ensure that a member of the Local Governing Body (usually the Chair) is nominated to be responsible for contacting the CEO (or, in their absence, a member of the Executive Team) in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against the headteacher
- ensure that relevant safeguarding/child protection training is accessed by all school staff/volunteers according to their role and responsibilities
- ensure that they receive an annual report regarding safeguarding/child protection work including details of early help involvement and the lead professional role which has been undertaken in the year which is shared with the LA or other appropriate body
- ensure that the governors support the Designated Member of Staff for Child Protection in carrying out his/her responsibilities as outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2022) and role in Job Description

All members, trustees and governors will read Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Leader

The Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Leader is a member of Stour Vale Academy Trust's central team and provides leadership on the continuous improvement of safeguarding and Child Protection across Stour Vale Academy Trust.

The Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Leader will:

- ensure safeguarding and child protection policy and related policies and processes comply with all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements
- provide support and advice to the CEO, Headteachers and DSLs to enable and equip them to lead and continuously improve safeguarding provision in their schools and across the trust
- to report to the CEO and Trust Board on the overall effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection across Stour Vale.

The CEO and Headteacher

The CEO/headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

- ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:
 - are informed of our systems which support safeguarding, including this policy, as part of their induction
 - understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect
- communicating this policy to parents/carers when their child joins the school and via the school website
- ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent

- ensuring that all staff undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, and updating the content of the training regularly
- acting as the investigating officer (or appointing an investigating officer if appropriate) in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate
- ensuring in schools with Early Years the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable
- making sure each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assigned a key person

Confidentiality

Safeguarding children raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all staff/volunteers in schools.

All staff in schools, both teaching and non-teaching staff, have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly children's social care and the police.

If a child wishes to confide in a member of staff/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, the member of staff/volunteer will tell the child, in an appropriate manner to the individual needs of the child, that they cannot promise confidentiality and may need to pass the information on to help keep the child or other children safe.

Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information within the expectations of the school's confidentiality policy and other relevant policies e.g., the safeguarding and child protection policy, inter-agency procedures.

Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding.

Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children.

The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe.

If staff need to share 'special category personal data', the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the child's best interests.

If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

Confidentiality is also addressed in this policy with respect to record-keeping and allegations of abuse against staff.

Recognising abuse and taking action & dealing with disclosures

Staff, volunteers, members, trustees and governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue.

See Appendix 2 outlining the school's procedures.

If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger

Make a referral to children's social care and/or the police **immediately** if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger. **Anyone can make a referral.**

Tell the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

Report your concerns to the DSL following the process and procedures in school for staff to follow.

If the DSL is not available, then deputy DSLs or the headteacher should be informed (this is to ensure there is no delay in seeking advice or making a referral).

The DSL will then make the decision about how to proceed.

The DSL ensures that all school staff and volunteers are alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and from other sources including members of the school community.

The DSL will ensure all staff are aware of the school's reporting and referral procedure and the need for timely reporting.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future, in accordance with KCSIE (2023). Consideration should be given to making a referral to children services if there are safeguarding concerns or there has been no contact with school.

Our member schools will robustly monitor the attendance of children on roll in the school in line with their Attendance Policy. When a safeguarding/child protection concern is raised, attendance concerns will be shared with partner agencies in accordance with local information sharing protocols.

The school will ensure they have systems in place to regularly update contact numbers for parents/carers and that there are at least two emergency contact numbers on file for every child on roll.

If a child makes a disclosure to you

If a child discloses a safeguarding issue to you, you should:

- listen to and believe them. Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions
- stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset
- tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner
- explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret
- write up your conversation as per school's procedures for recording information as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it
- date the report for the DSL to access. Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to children's social care and/or the police directly and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so

If you discover that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has taken place or a pupil is at risk of FGM

Keeping Children Safe in Education explains that FGM comprises 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs'.

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Possible indicators that a pupil has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in Appendix 6 of this policy.

Any teacher who either:

- is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and teachers could face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to disclose, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate.

Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must speak to the DSL and follow local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for teachers mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Any member of staff who suspects a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

If you have concerns about a child (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger)

Speak/refer to the DSL through agreed school procedures so an agreed course of action is put into place.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to the deputy DSL or a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local authority children's social care. You can also seek advice at any time from the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000. Share details of any actions you take with the DSL as soon as practically possible.

Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate. Share any action taken with the DSL as soon as possible.

Early help

If early help is appropriate, the DSL will lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment.

The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the school will consider a referral to local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

The Early Help process is one that we fully support and believe that it can bring agencies together, engage the family and provide outcomes that do not require more extensive and damaging intervention later on.

We mainly deal with Stourbridge and Brierley Hill Family Centre and their contact details along with more information about Early Help can be found here:

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/care-health/children-and-family-care/early-help-for-children-and-families/>

Professionals can complete an Early Help Assessment via Dudley Children's Portal

<https://childrensocialcare.dudley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

Referral

If there is a significant safeguarding concern and/or if any child, where staying at home for a prolonged period raises a concern for DSL, refer to MASH/Children's Social Services Front Door outlining the risks on a MARF/Request for help and support and record safeguarding details on Ridgewood High School's safeguarding systems/CPOMS.

MASH contact: - 0300 555 0050 or 0300 555 8574 after 5pm/weekends and Bank Holidays.

Safeguarding concerns (MARF/Request for help and support) can be reported via Dudley Children's Portal

<https://childrensocialcare.dudley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

If it is appropriate to refer the case to local authority children's social care or the police, the DSL will make the referral or support the team in school to do so. If you make a referral directly you must tell the DSL as soon as possible.

The local authority should make a decision within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up with the local authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation/resolution procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

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

If you have concerns about extremism

If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include [Channel](#), the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

The Department for Education also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which school staff and governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk. Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- think someone is in immediate danger
- think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group
- see or hear something that may be terrorist-related

If you have a mental health concern

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.

Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If you have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, take immediate action as per school's procedures.

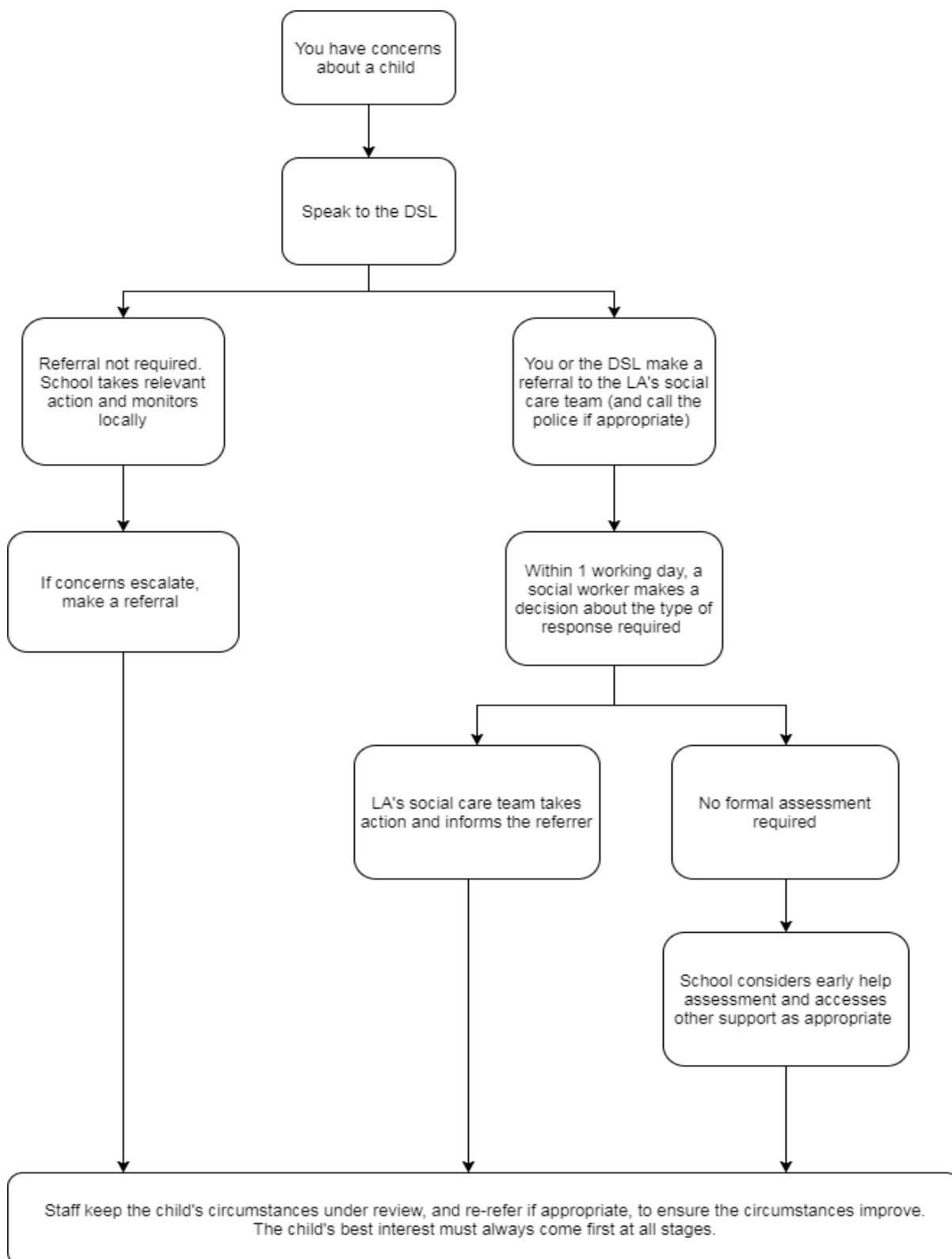
If you have a mental health concern that is **not** also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL to agree a course of action with required teams in school.

Where a need is identified, referrals can be made to the School Nurse/Health Advisor via the pastoral team in consultation with student and/or parent for low level mental health concerns and worry work.

We are now also being supported by Dudley Reflexions Team. Reflexions is an NHS funded Mental Health Support Team (MHST), which aims to help increase access to mental health support for children and young people in schools.

Reflexions offer a combination of 1:1 Low/High Intensity CBT including Mental Health assessments and weekly interventions with young people and their families as well as a Whole School Approach (WSA) including School Assemblies, Staff Training and Psychoeducational groups/workshops.

Figure 1: procedure if you have concerns about a child's welfare (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger)



Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer, contractor, governor or any other organisation of Individuals using school premises

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), a governor or any other organisation or individual using the school premises, or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), a governor or any other organisation or individual using the school premises, posing a risk of harm to children, speak to the headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the headteacher, speak to the chair of governors.

The headteacher/chair of governors will then follow the procedures set out in Appendix 5, if appropriate.

Where you believe there is a conflict of interest in reporting a concern or allegation about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) to the headteacher, report it directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO).

Early years providers

Where appropriate, the school will inform Ofsted of the allegation and actions taken, within the necessary timescale (see Appendix 5 for more detail).

Allegations of abuse made against other pupils

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys' as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for pupils.

We also recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse. However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy, but this safeguarding and child protection policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- could put pupils in the school at risk
- is violent
- involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment/violence, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes)

See Appendix 6 for more information about child-on-child abuse.

Procedures for dealing with allegations of child-on-child abuse

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- you must record the allegation and tell the DSL, but do not investigate it
- the DSL will contact the local authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence
- the DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed

- the DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

Creating a supportive environment in school and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse

We recognise the importance of taking proactive action to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, and of creating a supportive environment where victims feel confident in reporting incidents.

To achieve this, we will:

- challenge any form of derogatory or sexualised language or inappropriate behaviour between peers, including requesting or sending sexual images
- be vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- ensure our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- ensure pupils are able to easily and confidently report abuse using our reporting systems
- ensure staff reassure victims that they are being taken seriously
- ensure staff are trained to understand:
 - how to recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
 - that even if there are no reports of peer-on-peer abuse in school, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’
 - that if they have any concerns about a child’s welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
 - children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to
 - a friend may make a report
 - a member of staff may overhear a conversation
 - a child’s behaviour might indicate that something is wrong
 - that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
 - that a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
 - the important role they have to play in preventing peer-on-peer abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it
 - that they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns

Consensual/non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (‘sexting’)

What do we mean by sharing nudes and semi-nudes?

In the latest advice for schools and colleges (UKCIS, 2020), this is defined as 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. Alternative terms used by children and young people may include ‘dick pics’ or ‘pics’. The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images, videos and live streams are not always sexually or criminally motivated. This advice does not apply to adults sharing

nudes or semi-nudes of under 18-year olds. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police as a matter of urgency by the DSL.

Your responsibilities when responding to an incident

If you are made aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images/videos (also known as 'sexting'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must **not**:

- view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a pupil to share or download it (if you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL)
- delete the imagery or ask the pupil to delete it
- ask the pupil(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery (this is the DSL's responsibility)
- share information about the incident with other members of staff, the pupil(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers
- say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved

You should explain that you need to report the incident, and reassure the pupil(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

Initial meeting

Following a report of an incident, the DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff – this may include the staff member who reported the incident and the safeguarding or leadership team. This meeting will consider the initial evidence and aim to determine:

- whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)
- if a referral needs to be made to the police and/or children's social care
- if it is necessary to view the image(s) in order to safeguard the young person (in most cases, images or videos should not be viewed)
- what further information is required to decide on the best response
- whether the image(s) has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)
- whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images or videos from devices or online services
- any relevant facts about the pupils involved which would influence risk assessment
- if there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual
- whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents/carers should be involved)

The DSL will make an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care if:

- the incident involves an adult
- there is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example owing to special educational needs)

- what the DSL knows about the images or videos suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- the imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the images or videos is under 13
- the DSL has reason to believe a pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming)

If none of the above apply then the DSL, in consultation with the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate, may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. The decision will be made and recorded in line with the procedures set out in this policy.

Further review by the DSL

If at the initial review stage, a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or children's social care, the DSL will conduct a further review to establish the facts and assess the risks.

They will hold interviews with the pupils involved (if appropriate).

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a pupil has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

Informing parents/carers

The DSL will inform parents/carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

Referring to the police

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the police, this will be done through dialling 101.

Reporting systems for our pupils

Where there is a safeguarding concern, we will take the child's wishes and feelings into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

We recognise the importance of ensuring pupils feel safe and comfortable to come forward and report any concerns and/or allegations.

To achieve this, we will:

- put systems in place for pupils to confidently report abuse
- ensure our reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for pupils
- make it clear to pupils that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback

The DSL (Helen Baldry) is supported by a team of Deputy DSLs who are part of a wider safeguarding team. The Deputy DSL's include the five Heads of Year (S. Gower, R. Billingham, K. Bastock, D. Shakespeare and A. Wilks) and the SENDCO (J. Rose). All DDSLs have been trained to the same level as the DSL to strengthen the capacity of the team further.

The headteacher, Rae Cope, is also trained to DSL level and will contribute to decision making as the DSL feels is appropriate. The headteacher will take responsibility for informing the Disclosure and Barring Service where a member of staff has been dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child.

In addition, there are a number of non-teaching staff who will be involved closely in supporting the needs of students at Ridgewood High School. This includes support and guidance assistants for each year group and members of the SEN team. They will offer support in terms of Early Help meetings and in collecting factual information for other Child protection meetings.

Online safety and the use of mobile technology

Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to risks from the school's IT system. As part of this process, the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies should ensure their schools have appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness. They should ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies should consider the age range of their children, the number of children, how often they access the IT system and the proportionality of costs versus safeguarding risks.

The appropriateness of any filters and monitoring systems are a matter for individual schools and will be informed in part, by the risk assessment required by the Prevent Duty.

To support schools to meet this duty, the Department for Education has published [filtering and monitoring standards](#). The Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies should review the standards and support the Headteacher, DSL and IT Staff in meeting the standards, in particular:

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

Additional guidance on filtering and monitoring can be found at: [UK Safer Internet Centre: appropriate filtering and monitoring](#). South West Grid for Learning (swgfl.org.uk) have created a tool to check whether a school's filtering provider is signed up to relevant lists (CSA content, Sexual Content, Terrorist content Your Internet Connection Blocks Child Abuse & Terrorist Content).

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and well-being issues.

To address this, our member schools aim to:

- have robust processes in place to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers and governors
- protect and educate the whole school community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology (which we refer to as 'mobile phones')
- set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole school community
- establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

The 4 key categories of risk

Key approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

- **Content** – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism
- **Contact** – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes
- **Conduct** – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as 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; and
- **Commerce** – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams

Schools will be in regular contact with parents and carers. Those communications should be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online and parents and carers are likely to find it helpful to understand what systems schools use to filter and monitor online use. It will be especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and be clear who from the school (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

Whilst it is essential that the Trust Board and Local Governing Bodies ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place, they should be careful that 'over blocking' does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regard to online teaching and safeguarding.

For further details refer to the school's online safety policy.

Notifying parents or carers

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents or carers. The DSL will manage this in the event of a suspicion or disclosure with the team in school.

The school will always discuss concerns with parents/carers and consent for any referrals should be sought unless to do so would:

- place the child at risk of significant harm or further risk of significant harm
- place a vulnerable adult at risk of harm
- compromise any enquiries that need to be undertaken by children's social care or the police

Other staff will only talk to parents or carers about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents or carers would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved.

The school will endeavour to ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibilities placed on the school and staff for safeguarding children.

Pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

We recognise that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group, including:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- pupils being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other pupils
- the potential for pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

As a school we have in place additional support for these pupils. This includes:

- A designated Learning Support Hub that pupils can access during social times
- Allocated Keyworker for all pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions
- Close liaison with specialist support services eg. Autism Outreach, Visual impairment Service

Pupils with a social worker

Pupils may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

Where we are aware that a pupil has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks
- the provision of pastoral and/or academic support
-

Looked-after and previously looked-after children

We will ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked-after children and previously looked-after children safe. In particular, we will ensure that:

- appropriate staff have relevant information about children's looked-after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, and care arrangements
- the DSL has details of children's social workers and relevant virtual school heads

Each school in the Trust has appointed a designated teacher who is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children and previously looked-after children in line with [statutory guidance](#).

The designated teacher is appropriately trained and has the relevant experience to perform the role.

As part of their role, the designated teacher will:

- work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- work with virtual school heads to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including discussing how pupil premium plus funding can be best used to support looked-after children and meet the needs identified in their personal education plans

Physical Interventions (use of reasonable force)

It is important to allow children to do what they can for themselves, but depending on age and circumstances (i.e., a child who is hurt, who needs instruction in the use of a particular instrument/piece of equipment, safety issues such as the need to prevent a child hurting themselves or others), it may be necessary for some physical contact to take place.

Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables school staff to use 'reasonable force' to prevent a pupil from:

- committing any offence (or, for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil)
- causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil himself)
- prejudicing the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during the teaching session or otherwise

The general guidance on [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention](#) (HM Govt. June 2019), [Behaviour and discipline in schools – Advice for headteachers and school staff](#) (HM Govt January 2016), [Use of reasonable force – Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies](#) (2013) is available to schools and may be supplemented by specialist guidance.

Children and Learning Act 2009 requires the Trust Board to ensure that a procedure is in place, within member schools, for recording each significant incident in which a member of staff uses force on a pupil; and reporting each such incident to each parent of the pupil as soon as practicable after the incident.

The member of staff must not report the incident to a parent if it appears to that member of staff that doing so would be likely to result in significant harm to the pupil. If that is the case, or if there is no parent of the pupil to whom the incident could be reported, then the incident must be reported to the local authority where the pupil normally lives.

Safeguarding in the curriculum

Our member schools play a crucial role in preventative education. Preventative education is most effective in the context of a whole-school approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment. Our member schools will have a clear set of values and standards, upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life. These will be underpinned by the school's behaviour policy and pastoral support system, as well as by a planned programme of evidence-based PSHE delivered in regularly timetabled lessons and reinforced throughout the whole curriculum. Such a programme should be fully inclusive and developed

to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities). This will be underpinned by:

- the school behaviour policy
- a pastoral support system
- a planned programme of PSHE delivered regularly, tackling issues such as: boundaries; consent; body confidence; stereotyping; and sexual harassment

Child protection and wider child safety issues will be addressed in its wider context through the curriculum as appropriate in lesson time, subject opportunities and during assemblies. Relevant issues will be addressed through the curriculum, for example self-esteem, emotional literacy, assertiveness, power, sex and relationship education, e-safety and bullying.

Complaints and concerns which relate to safeguarding

Complaints against staff that may require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff.

Other complaints

Refer to Trust complaints policy and procedures.

Early years providers in our Trust will take account of requirements related to complaints set out in the safeguarding and welfare section of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Whistleblowing

Refer to Trust whistleblowing policy and procedures that cover concerns regarding the way the school safeguards pupils – including poor or unsafe practice, or potential failures.

Record-keeping

The Trust and member schools will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection record for each child.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.

If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded promptly and within 5 days of them being on roll securely, and separately, from the main pupil file. In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

Training

All staff

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including on whistleblowing procedures and online safety, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse or neglect.

This training will be regularly updated and at least annually to ensure updates from KCSIE are shared.

It will:

- be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole-school safeguarding approach and wider staff training, and curriculum planning
- be in line with advice from the 3 safeguarding partners
- have regard to the Teachers' Standards to support the expectation that all teachers:
 - manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe environment
 - have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including on online safety, as required but at least annually.

Contractors and volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

The DSL and deputy/deputies

The DSL and deputies will undertake child protection and safeguarding training at least every 2 years.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually through e-bulletins, specialised training, meeting other DSLs, and be up to date and aware of safeguarding developments.

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training.

Members, Trustees and Governors

All members, trustees and governors will receive an appropriate level of safeguarding training to make sure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities.

Safer Recruitment – interview panels

At least one person conducting any interview for any post at the school will have undertaken safer recruitment training. This will cover, as a minimum, the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures.

See Appendix 4 of this policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually**, having a key focus on Keeping Children Safe in Education, by The Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Leader (model Trust policy) and in the school (school-specific policy) (see title page). At every review, the model Trust policy will be approved by the Trust Board and the school-specific policy adopted by the Local Governing Body.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour
- Anit-bullying
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Health and safety
- Attendance
- Online safety
- Equality
- Relationships and sex education
- First aid
- Curriculum
- Privacy notices

Appendix 1 – Important contacts

Role/Organisation	Name	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Helen Baldry	hbaldry@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
Deputy DSL	Kate Bastock – Head of Year 10	kbastock@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Rachael Billingham – Head of Year 9	rbillingham@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Sophie Gower – Head of Year 7	sgower@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Deb Shakespeare – Head of Year 8	dshakespeare@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Andy Wilks – Head of Year 11	awilks@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Jenna Rose – SENDCO	jrose@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
	Rae Cope – Headteacher	rcope@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Yvonne Nelson Brown 01384 813110	Yvonne.Nelson-Brown@dudley.gov.uk
Chair of Governors	Mark Bache Kate Rogers- interim	
Link Governor for Safeguarding	Mark Bache Kate Rogers- interim	

Link Trustee for Safeguarding	Steve Tivey	Trust Office 0121 585 5385
Trust Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead	Paul Ramage	pramage@earls.dudley.sch.uk
Virtual Head	Emma Thomas	Emma.Thomas@dudley.gov.uk
Children Looked-After Lead	Helen Baldry	hbaldry@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
SENCo	Jenna Rose	jrose@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
School E-Safety Lead	Helen Baldry	hbaldry@ridgewood.dudley.sch.uk
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/Dudley Front Door	MASH/Dudley Front Door	0300 555 0050 'Request for help' and support via Dudley portal
Out of Hours Duty Team	Out of Hours Duty Team	0300 555 8574 or in an emergency call 999.
PREVENT Officer	Mark Wilson	Mark.Wilson@dudley.gov.uk
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Team	Nikki Fernandes - Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator	nikki.fernandes@dudley.gov.uk CSE.Team@dudley.gov.uk 01384 817777
Stour Vale Academy Trust	CEO – Rachel Salter CFO – Steve Ralph	Trust Office 0121 585 5385

Appendix 2 – School’s procedures

Reporting a concern about a child

Report your concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who should make a decision about whether to contact Social Care Team or the Police as soon as possible. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available, then Deputy Designated Lead, Heads of Year, SENDCO or the Headteacher should be informed (this is to ensure there is no delay in seeking advice or making a referral).

Staff should also record in writing the disclosure or observation as soon as possible on the CPOMS system under the appropriate category. Any concern where a child is at immediate risk of harm should be reported under Child Protection. If the CPOMS system is not available to the member of staff they should complete an orange Concerns form which can be found in the staffroom as part of the Safeguarding display, or from the print room in H block.

Advice will be sought from the MASH/Dudley Front Door team by telephone before completing the appropriate level of referral. Advice about Dudley LA Thresholds and how to complete a referral may be found at: <https://childrensocialcare.dudley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/safeguarding>

Incidents will be reported on a Multi-Agency Referral form (MARF)/Request for Help and Support, by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to the Multi agency Safeguarding Hub/Dudley Front Door via Dudley Children’s Portal.

<https://childrensocialcare.dudley.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

Other members of the Support and Guidance team will support in this process as required and as appropriate.

Concerns that are non-statutory (Below Level 4)

Level 1 - No referral is required. Professionals should contact Dudley’s Family information Service on 01384 814398 to obtain information about support available for children, young people and families.

Level 2 - Partner agencies should complete their own internal assessment as appropriate and forward this to the relevant Family Centre. Alternatively, an Early Help Assessment can be completed and forwarded to the appropriate Family Centre Cluster.

Level 3 - Referrals should be made by completing an Early Help Assessment and forwarding it to the appropriate Family Centre Cluster.

Appendix 3 – Types of abuse

Abuse, including neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

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

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse 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
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- 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
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve:

- physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing
- 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.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Appendix 4 – Safer recruitment and DBS checks: policy and procedures

Refer to the school's Safer Recruitment Policy.

Overview

Recruitment and selection process

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We must ensure the following procedures are in place during the recruitment and selection process to make it clear we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Advertising

When advertising roles, the Trust and member schools will make clear:

- that they are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- that safeguarding checks will be undertaken
- the safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children
- whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

Application forms

Application forms will:

- include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)
- include a copy of, or link to, our safeguarding and child protection policy

Shortlisting

The shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people and will:

- consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
- explore all potential concerns
- in addition, as part of the shortlisting process, schools should consider carrying out an online search as part of their due diligence on the shortlisted candidates. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online, which the school might want to explore with the applicant at interview. This online search should be carried out by a colleague not involved in the shortlisting process and candidates should be informed that online searches will be carried out as part of the recruitment process.

Seeking references and checking employment history

We will obtain references before interview. Any concerns raised will be explored further with referees and taken up with the candidate at interview.

When seeking references, we will:

- not accept open references
- liaise directly with referees and verify any information contained within references with the referees
- ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and completed by a senior person. Where the referee is school based, we will ask for the reference to be confirmed by the headteacher/principal as accurate in respect to disciplinary investigations
- obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed
- secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children
- compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate
- resolve any concerns before any appointment is confirmed

Interview and selection

When interviewing candidates, we will:

- probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, and ask candidates to explain this
- explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate's suitability to work with children
- record all information considered and decisions made

Pre-appointment vetting checks

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Schools also have access to the central team SCR, as appropriate. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

New staff

All offers of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks. When appointing new staff, we will:

- verify their identity
- obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed, we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken
- obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
- verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards
- verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate
- ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher

- carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK. Where available, these will include:
 - for all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records check for overseas applicants](#)
 - for teaching positions: obtaining a letter of professional standing from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked
 - check that candidates taking up a management position* are not subject to a prohibition from management (section 128) direction made by the secretary of state

* Management positions are most likely to include, but are not limited to, headteachers, principals and deputy/assistant headteachers.

Our Primary schools will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

Regulated activity means a person who will be:

- responsible, on a regular basis in a school, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or
- carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or
- engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not

Existing staff

In certain circumstances we will carry out all the relevant checks on existing staff as if the individual was a new member of staff. These circumstances are when:

- there are concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children; or
- an individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or
- there has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more

We will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- we believe the individual has engaged in [relevant conduct](#); or
- we believe the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#); or
- we believe the 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e., they may harm a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm); and
- the individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left

Agency and third-party staff

We will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Contractors

We will ensure that any contractor, or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at the school has had the appropriate level of DBS check (this includes contractors who are provided through a PFI or similar contract). This will be:

- an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity
- an enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.

We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.

Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances.

We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

For self-employed contractors such as music teachers or sports coaches, we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

Trainee/student teachers

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out.

Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.

Volunteers

We will:

- never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity
- obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity
- carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment
- ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006

Members, Trustees and Governors

All members, trustees and governors will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

The Chair of the Trust Board will have their DBS check countersigned by the secretary of state.

All members, directors and governors should have the following checks:

- a section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#)). If they have retained or been delegated any management responsibilities.
- identity
- right to work in the UK
- other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK

Appendix 5 – Allegations that may meet the harms threshold against staff

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- 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 indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school

We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

An appointed investigating officer will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the CEO where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The chair of governors will refer any allegation made against the headteacher to the CEO. The investigating officer will be appointed by the headteacher, or the CEO where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation, at the earliest opportunity.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense judgement and in line with Trust policy and procedures.

Schools should ensure they create an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

Suspension of the accused until the case is resolved

Suspension of the accused will not be the default position, and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the CEO (HR) and the designated officer at the local authority (LADO) as well as the police and children's social care where they have been involved.

Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive, or to cause harm to the subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

Procedure for dealing with allegations

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the investigating officer will take the following steps:

- conduct basic enquiries in line with procedures to establish the facts to help determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with the steps below
- discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or children's social care services. (The investigating officer may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police *before* consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the designated officer will be contacted as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)
- inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or children's social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or children's social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies
- where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or children's social care services, as appropriate
- where the investigating officer is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the individual's family, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and make a risk assessment of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to children's social care
- **if immediate suspension is considered necessary**, agree and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details
- **if it is decided that no further action is to be taken** in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation
- **if it is decided that further action is needed**, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or children's social care services as appropriate
- provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and considering what other support is appropriate
- inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The investigating officer with the DSL/headteacher will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to

have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice

- Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case (only in relation to their child – no information will be shared regarding the staff member)
- Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child

Early years providers

We will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegations being made.

If the school is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the school will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

Additional considerations for supply teachers and all contracted staff

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the school, such as a supply teacher or contracted staff member provided by an agency, we will take the actions below in addition to our standard procedures.

- We will not decide to stop using an individual due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with our LADO to determine a suitable outcome.
- The headteacher/Local Governing Body will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of the school, while the school carries out the investigation.
- We will involve the agency fully, but the school will take the lead in collecting the necessary information and providing it to the LADO as required.
- We will address issues such as information sharing, to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (we will do this, for example, as part of the allegations management meeting or by liaising directly with the agency where necessary).

When using an agency, we will inform them of our process for managing allegations, and keep them updated about our policies as necessary, and will invite the agency's HR manager or equivalent to meetings as appropriate.

Timescales

We will deal with all allegations as quickly and effectively as possible, and in line with any relevant policies.

Specific actions

Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution

The case manager will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or children's social care services.

Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the school will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the school will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

Individuals returning to work after suspension

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The appointed investigating officer with the CEO/headteacher will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the school.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

If a report is:

- determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate
- shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

Confidentiality and information sharing

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The investigating officer will take advice from the LADO, police and children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- how to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- what, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- how to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

Record-keeping

The investigating officer will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

In these cases, the school will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate.

Where records contain information about allegations of sexual abuse, we will preserve these for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. We will retain all other records at least until the individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

References

When providing employer references, we will:

- not refer to any allegation that has been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious, or any repeated allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious
- include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions

After any cases where the allegations are *substantiated*, the investigating officer will review the circumstances of the case with the CEO/headteacher and local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

For all other cases, the investigating officer will consider the facts and determine whether any improvements can be made.

Non-recent allegations

Abuse can be reported, no matter how long ago it happened.

The Trust will report any non-recent allegations made by a child to the LADO in line with our local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child, we will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold – Refer to Stour Vale Academy Trust's Managing Low-Level Concerns Policy and Procedures.

Appendix 6 – Specific safeguarding issues

Children missing from education

A child going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- are at risk of harm or neglect
- are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- come from the families of service personnel
- go missing or run away from home or care
- are supervised by the youth justice system
- cease to attend a school
- come from new migrant families

The school will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. For example, young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

- appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- suffering from changes in emotional well-being
- misusing drugs and alcohol
- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or education
- not taking part in education

If a member of staff suspects CCE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. It may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

CSE can include both physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity. It can also happen online. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam. CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge, for example through others copying videos or images.

In addition to the CCE indicators above, indicators of CSE can include a child:

- having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant

If a member of staff suspects CSE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Domestic abuse

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

Children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse and/or violence at home where it occurs between family members. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

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, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background, and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

Older children may also experience domestic abuse and/or violence in their own personal relationships.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children.

If police are called to an incident of domestic abuse and any children in the household have experienced the incident, the police will inform the key adult in school (usually the designated safeguarding lead) before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This is the procedure where police forces are part of [Operation Encompass](#).

The DSL will provide support according to the child's needs and update records about their circumstances.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare.

The DSL will be aware of contact details and referral routes in to the local housing authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity (where appropriate and in accordance with local procedures).

Where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, the DSL will also make a referral to children's social care.

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (including FGM and forced marriage)

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community, including FGM, forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

Abuse committed in this context often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All forms of HBA are abuse and will be handled and escalated as such. All staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA or already having suffered it. If staff have a concern, they will speak to the DSL, who will activate local safeguarding procedures.

FGM

The DSL will make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to be alert to children affected by FGM or at risk of FGM.

Indicators that FGM has already occurred include:

- a pupil confiding in a professional that FGM has taken place
- a mother/family member disclosing that FGM has been carried out
- a family/pupil already being known to social services in relation to other safeguarding issues
- a girl:
 - having difficulty walking, sitting or standing, or looking uncomfortable
 - finding it hard to sit still for long periods of time (where this was not a problem previously)
 - spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating
 - having frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems

- avoiding physical exercise or missing PE
- being repeatedly absent from school, or absent for a prolonged period
- demonstrating increased emotional and psychological needs – for example, withdrawal or depression, or significant change in behaviour
- being reluctant to undergo any medical examinations
- asking for help, but not being explicit about the problem
- talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

Potential signs that a pupil may be at risk of FGM include:

- the girl's family having a history of practising FGM (this is the biggest risk factor to consider)
- FGM being known to be practised in the girl's community or country of origin
- a parent or family member expressing concern that FGM may be carried out
- a family not engaging with professionals (health, education or other) or already being known to social care in relation to other safeguarding issues
- a girl:
 - having a mother, older sibling or cousin who has undergone FGM
 - having limited level of integration within UK society
 - confiding to a professional that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to 'become a woman'
 - talking about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent, or parents/carers stating that they or a relative will take the girl out of the country for a prolonged period
 - requesting help from a teacher or another adult because she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk of FGM
 - talking about FGM in conversation – for example, a girl may tell other children about it (although it is important to take into account the context of the discussion)
 - being unexpectedly absent from school
 - having sections missing from her 'red book' (child health record) and/or attending a travel clinic or equivalent for vaccinations/anti-malarial medication

The above indicators and risk factors are not intended to be exhaustive.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into marriage is a crime. 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.

Staff will receive training around forced marriage and the presenting symptoms. We are aware of the 'one chance' rule, i.e., we may only have one chance to speak to the potential victim and only one chance to save them.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into marriage, they will speak to the pupil about their concerns in a secure and private place. They will then report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- speak to the pupil about the concerns in a secure and private place
- activate the local safeguarding procedures and refer the case to the local authority's designated officer
- seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or fmufco.gov.uk
- refer the pupil to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor, learning mentor, or school counsellor, as appropriate

Preventing radicalisation

- **Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups
- **Extremism** is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces
- **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 of terrorism 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.

Schools have a duty to prevent children from being drawn into terrorism. The DSL will undertake Prevent awareness training and make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to identify children at risk.

We will assess the risk of children in our school being drawn into terrorism. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the potential risk in our local area, in collaboration with our local safeguarding partners and local police force.

We will ensure that suitable internet filtering is in place and equip our pupils to stay safe online at school and at home.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period.

Staff will be alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

The government website [Educate Against Hate](#) and charity [NSPCC](#) say that signs that a pupil is being radicalised can include:

- refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from themselves
- becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- changes in friendship groups and appearance
- rejecting activities they used to enjoy
- converting to a new religion
- isolating themselves from family and friends

- talking as if from a scripted speech
- an unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- increased levels of anger
- increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions
- accessing extremist material online, including on Facebook or Twitter
- possessing extremist literature
- being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining, or seeking to join, extremist organisations

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem, or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour – staff should have confidence in their instincts and seek advice if something feels wrong.

If staff are concerned about a pupil, they will follow the procedures set out in this policy, including discussing their concerns with the DSL.

Staff should **always** take action if they are worried.

Child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of school and online.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

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

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages; the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups; and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who don't want to receive such content.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools

Child-on-child sexual violence and harassment

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

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

Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive: a school could manage internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s).

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

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur:

- between 2 children of any age and sex
- through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children
- online and face to face (both physically and verbally)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment 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.

If a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- challenging inappropriate behaviours
- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up

- challenging physical behaviours (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

If staff have any concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the school's procedure.

Serious violence

Indicators which may signal that a child is at risk from, or involved with, serious violent crime may include:

- increased absence from school
- change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- significant decline in performance
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in well-being
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- unexplained gifts or new possessions (this could indicate that the child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation (see above))

Risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence include:

- being male
- having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- having experienced child maltreatment
- having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery

Staff will be aware of these indicators and risk factors. If a member of staff has a concern about a pupil being involved in, or at risk of, serious violence, they will report this to the DSL.

LGBTQ+ pupils

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBTQ+ is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBTQ+ can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBTQ+ (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBTQ+. Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBTQ+ lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

Some pupils may be vulnerable due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, either because they are subject to homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic bullying or because of negative responses from parents/carers or others, which may result in increased risk of self-harm, suicide or homelessness. Several studies also evidence that LGBTQ+ young people may be at increased risk of becoming victims of CSE. Schools should therefore ensure that they are aware of the increased risk factors and know how to access appropriate support for these young people when required.

Mental health

The Trust recognises its duty to support the prevention of impairment to children's mental and physical health or development. Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that schools play a key part in this.

We want to develop the emotional well-being and resilience of all pupils and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors, which increase someone's vulnerability, and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency.

The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counterbalance and promote further growth of resilience.

It is vital that schools work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils with mental health issues. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and intervention is identified and implemented.

Mental health difficulties can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. If you have a mental health concern that is not also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL.