



CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE POLICY 2026–2027

Written by:	Approved by:	Status	Last Review	Next Review
LCOU	Trustees	Ratified	September 2026	September 2027

1. Statement of Intent

Caistor Yarborough Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child.

The Academy recognises that children can abuse other children and that child-on-child abuse can occur:

- inside or outside the Academy;
- online;
- face-to-face;
- within intimate relationships;
- between children of any age or sex;
- individually or as part of a group.

Child-on-child abuse is never acceptable.

The Academy adopts a zero-tolerance approach to abuse between children.

This does not mean that every incident will be treated in exactly the same way. It means that all concerns will be:

- taken seriously;
- responded to appropriately;
- recorded;
- considered from a safeguarding perspective;
- addressed in a way that protects children and prevents recurrence.

Abusive behaviour will never be dismissed as:

- "banter";
- "just having a laugh";
- "boys being boys";
- "part of growing up";
- a normal part of relationships.

The absence of reported concerns does not mean abuse is not occurring.

The Academy recognises that children may:

- be afraid to report abuse;
- not recognise their experience as abusive;
- worry that they will not be believed;
- fear retaliation;

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- feel embarrassed or ashamed;
- be concerned about what will happen next;
- communicate distress through behaviour rather than direct disclosure.

All staff will therefore maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" and exercise professional curiosity.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- prevent child-on-child abuse;
- create a safe culture in which concerns can be reported;
- ensure all staff understand what child-on-child abuse may look like;
- ensure reports are responded to promptly and appropriately;
- support children who experience abuse;
- support children displaying harmful behaviour;
- protect other children and witnesses;
- identify wider safeguarding concerns;
- ensure appropriate referrals are made;
- ensure safeguarding and behaviour responses work alongside one another;
- promote respectful and healthy relationships;
- ensure incidents occurring online or outside the Academy are addressed where appropriate.

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Education Act 2002;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Sexual Offences Act 2003;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019;

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- Domestic Abuse Act 2021;
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance;
- DfE/UKCIS *Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people*;
- DfE *Searching, Screening and Confiscation* guidance;
- National Police Chiefs' Council guidance on when to call the police;
- relevant local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

This policy should be read alongside the Academy's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- RSHE/PSHE arrangements;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation procedures;
- Staff Code of Conduct.

4. Definition of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse is any form of abuse carried out by one child or group of children against another child or group of children.

A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Child-on-child abuse can be:

- physical;
- sexual;
- emotional;

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- discriminatory;
- coercive;
- controlling;
- online;
- offline;
- repeated or one-off.

A single incident can constitute abuse.

The fact that children are the same age, in a friendship group, in a relationship, or appear to have previously consented to contact does not mean abusive behaviour cannot occur.

Terminology

The Academy recognises that terminology relating to child-on-child abuse should be used carefully.

Not every child who has experienced abuse will identify with the term "victim", and terms such as "perpetrator" may be inappropriate when referring to children, particularly before the facts have been established.

Staff will use language that is appropriate to the individual circumstances and sensitive to the children involved.

5. Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse can include, but is not limited to:

- bullying, including cyberbullying;
- prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying;
- physical abuse;
- sexual violence;
- sexual harassment;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- consensual and non-consensual creation or sharing of nude or semi-nude imagery;
- AI-generated or manipulated intimate imagery;
- abuse within intimate personal relationships between children;
- coercive and controlling behaviour;
- upskirting;
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals;
- online harassment;

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- misogynistic or misandrist abuse;
- homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse;
- racist abuse;
- ableist abuse;
- threats, intimidation or humiliation.

6. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may include:

- hitting;
- kicking;
- punching;
- biting;
- hair pulling;
- pushing;
- choking;
- burning;
- poisoning;
- use of weapons or objects;
- deliberately causing another child physical harm.

Physical abuse may also occur as part of initiation or hazing-type behaviour.

Serious physical abuse will be considered both as a safeguarding matter and under the Academy's Behaviour Policy.

7. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes sexual offences defined within the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

This includes:

- rape;
- assault by penetration;
- sexual assault;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent.

The Academy recognises that:

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- a child under 13 can never legally consent to sexual activity;
- the age of consent is 16;
- consent must be freely given;
- consent can be withdrawn at any time;
- sexual violence can occur between children of any sex;
- abuse can occur within intimate relationships;
- sexual violence can occur online as well as face-to-face.

Reports of sexual violence will always be treated as safeguarding concerns.

8. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which can occur online and offline.

It may include:

- sexual comments;
- sexual "jokes";
- sexualised name-calling;
- sexual stories;
- sexual remarks about clothes or appearance;
- sexual comments about someone's body;
- sexualised online messages;
- unwanted sexual attention;
- sexual threats;
- sexual coercion;
- deliberately brushing against someone;
- displaying sexual images;
- making sexual gestures;
- sexualised bullying;
- sending unwanted sexual material;
- pressuring another child to send intimate imagery;
- sharing or threatening to share sexual images.

Sexual harassment is never acceptable.

9. Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) includes sexual behaviour that is:

- inappropriate for a child's age or developmental stage;
- harmful to another child;
- problematic;
- coercive;
- abusive;
- violent;
- persistent;
- lacking consent;
- associated with a power imbalance.

HSB can occur:

- face-to-face;
- online;
- simultaneously online and offline.

When considering sexual behaviour, staff should consider:

- the ages and developmental stages of children involved;
- power differences;
- coercion;
- consent;
- frequency;
- context;
- whether behaviour is escalating;
- whether the child displaying the behaviour may themselves have experienced abuse or harmful sexual material.

The DSL will lead decisions regarding safeguarding action.

10. Nudes, Semi-Nudes and AI-Generated Intimate Imagery

The Academy recognises that incidents involving nudes and semi-nudes can involve:

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- photographs;
- videos;
- live streams;
- digitally altered imagery;
- pseudo-images;
- AI-generated imagery;
- deepfakes;
- so-called "deep nudes".

Such imagery may be created or shared consensually or non-consensually.

All incidents involving nude or semi-nude imagery concerning children must be reported immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL.

Staff must not:

- view the imagery unless there is a clear and lawful reason;
- copy it;
- print it;
- forward it;
- save it;
- ask a child to send it to them;
- unnecessarily handle a device containing the imagery.

The DSL will manage the incident in accordance with current UKCIS/DfE guidance.

The response will consider:

- the age of the children;
- consent;
- coercion;
- grooming;
- exploitation;
- whether adults are involved;
- whether imagery has been widely shared;
- whether the child is at immediate risk;
- whether police or children's social care involvement is required.

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The Academy will seek to avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children while ensuring children are protected from harm.

11. Online Child-on-Child Abuse

Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding issues.

Online child-on-child abuse may include:

- threatening or abusive messages;
- cyberbullying;
- harassment;
- discriminatory abuse;
- misogynistic or misandrist content;
- impersonation;
- fake accounts;
- sharing private information;
- sharing images without consent;
- sexualised messages;
- coercion;
- blackmail;
- sextortion;
- sharing pornography or harmful sexual content;
- creation or circulation of AI-generated harmful content;
- manipulated images, audio or video;
- harassment through gaming platforms or group chats.

Online incidents occurring outside school may still require Academy intervention where they affect the safety, welfare or education of students.

12. Bullying and Discriminatory Abuse

Bullying can constitute child-on-child abuse.

This includes:

- physical bullying;

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- emotional bullying;
- verbal bullying;
- cyberbullying;
- prejudice-based bullying;
- discriminatory bullying.

The Academy will challenge abuse relating to:

- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- disability;
- SEND;
- nationality;
- culture;
- appearance;
- socioeconomic circumstances;
- care status;
- other aspects of identity.

Incidents will also be managed in accordance with the Academy's Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies.

13. Intimate Relationship Abuse Between Children

Children can experience abuse within romantic or intimate relationships.

This may include:

- controlling behaviour;
- isolation;
- monitoring phones or social media;
- jealousy;
- coercion;
- threats;

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- sexual harassment;
- sexual violence;
- pressure to send intimate images;
- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- blackmail.

Relationship status does not imply consent.

Reports will be managed as safeguarding concerns.

14. Whole-School Preventative Approach

The Academy recognises that preventing abuse requires a whole-school approach.

This includes:

- a strong safeguarding culture;
- clear behaviour expectations;
- consistent challenge of inappropriate behaviour;
- high-quality RSHE/PSHE;
- online safety education;
- education about consent;
- education about respectful relationships;
- teaching about equality and discrimination;
- challenging harmful gender stereotypes;
- student voice;
- effective supervision;
- staff training;
- accessible reporting routes;
- analysis of behaviour and safeguarding data.

The Academy will actively challenge cultures which normalise:

- sexual harassment;
- misogyny;
- misandry;

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- homophobia;
- racism;
- discriminatory language;
- coercion;
- harmful sexual behaviour.

15. Curriculum

Students will be taught, in an age and developmentally appropriate way, about:

- healthy relationships;
- respectful behaviour;
- consent;
- boundaries;
- equality;
- stereotyping;
- coercive control;
- sexual harassment;
- sexual violence;
- online safety;
- pornography;
- intimate image sharing;
- AI-generated imagery;
- grooming;
- exploitation;
- domestic abuse;
- reporting concerns;
- accessing help.

Teaching will be inclusive and appropriately adapted for students with SEND.

16. Students at Increased Risk

Child-on-child abuse can affect any child.

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However, some children may face increased vulnerability.

This may include:

- girls;
- children with SEND;
- disabled children;
- LGBT+ children or children perceived to be LGBT+;
- children from minority ethnic groups;
- looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- young carers;
- children experiencing disadvantage;
- children with social workers;
- children experiencing abuse or neglect;
- children with communication difficulties.

Staff must avoid stereotyping or making assumptions.

17. Girls and Gender-Based Abuse

The Academy recognises that girls are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Staff will challenge:

- sexist language;
- misogyny;
- sexual objectification;
- sexualised comments;
- gender-based harassment;
- harmful stereotypes.

Such behaviour will not be dismissed as harmless humour.

18. LGBT+ Children and Children Questioning Aspects of Their Identity

Children who are LGBT+, are perceived to be LGBT+, or are questioning aspects of their identity may be vulnerable to bullying or abuse.

Staff will challenge:

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- homophobic language;
- biphobic language;
- transphobic abuse;
- discriminatory harassment;
- deliberate humiliation or targeting.

Support will be individualised and safeguarding concerns will be responded to sensitively.

19. Children with SEND

Children with SEND may:

- be more vulnerable to abuse;
- have additional communication barriers;
- find it harder to recognise abuse;
- find it harder to report concerns;
- be disproportionately affected without outwardly showing signs.

Staff must not assume that changes in behaviour are simply part of a child's SEND.

Where a child with SEND is involved in a report of abuse:

- the DSL will be informed;
- the SENDCO will be involved where appropriate;
- communication needs will be considered;
- reasonable adjustments will be made;
- additional pastoral support will be considered.

20. Reporting Concerns – Students

Students can report child-on-child abuse to:

- any member of staff;
- their tutor;
- their Head of Year;
- a member of the pastoral team;
- the DSL;
- a Deputy DSL;

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- another trusted adult within the Academy;
- the Academy's confidential reporting route where available.

Students will be encouraged to report:

- something happening to them;
- something happening to a friend;
- something they have witnessed;
- something happening online;
- behaviour they are unsure about.

Reporting concerns is not "snitching".

Students will be taught that speaking up helps keep people safe.

21. Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- maintain an attitude of "it could happen here";
- recognise that children may abuse other children;
- understand the forms child-on-child abuse can take;
- challenge harmful and abusive behaviour;
- listen carefully to children;
- take reports seriously;
- never promise confidentiality;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- report concerns promptly to the DSL or Deputy DSL;
- record concerns accurately on CPOMS;
- protect children from retaliation;
- avoid unnecessarily sharing information;
- continue to exercise professional curiosity even where a child does not directly disclose abuse.

All staff are required to read and understand Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

22. Responding to a Disclosure

When a child discloses abuse, staff should:

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- listen carefully;
- remain calm;
- take the child seriously;
- reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling someone;
- reassure them that they are not causing a problem;
- avoid expressing shock or disbelief;
- avoid asking leading questions;
- use open prompts only where clarification is essential;
- explain that information will need to be shared with the DSL;
- explain what will happen next where possible;
- make an accurate written record;
- report to the DSL/Deputy DSL as soon as possible.

Staff should never require a child to repeatedly recount traumatic information unnecessarily.

23. Confidentiality

Staff cannot promise confidentiality.

Information will be shared only with those who need it for safeguarding purposes.

The child's wishes will be considered, but the Academy may need to share information without consent where this is necessary to protect the child or another person.

Parents/carers will normally be informed unless doing so would:

- place a child at greater risk;
- interfere with a police or children's social care investigation;
- otherwise be contrary to the child's welfare.

The DSL will lead decisions about information sharing.

24. Initial DSL Response

When a concern is reported, the DSL or Deputy DSL will consider:

- the nature of the incident;
- immediate safety;
- the wishes and feelings of the child affected;

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- the ages and developmental stages of those involved;
- any power imbalance;
- coercion;
- whether the incident is isolated or part of a pattern;
- whether others may also be at risk;
- previous concerns;
- SEND;
- safeguarding history;
- online elements;
- whether adults are involved;
- whether criminal behaviour may have occurred;
- whether external agencies need to be involved.

All decisions and the reasons for them will be recorded.

25. Risk and Needs Assessment

Following a report of sexual violence, the DSL or Deputy DSL will undertake an immediate risk and needs assessment.

For sexual harassment or other child-on-child abuse, a risk and needs assessment will be considered according to the circumstances.

The assessment should consider:

- the child who has experienced the behaviour;
- the child alleged to have displayed the behaviour;
- other children;
- witnesses;
- siblings where relevant;
- ongoing risks;
- shared lessons;
- social times;
- Academy transport;
- online contact;
- locations within the Academy;

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- additional safeguarding needs.

The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

26. Keeping Children Apart

Where necessary to safeguard children, temporary arrangements may be made to reduce or prevent contact.

This may include:

- changes to classes;
- changes to social arrangements;
- supervised movement;
- transport arrangements;
- changes to seating;
- separate spaces;
- restrictions on online contact.

For reports of rape or assault by penetration, the child alleged to have caused the harm will normally be removed from shared classes with the child who has reported the abuse while the facts are established, in line with KCSIE.

Such arrangements are not a judgement of guilt.

The Academy will avoid imposing unnecessary restrictions on the child who has reported abuse.

Any separation must be:

- proportionate;
- safeguarding-led;
- regularly reviewed;
- supportive of continued education.

27. Possible Safeguarding Responses

Following a report, the DSL may decide on one or more of the following routes.

Manage Internally

Where appropriate, the Academy may manage the incident internally through:

- safeguarding;
- pastoral support;
- behaviour procedures;

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- anti-bullying procedures;
- targeted intervention.

Early Help

Where a child or family would benefit from additional support at an early stage, the Academy will consider appropriate universal or community-based Early Help. This may include support provided by the Academy or through other local services and agencies. Early Help and internal Academy support are not mutually exclusive and may take place alongside one another.

Family Help

Where children or families would benefit from coordinated support, Family Help may be considered.

The Academy will work with relevant partners in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements.

Children's Social Care

A referral will be made where a child:

- has suffered harm;
- is likely to suffer harm;
- is at risk of significant harm;
- requires statutory safeguarding intervention.

The Academy will not wait for the outcome of a referral before putting appropriate protective measures in place.

Police

The police will be contacted where appropriate, including where potentially serious criminal behaviour has occurred.

Reports of rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault will normally be referred to the police alongside children's social care, in accordance with safeguarding guidance and local procedures.

28. Behaviour and Disciplinary Action

Safeguarding action and disciplinary action can take place at the same time.

Where behaviour is substantiated, consequences may be applied under the Academy's Behaviour Policy.

The Academy will make clear whether an intervention is:

- safeguarding;
- supportive;
- disciplinary;
- or a combination.

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The fact that a police or social care investigation is ongoing does not automatically prevent the Academy from taking proportionate disciplinary action.

However, the DSL and Headteacher will consider whether action could prejudice an external investigation.

29. Supporting the Child Who Has Experienced Abuse

Support will be individualised.

This may include:

- a trusted adult;
- regular check-ins;
- pastoral support;
- counselling or specialist services;
- safety planning;
- timetable adjustments;
- support with attendance;
- SEND support;
- support with online abuse;
- support with peer relationships;
- changes to transport;
- changes to classes where appropriate.

The child will:

- be believed and listened to;
- not be blamed;
- not be made to feel ashamed;
- not be made responsible for managing the other child's behaviour;
- not be unnecessarily removed from normal education for staff convenience.

Support may be required for a significant period of time.

30. Supporting the Child Alleged to Have Caused Harm

The Academy has safeguarding responsibilities towards all children.

A child displaying harmful behaviour may themselves:

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- have experienced abuse;
- have been exposed to harmful sexual content;
- be experiencing trauma;
- have SEND or communication needs;
- require safeguarding intervention.

Support may include:

- pastoral work;
- behavioural intervention;
- SEND support;
- Family Help;
- social care involvement;
- specialist HSB intervention;
- mental health support;
- external agency support.

Support does not remove accountability.

31. Parents and Carers

Parents/carers will normally be informed and involved appropriately.

The Academy will:

- explain safeguarding arrangements;
- explain support available;
- explain relevant behaviour consequences;
- listen to parental views;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality;
- explain the limits of information that can be shared about other children.

Parents/carers should not approach other children or families directly to resolve safeguarding concerns.

32. Witnesses and Other Children

Child-on-child abuse can affect children who witness it as well as those directly involved.

The Academy will consider support for:

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- witnesses;
- friendship groups;
- siblings;
- classmates;
- children affected by rumours;
- children exposed to online content.

The Academy will actively seek to prevent:

- retaliation;
- victimisation;
- bullying;
- online harassment;
- social exclusion.

33. Anonymity and Rumours

Where reports involve sexual offences, the Academy will respect legal requirements regarding anonymity.

Staff will carefully consider:

- who needs to know;
- what information should be shared;
- the risk of rumours;
- social media;
- screenshots and online sharing;
- bullying or retaliation.

Students will be reminded that sharing identifying information about children involved in sexual offence reports may cause significant harm and may have legal implications.

34. Police Investigations and Criminal Proceedings

The Academy will not wait for criminal proceedings to conclude before taking steps to safeguard children.

The DSL will liaise with police and children's social care to:

- protect children;
- avoid compromising investigations;

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- determine what information can be shared;
- consider appropriate Academy action;
- maintain education wherever possible.

If police take no further action, this does not automatically mean that abuse did not occur.

The Academy will continue to assess safeguarding needs and provide support.

35. Transfers to Another School

Where a child involved in a safeguarding concern moves school, the DSL will ensure that relevant safeguarding information is transferred securely and in accordance with statutory guidance.

Where appropriate, the DSL will speak directly with the receiving DSL to ensure continuity of safeguarding support.

36. Recording

Child-on-child abuse concerns will be recorded on CPOMS.

Records should include:

- the concern;
- the child's account;
- relevant evidence;
- immediate action taken;
- safeguarding considerations;
- risk assessments;
- referrals;
- decisions;
- reasons for decisions;
- support;
- parental communication;
- behaviour action where relevant;
- follow-up;
- review.

Behaviour sanctions will also be recorded on Bromcom where appropriate.

Some incidents will therefore require recording on both systems.

37. Monitoring Patterns

The DSL and relevant leaders will monitor child-on-child abuse to identify:

- repeated concerns;
- students repeatedly affected;
- students repeatedly displaying harmful behaviour;
- patterns by location;
- patterns by time or lesson;
- online trends;
- sexual harassment;
- discriminatory abuse;
- misogynistic or misandrist incidents;
- SEND-related vulnerability;
- year-group trends;
- links with attendance;
- links with behaviour;
- wider safeguarding patterns.

Data will be used to inform:

- curriculum;
- staffing;
- supervision;
- interventions;
- safeguarding training;
- Academy policy.

38. Staff Training

All staff will receive safeguarding training at induction and regular updates thereafter.

Training will include:

- child-on-child abuse;
- sexual violence;

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- sexual harassment;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- online abuse;
- nudes and semi-nudes;
- AI-generated/deepfake imagery;
- responding to disclosures;
- recording;
- professional curiosity;
- SEND vulnerability;
- discriminatory abuse;
- safeguarding referral routes.

All staff are required to read and understand Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

39. Governance

Trustees will ensure that:

- child-on-child abuse arrangements are effective;
- the Academy maintains a zero-tolerance approach;
- safeguarding procedures reflect KCSIE;
- staff are appropriately trained;
- students have accessible reporting mechanisms;
- curriculum provision addresses respectful relationships and abuse;
- safeguarding data informs strategic oversight;
- policies work consistently together.

Trustees will receive appropriate safeguarding information while maintaining confidentiality.

40. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the DSL and Headteacher.

It will be reviewed sooner where:

- KCSIE changes;
- legislation changes;

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- local safeguarding arrangements change;
- significant safeguarding learning requires amendment;
- monitoring identifies emerging risks.

Any substantive changes will be communicated to staff.