



Safeguarding and Child protection Policy

Last reviewed: September 2018

This document applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust

The following related documents can be found on our website: www.vale-academy.org

- Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy
- Anti-Bulling Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Equality Policy
- Whistleblowing Procedure

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PART 1

1. Introduction

This policy is based on a template provided by Oxfordshire County Council (September 2018) and has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Act 1989, and in line with the following guidance:

- “Keeping Children Safe in Education” 2018
- “Working Together to Safeguard Children” 2018
- “Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families” 2000
- “What to do if you are worried a Child is being Abused” 2015
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board guidelines

The Vale Academy Trust (the ‘Trust’) takes seriously its responsibility under section 11 of the Children Act and duties under “working together” to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements exist within our settings;
- identify and support those children who are suffering harm or are likely to suffer harm.

We recognise that all staff and governors have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm, and that the child’s welfare is our paramount concern.

Our schools should provide a safe, caring, positive and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child free from discrimination or bullying where children can learn and develop happily.

This policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in all schools within the Trust, and all persons working in the Trust’s central operations team. All persons in these categories must sign to confirm they have read and understood this policy. The following positions will have responsibility for ensuring this takes place:

- The headteacher of each school for all school staff and volunteers
- The Chair of the Trust’s Board of Directors for all Board Directors
- The chair of each Local Governing Body for governors
- The Chief Executive of the Trust for all central operations staff

2. Terminology

- **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** refers to the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing the impairment of their health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective and nurturing care and undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.
- **Child protection** refers to the processes undertaken to meet statutory obligations laid out in the [Children Act 1989](#) and associated guidance (see [Working Together to Safeguard Children, An Inter-agency Guide to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children](#)) in respect of those children who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering harm.
- **Staff** refers to all those working for or on behalf of the schools, in all school settings, full time or part time, paid or voluntary.
- **Child** refers to all young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- **Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents
- **DSL:** Designated Safeguarding Lead
- **LADO:** Local Authority Designated Officer

3. Aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their statutory responsibilities to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children
- To ensure consistent good practice across schools
- To demonstrate schools' commitment with regard to safeguarding children

4. The role of our staff

School staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, and prevent concerns from escalating.

- School staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

- Every school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will provide support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as children's social care. The DSL (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns.
- All our staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.
- Any of our staff members who have a concern about a child's welfare should follow the referral processes (see section 7, below). Staff should expect to support social workers and other agencies following any referral.
- **The Teachers' standards 2012 state that teachers, including headteachers, should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public interest in the teaching professions as part of their professional duties.**

5. What staff need to know

- Staff are made aware of the systems that support safeguarding; these are explained to them as part of their induction, including:
 - This child protection and safeguarding policy
 - The staff code of conduct (sometimes called staff behaviour policy)
 - The role of the DSL (including the identity of the DSL and any deputies)
 - Keeping children safe in education part 1
 - Whistleblowing policy
 - Managing allegations about staff
 - The safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
 - What to do if they have a concern about a child
- All staff should receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated. In addition, all staff should receive safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins and staff meetings), as required, and at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.
- All staff are made aware of the early help process, and understand their role in this.
- All staff are made aware of the process for making child protection referrals to social care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role that they might be expected to play in such assessments.

- All staff know what to do if a child tells them he/she is being abused or neglected. Staff understand how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. They understand that this means to involve only those who need to be involved, such as the DSL (or a deputy) and children's social care.
- **Staff will never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about the allegation/disclosure that the child has made, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child**

6. What staff should look out for

- Any child may benefit from early help, but our staff are particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:
 - Is disabled and has specific additional needs;
 - Has special education needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care plan);
 - is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups;
 - Is a young carer;
 - Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or home;
 - is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
 - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse;
 - has returned home to their family from care;
 - is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect;
 - is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
 - is a privately fostered child;
 - is misusing drugs or alcohol;
 - Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse and/or
 - Has returned home to their family from care.
- All staff members are aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect so they are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection (see part 2 of this policy for the definitions).
- Department for Education advice: What to do if you are worried a child is being abused. Advice for practitioners provides more information on understanding and identifying abuse and neglect:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

- Staff members are advised to maintain an attitude at all times of “**it could happen here**” where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act **in the best interests of the child**.
- Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. If staff are unsure they should **always** speak to the DS (or deputy).

7. What staff should do if they have concerns about a child

- If staff have any **concerns** about a child’s welfare, they should act on them immediately. **See Appendix B for a flow chart setting out the process staff should follow.**
- Staff should adhere to this safeguarding policy and speak to the DSL (or deputy).
- Options will then include:
 - Managing any support for the child internally via the school’s pastoral support processes;
 - An early help assessment;
 - An early help assessment;
 - A referral for statutory services, for example as the child might be in need, is in need, or suffering or likely to suffer harm.
- The DSL or a deputy should always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should consider speaking to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local children’s social care. In these circumstances, any action taken should be shared with the DSL (or deputy) as soon as is practically possible.
- Our Staff should not assume a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. They should be mindful that early information sharing is vital for effective identification, assessment and allocation of appropriate service provision. [Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#) supports staff who have to make decisions about sharing information. This advice includes the seven golden rules for sharing information and considerations with regard to the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the DSL or a deputy. 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.

- **Early help:** If early help is appropriate, the DSL (or deputy) 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 professional. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.
- **Statutory Assessments: Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and if appropriate the police) is made immediately.**
- **Female Genital Mutilation mandatory reporting duty for teachers:** Whilst our staff should speak to the DSL (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific **legal duty on teachers**. If a **teacher**, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police.
- **Record keeping:** All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the DSL (or deputy).
- **Why is all of this important?** It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Research and serious case reviews have repeatedly shown the dangers of failing to take effective action. Examples of this poor practice include:
 - failing to act on and refer the early signs of abuse and neglect;
 - poor record keeping;
 - failing to listen to the views of the child;
 - failing to re-assess concerns when situations do not improve;
 - not sharing information;
 - sharing information too slowly; and
 - a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.
- **If after a referral the child's situation does not appear to be improving** the DSL (or the person that made the referral) should press for re-consideration to ensure their concerns have been addressed and, most importantly, that the child's situation improves.

8. What staff should do if a child is in danger or at risk of harm

- **If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.** Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, the DSL must be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.

9. What staff should do if they have concerns about another staff member

- If a staff member has concerns about another staff member then this must be referred to the headteacher immediately. Where there are concerns about the headteacher this should be referred to the Chair of the school's Local Governing Body **who must discuss it immediately with the LADO.**
- Staff may consider discussing any concerns with the school's DSL and make any referral via them. Details can be found in Part 2 of this policy.
- Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.
- Refer to our [Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy](#)

10. What staff should do if they have concerns about safeguarding practices within the school

- All our staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the safeguarding regime and that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.
- Appropriate whistleblowing procedures, which are suitably reflected in staff training and staff behaviour policies, are in place for such concerns to be raised with each school's senior leadership team and with the Trust leadership. For further information refer to our [Whistleblowing Procedure](#)
- Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels are open to them, as detailed in our [Whistleblowing Procedure](#).

PART 2

11. Key personnel at Trust schools

Please refer to the relevant school website or school office for the names and contact details of the following safeguarding personnel, as necessary:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL)
- Nominated Child Protection Governor

12. Roles and responsibilities

Each school must nominate a senior member of staff to coordinate child protection arrangements and these are named as above. All schools must ensure that the DSL or a deputy will always be available (during school/college hours) for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

The Local Governing Body (LGB)

The LGB of each school will undertake a regular review of safeguarding and the related policies and procedures that operate in their school.

The LGB has a crucial role in monitoring and challenging staff on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and must ensure that their school:

- has a DSL for safeguarding and child protection who is a member of the senior leadership team and who has undertaken the approved LSCB training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic child protection training;
- follows child protection policy and procedures that are consistent with LSCB requirements are which reviewed annually and made available to parents on request;
- follows procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff including allegations made against the head teacher;
- follows safer recruitment procedures that include the requirement for appropriate checks in line with national guidance, and has staff on all interview panels who are Safer Recruitment trained;

- has a training strategy that ensures all staff, including the headteacher, receive child protection training, with refresher training at three-yearly intervals. The DSL should receive refresher training at two-yearly intervals;
- holds regular update sessions for staff regarding safeguarding, keeping staff up to date with any changes and ensuring that safeguarding remains a priority within the setting;
- has arrangements to ensure that all temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the school's arrangements for child protection;
- nominates an LGB member (normally the chair) to be responsible for liaising with the local authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the headteacher. An annual report will be submitted to the local authority about how the governing body's duties have been carried out. Any weaknesses or areas of concern will be rectified without delay.

The headteacher of each school must ensure that:

- These safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff in their school;
- sufficient time and resources are allocated to enable the DSL and deputy to carry out their roles effectively, including the assessment of pupils and attendance at strategy discussions and other necessary meetings;
- all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with our [Whistleblowing Procedure](#);
- child safety and welfare is addressed through the curriculum.

All schools must ensure that every DSL:

- is appropriately trained;
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the school community;
- has an understanding of OSCB procedures;
- keeps written records of all concerns when noted and reported by staff or when disclosed by a child, ensuring that such records are stored securely and

reported onward in accordance with this policy guidance, but kept separately from the child's general file;

- refers cases of suspected neglect and/or abuse to children's social care or police in accordance with this guidance and local procedure;
- notifies children's social care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two days without explanation;
- ensures that when a child with a child protection plan leaves the school, their information is passed to their new school and the child's social worker is informed;
- attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences in accordance with local procedure and guidance;
- coordinates the school's contribution to child protection plans;
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies;
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood this policy;
- ensures that the safeguarding and child protection policy is updated annually;
- liaises with the nominated governor and headteacher (where the DSL role is not carried out by the headteacher) as appropriate;
- keeps a record of staff attendance at child protection training;
- provides an annual safeguarding report to governors which is sent to the Oxfordshire County Council's LADO/Safeguarding team at County Hall no later than the December of the academic year, following the academic year to which the report applies;
- Makes this policy available to parents via school websites and school offices.

Deputy DSLs

Deputy DSLs must be appropriately trained and in the absence of the DSL carry out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of children. In the event of the long-term absence of the DSL the deputy will assume all of the functions above.

All staff:

All staff will follow the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Procedures/Local Authority guidance in all cases of abuse, or suspected abuse (these can be found at www.OSCB.org.uk).

All staff will therefore:

- implement and follow part 1 of this policy;
- understand that the responsibility to safeguard children requires that all staff appropriately share any concerns they may have about children;
- support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and resilience;
- provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident and know how to approach adults if they are in difficulties;
- provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure they contribute to assessments of need and support plans for those children where appropriate;
- Ensure that detailed and accurate written records of concerns about a child are kept even if there is no need to make an immediate referral. See guidance on record keeping: [Child Protection Record Keeping](#) .

13. Supporting Children

- Staff must recognise that a child who is abused, who witnesses violence or who lives in a violent environment may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame him/herself, and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth.
- Staff must accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.
- **Each school will support all children and young people by:**
 - encouraging the development of self-esteem and resilience in every aspect of life;
 - promoting a caring, safe and positive environment;

- liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children;
- carrying out no name consultations with the LCSS (Locality Community Support Service) where appropriate;
- carrying out EHA's (Early Help Assessments) where appropriate to identify what support can be put in place for the child and family;
- notifying Social Care as soon as there is a significant concern;
- notifying Social Care when a child/young person attending any school setting is privately fostered;
- providing continuing support to a pupil (about whom there have been concerns) who leaves the school by ensuring that such concerns and school medical records are forwarded under confidential cover to the Designated Person/DSL at the pupil's new school immediately.

14. Confidentiality

- All staff recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.
- The DSL will disclose personal information about a child or young person to other members of staff on a need to know basis only.
- However, all staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being or that of another.
- Staff will always undertake to share an intention to refer a child to Social Care with their parents /carers unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, staff will consult with the Schools Safeguarding Team or Social Care on this point.
- Staff will take no-names consultations with our LCSS/local Assessment Teams/ MASH teams to discuss any concerns, but understand that if asked by any of these teams for a name the name will be disclosed and it will become a referral.

15. Supporting Staff

- Staff who have encountered a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.
- Schools will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support. This could be provided by

another trusted colleague, Occupational Health, and/or a representative of a professional body or trade union, as appropriate.

- Schools have adopted a code of conduct for staff, which forms part of staff induction, and understand that staff should have access to advice on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour.
- Schools recognise that our DSLs should have access to support and appropriate workshops, courses or meetings as organised by the local authority or other certified training provider.

16. Allegations against staff

- All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.
- A child or young person may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the headteacher and follow our [Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy](#).

17. 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 about the attitude or actions of colleagues.
- For further information see our [Whistleblowing Procedure](#)

18. Physical Intervention/Positive Handling

- The policy on physical intervention/positive handling by staff is set out separately in our [Behaviour Management Policy](#).
- Such events should be recorded and signed by a witness.
- Staff who are likely to need to use physical intervention should be appropriately trained.

- Any physical intervention of a nature which is both unreasonable and disproportionate to the circumstances and/or causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.

19. Anti-Bullying

- The policy on the prevention and management of bullying is set out in our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#). The policy acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. Bullying is a safeguarding matter that if left unresolved can become a child protection matter. Every school setting will take seriously any bullying concerns and both investigate and take action to protect pupils where appropriate following our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#)

See Appendix C of this document for a broad description of Anti-Bullying Guidelines.

- Schools will liaise with the anti-bullying co-ordinator from Oxfordshire County Council, where appropriate: [OCC Anti-Bullying](#)

20. Health & Safety

Our [Health & Safety Policy](#) reflects the consideration schools give to the physical wellbeing of pupils.

21. Children with Special Educational Needs

Our schools recognise that children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. This policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- children with SEN and disabilities can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying- without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

22. Types of abuse and neglect

All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases multiple issues will overlap with one another.

- **Abuse:** a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.
- **Physical abuse:** a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.
- **Sexual abuse:** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of

maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

23. Specific safeguarding issues

- All staff have an awareness of safeguarding issues, some of which are listed below. Staff are made aware that behaviours linked to the likes of drug taking, alcohol abuse, truanting and sexting put children in danger.
- All staff are made aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer on peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to: bullying (including cyber bullying), gender based violence, sexual violence/sexual harassment, physical abuse, such as hitting, kicking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm, sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals. Staff are made clear of our policy and procedures with regards to peer on peer abuse.

Appendix A contains important additional information about specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues.

- We are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside our schools, or can occur between children outside our schools. All staff, but especially DSLs (or deputies) should be considering the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children's social care assessments should consider such factors so it is important that schools and colleges provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

24. Online safety

Pupils at all school settings increasingly work online, and all schools recognise that it is crucial to safeguard pupils from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. As such appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place.

25. Opportunities to teach safeguarding

In all school settings pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum. This may include covering relevant issues through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and through sex and relationship education (SRE).

26. Allegations of abuse made against other children (peer on peer abuse)

All staff recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, our child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser; this means it should be considered as a child care and protection issue for both children.

Peer on peer abuse can take many forms, and gender issues can be prevalent when dealing with this type of abuse this could for example include girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

27. Dealing with disclosures

Receive

Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse. Listen quietly and actively, giving your undivided attention. Allow silences when needed. Do not show shock or disbelief but take what is said seriously.

Reassure

Stay calm, no judgements, empathise. **Never make a promise that you can keep what a child has said a secret.** Give reassurance that only those who need to know will be told. Reassure the young person that they were right to tell you.

React

React to the student only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer this matter, but don't interrogate for full details.

Refrain from asking leading questions.

If you need to try to get more detail about what has been disclosed, use questions such as tell me, explain to me and describe to me.

If you do ask further questions, please remember to record the questions you have asked as well as the responses provided.

Do not criticize the perpetrator; the student may have affection for him/her.

Explain your next steps to the student, i.e. who you will be speaking to and what will happen next.

Record

If possible make brief notes about what they are actually telling you at the time. Keep these notes, however rough they are. If you are unable to make notes at the time write down what was said as soon as you can.

Record what was actually said by the student rather than your interpretation of what they are telling you. Be factual at all times.

Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour.

Report

Report the incident to the DSL or Deputy and do not tell any other adults or students what you have been told.

Never attempt to carry out an investigation of suspected abuse by interviewing the young person or any others involved. This is a highly skilled role and any attempts by yourself could affect possible criminal proceedings.

28. Record Keeping

The DSLs are responsible for ensuring that the necessary paperwork is completed and sent to the relevant people and stored in a safe and confidential place. This means that the records will be a coherent factual record of the concerns that are stored on individual children in a clear chronological order.

[http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/sa feguarding/Keeping Child Protection Records.doc](http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/sa%20feguarding/Keeping%20Child%20Protection%20Records.doc)

Front page chronologies should be used and be part of all individual safeguarding files (see link above for details).

Appendix A: Specific safeguarding issues

Children and the court system

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age appropriate guides to support children 5-11-year olds and 12-17 year olds.

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

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

Children missing from education

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Staff should be aware of their school or college's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.

Children with family members in prison

Approximately 200,000 children have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. NICCO provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people, (or a third person or persons) receive something, (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affections, gifts, money) as a result of them performing and/or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidations are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child's or young person's limited availability of choice, resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. (DCSF 2009).

Key Facts about CSE

- Sexual exploitation often starts around the age of 10 years old. Girls are usually targeted from age 10 and boys from age 8.
- It affects both girls and boys and can happen in all communities.
- Any person can be targeted but there are some particularly vulnerable groups, including looked after Children, Children Leaving Care and Children with Disabilities.
- Victims of CSE may also be trafficked (locally, nationally and internationally).
- Over 70% of adults involved in prostitution were sexually exploited as children or teenagers.

Sexual violence or abuse against children represents a major public health and social welfare problem within UK society, affecting 16% of children under 16. That is approximately 2 million children.

Good practice – Individuals

- Recognise the symptoms and distinguish them from other forms of abuse
- Treat the child/young person as a victim of abuse
- Understand the perspective/behaviour of the child/young person and be patient with them
- Help the child/young person to recognise that they are being exploited
- Collate as much information as possible
- Share information with other agencies and seek advice/refer to Social Care

Good practice – Organisations

- Ensure robust safeguarding policies and procedures are in place which cover CSE
- Promote and engage in effective multi-agency working to prevent abuse
- Work to help victims move out of exploitation
- Cooperate to enable successful investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators

Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs and a referral to the National Referral Mechanism¹² should be considered. Like other forms of abuse and exploitation, county lines exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years;
- can affect any vulnerable adult over the age of 18 years;
- can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and young people or adults; and

- is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Domestic Abuse

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial; and
- emotional

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes in to the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. The following factsheets usefully summarise the new duties: Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets. The new duties shift focus to early intervention and encourage those at risk to seek support as soon as possible, before they are facing a homelessness crisis.

In most cases school and college staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16 and 17 year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the designated

safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances. The department and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have published joint statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/ or require accommodation.

So-called 'honour-based' violence

So-called 'honour-based' violence (HBV) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBV, or already having suffered HBV.

Actions

If staff have a concern regarding a child that might be at risk of HBV or who has suffered from HBV, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). As appropriate, they will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multiagency liaison with police and children's social care. Where FGM has taken place, since 31 October 2015 there has been a mandatory reporting duty placed on **teachers** that requires a different approach (see following section).

Female Genital Mutilation FGM

FGM is child abuse and a form of violence against women and girls, and therefore should be dealt with as part of existing child safeguarding/protection structures, policies and procedures.

FGM is illegal in the UK. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Other than in the excepted circumstances, it is an offence for **any person (regardless of their nationality or residence status)** to:

- perform FGM in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (section 1 of the Act);
- assist a girl to carry out FGM on herself in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (section 2 of the Act); and
- Assist (from England, Wales or Northern Ireland) a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a **UK national or permanent UK resident** (section 3 of the Act).

Forced Marriage (FM)

FM is now a specific offence under s121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 that came into force on 16 June 2014.

A FM is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties, and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is when someone faces physical pressure to marry (e.g. threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if someone is made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family). This is very different to an arranged marriage where both parties give consent.

FM is illegal in England and Wales. This includes:

- taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not)

Prevent

The Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015

The Act places a Prevent duty on specified schools to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". The education and childcare specified authorities in Schedule 6 to the Act are as follows:

- The proprietors of maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained nursery schools, independent schools (including academies and free schools) and alternative provision academies, PRUs, registered early years providers, registered late years providers and some holiday schemes.

Schools/settings subject to the Prevent Duty will be expected to demonstrate activity in the following areas –

- Assessing the risk of children being drawn into terrorism
- Demonstrate that they are protecting children and young people from being drawn into terrorism by having robust safeguarding policies.
- Ensure that their safeguarding arrangements take into account the policies and procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Make sure that staff have training that gives them the knowledge and confidence to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism, and to challenge extremist ideas which can be used to legitimise terrorism
- Expected to ensure children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in school

Sexting in schools

<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/safeguarding/SextingResourcePack.pdf>

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

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

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. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that **all** victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk. Staff should be aware of the importance of:

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

What is Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment?

Sexual violence

It is important that school and college staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003/19 as described below:

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

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

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

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

Sexual Harassment

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

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

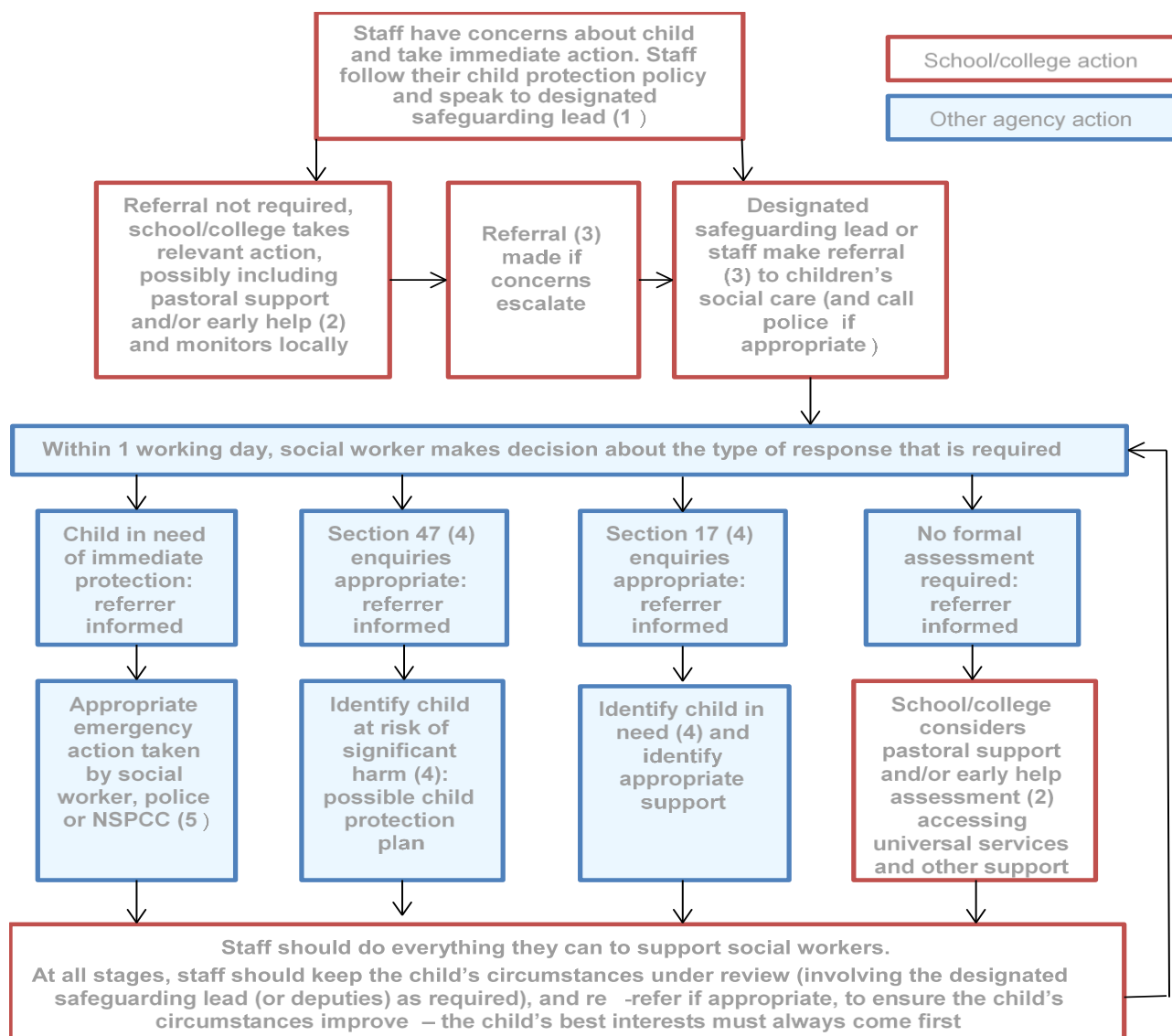
- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual “jokes” or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes (schools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

The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment

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

If staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they should follow the referral process as set out from paragraph in part one of this policy. As is always the case, if staff are in any doubt as to what to do they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

Appendix B: Actions where there are concerns about a child



- (1) In cases which also involve a concern or an allegation of abuse against a staff member, see Part four of this guidance.
- (2) Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from co-ordinated early help, an early help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Chapter one of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides detailed guidance on the early help process.
- (3) Referrals should follow the process set out in the local threshold document and local protocol for assessment. Chapter one of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
- (4) Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make enquiries to decide whether to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Full details are in Chapter one of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
- (5) This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).

Appendix C: Anti-Bullying guidelines for staff, parents and students

Please refer to our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) for full details.

The table below broadly describes the stages employed in the management of friendship issues through to bullying. Friendship issues are a normal part of growing up and most children will fall out with friends during their school career as they develop and change as people; this is not uncommon and self-management is an important skill to develop. The table below is not definitive, and definitive, and different strategies may be tried in one particular stage; equally, each stage is not compulsory. How this guidance is used will depend on the child and the circumstances. Formal Bullying Records must be kept for safeguarding purposes for any intervention at Stage 3 and onwards.

<p>Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most friendship and relationship issues resolve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1 Intervention by staff. Discussions will take place with relevant students. Parents may not be informed at this stage as most situations are resolvable and self-management is an important life skill. The member of staff will make a judgement based on knowledge and experience.
<p>Stage 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some friendship and relationship issues extend further and need more structure to resolve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An informal Restorative Meeting with a member of staff. Parents informed by phone or in person but preferably in writing that a Stage 2 Restorative Meeting has been held and the behavioural expectations made clear
<p>Stage 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely friendship issues get to this stage, but may still be resolved this way. Sustained behaviour (bullying) is now a consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A formal Restorative Meeting supported by a trained practitioner (staff trained in Restorative Practice through the OCC Anti-Bullying Team). A written record sent to all parents concerned. Relevant staff are informed of local actions / guidance.
<p>Stage 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained behaviour is now the likely cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meeting with the parents of the bully(ies) to educate and support the bully to change their behaviour. Clarity of sanction should a change in behaviour not be seen.
<p>Stage 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions implemented

During the stages, any of the following approaches identified in the policy may be considered:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-operative group work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Counselling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circle of Friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddy Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A child may be requested to keep a diary of Who, What, When and How? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-esteem support for the victim or the bully