

September 2026

Next Review date: September 2027

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all academies managed by Wootton Academy Trust (WAT).



**Wootton
Academy Trust**

Person responsible: Executive Headteacher

Approved by: Wootton Academy Trust Board of Trustees

Associated documentation

- Behaviour Policy
- Restrictive Interventions Policy (including the use of Reasonable Force and Seclusion)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Prevent Duty
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Acceptable Use Agreement
- e-Safety and Data Security policy
- Equality Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Medical Needs Policy
- Fire Safety Management
- Health & Safety Policy
- Promoting British Values Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct/Safer Working Practices
- When To Call the Police Guidance for Schools and Colleges
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges
- Critical Incident Plan & Lockdown Procedures

Wootton Academy Trust

Designated WAT Trustee responsible for Safeguarding:

WAT Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) & PREVENT:

WAT Deputy DSL (Safeguarding Officer):

WAT Deputy DSL (Safeguarding Officer):

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (LAC):

Safeguarding Governor on WA Local Governing Board:

Safeguarding Governor on KC Local Governing Board:

Ms. J. Henry

Mrs K. Gardner-Oyemade

Mrs S. Rydeheard

Mr R. Gardner

Mrs K. Gardner-Oyemade

Mr A. Lavery

Mrs P. Kendall

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1. Aims

The Trust aims to ensure that:

- Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare
- All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities with respect to safeguarding
- Staff are properly trained in recognizing and reporting safeguarding issues

2. Legislation and Statutory guidance.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DFE's) statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2026\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#), and the [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#). We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners. The Trust recognises that safeguarding guidance continues to evolve and will ensure that safeguarding practice reflects current statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements and emerging safeguarding risks.

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 students 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
- [Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings \(February 2022\)](#), which provides guidance for staff to reduce the risk of allegations.
- [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](#), 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 students with regard to these characteristics. The Act allows our school to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting students (where we can show it's proportionate). This includes

making reasonable adjustments for disabled students. 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 student outcomes. Some students may be more at risk of harm from issues such as sexual violence; homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying; or racial discrimination

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

3. 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 protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 1 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 1 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. This also includes pseudo-images that are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

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

- › The local authority (LA)
- › Integrated care boards (previously known as clinical commissioning groups) 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.

4. Equality Statement.

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognizing or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognize 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 and/or disabilities (SEND) or health conditions (see section 10)
- Are young carers
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexual orientation
- 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 radicalization
- 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 absent from education

Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated.

5. Roles and responsibilities.

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

WAT plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a trust-wide approach to preparing students 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, physically or online)

- 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 FGM and how to access support
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

5.1 All staff

All staff, including supply staff, volunteers and contractors will:

- Read and understand Part 1 and Annex B of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), and review this guidance at least annually
- Sign a declaration annually confirming that they have read, understood and will comply with the statutory safeguarding guidance.
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers 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 students who are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) to speak out and share their concerns

All staff will be aware of:

- Our systems which support safeguarding, including this safeguarding and child protection policy, their responsibility in relation to the Prevent Duty, the staff code of conduct/safer working practices, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead and deputies, the behaviour policy, the online safety and data security policy and the safeguarding response to children who are absent 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/college and online
- The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) LGB can be targeted by other children
- What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

Section 15 and appendix 4 of this policy outlines in more detail how staff are supported to do this.

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is a member of the executive leadership team. Our DSL is **Kimika Gardner-Oyemade**. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding at the Trust. This includes online safety and understanding our filtering and monitoring processes on Trust devices and Trust networks to keep students safe online. The Safeguarding Trustee will monitor the filtering and monitoring process.

During term time, the DSL will be available during school/college hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL can also be contacted via email out of working hours. When the DSL is absent, the safeguarding officers will act as cover. If the DSL and safeguarding officers are not available, the Executive Headteacher or Academy Heads will act as cover.

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;
- Have a good understanding of the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place at the Trust.

The DSL will also:

- Keep the Executive Headteacher and Academy Heads informed of any issues;
- 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 Trust'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 safeguarding officers are set out in their job description.

5.3 The Governing Board

The Governing Board will:

- Facilitate a Trust-wide approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development
- Participate in annual safeguarding training.
- Evaluate and approve this policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the Executive Headteacher and Academy Heads to account for its implementation
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and our Trust's local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Appoint a senior board level lead and a linked governor for each academy to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the full governing board. This is always a different person from the DSL

- Ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with advice from the safeguarding partners
- Ensure that the Trust has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and review their effectiveness. This includes:
 - Making sure that the leadership team and staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training
 - Reviewing the [DfE's filtering and monitoring standards](#), and discussing with IT staff and service providers what needs to be done to support the Trust in meeting these standards
- Make sure:
 - 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 Trust-wide approach to safeguarding and related policies
 - The DSL has lead authority for safeguarding, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place
 - The Trust 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 3 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/college 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 Trust about safeguarding arrangements, where appropriate
 - Make sure that safeguarding requirements are a condition of using the Trust premises, and that any agreement to use the premises would be terminated if the other body fails to comply

Trustees and governors will receive assurance that:

- all volunteer arrangements comply with KCSIE 2026 regulated activity requirements;
- safeguarding training materials reflect current statutory guidance;
- online safety and AI-related risks are regularly reviewed;
- safeguarding arrangements remain effective for children educated in alternative provision or through off-site arrangements.

The Designated WAT Trustee responsible for safeguarding will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the Executive Headteacher, where appropriate (see appendix 3). All governors will read Keeping Children Safe in Education in its entirety.

5.4 The Executive Headteacher

The Executive 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 Trust and via the school and college websites
- Ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent
- 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 3)
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL on this

6. Confidentiality

- Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding
- Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children
- The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe
- If staff need to share 'special category personal data', the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; or if to gain consent would place a child at risk
- Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the child's best interests
- If a victim asks the school/college 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 the 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 deputies)
- Confidentiality is also addressed in this policy with respect to record-keeping in section 14, and allegations of abuse against staff in appendix 3.

7. Recognising Abuse and Taking Action.

All staff are expected to be able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and shall 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 serious violence, including knife crime
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from education, care or home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- 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
- Is suffering from mental ill health
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is at risk of so-called 'honour'-based abuse such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or forced marriage
- Is a privately fostered child
- Has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending
- Is missing education, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- Has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

Please note – in this and subsequent sections, you should take any references to the DSL to mean "the DSL (or deputy DSL)".

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

Make a referral to children's social care and/or the police **immediately** if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger. **Anyone can make a referral.** Tell the DSL (see section 5.2) as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

See appendix 6 for further details to make a referral.

The following link can also be used to report child abuse to the relevant local council:

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

7.2 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
- Record the incident on CPOMS. 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.

7.3 If you discover that FGM has taken place or student is at risk of

FGM

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

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'. Possible indicators that a student has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a student may be at risk, are set out in appendix 4 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 **student 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 student is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine students.

Any member of staff who suspects a student is *at risk* of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out or discovers that a student **aged 18 or over** appears to have been a victim of FGM, should speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

Further information can be accessed through [Bedford borough](#) council.

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

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.

Early Help Assessment

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 Trust will consider a referral to local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

Family Help

The Trust recognises the importance of identifying children and families who may benefit from Family Help at the earliest opportunity. Family Help provides coordinated support to children and families before concerns escalate to statutory intervention. Staff should remain professionally curious and consider whether emerging concerns relating to attendance, behaviour, parental capacity, mental health, domestic abuse, substance misuse or neglect indicate that a Family Help response may be appropriate. The DSL will work alongside relevant agencies to ensure children receive the right help at the right time.

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 section 7.1), 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.

7.5 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 the police or [Channel](#), the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

The DfE 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 student. You can also email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk. Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

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

- Think someone is in immediate danger
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group

See or hear something that may be terrorist-related

7.6 If you have concerns about mental health

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.

Staff should recognise that mental ill-health does not in itself constitute a safeguarding concern. However, it may indicate that a child has experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or trauma, or that they are at increased risk of harm. Where staff believe a child presents an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others due to mental health concerns, emergency medical assistance will be sought without delay through emergency services, NHS urgent care pathways or other appropriate emergency provision. Staff will remain alert to indicators including:

- significant changes in behaviour;
- social withdrawal;
- self-harm;

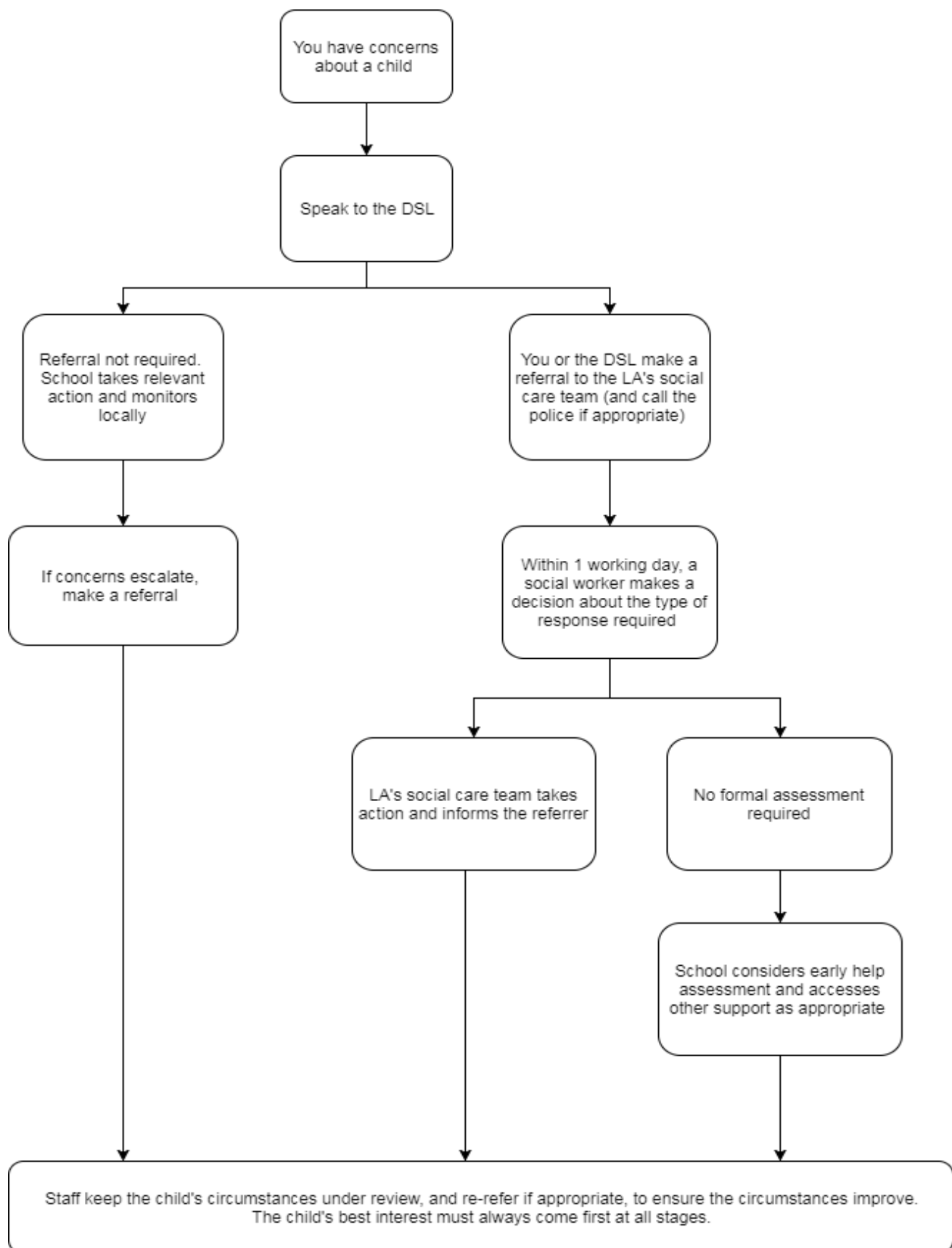
- suicidal ideation;
- persistent anxiety;
- emotional distress.

Where concerns are identified, staff will report these to the DSL and appropriate support will be arranged in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies where appropriate.

Further information can be accessed through the Department for Education guidance on [mental health and behaviour in schools](#).

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

(Note – if the DSL is unavailable, this should not delay action. See section 7.4 for what to do.)



7.7 Concern about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, trainee teachers, whether salaried or fee-funded, 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 Executive Headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about Executive Headteacher, speak to the Designated WAT Trustee responsible for Safeguarding – jhenry@wootton.beds.sch.uk.

Concerns/allegations relating to a member of staff must also be shared in writing and sent to staffsafeguarding@wootton.beds.sch.uk promptly.

The Executive Headteacher/ Designated WAT Trustee responsible for Safeguarding will then follow the procedures set out in appendix 3, 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 Executive Headteacher, report it directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO). In line with DFE guidance, the Designated WAT Trustee responsible for Safeguarding will ensure that safeguarding requirements are included as a part of any hire agreement and failing to comply will result in termination of the agreement.

If you receive an allegation relating to an incident where an individual or organisation was using the Trust premises for running an activity for children, follow our Trust safeguarding policies and procedures, informing the LADO, as you would with any safeguarding allegation.

7.8 Allegations of abuse made against other students

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

Most cases of students hurting other students will be dealt with under our school and college behaviour policies, 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 students at risk
- Is violent
- Involves students 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 4 for more information about child-on-child abuse.

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

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

- You must record the allegation on CPOMS 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/college 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 at the Trust 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.

The Trust recognises harmful sexual behaviour as developmentally inappropriate, problematic or abusive sexual behaviour displayed by children. Staff will respond proportionately and ensure that both the child displaying the behaviour and any child affected receive appropriate safeguarding support and intervention.

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 sexes – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female students, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- Ensure our curriculum helps to educate students about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensure students 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/college, 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, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
- That a student 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 does not (in itself) prevent the Trust 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 local authority 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

7.9 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, including pseudo-images, which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video (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 student 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 student to delete it
- Ask the student(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 student(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 student(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

Initial review meeting

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

- Whether there is an immediate risk to student(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 students involved which would influence risk assessment
- If there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the students 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. Where an adult poses as a child to groom or exploit a child or young person, the incident may first present as a child-on-child incident. See appendix 4 for more information on assessing adult-involved incidents
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to SEN)
- 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 student in the images or videos is under 13
- The DSL has reason to believe a student 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/s 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 students involved (if appropriate).

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a student 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 student at risk of harm.

Referring to the police

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the police, this will be done through liaising with our linked police community support officer and reporting via 101. If appropriate, the DSL will also complete a Multi-Agency Information Submission Form to be shared with the police.

Recording incidents

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

incidents.

Curriculum coverage

Students are taught about the issues surrounding the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes as part of our personal, social, health education and relationships and sex education (PSHE), 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

Students 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 students so they are aware of the processes the Trust will follow in the event of an incident.

7.10 Reporting systems for our students

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 students feel safe and comfortable to come forward and report any concerns and/or allegations.

To achieve this, we will:

- Put systems in place for students to confidently report abuse
- Ensure our reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for students
- Make it clear to students that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback
- Students are able to raise concerns directly through the safeguarding team; form tutors and the pastoral team; by sending an email to the dedicated email account.
- Students are made aware of the reporting systems and processes through the Pastoral team, assemblies and our PSHE curriculum.

8. 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 Trust aims to:

- Have robust processes (including filtering and monitoring systems) in place to ensure the online safety of students, staff, volunteers and governors
- Protect and educate the whole Trust 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 Trust-wide community
- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

The 4 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, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories
- **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 students 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 students are encouraged to do so, including where they're a witness rather than a victim
- Train staff, as part of their induction, on safe internet use and online safeguarding issues including cyber-bullying, the risks of online radicalisation, and the expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring. All staff members will receive refresher training as required and 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 will not take pictures or recordings of students on their personal phones or cameras
- Make all students, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and governors aware that they are expected to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of the internet in school/college, use of the Trust's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- Explain the sanctions we will use if a student is in breach of our policies on the acceptable use of the internet and mobile phones
- Make sure all staff, students and parents/carers are aware that staff have the power to search students' 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 Trust'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 Trust community
- Provide regular safeguarding and children protection updates including online safety to all staff, at least annually, in order to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard effectively
- Review the child protection and safeguarding policy, including online safety, annually and ensure the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly

The Executive Headteacher and Trustees will receive annual assurance regarding:

- the effectiveness of filtering and monitoring systems;
- any safeguarding incidents linked to online activity;
- annual review of online safeguarding risks;
- actions taken following review.

8.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

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

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

The Trust will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully students in line with this policy and our Behaviour policy.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools while they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the school. Our Trust's requirements for filtering and monitoring also apply to the use of AI, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

This section summarises our approach to online safety and mobile phone use. For full details about our Trust's policies in these areas, please refer to our online safety and mobile phone policies which can be found on our website.

Staff will remain alert to safeguarding risks presented through AI, recognising the increasing use to facilitate abuse. Emerging risks including:

- AI-generated sexual imagery
- Nudification applications
- AI-enabled bullying and harassment
- Deepfake content
- Manipulated images used for extortion
- AI-enabled grooming
- Synthetic child sexual abuse material
- Misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy-based content

Such concerns will be treated as safeguarding concerns and referred to the DSL.

9. Notifying parents or carers

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)

10. Students with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

We recognise that students with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Children with disabilities are more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, exploitation 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
- Students being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other students
- The potential for students 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
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so

We offer extra pastoral support for these students. This includes:

- All students with SEND have an allocated Key Worker to support in ensuring that their needs are effectively communicated.
- Students will have additional check-ins from the Pastoral team, as and when required
- Additional individual or group-based interventions would be put in place, as and when required

Any abuse involving students with SEND will require close liaison with the DSL and the SENCO.

10.1 Children with Medical Conditions

Children with long-term medical conditions or complex health needs may face additional safeguarding vulnerabilities.

Staff should recognise that:

- medical conditions may increase a child's dependence upon adults;
- communication barriers may prevent children from reporting abuse;
- repeated absence due to illness may mask safeguarding concerns;
- safeguarding concerns should not be attributed solely to a child's medical diagnosis.

The DSL will work collaboratively with health professionals, parents and the SEND team where safeguarding concerns involve pupils with medical needs.

11. Young Carers

The Trust recognises that young carers may experience additional safeguarding vulnerabilities.

Staff will remain alert to indicators including:

- persistent absence;
- tiredness;
- emotional distress;
- caring responsibilities beyond those appropriate for their age;
- social isolation.

Where appropriate, young carers will be referred for additional support through local services and pastoral provision.

12. Student with a social worker

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

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

13. Looked-after and previously looked-after children.

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

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

We have appointed a designated teacher, **Kimika Gardner-Oyemade**, who is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children and previously looked-after children in line with [statutory guidance](#).

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

As part of their role, the designated teacher will:

- Ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to

Work with virtual school heads to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including discussing how student premium plus funding can be best used to support looked-after children and meet the needs identified in their personal education plans.

14. Students accessing alternative provision

The Trust remains responsible for safeguarding students accessing Alternative Provision. Appropriate safeguarding information will be shared with providers prior to placement.

The Trust will monitor attendance, welfare and safeguarding arrangements throughout the placement and maintain regular communication with the provider. The Trust will primarily seek to use providers approved by the local authority, in addition to carrying out regular quality assurance monitoring.

15. Students who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

We recognise that students who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) can be targeted by other children. See our behaviour policy for more detail on how we prevent bullying based on sex or sexual orientation.

We also recognise that LGB children are more likely to experience poor mental health. Any concerns should be reported to the DSL and children can seek support through tutors or the Pastoral team to ensure that they have a trusted adult.

When families/carers are making decisions about support for gender questioning students, they should be encouraged to seek clinical help and advice. This should be done as early as possible when supporting pre-pubertal children.

When supporting a gender questioning student, we will take a cautious approach as there are still unknowns around the impact of social transition, and a student may have wider vulnerability, such as complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases, autism (ASD) and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). We will also consider the broad range of their individual needs, in partnership with their parents/carers (other than in rare circumstances where involving parents/carers would constitute a significant risk of harm to the student). We will also include any clinical advice that is available and consider how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying.

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

The Trust recognises that children who are questioning their gender may, in some circumstances, experience additional vulnerability. Safeguarding decisions will always be made on an individual basis, taking account of the child's wishes and feelings, engaging with parents/carers as a matter of priority where appropriate, relevant legislation and the child's best interests.

Staff will ensure that safeguarding concerns relating to any child are managed sensitively, proportionately and in accordance with statutory guidance.

16. Complaints and concerns about Trust safeguarding policies.

16.1 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 3).

16.2 Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a child or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a child that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Complaints are managed by the senior leadership team and governors, where appropriate. An explanation of the complaints procedure is included in the Complaints Policy on the school and college websites.

Complaints from staff are dealt with under the Trust's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures. Complaints which escalate into a child protection concern will automatically be managed under the Trust's child protection procedures.

16.3 Whistleblowing

At WAT we have a culture of safety and of raising concerns. Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. The Trust's Whistleblowing policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations.

The NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. You should call the Whistleblowing Advice Line if:

- Your organisation does not have clear safeguarding procedures to follow
- You think your concern won't be dealt with properly or may be covered-up
- You have raised a concern but it has not been acted upon
- You are worried about being treated unfairly

Staff can call 0800 028 0285. The line is available from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

17. Record keeping.

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule, electronically, on CPOMS.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded in writing. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as local authority children's social care or the Prevent programme, etc. 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 Trust.

If a child for whom the Trust has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another setting, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main student 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 setting and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

In addition:

- All safeguarding records are kept electronically
- Records are kept within CPOMS
- Appendix 2 sets out our policy on record-keeping specifically with respect to recruitment and pre-appointment checks
- Appendix 3 sets out our policy on record-keeping with respect to allegations of abuse made against staff

18. Training

18.1 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 Trust's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse, exploitation or neglect.

This training will be regularly updated and will:

- Be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the Trust-wide safeguarding approach and wider staff training, and curriculum planning
- Be in line with advice from the 3 safeguarding partners
- Include online safety, including an understanding of the expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff around filtering and monitoring
- 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 students

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of becoming involved with or supporting 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.

18.2 The DSL and Deputies

The DSL and deputies will undertake child protection and safeguarding training at least every 2 years. In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training.

18.3 Governors/ Trustees

All Governors/ Trustees receive annual 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 Trust to deliver a robust Trust-wide approach to safeguarding

As the Designated WAT Trustee responsible for Safeguarding may be required to act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the Executive Headteacher, they receive training in managing allegations for this purpose.

18.4 Recruitment – interview panels

At least 1 person conducting any interview for any post at the Trust will have undertaken safer recruitment training. This will cover, as a minimum, the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures.

See appendix 2 of this policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

19. Safer Working Practice

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook/staff code of conduct and Safer Recruitment Consortium Document Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings (February 2022) available at:

<https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org/>

The document seeks to ensure that the responsibilities of school leaders towards children and staff are discharged by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe, unprofessional and unwise behaviour. This includes guidelines for staff on positive behaviour management in line with the ban on corporal punishment (School Standards and Framework Act 1998). Please see the school's behaviour management policy for more information.

20. Monitoring arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by **Kimika Gardner-Oyemade**. At every review, it will be approved by the board of Trustees.

The enclosed appendices are based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, **Keeping Children Safe in Education**.

Appendix 1: Types of abuse

Abuse, including neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by 1 definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

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

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

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

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

- Physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet)

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

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

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

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate 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 2: Safer recruitment and DBS checks 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 Trust'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
- Require a self-disclosure of any criminal convictions

Shortlisting

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

- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
- Explore all potential concerns

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 interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:
 - If they have a criminal history
 - Proof of identity
 - Whether they are included on the children's barred list
 - Whether they are prohibited from teaching
 - Consent to carry out online checks
 - 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. In addition, we will ask all candidates to sign their application form in person if we have received an electronic signature only.

We will also consider carrying out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online. Shortlisted candidates will be informed that we may carry out these checks as part of our due diligence process.

Seeking references and checking employment history

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

When seeking references we will:

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

Interview and selection

When interviewing candidates, we will:

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

Pre-appointment vetting checks

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the Trust'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

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

- Verify their identity and proof of address
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, unless it is deemed necessary to retain a copy of the DBS certificate, in this case, the certificate will be kept in a sealed envelope in the personnel file documenting 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 checks 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 that candidates taking up a management position* are not subject to a prohibition from management (section 128) direction made by the secretary of state

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

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 it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Contractors

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

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

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors. We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months. Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances. We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the Trust.

Trainee/student teachers

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

Volunteers

The Trust will assess all volunteer roles to determine whether they constitute regulated activity. Any volunteer undertaking regulated activity with children will be subject to an Enhanced DBS check including Children's Barred List information.

The Trust will ensure that no individual undertaking regulated activity is barred from working with children. Volunteer recruitment, induction, supervision and Single Central Record processes will reflect the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

Governors and members

All trustees, local governors and members 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 board will have their DBS check countersigned by the secretary of state.

All proprietors, trustees, local governors and members 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

Where we place a student 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 students 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 student 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.

Students staying with host families

Where the Trust makes arrangements for students 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 Trust 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 3: allegations of abuse made against staff

Allegations against staff (including low-level concerns)

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, trainee teachers, whether salaried or fee-funded, 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/college

If we're 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 Executive Headteacher, or the WAT Designated Trustee responsible for Safeguarding where the Executive 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.

If we receive an allegation of an incident happening while an individual or organisation was using the Trust premises to run activities for children, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform our LADO.

The Trust will ensure that all staff understand the distinction between allegations that meet the harm threshold and concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns). All concerns will be recorded, reviewed and responded to proportionately in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

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 Trust 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 Trust 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 or other work for the academy trust

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the Trust's personnel adviser and the designated officer 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 Trust 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 Trust 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 the Trust 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. Additional support is also available through the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme
- 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 Trust 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 Trust 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 Trust'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 Trust, 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 governing board will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of the Trust, while the Trust carries out the investigation
- We will involve the agency fully, but the Trust 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 Trust ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the Trust will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the Trust 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/college.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

If a report is:

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

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 Trust will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

Confidentiality and information sharing

The Trust 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 Trust will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate.

We will retain all records at least until the accused individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

References

When providing employer references, we will:

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

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 Trust'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.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the Trust 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
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the Trust
- Pre-employment 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 Trust 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 students

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 Trust's safeguarding system

Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Executive 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 Executive Headteacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the Trust's staff code of conduct. The Executive 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. 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 Trust

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

Appendix 4: specific safeguarding issues

Assessing adult-involved nude and semi-nude sharing incidents

All adult-involved nude and semi-nude image sharing incidents are child sexual abuse offences and must immediately be referred to police/social care. However, as adult-involved incidents can present as child-on-child nude/semi-nude sharing, it may be difficult to initially assess adult involvement.

There are two types of common adult-involved incidents: sexually motivated incidents and financially motivated incidents.

Sexually motivated incidents

In this type of incident, an adult offender obtains nude and semi-nudes directly from a child or young person using online platforms.

To make initial contact, the offender may present as themselves or use a false identity on the platform, sometimes posing as a child or young person to encourage a response and build trust. The offender often grooms the child or young person on social media, in chatrooms or on gaming platforms, and may then move the conversation to a private messaging app or an end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) environment where a request for a nude or semi-nude is made. To encourage the child or young person to create and share nude or semi-nude, the offender may share pornography or child sexual abuse material (images of other young people), including AI-generated material.

Once a child or young person shares a nude or semi-nude, an offender may blackmail the child or young person into sending more images by threatening to release them online and/or send them to friends and family.

Potential signs of adult-involved grooming and coercion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications, which may include the offender sharing unsolicited images
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Coerced/pressured into doing sexual things, including creating nudes and semi-nudes
- Offered something of value such as money or gaming credits
- Threatened or blackmailed into carrying out further sexual activity. This may follow the child or young person initially sharing the image or the offender sharing a digitally manipulated image of the child or young person to extort 'real' images

Financially motivated incidents

Financially motivated sexual extortion (often known as 'sextortion') is an adult-involved incident in which an adult offender (or offenders) threatens to release nudes or semi-nudes of a child or young person unless they pay money or do something else to benefit them.

Unlike other adult-involved incidents, financially motivated sexual extortion is usually carried out by offenders working in sophisticated organised crime groups (OCGs) overseas and are only motivated by profit. Adults are usually targeted by these groups too.

Offenders will often use a false identity, sometimes posing as a child or young person, or hack another young person's account to make initial contact. To financially blackmail the child or young person, they may:

- Groom or coerce the child or young person into sending nudes or semi-nudes and financially blackmail them
- Use images that have been stolen from the child or young person taken through hacking their account
- Use digitally manipulated images, including AI-generated images, of the child or young person

The offender may demand payment or the use of the victim's bank account for the purposes of money laundering.

Potential signs of adult-involved financially motivated sexual extortion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person. They may be contacted by a hacked account of a child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications which may include the offender sharing an image first
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Pressured into taking nudes or semi-nudes
- Told they have been hacked and they have access to their images, personal information and contacts
- Blackmailed into sending money or sharing bank account details after sharing an image or the offender sharing hacked or digitally manipulated images of the child or young person

Children who are absent from education

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

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

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

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

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being absent, 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. Detailed information can be accessed via [Bedford Borough Council's policy and procedures](#).

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. It may involve an 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.

Financial exploitation

Financial exploitation occurs where a child is manipulated, coerced or deceived into providing money, financial services, possessions or access to financial accounts for the benefit of another individual or criminal group. Financial exploitation may occur alongside child criminal exploitation, county lines activity, online grooming, organised crime or domestic abuse, but it may also occur independently.

Children may not recognise that they are being exploited, particularly where exploitation is presented as friendship, affection, employment opportunities or financial reward. Financial exploitation may occur both online and offline and may involve peers, adults or organised criminal networks.

Examples of financial exploitation include:

- Being pressured to hand over cash, bank cards or savings.
- Opening or allowing access to bank accounts on behalf of others ("money muling").
- Being coerced into transferring money electronically.
- Theft of wages, benefits or personal possessions.
- Being manipulated into purchasing goods for others.
- Being encouraged to participate in online fraud, scams or financial crime.
- Gambling-related exploitation.
- Being required to repay fabricated or escalating debts.
- Receiving unexplained gifts or money in exchange for completing tasks.

Staff should remain professionally curious where children present with indicators including:

- unexplained money or expensive possessions;
- multiple mobile phones or electronic devices;
- significant changes in spending habits;
- unexplained bank cards or financial accounts;
- anxiety relating to money;
- association with older peers or adults;
- unexplained absences;
- reluctance to discuss finances;
- evidence of online fraud or gambling.

Financial exploitation should always be considered alongside wider safeguarding concerns including child criminal exploitation, county lines, trafficking and modern slavery.

Any concerns regarding possible financial exploitation should be reported immediately to the DSL.

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. It may involve an 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 2.

Our Trust has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are no reports, that 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 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 Trust'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.

Child-on-parent abuse

The Trust recognises that some children display abusive behaviours towards their parent(s) or carers. Child-on-parent abuse may involve physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, financial or coercive behaviours intended to intimidate, control or harm a parent or carer.

Although these behaviours may appear as behavioural issues, they should also be viewed through a safeguarding lens, recognising that children displaying abusive behaviours may themselves have experienced abuse, trauma, neglect, exploitation, domestic abuse or unmet SEND needs.

Child-on-parent abuse may include:

- Physical assaults or threats of violence.
- Intimidation or controlling behaviour.
- Verbal abuse and repeated threats.
- Damage to property.
- Financial abuse or theft.
- Emotional manipulation.
- Coercive or controlling behaviours designed to dominate family members.

Staff should be alert to indicators including:

- parents expressing fear of their child;
- repeated police attendance at the family home;
- significant deterioration in family relationships;
- parents appearing reluctant to discuss home life;
- escalating aggressive behaviour outside school;
- repeated incidents of damage to property;
- safeguarding concerns involving siblings.

The Trust recognises that child-on-parent abuse rarely occurs in isolation and should always be considered alongside other safeguarding risks.

Any concerns should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

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. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation 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/college (usually the designated safeguarding lead) before the child or children arrive at school/college the following day, as a part of the Operation Encompass procedure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

FGM

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

Section 7.3 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 student is at risk of FGM.

Indicators that FGM has already occurred include:

- A student confiding in a professional that FGM has taken place
- A mother/family member disclosing that FGM has been carried out
- A family/student 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/college, 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 student 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/college
 - 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.

It is also illegal to cause a child under the age of 18 to marry, even if violence, threats or coercion are not involved.

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 student is being forced into marriage, they will speak to the student about their concerns in a secure and private place. They will then report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- Speak to the student 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 fmua@fco.gov.uk
- Refer the student to an education welfare officer, a member of the pastoral team, or Trust counsellor, as appropriate

Preventing radicalisation

- **Radicalisation** refers to the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence
- **Extremism** is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:
 - Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
 - Undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
 - Intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results outlined in either of the above points
- **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 and colleges have a duty to prevent children from becoming involved with or supporting 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 at the Trust becoming involved with or supporting 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 students to stay safe online at school, college and at home. There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to radicalization into terrorism. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period. Staff will be alert to changes in students' behaviour.

The government website [Educate Against Hate](#) and charity [NSPCC](#) say that signs that a student 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 student, 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.

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/college.

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 Trust 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 LGB children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

If staff have any concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the 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 Trust's approach to this type of abuse.

Misogyny and Harmful Online Ideologies

The Trust recognises that children and young people may be exposed to harmful online content and communities that promote misogyny, violence, hatred, discrimination or extremist beliefs.

Online platforms, gaming environments, social media, livestreaming services and encrypted messaging applications may expose children to content which normalises abuse, violence towards women and girls, coercive control, harmful stereotypes or other forms of prejudice.

Children may also encounter online communities which encourage:

- misogyny;
- violent or aggressive attitudes towards women and girls;
- incel (involuntary celibate) ideology;
- extremist beliefs;
- racism;
- antisemitism;
- homophobia;
- transphobia;
- ableism;
- conspiracy theories;
- harmful body image or self-harm communities;
- encouragement of violence towards others.

Staff should recognise that exposure to harmful online ideologies may increase the risk of:

- violence against women and girls;
- sexual harassment;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- child-on-child abuse;
- coercive and controlling behaviour;
- radicalisation;
- hate crime;
- criminal exploitation.

Possible indicators may include:

- sudden changes in language or attitudes;
- use of misogynistic or discriminatory terminology;
- fixation on violent online personalities or influencers;
- increased secrecy regarding online activity;
- possession or sharing of extremist or hateful material;
- attempts to justify discriminatory beliefs;
- increased hostility towards protected groups;
- online behaviour inconsistent with previous attitudes.

The Trust will respond to concerns through a safeguarding rather than purely disciplinary approach, recognising that children may themselves be vulnerable to manipulation, coercion or radicalisation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider:

- the level of risk presented;
- whether Prevent referral thresholds are met;
- whether other safeguarding concerns are present;
- the need for parental engagement where appropriate;
- curriculum responses through RSHE, PSHE and online safety education;
- any wider environmental concerns that require action at whole-school level.

The Trust promotes a culture of equality, inclusion and mutual respect. Any incidents involving misogyny, discriminatory behaviour or harmful online ideologies will be addressed promptly through safeguarding, education and, where appropriate, behaviour procedures.

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/college
- 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 student 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-in via our electronic system and wear a visitor's badge.

Visitors to the Trust 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 Trust any speaker who is known to disseminate extremist views, and will carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any individual or organisation using Trust facilities is not seeking to disseminate extremist views or radicalise students or staff.

Appendix 5 Definition of Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of the LA) for the care of a child:

- Under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled);
- By someone other than a close relative;
- With the intention that it should last for 28 days or more;
- Private foster carers may be from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt.

However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether full or half blood or by marriage or by civil partnership) or a step parent will not be a private foster carer.

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child.

The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the foster carer should be continuous – but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break. A break in the period e.g. for a child to visit his/her parents at the weekend would not affect the nature of the placement as a private foster placement. For a break to restart in calculating the period it must result from the ending of one arrangement prior to the start of a new arrangement.

Where a child is under 16 years old and is a student at an independent school and lives at the school during the school holidays for a period of more than 2 weeks, he/she will be subject to private fostering regulations unless one of the exemptions below applies.

Where a child under 16 is studying at a language school for more than 28 days and stays with a host family he/she will be subject to private fostering regulations.

Exemptions

These are covered in Schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989 but the main exemptions are covered below.

Children will not be privately fostered:

- Where the arrangements last for less than 28 days and are not intended to extend beyond that period;
- Where the child is looked after by a LA;

- Where the child is living in a children's home or accommodation provided by/on behalf of a voluntary organisation;
- A school in which he/she is receiving full time education (either during term time or residing there less than 2 weeks of any school holiday);
- Where the child is placed by an adoption agency in the care of a person who proposes to adopt him or he is a protected child under the Adoption Act 1976 (Section 32).

Taken from [Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Safeguarding Children Procedures Private Fostering Policy](#) (Accessed September 2024)

Appendix 6 Making a referral to Children's Social Care

The usual method of referring concerns to Children's Social Care, is via designated staff. However, please be aware that **anybody can make a referral**. Examples of situations where you would potentially need to make a direct referral might include: where a Designated staff member is not immediately available, or where you feel that the actions of a Designated person have been insufficient in relation to a particular safeguarding situation.

If you do need to refer to Social Care directly, you should refer to the Local Authority in which the child is resident (Normally, either Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire). The exceptions to this are:

- Outside of office hours, for which there is an out of hours number which covers the whole of Bedfordshire
- In respect of children who are 'looked after' by the local authority, in which case the referral may need to be made to the placing local authority (details on SIMS)

When contacting the relevant Children's Social Care Department:

- Check first that the student is **under 18 yrs**. If they are 18 or over, they will be classed as adults & a referral will not be accepted. (Seek advice from Pastoral & Designated staff, as we will still look to support the student)
- Consider whether you need to seek advice from them regarding whether to notify the child's family in advance of the referral

Contact Details for Children's Social Care

Bedford Borough – Integrated Front Door	Tel: 01234 718700 (office hours) Tel: 0300 300 8123 (out of hours) Email: multiagency@bedford.gov.uk
Central Bedfordshire – Access & Referral Hub	Tel: 0300 300 8585 (office hours) Tel: 0300 3008123 (out of hours) Email: cs.accessandreferral@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk Out of Hour Service – (Mon-Thurs 5:20pm – 8:45am and Fri 4:20pm – Mon 8:45am)
Or alternatively, you can report to NSPCC:	Tel: 0808 800 5000 http://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/

Appendix 7 WAT Sex and Relationships Guidance

Upon learning of sexual activity involving a student, there needs to be a risk assessment process to determine whether there is evidence of sexual abuse.

While recognising that sexual activity is unlawful where either participant is under the age of 16, the law is not frequently used to prosecute mutually-agreed sexual activity involving teenagers unless it involves abuse or exploitation. Where the child has not yet reached their teens (i.e. 12 & under) this will always by definition be deemed a child protection issue, whether the young person has consented or not, as a young person under the age of 13 is considered unable to give valid consent to any sexual act.

In order to determine whether the relationship presents a risk to the young person, the following factors should be considered. This list is not exhaustive and other factors may need to be taken into account:

- Does the sexual relationship involve:
 - A partner who is a close relative or is in a position of trust in relation to the young person?
 - Sexual exploitation? (see below)
 - A young person who is learning disabled to the extent that (s)he is incapable of consenting to sex?
 - A young person under the age of 13?
- Is the young person competent to understand and consent to the sexual activity they are involved in? Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or are fearful of what might happen if they don't comply, consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child. Did the young person's own behaviour, for example through misuse of substances, including alcohol, place them in a position where they were unable to make an informed choice about the activity?
- Are there power imbalances, for example due to difference in size, wealth, age or development? (If the age gap is greater than 4 years for those under 16 years old, the case must be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.) Gender, race and levels of sexual knowledge can all be used malevolently to exert power.
- Is there any evidence that aggression, coercion or bribery was involved (including misuse of substances/alcohol as a disinhibitor)?
- What are the living circumstances of the young person concerned? Are they attending school?
- Have there been any attempts to secure secrecy by the sexual partner beyond what would be considered usual in a teenage relationship?
- Does the young person have a learning disability, mental disorder or other communication difficulty?
- Does the young person deny, minimise or accept concerns/risks?
- Are methods used to secure compliance and/or secrecy by the sexual partner consistent with behaviours considered to be grooming?

Grooming is likely to involve efforts by a sexual predator (often older than the child or young person) to befriend a child/young person by indulging or coercing her/him:

- with gifts, treats, money, drugs,
- developing a trusting relationship with the child/young person's family (or actively attempting to isolate them from support networks),
- developing a relationship with the child/young person through the internet etc. in order to abuse the child/young person.
- A young person may be at higher risk of coercion/bribery/grooming and sexual exploitation if (s)he is at disadvantage within society. Young people who have disabilities, young gay men and women, those affected by poverty, those experiencing homelessness, looked-after children and young

people, those living away from home and survivors of sexual abuse can all be particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation.

Confidentiality versus a parent's right to know

Young people have a right to confidentiality of personal information unless it compromises the rights and safety of others or themselves.

A ruling in the House of Lords in 1985 set the legal precedence with regards the issue of a parent's right to be informed versus the child's right to confidentiality and is considered best practice. This ruling generally referred to as the *Fraser Guidelines*, held that sexual health services can be offered without parental consent providing that:

- The young person understands the advice that is being given
- The young person cannot be persuaded to inform or seek support from their parents, and will not allow the worker to inform the parents that contraceptive/protection e.g. condom advice, is being given
- The young person is likely to begin or to continue to have sexual intercourse without contraception or protection by a barrier method
- The young person's physical or mental health is likely to suffer unless they receive contraceptive advice or treatment
- It is in the young person's best interest to receive contraceptive/safe sex advice and treatment without parental consent

Also relevant is that in some instances, to tell a parent that their child is sexually active might actually expose that child to risk of significant harm, particularly where there are religious or cultural factors.

Since the House of Lords ruling in 1985, the *Fraser Guidelines* have been more widely used to help assess whether a child has the maturity to make their own decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions.

HOWEVER, the right to confidentiality can never be absolute. The young person should be made aware that confidentiality may be breached in situations whereby there is a risk to the health, safety or welfare of a young person or others which is so serious as to outweigh their right to privacy.

In these circumstances, the over-riding objective must be to safeguard the young person. If considering any disclosure of information to other agencies (including the police) staff should weigh up against the young person's right to privacy, the degree of current or likely harm, what any such disclosure is intended to achieve and what the potential benefits are to the young person's well-being. Except in the most exceptional of circumstances, disclosure should only take place after consulting the young person and offering to support a voluntary disclosure.

Appendix 8 Staff Mobile Phone and Image Guidance

Introduction

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however, there are also associated risks.

Children and young people need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. As with e-safety issues generally, risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of *content*, *contact* and *conduct* and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

Aim

- The aim of the Staff Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.
- This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools – which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

Scope

- This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site. This includes staff, volunteers, children, young people, parents/carers, visitors and community users. This list is not exhaustive.

Policy statement

- It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.
- It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.
- When mobiles phones are misused, it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.
- It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Designated 'mobile free' areas situated within the setting are:

- changing areas
- toilets

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the **use** of personal or work-related mobiles by any individual in these areas.

Code of conduct

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a cooperative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment leading to increased productivity.

It is therefore ensured that all practitioners:

- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse.
- are vigilant and alert to potential warning signs.
- know how to minimise risk.
- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations.
- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
- are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours.
- are aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

It is fully recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or 'bans' on the actions of others can be counterproductive, leading to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy.

The imposition of rigorous, inflexible rules is therefore avoided, unless the potential risks of not enforcing them far out-weigh the benefits. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the setting environment, which is agreed to by all practitioners.

Procedures

Personal mobiles

- Effective guidance is in place to avoid the use of mobile phones causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and to ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse.
- In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety, the guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile phone on site, including children, parents and visitors, as detailed below:
- **Staff, Volunteers and Student Teacher** are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however, there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks.
- Other than in pre-agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made during lesson time.
- **Staff, Volunteers and Student Teacher** are generally not permitted, in any circumstance, to use their phones for taking, recording or sharing images and 'mobile free' areas must be observed at all times. However, SLT do recognise that staff members may find the use of a mobile phone to be the best method of taking photographs at events such as sporting events and educational visits however this must be authorised by a member of SLT before the event. Staff members must transfer the images to the academy intranet as soon as is practical after the event and delete the images from their personal mobile phone.
- **Staff, Volunteers and Student Teacher** are not permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting unless authorised by a member of the SLT.
- **Parents/carers, visitors and contractors** are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any of the designated mobile free areas. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others. Under no circumstances is **any** individual permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone. Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

Work mobiles

The use of a designated work mobile is promoted as it is:

- an essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips.
- an effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received.
- a back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

Personal calls are not permitted to be made on the work mobile, other than in agreed exceptional circumstances. Contact or calls can be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency. All calls are logged.

Driving

If any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone should be switched off whilst driving. It is strongly recommended that practitioners follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones.

Under no circumstances should practitioners drive whilst taking a phone call. This also applies to hands-free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

Emergency contact

It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times.

Practitioners, therefore, in agreed exceptional circumstances are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This is to enhance their own well-being and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work.

Such use will be for an agreed limited period only, until any concerns or issues leading to the exceptional circumstance request have been resolved.

It is ensured at all times that the landline telephone remains connected and operational, except in circumstances beyond control. This means that it is available for emergency/urgent contact at all times.

Guidance on student mobiles

It is the expectation that students should not use devices on the academy site, unless with permission in special circumstances such as having a medical need. If students bring a mobile phone to school, it must remain off and kept in their bag. Students are encouraged to take their mobile phones on academy trips to enable them to keep safe.

Appendix 9

Key Personnel Contact Details

Role:	Name / Details:	Contact:
Wootton Academy Trust [WAT]		
Designated Safeguarding Lead & Deputy Head	Mrs K. Gardner-Oyemade	kgardner-oyemade@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Mrs. S. Rydeheard Mr R. Gardner	srydeheard@wootton.beds.sch.uk rgardner@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Safeguarding Administrator	Miss L. Wiltsher	lwiltsher@wootton.beds.sch.uk
WAT Safeguarding Trustee ¹	Ms. J. Henry	jhenryt@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Executive Headteacher	Mr. M. Lehain	mlehain@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Wootton Academy		
Head of School	Mrs. C. McMorn	cmcmorn@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Deputy Head of School	Miss A. Burnham	aburnham@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Safeguarding Governor	Mr A. Laverty	alaverty@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Kimberley 16 - 19 College		
Head of College	Mr. T. Detheridge	tdetheridge@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Deputy Head of College	Dr. E. MacKay	emackay@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Safeguarding Governor	Mrs P. Kendall	pkendall@wootton.beds.sch.uk
Other Key Contacts		
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Sandeep Mohan	LADO@bedford.gov.uk 01234 276 693

Prevent Co-ordinator	Stephanie Golby	Stephanie.Golby@luton.gov.uk
Integrated Front Door	Mon-Fri, 9am – 5pm Outside of these hours	Tel: 01234 718700 during office hours 0300 300 8123 out of hours Bedford Borough Council Children's Services Integrated Front Door
Police	In an emergency For non-emergency but possible crime	999 101

Ms. Henry may also be contacted through the Trust Board's Governance Professional, Mrs. L. McKenna
lynn.mckenna@bedford.gov.uk