



CONIFERS HOUSE SCHOOL

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Next review due	September 2026
Last review	September 2025
Approved by	Dr Julie Smith, Chair of Governors

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the latest updated version of the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for schools in England, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025. This 2025 guidance will replace Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025 when it comes into force on 1 September 2025.

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), the [Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) and [the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#) (as amended 2023). Schools and colleges in England must have regard to it when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. For the purposes of this guidance children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The substantive changes to the 2025 guidance are included in the appendices for reference. The full 2025 document and the other key statutory guidance and legislation referred to in this introduction, are available through the hyperlink on the school website. All staff should be aware of systems within the school, which support safeguarding, and these should be explained to them as part of staff induction. This should include the:

- child protection policy (which should amongst other things also include the policy and procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse)
- behaviour policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- staff behaviour policy (sometimes called a code of conduct) should amongst other things, include low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing
- safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or prolonged periods
- the role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies).
- Copies of policies and a copy of Part one (or Annex A, if appropriate) of this document should be provided to all staff at induction.

Key Changes in 2025

The following are the key changes to the child protection and safeguarding policy from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (see appendix 7):

New in 2025: Online safety expanded to include misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories

Updated: Filtering & monitoring – added AI safety and cybersecurity guidance

Updated: Attendance guidance now statutory; escalate safeguarding concerns to children’s services

Updated: Alternative Provision – written safeguarding checks, pupil location records, half-termly reviews

Updated: Virtual School Heads include kinship care (non-statutory)

Updated: Language change – “autism spectrum disorder” now “autism”

Updated: Safer recruitment – refreshed links; TRA Employer Access Service reference removed

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education’s statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2025\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2025\)](#), and the [NGA Guidance 2025](#). 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:

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

Part 1 of the schedule to the [Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) Regulations 2015](#), which places a duty on non-maintained special 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

[The Human Rights Act 1998](#), which explains that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to individuals under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

[The Equality Act 2010](#) (guidance), which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people regarding particular protected characteristics (including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race). This means our governors and headteacher should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils with regard to these characteristics. The Act allows our school to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils (where we can show it’s proportionate). This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. For example, it could include taking positive action to support girls where there’s evidence that they’re being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or harassment

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which explains that we must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The PSED helps us to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil outcomes. Some pupils may be more at risk of harm from issues such as sexual violence; homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying; or racial discrimination

Important Contacts

Role/ Organisation	Name	Contact Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) /Conifers House School	Catherine Miller	Catherine.miller@conifershouse-school.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Georgios Chatzakis	Georgios.Chatzakis@conifershouse-school.co.uk
Local authority designated officer (LADO)	Duty LADO	West Sussex LADO@westsussex.gov.uk 03302226450
Role/ Organisation	Name	Contact Details
Chair of governors	Julie Smith	07713 255531 chair@Conifershouse-school.co.uk
Channel helpline		020 7340 7264

Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

- All staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering).
- The training will be regularly updated. In addition, all staff will receive safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings), as required, and at least annually, to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.
- All staff will be aware of their local early help process and understand their role in it.

- All staff will be aware of the process for making referrals to local authority children’s social care and for statutory assessments (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments.
- All staff will know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused, exploited, or neglected. Staff will know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and local authority children’s social care.
- Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
- All staff will be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor will a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- All staff will 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 threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers.
- This will not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

Online Safety and Cyber Security

The designated safeguarding lead will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place. The school will carry out an annual review of the approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks the children face. This will include a review of the effectiveness of procedures periodically to keep up with evolving cyber-crime technologies.

The school has a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology, which will also reflect the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e., 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.

The school will ensure that all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training that includes online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring. The training will be regularly updated. Induction and training will be in line with any advice from the safeguarding partners.

As part of this process, the school will ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place and regularly review their effectiveness. We will 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 school will consider the number of and age range of the pupils, those who are potentially at greater risk of harm and how often they access the IT system along with the proportionality of costs versus safeguarding risk.

Definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- 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 2 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 2 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 include everyone under the age of 18.

The following 3 safeguarding partners are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education

2025 (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

Victim is a widely understood and recognised term, but we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will be prepared to use any term that the child involved feels most comfortable with.

Alleged **perpetrator(s)** and perpetrator(s) are widely used and recognised terms. However, we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what’s appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by- case basis.

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 (see section 10)
- 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 (see section 12)
- Are missing from education
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated. Elective home education can mean that some children are not in receipt of suitable education. Many home educated children have a 'positive learning experience'.

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's responsibility**. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and governors in the school and is consistent with the procedures of the 3 safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

School plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-school approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by our:

- Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral support system
- Planned programme of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Boundaries and consent
 - Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
 - Body confidence and self-esteem
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
 - The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based

violence such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and how to access support

- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

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 2025, and review this guidance at least annually.
- Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance (List with SBM)
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents. This includes making parents aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g., sites they need to visit or who they’ll be interacting with online)
- Provide a safe space for pupils who are LGBTQ+ to speak out and share their concerns. All staff will be aware of:
 - Our systems which support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct, the role and identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), the behaviour policy, and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
 - The early help assessment process (sometimes known as the 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
 - 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, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)
 - The importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
 - The fact that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their home, at school and online
 - The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBT) can be targeted by other children
 - What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

Appendix 5 of this policy outline in more detail how staff are supported to do this.

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding in the school. During term time, the DSL will be available during

school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

The DSL can also be contacted out of school hours if necessary. When the DSL is absent, the DDSL will act as cover. If the DSL and DDSL are not available, Julie Smith, Safeguarding Lead for the Conifers House School Board, will act as cover (for example, during out-of-hours/out-of term activities).

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
- 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
- Have a good understanding of harmful sexual behaviour

The DSL will also:

- Liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate
- Discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children’s social care colleagues to prepare the school’s policies
- Be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment, and be confident as to how to access this support
- Be aware that children must have an ‘appropriate adult’ to support and help them in the case of a police investigation or search

The full responsibilities of the DSL and DDSL are set out in their job description and are attached as Appendix 6 of this policy, including duties to include online safety.

The Conifers House School Board

The governing board will:

- Facilitate a whole-school approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, 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, including all aspects of online safety.
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and our school’s local multi-agency safeguarding

arrangements

The Conifers House Board lead for Safeguarding is Julie Smith, who will monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the full Conifers House board (this is always a different person from the DSL) and will ensure that:

- The DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support
- Online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-school approach to safeguarding and related policies
- The leadership team and relevant staff are aware of and understand the IT filters and monitoring systems in place, manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns
- The school has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors). Appendix 4 of this policy covers this procedure
- That this policy reflects that children with SEND, or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to any abuse or neglect being recognised

Where another body is providing services or activities (regardless of whether or not the children who attend these services/activities are children on the school roll):

- Seek assurance that the other body has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies/procedures in place, and inspect them if needed
- Make sure there are arrangements for the body to liaise with the school about safeguarding arrangements, where appropriate
- Make sure that safeguarding requirements are a condition of using the school premises, and that any agreement to use the premises would be terminated if the other body fails to comply

The chair of governors will act as the ‘case manager’ in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher, where appropriate (see appendix 4).

All governors will read Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (updated September 1st) in its entirety. This policy has information on how governors are supported to fulfil their role.

The Headteacher

The 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 ‘case manager’ in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate (see appendix 4)
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL on this
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable
- Making sure each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assigned a key person

Confidentiality

Conifers House School recognises that to effectively meet a child’s needs, safeguard their welfare and protect them from harm the school must contribute to inter-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and share information between professionals and agencies where there are concerns.

- 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
- Staff, governors and trustees should use the DfE’s data protection guidance for schools to help you:
 - Comply with data protection law
 - Develop data policies and processes
 - Know what staff and pupil data to keep
 - Follow good practices for preventing personal data breaches
- 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 a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment:
- There’s no definitive answer, because even if a victim doesn’t consent to sharing information, staff may still lawfully share it if there’s another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies

The DSL will have to balance the victim’s wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children. The DSL should consider that:

- Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children’s social care

- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. Regarding anonymity, all staff will:
- Be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system
- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved
- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities

The government's information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners includes 7 'golden rules' for sharing information and will support staff who have to make decisions about sharing information. If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they should speak to the DSL (or deputy). Confidentiality is also addressed in this policy with respect to record-keeping in section 14, and allegations of abuse against staff in appendix 4

Recognising Abuse and Taking Action

- Staff, volunteers and governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue.
- Please note – in this and subsequent sections, you should take any references to the DSL to mean "the DSL (or deputy DSL)".

Referral to Social Care and the Police

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.

Agency and Contact Details

Agency	Contact Details
Police	<p>If you believe that urgent action is needed because a child is in immediate danger or needs accommodation, act immediately, phone the Police on 999.</p> <p>If you are seeking advice phone 101.</p> <p>You can report a crime that is not an emergency on https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/report-a-crime-incident/</p>
Agency	Contact Details
	<p>_____</p>
<p>If the child lives in West Sussex The Integrated Front Door (IFD) for West Sussex Children Services receive safeguarding enquiries and referrals for children's social care and early help services, including those with disabilities</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

If you are not sure which Local Authority the child lives in, you can report abuse here:

<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

Informing the DSL

What happens when you get in touch with Contact Advice and Assessment Service?

All calls made to CAAS during working hours will be answered by business support. Their role is to take the details and connect you to the appropriate person. Business Support workers are not trained social workers and will not be able to discuss the details of the case with you.

If your call is about a new referral, you will be put through to a qualified Social Worker within CAAS. They will then be able to discuss your concerns with you and give you advice where appropriate.

The social worker will ask if you have Parental Responsibility (PR) for the child (or children) who you have called about. If you do not have PR, the social worker will listen to and record the information which you wish to report to Children and Family Services. However, if you do not have PR, it will not be possible for them to give you any information about that child or family.

If you are raising a concern about a child (or children), the social worker will use their professional knowledge to assess if there might be a risk of harm. They will also consider if the child (or children) is/are in need of any support or services.

Possible outcomes of contacting CAAS are:

- You might be offered advice and, if necessary, you will be directed to other services which can best meet your needs
- No further action may be taken
- Further enquiries or information gathering may be undertaken. This could include enquiries undertaken by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH process is carried out by a multiagency team of professionals who work alongside CAAS
- A Single Assessment may be undertaken. There are clear thresholds in place for when a Single Assessment must be carried out or when Child Protection must be started.
- Child Protection enquiries may be undertaken
- Gathering information – gathering information from other professionals helps Children and Family Services to understand if the professionals who know your child (or children) are concerned about their welfare. This helps CAAS to make sure your child is adequately safeguarded and that you know where to go for support.
- You will usually be asked to give your agreement before information gathering is carried out. However, there will be times when the need for agreement is overridden by the Duty Manager.
- Children and Family Services have a statutory responsibility to ensure that a child or children are adequately safeguarded.

Following any initial contact with CAAS, those people with PR for a child (or children) will be sent an outcomes letter. This letter outlines what Children and Family Services intend to do as a result of any concerns that have been brought to their attention. If the initial contact was made by a professional, they will also be sent a copy of the outcomes letter. Any professional who has been contacted for information during enquiries will also be sent an outcomes letter.

Children and Family Services have a statutory duty to investigate all concerns about the welfare of children which are drawn to their attention.

Time Scales

CAAS aim to respond to all initial contacts within 24 hours. However, this time can sometimes be extended to allow for further investigation to be carried out either by the duty worker or through the

MASH process.

- If a safeguarding issue is identified, immediate action will be taken.
- All contact made with Children and Family Services via the CAAS team are overseen by an experienced manager.

If you already have an allocated worker your call will be put through to this worker. If your allocated worker is not available, you will either be asked to leave a message or offered a call back.

- A record of all calls received by the Social Work teams is kept on the central electronic record.
- If your allocated worker is unavailable and you need to speak to a Social Worker urgently you will be put through to a member of the relevant team.

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 soon as possible in the child’s own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it
- Sign and date the write-up and pass it on to the DSL.
- Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to children’s social care and/or the police directly (see 7.1), and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so.
- Aside from these people, do not disclose the information to anyone else unless told to do so by a relevant authority involved in the safeguarding process Bear in mind that some children may:
- Not feel ready, or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected
- Not recognise their experiences as harmful
- Feel embarrassed, humiliated or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation and/or language barriers
- None of this should stop you from having a ‘professional curiosity’ and speaking to the DSL if you have concerns about a child.

If You Discover that FGM has Taken Place, or a Pupil is at Risk of FGM

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 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 5 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 will 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 our 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 should speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

See Appendices 1-4 for local contact details.

If You Have a Concern About a Child

About a child (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger)

Figure 1 below, before section 7.7, illustrates the procedure to follow if you have any concerns about a child's welfare.

- Where possible, speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.
- If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken.
- Speak to 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 (see 'Referral' below).
- Share any action taken with the DSL as soon as possible.

Out of School Settings

- When services or activities are provided by the school under the direct supervision or management of the school staff, the arrangements for child protection will apply. However, where services or activities are provided separately by another body this is not necessarily the case.
- The school will therefore seek assurance that the provider concerned has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place (including inspecting these

as needed); and ensure that there are arrangements in place and to liaise with the school on these matters where appropriate.

- This applies regardless of whether or not the children who attend any of these services or activities are children on the school roll or attend the college.
- The school will also ensure safeguarding requirements are included in any transfer of control agreement (i.e., lease or hire agreement), as a condition of use and occupation of the premises; and that failure to comply with this would lead to termination of the agreement.

Early Help Assessment

Early help is defined as 'support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse'. This reflects the Working together to safeguard children guidance.

Practitioners should be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care (EHC) plan)
- is a young carer
- is bereaved
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or have been the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime) as well as the victim
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalized
- is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- is suffering from mental ill health
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child
- has a parent or carer in custody
- Unexplainable and/or persistent absences from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

If an early help assessment is appropriate, the DSL will generally 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, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

We will discuss and agree, with statutory safeguarding partners, levels for the different types of assessment, as part of local arrangements.

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

See Appendix 1 for local contacts for early help assessment

Referral

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 you to do so.

- If you make a referral directly (see below), you must tell the DSL as soon as possible.
- The local authority will 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 procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child’s situation improves.

See Appendix 1 for local contact details for referral and escalation.

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.
- If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken.
- Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or seek advice from local authority children’s social care.
- Make a referral to local authority children’s social care directly, if appropriate (see ‘Referral’ above).
- Inform the DSL or deputy as soon as practically possible after the referral.
- 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 and/ or think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group

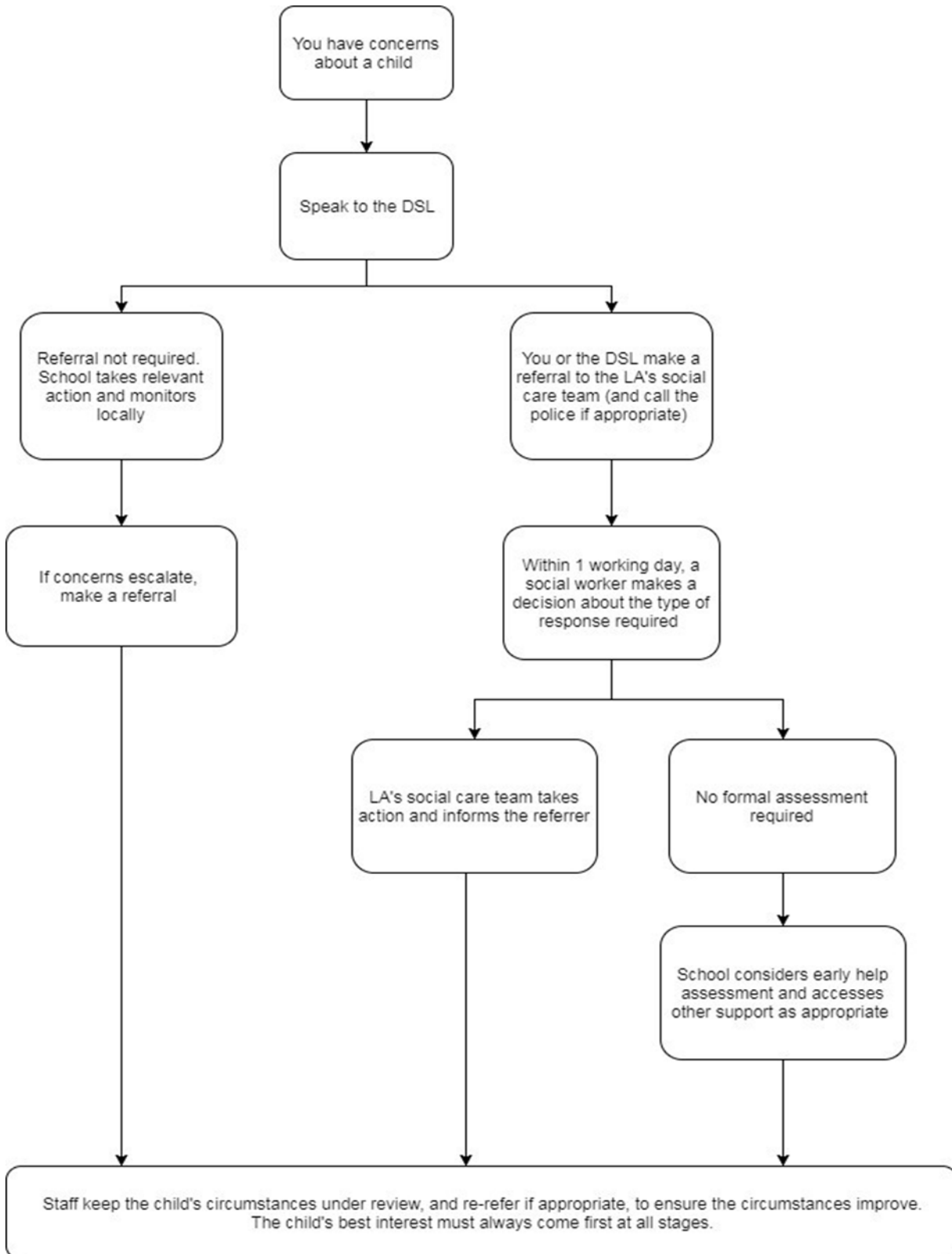
If You Have a Mental Health Concern

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 by following the steps in section 7.4.
- If you have a mental health concern that is not also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL to agree a course of action.
- Refer to the Department for Education guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools for more information.
- Public Health England guidance on promoting children's emotional health and wellbeing at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-people-emotional-health-and-wellbeing>
- Lesson plans and teaching materials from Rise Above <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/topics/mental-wellbeing/overview>

Welfare Procedure

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 or Contractor

- If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) 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 4, 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) telephone 01635503154 for West Sussex or LADO@westsussex.gov.uk, telephone

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” or “part of growing up”, 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-onchild 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 child protection and safeguarding 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, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos
 - (including the sharing of nudes and semi- nudes)

See appendix 5 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. This will include considering school transport as a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s)

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

If the incident is a criminal offence and there are delays in the criminal process, the DSL will work

closely with the police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator. We will ask the police if we have any questions about the investigation.

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 (as described in section 7.10 below)
- Ensure staff reassure victims that they are being taken seriously
- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners
- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape or assault by penetration. We will do all we can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed
- Consider intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment Ensure staff are trained to understand:
 - How to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
 - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child 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 child-on-child 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
- That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and friends from either side

The DSL will take the lead role in any disciplining of the alleged perpetrator(s). We will provide support at the same time as taking any disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action can be taken while other investigations are going on, e.g., by the police. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident doesn't (in itself) prevent our school from coming to its own conclusion about what happened and imposing a penalty accordingly. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis, taking into account whether:

Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the police and/or LA children's social care to determine this

There are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes ('Sexting')

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' or 'youth produced sexual imagery'), 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 Review Meeting

Following a report of an incident, the DSL will 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 that deals with safeguarding concerns. 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 were 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 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 (see Appendix 1)
- Recording incidents

- All incidents of sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, and the decisions made in responding to them, will be recorded.
- The record-keeping arrangements set out in section 14 of this policy also apply to recording these incidents.

Curriculum coverage

Pupils are taught about the issues surrounding the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes as part of our PSHE and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) education and computing programmes. Teaching covers the following in relation to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes:

- What it is
- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive and when it may be deemed as online sexual harassment

Issues of legality

The risk of damage to people's feelings and reputation Pupils also learn the strategies and skills needed to manage:

- specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images the receipt of such images
- This policy on the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes is also shared with pupils so they are aware of the processes the school will follow in the event of an incident.

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 Our systems will include:
- Displays with details and photographs of the DSL, DDSL and Headteacher so that children know who to contact.
- Child-friendly 'Worries and Concerns' forms for children to complete
- Nominated Trusted Adults for every child with whom they regularly have time and space to talk
- Details of the NSPCC and Childline helplines on display

Online Safety and the use of Mobile Technology

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 wellbeing issues.

To address this, our school aims 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 Four Key Categories of Risk

Our 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, antisemitism, 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 To meet our aims and address the risks above we will:

- Educate pupils about online safety as part of our curriculum. For example:
 - The safe use of social media, the internet and technology Keeping personal information private
 - How to recognise unacceptable behaviour online
 - How to report any incidents of cyber-bullying, ensuring pupils are encouraged to do so, including where they are a witness rather than a victim
- Train staff, as part of their induction, on safe internet use and online safeguarding issues including cyber- bullying and the risks of online radicalisation. All staff members will receive refresher training at least once each academic year
- Educate parents/carers about online safety via our website, communications sent directly to them and during parents’ evenings. We will also share clear procedures with them, so they know how to raise concerns about online safety
- Make sure staff are aware of any restrictions placed on them with regards to the use of their mobile phone and cameras, for example that:
- Staff are allowed to bring their personal phones to school for their own use, but will limit such use to non-contact time when pupils are not present

- Staff will not take pictures or recordings of pupils on their personal phones or cameras
- Make all pupils, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and governors aware that they are expected to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of the internet in school, use of the school's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- Explain the sanctions we will use if a pupil is in breach of our policies on the acceptable use of the internet and mobile phones
- Make sure all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware that staff have the power to search pupils' phones, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.
- Put in place robust filtering and monitoring systems to limit children's exposure to the 4 key categories of risk (described above) from the school's IT systems
- Carry out an annual review of our approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks faced by our school community

Signposting and Notifying Parents or Carers

Parents will be given signposting for specialist organisations as appropriate to their circumstances and needs, including:

- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Services (SENDIASS). SENDIASS offer information, advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND.
- All local authorities have such a service: Find your local IAS service (councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk).
- Mencap - Represents people with learning disabilities, with specific advice and information for people who work with children and young people.

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

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. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

The DSL will, along with any relevant agencies (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis):

- Meet with the victim's parents or carers, with the victim, to discuss what's being put in place to safeguard them, and understand their wishes in terms of what support they may need and how the report will be progressed
- Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss support for them, and what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g., moving them out of classes with the victim, and the reason(s) behind any decision(s)

Pupils with Special Educational Needs, Disabilities or Health Issues

All students at Conifers House School have special educational needs (SEN) and many also have disabilities or certain health difficulties which can increase their vulnerability and present additional challenges. They may be 3 times more likely to be abused than their peers. 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
- We provide a high ratio of staff support to our students with small class sizes.
- Staff are alert to students' behaviour and emotional states, and this means that they often notice quickly if something is wrong. They are trained to support students to communicate and advocate for them.
- We are alert to the extra vulnerabilities and challenges our students may face.

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:
 - o Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks
 - o 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. We will ensure that:

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

As part of their role, they will:

- Work 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

Complaints and Concerns About School Safeguarding Policies

Complaints Against Staff

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff (see appendix 4).

Other Complaints

Other Complaints will be dealt with according to our Complaints policy.

Whistleblowing

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school’s safeguarding arrangements. If it becomes necessary to consult outside the school, they should speak in the first instance, to the LADO following the Conifers House School Whistleblowing Policy.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Whistleblowing re the Headteacher should be made to the Chair of Conifers House School Board, Julie Smith, whose contact details are readily available to staff via the website – [Conifers House School](#)

Record-Keeping

We 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 in writing. 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 file for each child.
- Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.
- Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.
- Safeguarding records which contain information about allegations of sexual abuse will be

retained for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry.

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 as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main pupil file.

To allow the new school/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this should be within:

- **5 days** for an in-year transfer, or within
- **The first 5 days** of the start of a new term

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.

Our safeguarding records are held electronically using CPOMs. This is password protected, with two factor authentication required for elevated users.

The school shares information with other agencies when this is appropriate, in line with our local safeguarding procedures.

In addition:

Appendix 3 sets out our policy on record-keeping specifically with respect to recruitment and pre-appointment checks

Appendix 4 sets out our policy on record-keeping with respect to allegations of abuse made against staff

Training

All Staff

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including on whistle-blowing 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 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 (for example, through emails, e-bulletins and staff meetings).
- Contractors who are provided through a private finance initiative (PFI) or similar contract will

also receive safeguarding training.

- Volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

The DSL and DDSL

The DSL and DDSL 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 (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training. Duty includes online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place at the school.

Conifers House School Board

All members of the Conifers House School Board receive training about safeguarding and child protection

(including online safety) at induction, which is regularly updated. This is to make sure that they:

- Have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities, such as providing strategic challenge
- Can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support the school to deliver a robust whole-school approach to safeguarding
- As the chair of governors may be required to act as the ‘case manager’ in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher, they receive training in managing allegations for this purpose.

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 2025, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures.

See appendix 3 of this policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

Candidates will be informed that online searches are part of the recruitment process.

Staff who have Contact with Pupils and Families

All staff who have contact with children and families will have supervisions which will provide them with support, coaching and training, promote the interests of children and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by Julie Smith, Safeguarding Lead Governor and Chair of the Conifers House School Board. At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Positive Behaviour
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and selection of staff

- Whistleblowing
- Anti-Bullying
- Health & Safety
- Attendance
- Curriculum
- PSHE
- Medical

Appendices

Appendix 1: West Sussex Contacts

Concerned about a Child who lives in West Sussex?

- If there is immediate risk of harm to a child, call the Police on 999
- If there is no immediate risk, and you want to talk to your local police officer, get advice, or report a crime that does not need an emergency response. phone 101.
- If you are concerned about a child in West Sussex, it is important that you talk to someone about this. Don't ignore your concerns or delay taking action.
- If you are a professional or volunteer and are concerned about a child, you should discuss this with your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safety Lead (DDSL) and together agree the most appropriate course of action.
- This may be speaking with the family about the concerns and undertaking an early help assessment or signposting to appropriate services to address the family's needs.

NSPCC Sign Video: This service uses British Sign Language and is available on PC, Mac, iOS (iphone/ipad) and Android smartphone (4.2 or above). Once you are connected, a BSL interpreter will appear on your screen. You can explain to the interpreter what your concerns are and tell them that you want to contact the NSPCC. The interpreter will contact NSPCC and relay your concerns to a counsellor. The counsellor will listen to your concerns and advise on a course of action. This BSL video service is currently available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 6pm. For further information and to access this service visit: nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse.

Appendix 2: Types of Abuse

Abuse, exploitation, neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by 1 definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap. The definition of abuse now also has 'including where children see, hear or experience its effects' in relation to domestic abuse.

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

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as causing 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 caregivers) Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Appendix 3: Safer Recruitment and DBS Checks – Policy and Procedures

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 have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Advertising

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

- Our school's commitment 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**

Our 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 child protection and safeguarding policy and our policy on the employment of ex-offenders
- CVs will not be accepted **Shortlisting**

Our shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people, at least one person will have undertaken safer recruitment training. This will cover, as a minimum, the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education

2025, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures and will:

- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
Explore all potential concerns
- Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:
 - Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at the interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:
 - If they have a criminal history
 - Whether they are included on the barred list
 - Whether they are prohibited from teaching
 - Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
 - Any relevant overseas information
- Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true
- We will also carry out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online.

Seeking references and checking employment history

We will obtain references before the interview. Any concerns raised will be explored further with referees and taken up with the candidate at an 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, 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 2025, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures. 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). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals’ personnel files.
- We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

New staff appointments

All offers of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the necessary preemployment 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, the appointment, including when using the DBS update service.
- 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. These could include, where available:

For all staff, including teaching positions:

- criminal records check for overseas applicants

For teaching positions:

- obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach
- Check those 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.

- 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 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 or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or
- Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college 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 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.
- 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.
- When 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 paid 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.
- In both cases, this includes checks to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. 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.
- When 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

Conifers House School Board

- All Conifers House School Board members and governors will have an enhanced DBS check without barred list information.
- They will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information if working in regulated activity. The Chair of the Conifers House School Board will have their DBS check countersigned by the

secretary of state.

- All proprietors, trustees, and governors will also 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).
- Identity
- Right to work in the UK
- Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK.

Staff working in Alternative provision settings

- Conifers House School continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of pupils we place with an Alternative Provision provider
- We obtain written confirmation from the provider that they have carried out the appropriate safeguarding checks on individuals working there that we would otherwise perform.
- Adults who supervise pupils on work experience
- When organising work experience, we will ensure that policies and procedures are in place to protect children from harm.
- We will also consider whether it is necessary for barred list checks to be carried out on the individuals who supervise a pupil under 16 on work experience. This will depend on the specific circumstances of the work experience, including the nature of the supervision, the frequency of the activity being supervised, and whether the work is regulated activity.

Pupils staying with host families

Where the school makes arrangements for pupils to be provided with care and accommodation by a host family to which they are not related (for example, during a foreign exchange visit), we will request enhanced DBS checks with barred list information on those people.

Where the school is organising such hosting arrangements overseas and host families cannot be checked in the same way, we will work with our partner schools abroad to ensure that similar assurances are undertaken prior to the visit.

Appendix 4: Allegations Against Staff (including low-level concerns) policy

Section 1: allegations that may meet the harms threshold

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 they 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

If we are in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, we will consult our local authority designated officer (LADO).

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.

A ‘case manager’ will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of governors where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

- Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.
- 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.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned
- Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children
- Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children
- Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents/carers have been consulted
- Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the school’s personnel adviser and the LADO at the local authority, 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 case manager will take the following steps:

- Conduct basic enquiries in line with local 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 case manager 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 case manager will notify the designated officer 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 case manager 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 case manager 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

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 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 will endeavour to comply with the following timescales, where reasonably practicable:

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious should be resolved within 1 week
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be taken within 3 working days
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, this should be held within 15 working days
- However, these are objectives only and where they are not met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter.

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.

Where the allegation is substantiated 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.

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 case manager 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 allegations If an allegation is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and case manager 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 case manager 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 case manager 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 the 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

Learning lessons

After any cases where the allegations are substantiated, the case manager will review the circumstances of the case with the 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.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual

For all other cases, the case manager 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.

- We 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.
- When 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.
- Section 2: concerns that do not meet the harm threshold
- This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.
- Concerns may arise through, for example:
 - Suspicion o Complaint o Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
 - Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school
Preemployment vetting checks
 - We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children. Definition of low-level concerns

The term ‘low-level’ concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority
- Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:
 - Being overly friendly with children
 - Having favourites
 - Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
 - Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
 - Humiliating pupils

Sharing low-level concerns

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns as per section 7.7 of this policy
- Empowering staff to self-refer
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage

- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised Helping to identify any weakness in the school’s safeguarding system

Responding to low-level concerns

- If the concern is raised via a third party, the headteacher will collect evidence where necessary by speaking: Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses
- The headteacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the school’s staff code of conduct.
- The headteacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

Record-keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing using the form below and reported to the headteacher. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harms threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school
- Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual’s employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

References

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

Conifers House School - Low Level Concern Form

This form can be used to share any concern with the Headteacher, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ – that an adult may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Schools’ Code of Conduct (including inappropriate conduct outside of work) and/or in a way that on first glance does not appear to meet the allegation ‘harm’ threshold.

A concise record is required, including brief context in which the low level concern arose, plus details which are chronological, precise and as accurate as possible, of any such concern and /or relevant incident(s). Continue on separate sheets as necessary. The form should be signed, dated and include times.

Details of Concern:

Name of Staff member raising concern:

Job Title/Role :

Date and Time :

Name of Staff member raising concern:

Job Title/Role :

Date and Time :

This should be given to the Headteacher unless the concern relates to the Headteacher, in which case it should be given to the Chair of Governors.

Conifers House School - Low Level Concern Form

Received by : Name and Job Title/Role

At Time :

Date :

Was the staff member raising the concern spoken to? Yes/No

Give brief reason for doing so and outcomes:

Was the staff member who is the subject of the concern spoken to? Yes/No Give a brief but valid reason/explanation for not.

If Yes, please detail below the staff member's response to the concern:

- 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

We 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 nonstandard 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.

Children who are absent from education

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. The school's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

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 wellbeing
- 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.

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. It can also take place both face-to-face and online and can occur simultaneously between the two.

Our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are no reports, which doesn't mean that this kind of abuse isn't happening.

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 children (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- 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.

If staff have any concerns about child-on-child abuse, or if a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

When considering instances of harmful sexual behaviour between children, we will consider their ages and stages of development. We recognise that children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse and trauma and will offer them appropriate support.

Domestic abuse

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 (abuse in intimate personal relationships between children) and
- child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse.
- it can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological or emotional.
- it can also include ill treatment that isn't physical, as well as witnessing the ill treatment of others – for example, the impact of all forms of domestic abuse on children.

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. Children who witness domestic abuse are also victims

Older children may also experience and/or be the perpetrators of domestic abuse and/or violence in their own personal relationships. This can include sexual harassment.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children and affect their health, wellbeing, development and ability to learn.

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 – Thames Valley Police cover Reading and West Berkshire and 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 and DDSL will be aware of contact details and referral routes 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.

Section 8.3 of this policy sets out the procedures to be followed if a staff member discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out or suspects that a pupil is 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 1 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 '1 chance' rule, i.e., we may only have 1 chance to speak to the potential victim and only 1 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 fm@fco.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 alerted to changes in pupils' behaviour.

The government website Educate Against Hate and charity NSPCC says 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 our procedures set out in section 7.5 of this policy, including discussing their concerns with the DSL.

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

Further information on the school's measures to prevent radicalisation are set out in other school policies and procedures, including our curriculum policy, positive behaviour policy, online/e-safety policy

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools

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 any form of abuse or neglect.

Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When supporting victims, staff will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again
- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence, and show sensitivity to their needs
- Some groups are potentially more at risk.
- Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

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 procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate.

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 wellbeing 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.

Checking the identity and suitability of visitors

All visitors will be required to verify their identity to the satisfaction of staff and to leave their belongings, including their mobile phone(s), in a safe place during their visit.

If the visitor is unknown to the setting, we will check their credentials and reason for visiting before allowing them to enter the setting. Visitors should be ready to produce identification.

Visitors are expected to sign the visitors' book and wear a visitor's badge.

Visitors to the school who are visiting for a professional purpose, such as educational psychologists and school improvement officers, will be asked to show photo ID and:

- Will be asked to show their DBS certificate, which will be checked alongside their photo ID; or the organisation sending the professional, such as the LA or educational psychology service, will
- provide prior written confirmation that an appropriate level of DBS check has been carried out (if this is provided, we will not ask to see the DBS certificate)
- All other visitors, including visiting speakers, will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times.
- We will not invite into the school any speaker who is known to disseminate extremist views and will carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any individual or organisation using school facilities is not seeking to disseminate extremist views or radicalise pupils or staff.

Non-collection of children

If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day, we will contact parents after 15 minutes. The Headteacher will look after the child and the incident will be recorded in the Safeguarding records. In the event of a delay or other issues with home-school transport, the school will contact the child's parent or carer and make arrangements to care for the pupil on the school until this is resolved. Should a staff member be required to use their personal transport, there will be appropriate car insurance and adult-pupil supervision ratio will include a school escort.

Missing pupils

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible.

Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored by adhering to the Conifers House School attendance policy and Missing Persons Procedure. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. The DSL will monitor unauthorised absences and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority particularly where children go missing on repeat occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day in conjunction with ‘Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities’.

Appendix 6: Designated Safeguarding Lead - Job Description

Job description for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	
Conifers House School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment	
Summary of the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) occurring at the school and to support all other staff in dealing with any child welfare and child protection concerns that arise. • To have the status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post including committing resources, and where appropriate, supporting and directing other staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of students. • Whilst the activities of DSL can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies (DDSLs), the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection remains with the DSL. This lead responsibility cannot be delegated. • To take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and to support other staff to do so, and to contribute to the assessment of students. • To promote and safeguard the welfare of students in the school, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place
Main duties and responsibilities	

<p>Managing referrals</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refer cases of suspected abuse of any student at the school to the local authority children's social care; • support staff who make referrals to local authority children’s social care; • refer cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern; • support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme; • refer cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS); and • refer cases where a crime has been committed to the Police.
<p>Work with others</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act as a point of contact with the three safeguarding partners: the local authorities (Reading and West Berkshire); the clinical commissioning group; and the police; • liaise with the Chair of the Conifers House School Board (Safeguarding lead) to inform her of issues; especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the act.
	<p>Children Act 1989 and police investigations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as required, liaise with the “case manager” (as per Part 4 of KCSIE 2025) and the designated officer (LADO) at the local authority for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member; • liaise with staff (especially pastoral support staff, IT staff, First Aiders, and the named persons with oversight for SEND) on matters of safety and safeguarding (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies; and • to act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.

<p>Training</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure your child protection training and that of the DDSLs is sufficient and appropriate to provide the knowledge and skills required to carry out this role. This training must be updated every two years. All members of the DSL team should also undertake Prevent awareness training. • In addition to the formal training, the knowledge and skills of members of the DSL team should be supplemented and refreshed at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role in order to: • understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children’s social care referral arrangements. • have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so. • ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the School or School’s child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff. • be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers. • understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation. • understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school, and with the three safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners. • be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals. • understand and support the school with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and be able to provide advice and support to staff on
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting children from the risk of radicalisation. • be able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at School. • be able to recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online. • obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses; and • encourage a culture of listening to students and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school may put in place to protect them.
<p>Raising awareness</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the school’s child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately. • ensure the School’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with the OHS Board regarding this, • ensure the safeguarding policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this; and • link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements
<p>Child protection files</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that when a student leaves the school their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible. • ensure child protection files are transferred separately from the student’s main file in a secure manner and confirmation of receipt is received from the destination school or college. • consider whether it is appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of the student leaving

<p>Availability</p>	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure during term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead will always be available to discuss any safeguarding concerns; and • Arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.
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Appendix 7: Changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)

This table explains where we made substantive changes.

Summary	About the guidance
Part one	Safeguarding information for all staff
Page 7	Definition of 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' – amended to reflect the duties that relate to school and college staff within the updated 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'
Paragraph 18	'Early help' – amended to reflect the duties which apply to school and college staff within the revised 'Working Together' guidance
Paragraph 19	'Abuse and Neglect' – heading amended to include 'exploitation' (also throughout the document as applicable)
Paragraph 24	'Indicators of Abuse and neglect' – additional text included 'including where they see, hear, or experience its effects' when referring to domestic violence.
Paragraph 29	'Safeguarding Issues' – ' <i>deliberately missing education</i> ' amended to reflect revised definition of ' <i>unexplainable and or/persistent absences from education</i> '
Part two	The management of safeguarding
Paragraph 92	Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR – paragraph included to comply with DPA/UKGDPR requirements
Paragraph 171	'Alternative Provision' – text added to clarify school remains responsible for the pupils they place in alternative provision
Paragraph 180	Wording amended to reflect change in legislation – School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
Paragraph 204	Links added to NSPCC advice on protecting children with SEN; and deaf/disabled children and young people
Paragraphs 205 to 209	'Children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning their gender' – disclaimer added, and additional text includes further clarification to comply with gender questioning children guidance terminology
Part three	Safer recruitment

Summary	About the guidance
Page 78	'Individuals who have lived or worked outside the UK' - reference to 'UK Centre for Professional Qualifications' removed (including the link) as they no longer provide an advisory service on behalf of the UK Government in regard to regulated professions and recognition of professional qualifications. This service ceased in December 2023
Part five	Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment
Paragraph 497	'Early help' – text amended to reflect 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'
Annex B	Further information
Page 151	'Children and the court system' – two separate age-appropriate guides for schools to support children in the court system now included
Page 156	'Preventing radicalisation' – disclaimer added, and minimal changes to wording, to clarify school and college duties in relation to Prevent
Annex C	Role of the designated safeguarding lead
Page 170	'Holding and sharing information' – bullet point 3 further guidance added regarding the rationale for making decisions