Safeguarding Policy September 2026

September 2026

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Policy Lead:	Assistant Headteacher (Designated Safeguarding Lead)
Date last approved:	September 2026
Approved by:	Governors
Date for Review:	September 2027

At The Oaks Academy, the named personnel with designated responsibility for Child Protection and Safeguarding are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead/s (DDSL)**	**Safeguarding Governor**
Emma Leftwick	Rachael Todhunter, Alex Brooks, Helen Holland	Darren Locke

The named personnel with designated responsibility regarding allegations against staff / those working in the school are:

Designated Senior Manager **(normally the Headteacher or Principal)**	**Chair of Governors** **(in the event of an allegation against the Headteacher)**
Peter Kingdom	Mary Massey

Additional Responsibilities:

Designated Teacher for Cared for Children
Emma Leftwick
Mental Health Lead
Emily Abberley
Single Point of Contact for Prevent (SPOC) *(usually the DSL)*
Emma Leftwick

At The Oaks Academy, we recognise the responsibility we have under Section 175 of the Education and Inspections Act 2002, to have arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Governing Board in our school approve the S.175/157 return to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) on a yearly basis.

This policy demonstrates the school's commitment and compliance with safeguarding legislation; it should be read in conjunction with:

- Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) procedures
- Working together to safeguard children 2026: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children
- Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: child's rights impact assessment – March 2025
- The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide – March 2025
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused. 2015
- Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and staff DFE 2022
- Safer Working Practice Guidance for those working with children and young people in education settings May 2022
- **Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance**
- Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education - GOV.UK
- Gender Questioning Guidance Guidance for Schools and Colleges: Gender Questioning Children - Department for Education - Citizen Space (awaiting publication)
- "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" DfE July 2017
- when-to-call-the-police--guidance-for-schools-and-colleges.pdf
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation (publishing.service.gov.uk) – July 2022
- Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK
- School Mental Health Policy
- School Relationships (and Sex) Education Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff use of mobile phones, electronic devices and Social Media Policy
- Mobile phones in schools - GOV.UK
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Children missing education - GOV.UK
- School administration of medicines policy
- Allergy safety in schools - GOV.UK
- School Health and Safety Policy
- School safer recruitment policy

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners in this school make sure their approach is child centred. This means that we consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. The term children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The term all staff includes all those working or volunteering in a school including those that don't have direct contact with children and those who work outside of the school day.

No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. Through our day-to-day contact with pupils and direct work with families, staff take notice of indicators of possible abuse or neglect and consult with Children's Services in Cheshire East (or in neighbouring authorities dependent upon the child's area of residence). We recognise that we form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This responsibility also means that we are aware of the behaviour of staff in the school; we maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** where safeguarding is concerned.

In our school we ensure that:

- All children, regardless of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics) are treated equally and have equal rights to protection.
- We promote an inclusive, anti-discriminatory culture where racism, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour are recognised, challenged and addressed as part of our safeguarding responsibilities
- All staff act on concerns or disclosures that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- All staff are professionally curious and feel able to challenge decisions to ensure children receive the right support
- Pupils and staff involved in Safeguarding issues receive appropriate support
- Staff adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct Handbook and understand what to do in the event of any allegations against any adult working in the setting
- All staff are aware of Early Help and ensure that relevant referral, assessments, and interventions take place
- All staff are aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label; they recognise that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another
- All staff understand that children's poor behaviour may be a sign they are suffering harm or that they have been traumatised by abuse.

This policy is available on our school website and printed copies of this document are available to parents upon request. We inform parents and carers about this policy when their children join our school and through our school newsletter.

The policy is provided to all staff (including temporary staff and volunteers) at induction, alongside our Staff Code of Conduct. Our safeguarding induction covers online safety which details expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring, the role of the DSL, Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 in full, pupil behaviour policy (including bullying) safeguarding response for those children who go missing from education and staff code of conduct (including whistleblowing and social media). All staff must sign a Declaration to indicate that they have read and understood our Safeguarding policies and procedure, this is signed by all new staff and on an annual basis by existing staff.

In addition, all staff including those who do not directly work with children are provided with at least Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and are required to sign to indicate that they have read part one in full and understood it. School and college leaders and those staff who work directly with children should also read Annex A.

This policy reflects the whole school approach to child-on-child abuse - refer to the Child-on-child abuse including harassment and violence in the specific forms of abuse part of this policy.
Staff are aware to refer to Part 5 of KCSiE if concerns arise.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is able to support all staff in understanding their responsibilities and implementing it in their practice.

2.0 Aims of this document:

- To provide staff with the framework to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and in doing so ensure they meet their statutory responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice across the school
- To demonstrate our commitment to protecting children
- To raise the awareness, of all staff, of the need to safeguard all children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse
- To emphasise the need for good communication between all members of staff in matters relating to child protection
- To promote safe practice and encourage challenge for poor and unsafe practice

- To promote effective working relationships with other agencies involved with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, especially with Children's Social Care and the Police
- To ensure that all members of the school community are aware of our procedures for ensuring staff suitability to work with children
- To ensure that staff understand their responsibility to support children who have suffered abuse in accordance with their agreed plan e.g. extra / targeted help, child in need/ child protection plan

3.0 Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all members of the school community including staff, pupils, volunteers, supply teachers, parents/carers, visitors, agency staff and students, or anyone working on behalf of The Oaks Academy.

This policy is consistent with Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) child protection procedures.

4.0 Definitions of terms used in this document:

Child Protection: refers to the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- 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
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework

Early Help: means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing 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. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

Staff: refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school/education setting in either a paid or voluntary capacity, full time or part time. This also includes parent volunteers and Governors and those who do not work directly with children.

Child: refers to all children who have not yet reached the age of 18. On the whole, this will apply to pupils from our own school; however, the policy will extend to children visiting from other establishments.

Parent: refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role e.g. carers, stepparents, foster parents, and adoptive parents.

5.0 Prevention:

Children feel secure in a safe environment in which they can learn and develop. We achieve this by ensuring that:

- Children develop realistic attitudes to their responsibilities in adult life and are equipped with the skills needed to keep themselves safe; including understanding and recognition of healthy/unhealthy relationships and support available
- Children are supported in recognising and managing risks in different situations, including on the internet; being able to judge what kind of physical contact is acceptable and unacceptable, recognising when pressure from others, including people they know, threatens their personal safety and well-being and supporting them in developing effective ways of resisting pressure
- All staff are aware of school guidance for their use of mobile technology and have discussed safeguarding issues around the use of mobile technologies and their associated risks
- Importance and prioritisation are given to equipping the children with the skills needed to stay safe, including providing opportunities for Personal, Social and Health Education and Relationships and Sex Education throughout the curriculum

- Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place; however, we are careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching, remote learning and safeguarding

- All adults feel comfortable and supported to draw safeguarding issues to the attention of the Headteacher and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead and can pose safeguarding questions with “respectful uncertainty” as part of their shared responsibility to safeguard children

- Emerging themes are proactively addressed and fed back to the local authority and CESCP to ensure a coherent approach so that multi-agency awareness and strategies are developed

- There is a proactive approach to substance misuse. Issues of drugs and substance misuse are recorded, there are related policies and a curriculum which is robustly delivered throughout the school.

- Support and planning for children in custody and their resettlement back into the school community is undertaken, where necessary, as part of our inclusive approach.

- We comply with ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ 2026 and support the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership - Continuum of Need

- This document supports professionals to access the **right help and support** for children and their families at the **right time**

- We systematically monitor pupil welfare, keeping accurate records, speaking to parents and notifying appropriate agencies when necessary

- All staff are aware of children with circumstances which mean that they are more vulnerable to abuse/less able to easily access services and are proactive in recognising and identifying their needs

- All staff are aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened; this could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL (or a deputy) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication with children and young people

- if they have concerns about a child. Staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication whilst ensuring safer working practices.

- The voice of the child is paramount; therefore, our pupils are actively involved in safeguarding development. There is an established pupil group who work with and challenge staff in order to develop aspects of safeguarding e.g. through the curriculum, approaches and displays.
- We consult with, listen and respond to pupils, principally through pupil voice activities and a school committee.

6.0 Early Help:

All staff understand the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) Continuum of Need and Child Protection procedures; Right Help, Right Time - Delivering effective support for children and families in Cheshire East, Multi Agency Continuum of Need Guidance – (see link in previous section) to ensure that the needs of our children are effectively assessed; decisions are based on a child's development needs, parenting capacity and family & environmental factors. We ensure that the most appropriate referrals are made. In supporting Families First, we actively support multi agency planning for these children and, in doing so, provide information from the child's point of view; bringing their lived experience to life as evidenced by observations or information provided. Staff know how to pass on any concerns no matter how trivial they seem.

Staff members always act in the interests of the child and are aware of their responsibility to take action as outlined in this policy. In our school staff are aware that they must be prepared to identify those children who may benefit from early help.

Our staff are alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has a mental health need
- is a young carer
- is pregnant and/or is a parent themselves
- has exhibited early signs of abusive, violent and/or harmful behaviours
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups and county lines
- is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care

- has been repeatedly removed from the classroom, experienced multiple suspensions, is on a part time timetable, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- is at risk of exploitation, modern slavery, trafficking, including criminal or sexual exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised into terrorism
- has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
- 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 alcohol and other drugs themselves
- has returned home to their family from care
- is at risk of honour or faith-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is a 'privately fostered child'
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

If there are concerns about a child's welfare that do not meet the thresholds of child abuse the school will consider whether the Early Help approach should be considered. Staff are aware that early identification of concerns and the use of Early Help to develop a multi-agency plan for the child can reduce the risk of subsequent abuse.

The multi-agency continuum of need is a guidance tool that all agencies, professionals and volunteers can use to consider how best to meet the needs of individual children and young people. This support can be provided on a single agency basis or a multi-agency basis. This approach aims to reduce risk and vulnerability and meet needs at the appropriate level of support and/or intervention. Access to effective early intervention and prevention services is essential to achieving this.

Our school is an Operation Encompass school which means that we are able to give proactive support to those children and their families where domestic abuse is identified.

If a member of staff has concerns about a child, they will need to decide what action to take. Where possible, there should be a conversation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy to agree a course of action, although any staff member can consult with The Integrated Front Door/contact the police. Other options could include referral to specialist services or early help services and should be made in accordance with the referral threshold set by Cheshire East's Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Family Hub model, now implemented across Cheshire East, strengthens existing partnerships in each locality making it easier for practitioners to get support for families. Family Hubs support children and young people from 0-19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

In the first instance staff should discuss 'Early Help' requirements with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy. If early help is appropriate the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy will support the staff member in liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency or community-based assessment as appropriate.

As staff may be required to support other agencies and practitioners and parents /carers and children in an extra help plan or targeted help plan, all staff are aware of the relevant assessments and appropriate support is given to them when they undertake an early help assessment. We have a suite of screening tools which may also help to identify the level of need, the best pathway of support, and the interventions you can be provided for children, young people and families. These can be found on the CESCP website: www.cescp.co.uk

Where early help and or other support is appropriate, we ensure that the situation for the child is kept under constant review. If the child's situation doesn't appear to be improving, we take appropriate action.
The children in our school are made aware that there are adults whom they can approach if worried or in difficulty.

There is adequate signposting to external sources of support and advice for staff, parents and pupils on our Safeguarding noticeboards in school and in main reception.

7.0 Early Help, Child in Need and Child Protection : (Family Help)
In our school we ensure that we follow Cheshire East's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Agency Roles and Responsibilities to ensure that our work, on behalf of our children, is of a consistently good standard. We use these standards to challenge other workers on behalf of children where the standards are not being met. The Headteacher and the DSL are aware of the Cheshire East Escalation Procedure: Procedure for Multi-Agency Professional Challenge

8.0 Concerns about a child - recording and reporting:

Our recording procedures are in line with those outlined in Cheshire East's "Recording and Reporting Guidance" 2026; the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Lead are aware of this document.

We follow the non-statutory Information Sharing Guidance when making decisions about whether to share information: Information sharing duty statutory guidance - GOV.UK

Where a member of staff is concerned that a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or their Deputy, without delay. A written record should be made of these concerns as soon as possible following the disclosure/concern being raised; this must be on the same working day.

Where staff have conversations with a child who discloses abuse, they follow the basic principles:

- listen rather than directly question, remain calm
- never stop a child who is recalling significant events
- never ask a child if they are being abused
- make a record of the discussion to include time, place, persons present and what was said (child language – do not substitute words)
- advise you will have to pass the information on
- avoid coaching/prompting
- never take photographs of any injury
- never undress a child to physically examine them
- allow time and provide a safe haven / quiet area for future support
- at no time promise confidentiality to a child or adult
- all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward and that they will be supported and kept safe
- nor should a victim ever be made to feel they are a problem or ashamed for making a report
- where abuse has occurred online or outside of the school or college it will be treated equally seriously

Staff are aware that they should only use open questions such as TED: Tell me what you mean by that, Explain what you mean by that, Describe that.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy will obtain key information and agree relevant actions after making a timely assessment of the information.

We recognise that parents may hold key information about incidents/allegations therefore, in the majority of situations; the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy will speak to the parents and gain their consent to discussing the situation with others. Staff are aware that there will be very few instances where, to speak to the parents, it could further endanger the child. In those situations, they would still consult/refer but would have clearly recorded reasons as to why they had not gained parental consent.

The following situations are the instances in which parental consent would not be gained prior to a referral:

- Discussion would impede a police investigation or social work enquiry
- Sexual abuse is suspected
- Organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Fabrication or induced illness or perplexing presentations is suspected

- Honour or faith-based abuse e.g. forced marriage, FGM etc. is a possibility/is suspected

Additional consideration re parental consent would be needed in the following circumstances, particularly if there are concerns around parental involvement or influence:

- Extremism or radicalisation is suspected
- County Lines activities are suspected

Staff are also aware that, even in situations where the parent does not give consent, the best interests of the child are paramount and therefore, they would share their concerns. In addition, the referral will not be delayed if it has not been possible to contact the parents/carers.

Safeguarding concerns at all levels:

Phone the Integrated Front Door: 0300 123 5012

The Integrated Front Door now RAG rate all contacts referencing
RED/AMBER/GREEN

Timescales

Red – Immediate safeguarding concerns identified – Where a strategy meeting is required and threshold for significant harm is met **to be progressed within 4 hours**
Amber – If deemed safeguarding but not immediate risk, there will be **one working day** for triage and decision-making.
Green - Practitioner Support Officers have **three working days** to triage referrals and make a recommendation around next steps. This includes information requests unless court ordered or required for a section 47 enquiries in another local authority.

Contacts should be sent for authorisation with sufficient time for managers to review, as this is included within the timescales.

A consultation will take place with the Integrated Front Door (IFD) and/or the police immediately.

Where a child lives in a different authority the Designated Safeguarding Lead follows the procedures for that authority.

Where possible we ensure that contacts with outside agencies are through the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their Deputy; however, staff are aware that anyone can make this contact. Where a member of staff makes contact, they ensure that they make the Designated Safeguarding Lead aware as soon as possible.

Safeguarding records are held electronically. Safeguarding and Child Protection records are stored securely and are separate from the main pupil file. Authorisation to access these records is controlled by the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead, information should be kept confidential.

All records should be dated and signed, with the name of the signatory clearly printed, and filed in chronological order. For electronic record keeping systems, a separate signature is not necessary if individuals have their own log in and any changes to a record are automatically logged.

The school ensures that safeguarding information, including Child Protection information, is stored and handled in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – 'data protection laws'.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. Information sharing duty statutory guidance - GOV.UK

Where children leave the school or college, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure their safeguarding file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This allows the new school or college to have support in place for when the child arrives. See the Cheshire East Record Keeping Guidance.

We also ensure that key workers or social workers are notified where a child leaves the school (as appropriate).

9.0 Safer Working Practices

Use of mobile phones, cameras and internet:
The school and staff take safeguarding seriously and understand this policy is over-arching. We refer staff to the 'Staff use of mobile phones policy,' 'Social Media Policy', 'Staff Code of Conduct' and 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Young People in Education Settings May 2022'.

Electronic devices should be password protected so that content cannot be accessed by unauthorised users.

Cameras, photography and images:
The Oaks Academy will obtain parents' and carers' *written consent* for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications).

Staff will ensure the The Oaks Academy designated camera or recording devices (tablets, cameras, laptops etc) are used when capturing evidence of work undertaken.

Online safety:
On school equipment we ensure that appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place.

We refer you to our 'Online Safety Policy' which incorporates and considers the 4Cs as detailed in KCSIE 2025 to ensure an effective online policy.

The school's policy on the use of mobile and smart technology and their use reflects the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content. We carefully consider how this is managed on the school premises.

Working off school premises:
Where staff take school computer, digital equipment or records in paper form off the school site, they do so with the view that they abide by the appropriate policy for this.

Staff are reminded that information, both in paper or electric form, is sensitive and protected under data protection and GDPR and should be safe and securely stored off the premises and during transportation.

Online safety and children's use of devices, including mobile phones:

On school equipment we ensure that appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place.

We refer you to our 'Online Safety Policy' which incorporates and considers the 4Cs as detailed in KCSIE 2026 to ensure an effective online policy.

The school's policy on the use of mobile and smart technology and their use reflects the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content. Our mobile phones policy carefully considers how this is managed on the school premises.

Our school is a mobile phone-free environment. We follow the statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools and have a policy whereby pupils do not have access to their mobile phone throughout the school day including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime. We do this by use of phone pouches.

10.0 Allegations against staff

Support and advice are sought from Children's Services or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), and our Personnel/Human Resources advisor whenever necessary.

Officer (LADO), and our Personnel/Human Resources advisor whenever necessary.

At The Oaks Academy we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school; including directly employed staff, contractors, volunteers, governors, supply teachers and trainee teachers, may harm children; that they may have:

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or**
- **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or**
- **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.**

The last bullet point above includes behaviour that may have happened outside of school or college, that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children, this is known as transferable risk.

Any concerns of this nature, about the conduct of other adults, should be taken to the Headteacher or Principal without delay or, where that is a concern about the Headteacher or Principal, to the Chair of Governors and the LADO.

Staff are aware that this must be done on the same working day.

The school will not internally investigate until instructed by the LADO.

We make all staff aware of their duty to raise concerns. Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them.

As part of our whole school approach to safeguarding, we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the school (including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors and trainee teachers) are dealt with promptly and appropriately. This includes allegations which do not meet the harms threshold, also known as low level concerns.

Low-level concerns

We understand that the term ‘low-level’ concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college 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 harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns will be reported in the same way as a concern in relation to concerns and allegations that meet the harms test i.e. to the Headteacher or chair of governors if the concern is about the headteacher.

Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and responded to.

Where a pattern of behaviour is identified, the Headteacher or Principal will decide on a course of action. This might be internal disciplinary procedures, or referral to the LADO if the harm threshold is met.

The Headteacher or Principal will consider if there are any wider cultural issues in school that enabled the behaviour to occur and if appropriate policies could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of recurrence.

Relating to Organisations or Individuals using School Premises

If the schools receive an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using their school premises for the purposes of running activities for children (for example community groups, sports associations, or service

providers that run extra-curricular activities), as with any safeguarding allegation, we will follow safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO.

11.0 Safer Recruitment

The school pays full regard to DfE guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026 and with reference to the 'Position of Trust' offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003). We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the school who is likely to be perceived by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult.

We do this by:

- Operating safer recruitment practices, following the guidance in Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*)*
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers always adhere to our Staff code of conduct and other professional standards, including after school activities. Staff are aware of social media/on-line conduct policies.
- Ensuring that all staff and other adults on site are aware of the need for maintaining appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationship with pupils and parents, following our Staff code of conduct.
- Requiring all staff to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Disqualification under the Child Care Act 2006 (amended following the 2018 Regulations)
- Maintaining an accurate, complete, up to date Single Central Record

12.0 Staff training and updates:

In our school there is a commitment to the continuous development of all staff, regardless of role, with regard to safeguarding training:

All staff undertake Effective Safeguarding (previously known as Basic Awareness) training within the first term of their employment/placement with SCiES and this training is refreshed every 3 years to enable them to understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.

This training needs to include local information, priorities and safeguarding procedures for Cheshire East and needs to align with the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership training pathway for schools and colleges.

All staff receive an annual refresher update for their safeguarding training. In addition, they receive regular updates via staff meetings, briefings and communications throughout the year.

The Designated Lead and Deputies have completed specific training such as Designated Safeguarding Lead Training in order to carry out the duties of the role, and attend (CESCP) multi agency Safeguarding and Child Protection training on an annual basis.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy attends the Designated Safeguarding Leads meetings held each term coordinated by the SCiES Team, therefore enabling them to remain up to date with safeguarding practices and be aware of any emerging concerns/themes within Cheshire East.

The school acknowledges findings from local and national practice learning reviews and shares lessons learned with all staff.

13.0 Cared for children (Looked after children) and previously cared for children

At The Oaks Academy we ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep Cared for Children safe as we are aware that children often become cared for as a result of abuse and/or neglect. We have identified a designated teacher for our Cared for Children who is appropriately trained and has the relevant qualifications and experience; this person works closely with the Virtual School.

14.0 Children with special needs and disabilities

We ensure that staff are aware that children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. We ensure that staff have knowledge and understanding of the additional barriers which can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in children with special needs/disabilities. These barriers can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionally impacted by things like bullying - without outwardly showing any signs communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges risks that they do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
    - the need for intimate care or that these children are isolated from others
    - that these children are more likely to be dependent on adults for care, and

  these children may have issues over 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 aim to build the necessary skills in staff so that they can safeguard and respond to the specific needs of this group of children.

15.0 The use of 'reasonable force'

There are limited circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools and colleges to use reasonable force to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a young person needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time' the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

We have a key emphasis on de-escalation and only use physical touch to prevent a child or others being harmed. If we do this, we ensure that it is for the shortest time necessary.

Where it has been necessary to use physical intervention, we ensure the following:

- the child's wellbeing after the event is monitored and supported
- parents are fully briefed
- the incident is fully recorded including antecedents, de-escalation attempted and holds used.
- an individual plan is agreed and recorded so that it is clear what will happen should a similar situation arise in the future
- any incident involving the restraint of a child is always reported to an identified senior member of staff

At The Oaks Academy, key staff have received training in de-escalation.

16.0 Private Fostering

Private Fostering is a type of 'Kinship Care'. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 provides further examples of this type of care and information and guidance around supporting children living in these arrangements. To support kinship carers, the role of virtual heads has been extended to supporting every child in the care of friends or family.

We recognise that our school has a mandatory duty to report to the local authority when we become aware of, or suspect that, a child is subject to a private fostering arrangement. To aid our awareness we ensure that we establish parental

responsibility for every child; we take steps to verify the relationship of the adults to the child when we register them.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

A close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and stepparents (by marriage or where a legal order has been made, such as a Child Arrangement Order); it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.

Parents and private foster carers both have a legal duty to inform the relevant local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start; not to do so is a criminal offence.

Whilst most privately fostered children are appropriately supported and looked after, we recognise that they are a potentially vulnerable group who should be monitored by the local authority, particularly when the child has come from another country. In some cases, privately fostered children are affected by abuse and neglect, or are involved in trafficking, child sexual exploitation or modern-day slavery.

Where a member of staff becomes aware of private fostering arrangements, they are aware that they need to notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then speak to the family of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform Cheshire East. The school would also inform Cheshire East of the private fostering arrangements.

17.0 Children who are absent from education

Under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 we have a duty to investigate any unexplained absences especially as a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

At The Oaks Academy we follow Cheshire East's procedures for dealing with children that are absent or who go missing from lessons and/or school. All staff are aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly or prolonged, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation, including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour or faith-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. We will refer to: Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) updated July 2026

We also ensure that we are rigorous in our attendance procedures; these are outlined in our attendance policy.

If children do not attend school, we have a duty of care to ensure they are safe. This may involve visiting the child's home to ensure their welfare and safety and will always be done in the best interests of the child. School will always endeavour that parents / carers and the child/ren themselves are involved in this process. If we are unable to be assured of the child's safety, we will, through our Designated Safeguarding Lead, seek advice from other agencies such as The Attendance and Children Out of School Team, the police or the Integrated Front Door, if deemed necessary.

Where a child's destination is unknown when they have left our school, we ensure we carry out all necessary checks and refer them as Children Missing Education (CME), using the appropriate notification form on the Cheshire East website, so that they can be followed up on. Staff are aware of the trafficking of children and the importance of rigour around our attendance procedures to reduce this as a threat to our children's safety.

Remote education

We are aware that some children may require a short period of remote education.
We follow the government guidance. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education
We will remain in regular contact with parents and carers. Those communications will be used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online and parents and carers will be informed what systems schools and colleges use to filter and monitor online use.

It is especially important for parents and carers to be aware of what their children are being asked to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access and be clear who from the school or college (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online

Alternative Provision

If our pupils are accessing an alternative provision we:

- gain written confirmation from the alternative provider that appropriate staff safeguarding checks have been carried out, as well as written information about any arrangements that may put the child at risk
- have records of the address of the alternative provider and any subcontracted provision or satellite sites the child may attend
- regularly review any alternative provision placements to make sure the placement continues to be safe and meets the child's needs.

Our school follows the voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision and understands that our school remains ultimately responsible for the

provision they commission. We will continue to carry out safeguarding checks and conduct our own due diligence to ensure that the provision is appropriate for meeting each child's individual needs.

If safeguarding concerns occur, we are mindful that the placement should be immediately reviewed and ended if necessary.

18.0 Children who need a social worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans)

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse and/or neglect and/or exploitation and/or complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads will be aware of the fact a child has a social worker and will use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes.

Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services).

19.0 Children requiring mental health support

We recognise that schools have an important role to play in supporting the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of their pupils.

All staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, signs of an eating disorder, suicidal ideation or suicide. They could also be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals will attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Our staff, however, still have an important role to play.

Specifically, they can support the fulfilment of 4 key roles:

- promoting good mental wellbeing and preventing the onset of mental illness,
- observing pupils and identifying early those who may be experiencing mental health problems or being at risk of developing one,
- ensuring early targeted support is provided, and
- liaison with/referral to specialist services where needed.

Where support is needed, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider whether to inform parents or carers to support the child's wellbeing, where doing so would not place the child at additional risk.

Whilst all staff are able to observe and support the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils and learners, most schools and colleges also have a mental health lead in place. Mental health leads should support settings to embed a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

Our staff will consider the range of locally available support to meet the needs of children and young people. We will make use of support from their respective Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

We will also consider other support available outside of school that might be suitable, for example family hubs, commissioned services etc.

20.0 Educational Outcomes

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead ensures that staff know the children who have experienced or are experiencing welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues so that, as relevant, we know who these children are, understand their academic progress and attainment; this means that we are able to make necessary adjustments to help these children to achieve. In this way we maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort. This includes children with a social worker and those previously known to social care; we ensure that teachers are made aware of those children in this category.

21.0 Specific safeguarding issues

All staff have an awareness of safeguarding issues. They are aware that these safeguarding issues may not directly involve the child in our school but could be happening to their siblings or parents this includes the importance of understanding intra-familial harms and support for siblings where there is intrafamilial harm. They are also aware that some issues could be happening in the lives of staff members.
Staff are supported in accessing and completing the relevant screening tools:
CE SCP Multi-Agency Toolkit

As a school that promotes a strong culture of safeguarding and being alert to the signs and indicators of abuse and harm in children, staff would be aware of the following issues identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (Part One and Annexe B) and would know how to identify and respond to them:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional
- Neglect
- Child abduction and community safety incidents
- Children and the Court System

- Children with family members in prison / custody
- Cyber crime
- Homelessness
- Drug/substance/alcohol misuse (both pupil and parent)
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- County lines
- Serious violence
- Extremism and Radicalisation, including Prevent and Channel
- Children missing from education
- Domestic abuse
- Child-on-child relationship abuse/Teenage Relationship Abuse
- Child-on-child abuse
- Nudes and Semi Nudes including where generated from AI
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges
- Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Sexual health needs
- Obesity/malnutrition
- Online grooming
- Inappropriate behaviour of staff towards children
- Bullying including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying. Breaches of the Equality Act 2010
- Prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice, and other forms of discrimination.
- Mental health issues including self-harm
- Honour and faith-based abuse including - Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Child Trafficking
- Modern Slavery and National Referral Mechanism

Staff are aware that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, deliberately missing education and making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes put children in danger.

21.0 Governor Responsibilities

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school or college approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school or college, and ensuring that safeguarding, and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the **best interests** of the child at their heart (KCSiE 2026)

As a school we ensure that the Governing Bodies and proprietors ensure that all governors and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction. KCSiE 2026 highlights “This training should equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools and colleges are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding.”

The Governing Board fully recognises its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in accordance with Government guidance.

The Governing Board have agreed processes which allow them to monitor and ensure that the school:

- has robust safeguarding procedures in place
- operates safe recruitment procedures and carries out appropriate checks on new staff and adults working on the school site
- has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against any member of staff or adult on site
- has a member of the Leadership Team who is designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with safeguarding and child protection issues and has the appropriate status, authority, skills and experience within the school
- takes steps to remedy any deficiencies or weaknesses regarding safeguarding arrangements
- is supported by the Governing Board nominating a member responsible for liaising with the LA and/or partner agencies in the event of allegations of abuse against the Headteacher or Principal; this is the Chair
- carries out an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures
- carries out an annual Safeguarding Audit (Section 175 audit) in consultation with the Governing Board, sharing this with the CESCP on request.

Finally:

Staff at The Oaks Academy take the safeguarding of each child very seriously. This means that, should they have any concerns of a safeguarding nature about a child or adult, they are expected to report, record and take the necessary steps to ensure that the child is safe and protected. This is never an easy action, nor one taken lightly. They are aware that it can lead to challenge from parents/carers, but at all times staff have the child at the heart of all their decisions and act in their best interests.

Further information on our safeguarding and related policy documents and procedures is available on request from the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

STAYING SAFE AT THE OAKS ACADEMY

KEY CONTACTS IN OUR SCHOOL:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead: EMMA LEFTWICK
- Deputy DSL/s: RACHAEL TODHUNTER, HELEN HOLLAND, ALEX BROOKS
- Operation Encompass: EMMA LEFTWICK
- Mental Health Lead: EMILY ABBERLEY
- Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for Prevent: EMMA LEFTWICK
- Chair of Governors: MARY MASSEY

OUR LOCAL CONTACT NUMBERS ARE:

- Integrated Front Door – Cheshire East: 0300 123 5012 (Option 3, Option 2)
- Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours): 0300 123 5022
- Family Help Front Door: 0300 123 5012 (Option 3, Option 1)
- Safeguarding of Children Concerns (Children living in other authorities):

(INSERT DETAILS OF RELEVANT AUTHORITY CONTACT NUMBERS)

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01270 685904 / 01606 288931
- Prevent referrals: Prevent Referral Process
- Cyber Prevent (concerns re online activity) referrals Cyber.Prevent@nwrocu.police.uk
- Police: 999 (Emergency) / 101 (Non-emergency)
- Mental Health Helpline: 0300 303 3972
- Adult Safeguarding: 0300 123 5010

Concerns about an Adult: Whistleblowing/Confidential reporting process

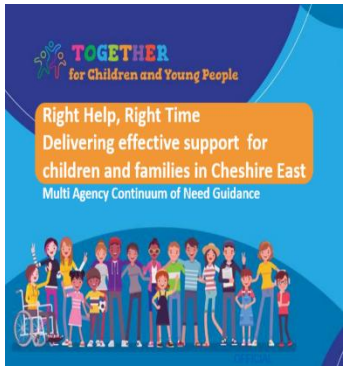
Schools and colleges should have processes and procedures in place to manage any safeguarding concern or allegation (no matter how small and including low level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors)

If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors) harming or posing a risk of harm to children, then this should be referred to the **headteacher.**

Where there is a concern/allegation about the headteacher, this should be referred to the **chair of governors**

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01270 685904

Portal Link *LADO Consultation*



This document sets out our approach to keeping children safe and protected and underpins our local vision to provide the right help at the right time for children and families in Cheshire East at the earliest opportunity. The document refers to children, which includes unborn children, infants, children and young people.

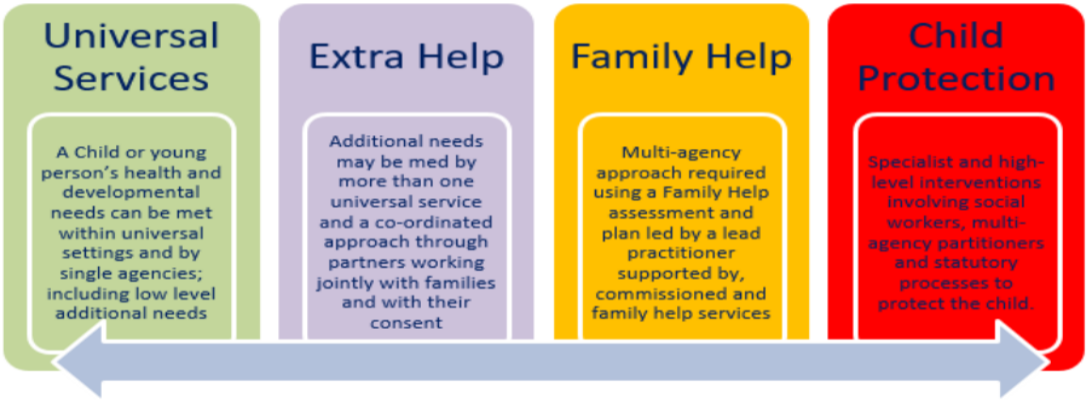
In Cheshire East we know that most children and their families can be supported through a range of universal services. These services include education, early years, health, housing, and services provided by voluntary organisations. However, some children have more complex needs and may require access to Early Support or Family Help to support them. We want to ensure that we provide the right help and support for families, led by the presenting need and not a prescribed framework. We understand the need to be flexible and have

Working Together to Safeguard Children highlights the importance of clear thresholds for taking action to safeguard children which are understood by those who work with children and adults who are parents/carers. By ensuring a shared understanding of the local continuum of need for support, children will receive the right help at the right time.

This guidance should not replace having a conversation or the use of sound professional judgement. We encourage you to use this document as guidance in combination with any prior knowledge of the family, safeguarding training, advice from your Designated Safeguarding Lead within your organisation and the voice of the child and their family.

Family Help Continuum of Need: Providing families with the right help at the right time, delivered by the right people

In Cheshire East we aim to work collaboratively with children and families and to support professionals in understanding the unique situation for each child. All professionals working with children and families will be curious, compassionate, respectful and rigorous in making judgements, while maintaining a clear focus on the safety and protection of children.



Our Extra Help offer will be delivered by partners supported by Partnership Family Help Officers and Family Advisors in our Children's Hubs.

Our Family Help offer is centred around the presenting needs of the child and family. Following a referral to the Integrated Front Door we will assess the presenting needs and decide what services and help best meet the needs of the child and family. All families that present with multiple or complex needs will be eligible for our Family Help Offer.

Right Help, Right Time

Universal Services
A child or young persons health and developmental needs can be met within universal settings and by single agencies including low level additional needs. Children make good progress and their health, education, social and emotional needs are met. Children, young people and families can access universal services as required such as Family Hubs, GP's, Early Years and Schools.

Family Advisors based in the Family Hubs will be available to signpost people to services and advice about local resources.

Extra Help
Offering Help at the right time increases the chances that positive change will happen. Without additional support from one or more agencies their needs may increase. Children, young people and families can access more than one universal service and/or coordinated extra help services. A lead professional using a team around the family approach can help identify needs and co-ordinate support before needs become more complex or acute. An extra help assessment and plan is available for professional to use alongside guidance for completion Extra Help forms and support for professionals

Partnership Family Help Officers are available to offer support and guidance for agencies wanting to offer children and families Extra support. If you wish to speak to a Partnership Family Support Officer, please use partnershipfamilyhelp@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Family Help
These are children and young people with higher level unmet needs, or where risk is identified, and where there is evidence, this is affecting their health and development. A referral into the Integrated Front Door may be needed and may meet the criteria for a multi-agency Family Help assessment to co-ordinate services and provide support to families with their consent. There will be an allocated Family Help Lead Practitioner who will co-ordinate multi-agency support, intervention and planning.

Services who may provide support at this level include Family Help, SEN services, children with disability services, youth inclusion and support panels, Youth Justice Service, drug and alcohol services, mental health services, and voluntary and community sector services.

Child Protection
These children are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm. These children are likely to have already experienced adverse effects and to be suffering from poor outcomes. Their needs may not be considered by their parents. This may include situations where immediate child protection intervention is needed to safeguard the child or where Family Help has been provided but this support has been insufficient to promote change and the child or young person is or becomes at risk of significant harm. This is likely to mean that they require a referral to the Integrated Front Door. A Family Help single assessment (S17 CA 1989) will be completed and the Family Help Team in collaboration with the Multi Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) may initiate child protection procedures under S47 (CA 1989), or issue care proceedings.

Physical Abuse

- Bruises, black eyes and broken bones.
- Unexplained or untreated injuries.
- Injuries to unusual body parts e.g. thighs, back, abdomen.
- Bruising that resembles hand/finger marks.
- Burns/scalds.
- Human bites/cigarette burns.
- Injuries that the child cannot explain or explains unconvincingly.
- Injuries in babies and non-mobile children

Symptoms of abuse

Sexual Abuse

- Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms and marks on the neck
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Sudden change in behaviour or school performance
- Displays of affection that are sexual or not age-appropriate
- Use of sexually explicit language that is not age-appropriate
- Alluding to having a secret that cannot be revealed
- Bedwetting or incontinence
- Reluctance to undress around others (e.g. for PE lessons)
- Infections, unexplained genital discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Self-harming
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance
- Reluctance to be alone with a particular person

Neglect

- Excessive hunger
- Inadequate or insufficient clothing
- Poor personal or dental hygiene
- Untreated medical issues
- Changes in weight or being excessively under or overweight
- Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression or self-harm
- Poor relationships with peers
- Self-soothing behaviours that may not be age-appropriate (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- Changes to school performance or attendance

Emotional Abuse

- Concerning interactions between parents or carers and the child (e.g. overly critical or lack of affection)
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self-harm or eating disorders
- Lack of empathy shown to others (including cruelty to animals)
- Drug, alcohol or other substance misuse
- Change of appetite, weight loss/gain
- Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger

Behaviours

- Marked change in general behaviour
- Extremely passive/aggressive
- Sleeping difficulties
- Lethargy/tiredness
- Poor social relationships
- Disclosure
- Withdrawn/withdrawn from family and friends
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
- Self-harm or eating disorders
- Eating disorder
- Fear of certain adults
- Attendance difficulties
- Self-harm

Receiving Disclosures:

Receive

- Listen, try not to look shocked or be judgmental
- Believe what they say, accept what they say and take it seriously
- Don't make them feel bad by saying "you should have told me earlier"
- Don't 'interrogate' them – let them tell you, try not to interrupt
- Note the date and time, what was done, who did it, and where it took place
- Don't criticise the perpetrator
- Don't ask leading questions – use 'open' questions to clarify only (T.E.D)

Tell me what you mean by that?
Explain that to me
Describe that….

Reassure

- Stay calm, tell the child they've done the right thing in telling you
- Reassure them they are not to blame
- Empathise – don't tell them how they should be feeling
- Don't promise confidentiality, explain who needs to know
- Explain what you'll do next
- Be honest about what you can do

Report and Record

- Make a brief, accurate, timely and factual record
- Discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their Deputy, without delay
- The DSL will assess the situation and decide on the next steps

Things to include:

- Time and full date of disclosure/incident and the time and full date the record was made
- An accurate record of what was said or seen, using the child's words as appropriate
- Whether it is 1st or 2nd hand information
- Whether the child was seen/spoken to
- Whether information is fact/ professional judgement
- Full names and roles/status of anyone identified in the report
- Sign the record with a legible signature.
- Record actions agreed with/by the Designated Lead (SMART)
- Avoid acronyms/jargon/abbreviations

Action for DSL: Review records regularly; add any new concerns, respond to these immediately and record evidence of actions taken and outcomes.

DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH INJURIES OR MARKS EVEN IF REQUESTED TO DO SO

Specific forms of Abuse

The information provided below is an abridged version of Annexe A of KCSiE. However, there are details below as to how our school responds to these concerns and more. Some specific concerns are detailed within the main body of this policy.

Harm outside the home

Including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and the victim may identify as being part of this group.

CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

We know that different forms of harm often overlap, and that perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation. In some cases, the exploitation or abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants (for example, money, gifts or affection), and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage, such as increased status, of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child causing the harm is also recognised as a victim. It is not possible for a child to consent to be exploited, abused or trafficked, and they may not recognise that it is happening to them.

Whilst the age of the child may be a contributing factor for an imbalance of power, there are a range of other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, including,

- sexual identity
- cognitive ability
- having a physical or learning need
- being neurodivergent
- learning difficulties
- communication ability
- physical strength
- status
- access to economic or other resources

Some of the following can be indicators of both child criminal and sexual exploitation where children:

- appear with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions which could also indicate that children have been approached by or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation
- associate with other children involved in exploitation
- suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- misuse alcohol and other drugs
- go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education

Children who have been exploited will need additional support to help maintain them in education.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children

- being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines,
- working in cannabis factories,
- shoplifting or pickpocketing.
- they can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime
- or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex or penetration with an object) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

Some additional specific indicators that may be present in CSE are children who:

- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffer from sexually transmitted infections
- display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development
- become pregnant

As with CCE, victims are not always recognised and can be criminalised for actions they take whilst under coercion. This remains a significant concern, as professionals continue to encounter cases where children are manipulated, groomed, and exploited without fully understanding the abuse they are experiencing.

County Lines

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation and County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of schools (including special schools), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children’s homes and care homes. Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media.

Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing (from school, care or home) and are subsequently found in areas away from their home
- have been the victim, perpetrator, or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing

Children and the court system

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age appropriate guides to support children 5-11-year olds https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-witness-booklet-for-5-to-11-year-olds and 12-17 year olds https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-witness-booklet-for-12-to-17-year-olds . The guides explain each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained. Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children.

The Ministry of Justice provides an information service which helps parents make child arrangements, without going to court and for them to understand alternative resolution options. They have also launched online child arrangements plan tool. This may be useful for some parents and carers.

Child abduction and community safety incidents

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances); and by strangers. Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a school can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation. As children get older and are granted more independence (for example, as they start walking to school on their own) it is important they are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe. Many schools provide outdoor-safety lessons run by teachers or by local police staff. It is important that lessons focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers. Further information is available at: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org.

Child-on-child abuse including Harassment and Violence

Children can abuse other children and this is often referred to as child-on-child abuse. This can occur both inside and outside of school/college. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other prejudice based incidents,
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon
- harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment – which may include misogyny/misandry. Part 5 of KCSiE sets out how schools and colleges should respond to reports of this nature
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')

- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse. Sexual harassment refers to 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' which can occur both online and offline and inside and outside of school or college. In this context it specifically relates to child-on-child sexual harassment.
- 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, making or sharing of nudes and semi nudes images and or videos including those generated using AI
- 'Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone can be a victim.
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Harmful Sexual Behaviour: HSB can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children towards a single child or towards another group of children. HSB exists on a continuum and may escalate into sexual harassment or sexual violence.

We refer to the ERASE Tool to support us in deciding the level of concern in relation to HSB.

All staff are aware that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and alleged perpetrator.

As well as knowing how to respond to concerns, all staff know that child-on-child abuse is preventable. As well as knowing how to recognise behaviours and indicators of risk early, staff know that timely, evidence-based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence.

Staff recognise that racism, faith-targeted abuse, and other forms of discriminatory behaviour may have a significant impact on a child's welfare, wellbeing and sense of safety and should be considered within safeguarding practice where appropriate.

Staff are clear on our procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse and do not take it any less serious than adult to child abuse; they are aware that it should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny and an unsafe environment for children, We ensure that we apply the same thresholds

In our school our PSHE and RSE curriculum teaches children in an age/developmentally appropriate way about topics which include healthy relationships, consent, staying safe online and positive friendships.
We have systems in place for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

Allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with using our normal school's child protection procedures and in line with Part 5 of KCSiE 2026..

We have clear processes as to how victims, perpetrators and any other children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported.

We recognise that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported.

We recognise that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Where sexual violence or sexual harassment between children is alleged then the school follows the guidance issued by the DfE in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

Where making or sharing nudes or semi nudes (youth produced sexual images) are part of the abuse then the school follows the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings

Children Missing from Home or Care

Children who run away from home or from care can provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living. Research shows that children run away from conflict or problems at home or school, neglect or abuse, or because they are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them. Many run away on numerous occasions.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definition a missing person *is:* 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed'.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors need to be considered.

Push factors include:

- conflict with parents/carers
- feeling powerless
- being bullied/abused
- being unhappy/not being listened to
- the Trio of vulnerabilities

Pull factors include:

- wanting to be with family/friends
- drugs, money and any exchangeable item
- peer pressure
- for those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us).

If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of missing is met, we will either support the parent to contact the police to inform them, or we will take the relevant action.

Cyberbullying

Central to our School's anti-bullying policy is the principle that '*bullying is always unacceptable'* and that '*all pupils have a right not to be bullied*'.

The school recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside school which spills over into the school and so we will respond to any bullying including cyber-bullying that we become aware of carried out by pupils when they are away from the site.

Cyber-bullying is defined as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself."

By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media:

- bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones
- the use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites
- using e-mail to message others
- hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts
- making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks in on-line forums
- Cyber-bullying may be at a level where it is criminal.

If we become aware of any incidents of cyberbullying, we will consider each case individually as to any criminal act that may have been committed. The school will pass on information to the police if it feels that it is appropriate, or we are required to do so.

Domestic Abuse/Violence

The Oaks Academy believes that all our pupils have the right to be safe at school and also in their own homes. We are aware that all children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, we are alert to the indicators of abuse, and we have a planned approach to supporting children in a proactive way. We do this by updating the Vulnerable Children's List and collecting the child's voice.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduces the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. We understand that the term domestic abuse captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be "personally connected." (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Section 2).

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

Domestic abuse can affect anybody; it occurs across all of society, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. Domestic abuse affects significant numbers of children and their families causing immediate harm as well as damaging future life chances. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'.

Domestic abuse negatively affects children. We know that they are often more aware of what is happening than parents think. How they respond depends on their age, personality and support network; but they recover best when they are helped to understand and to process what is happening/has happened to them. Their experiences will shape their self-worth, identity, and ability to relate to others in childhood and adulthood; making it much more difficult to succeed at school and develop friendships.
To support our children, we:

- have an ethos which puts children's wellbeing at the heart of all that we do
- create a predictable school life with set routines
- ensure that rules and expectations are clearly stated and understood by all
- understand that oppositional and manipulative behaviours are not attempts to 'provoke us', but may be attempts by these children to control their world when so much feels out of control for them
- model respectful and caring behaviour, positive conflict resolution and respectful interactions, helping children learn not only what not to do, but what to do instead
- use the language of choice, making clear the benefits and negative consequences of their choices ensuring that we follow through with any consequences or sanctions
- support children to put feelings into words. We build up a vocabulary of emotional words with them so that they can begin to express their feelings more appropriately/accurately (*A child exposed to domestic abuse may have seen a lot of behaviours that express strong feelings, but may not have heard words to appropriately express/ describe these feelings)*
- understand that the child may experience conflicting and confusing emotions when thinking of or talking about their parents
- create opportunities for children to feel successful. We let the child know that they matter, taking an active interest in them

- accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away (if ever)
- provide effective, non-verbal, systems for children to access support
- provide reassurance that only people who need to know about the incident will know
- allow the child, where necessary, to safely store work in school or shred it after completion when providing interventions
- have visible and accessible worry boxes/internal support systems /information regarding external sources of support e.g. Childline etc.
- provide opportunities to teach about and discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships

Children, Young People and Domestic Abuse

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. Our designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) are aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year-olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Local authority children's social care will be the lead agency for these children and our designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) ensures appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 places a new duty on local housing authorities in England to notify educational institutions, health visiting services and general medical practices, when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. This notification should be made when consent has been given from the parent, those with parental responsibility or care of the child, or the child themselves in cases of 16–17-year-olds living independently from their parents.

The notification will enable school and college staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children at the earliest opportunity and support them to improve their outcomes. Whilst any discussion with the local housing authority should be progressed as appropriate, this notification does not, and should not, replace existing safeguarding and welfare duties nor a referral into local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Emotional Abuse

Staff are all aware that emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which can cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

We understand that it may involve the following:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- verbal abuse such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name calling as well as not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate

- 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 from participating in normal social interaction
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Honour or Faith-Based Abuse including Breast ironing, FGM and Forced Marriage

Staff are aware that Honour or Faith-Based Abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA" (KCSIE 2026)

Awareness raising has taken place around HBA; staff are alert to possible indicators. They are aware that forced marriage is an entirely separate issue from arranged marriage; that it is a human rights abuse and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic violence and that HBV and forced marriage can affect both young men and women.

As a school we would never attempt to intervene directly; where this is suspected we would speak to Integrated Front Door before sharing our concerns with the family.

Breast Ironing also known as Breast Flattening

Staff have been made aware of an act of abuse performed on girls (from around the age of 9 years old) in which their breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded, burned with heated objects or covered with an elastic belt to prevent or delay the development of their breasts; the intention being to protect the child from rape, forced marriage, sexual harassment or removal from education. It is a practice in Cameroon, Nigeria and South Africa. It is often carried out by the girl's mother.

Staff are clear that they would follow our usual procedure for recording and reporting this abuse where it is suspected**.**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Staff are aware of Female Genital Mutilation (also known as female circumcision, cutting or Sunna) and that it is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Staff are also aware that FGM

- is child abuse; it's dangerous and it is a criminal offence. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM however there is no valid reason for it.
- is illegal in the UK. It's also illegal to take a British national or permanent resident abroad for FGM or to help someone trying to do this.

Indications that FGM may be about to take place:

- when a female family elder is around, particularly when she is visiting from a country of origin.
- reference to FGM in conversation e.g. a girl may tell other children about it.
- a girl may confide that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to 'become a woman'.

- a girl may request help from a teacher or another adult if she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk.
- parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period.
- a girl may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent.
- a girl being withdrawn from PSHE or from learning about FGM (parents may wish to keep her uninformed about her body and rights)

Indications that FGM has taken place:

- difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet possibly with bladder or menstrual problems
- unusual/a noticeable change in behaviour after a lengthy absence
- reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations
- asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear
- prolonged absences/ persistent unexplained absence from school/college
- seek to be excused from physical exercise without the support of their GP
- child not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities
- close supervision of child by family/carers

Teachers in our school are aware of their responsibilities under section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 which says that "If a **teacher**, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 the **teacher** must report this to the police".

Members of our school community are alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. They have been made aware that FGM typically takes place between birth and around 15 years old. Potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM have been shared and the next steps have been identified, in that we take the same course of action as we would with any form of abuse; the Designated Safeguarding Lead plays a full part in the process of identification recording and reporting. We are mindful that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity is always shown when approaching the subject.

Forced Marriage

Since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form or coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages. Staff are aware of Forced Marriage and that it is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological.

Children, especially girls who are forced to marry, or those who fear they may be forced to marry, are frequently withdrawn from education, restricting their educational and personal development.
Forced marriage resource pack - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Indications that a Child is at risk of Forced Marriage:
Staff are aware that they need to be aware of significant changes in the child's presentation emotional and physical, in dress and behaviour.

- appearing anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn with low self-esteem
- self-harming, self-cutting or anorexia
- criminal activity e.g. shoplifting or taking drugs or alcohol
- declining performance, aspirations or motivation
- not allowed to attend any extra-curricular or after school activities
- girls and young women may be accompanied to and from school/college
- attending school but absenting themselves from lessons
- stopping attendance at school/college
- a family history of older siblings leaving education early and marrying early

Actions our school takes in relation to take around Honour or Faith Based Abuse:

- when managing requests for absence, we use an absence request form which requests information on all siblings who attend other schools. Sometimes younger siblings tell teachers information that has a bearing on older members of the family, so it is important that we liaise with the other schools
- the Headteacher teacher requires a meeting with parents to discuss applications for extended leave of absence during term time, as we feel this can provide an opportunity to gather important information. We ask for the precise location of where the child is going; the purpose of the visit; the return date and whether it is estimated or fixed
- we check in with the child/children to see if they know and corroborate the purpose of the visit.
- if a return date has been specified and a child has not returned to school, we would contact our Attendance/Education Welfare Officer. We would never remove the child from the roll without first making enquiries about their disappearance in line with Cheshire East Children Missing Education Procedures and referring the case to the police and Children's Services as appropriate.

Modern Day Slavery including Trafficking and the National Referral Mechanism

The Modern Slavery Act came into Force in 2015. Modern slavery encompasses exploitation including sexual exploitation, criminal, financial exploitation human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs

Staff are aware that:

- a person commits an offence if they knowingly hold another person in slavery or servitude or if they knowingly require another person to perform forced or compulsory labour
- it is an offence to arrange or facilitate the travel of a person with a view to them being exploited. These are serious offences carrying a penalty of up to life imprisonment
- any consent victims have given to their treatment will be irrelevant where they have been coerced, deceived or provided with payment or benefit to achieve that consent
- children (under 18 years) are considered victims of trafficking, whether or not they have been coerced, deceived or paid to secure their compliance. They need only to have been recruited, transported or harbored for the purpose of exploitation

Trafficked Children

Human trafficking is defined by the United Nations, in respect of children, as "the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation."

Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim.

As a school we are alert to the signs both for our children and for their families and are aware that this may be if they:

- show signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy
- have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- are required to earn a minimum amount of money every day
- work in various locations
- have limited freedom of movement
- appear to be missing for periods

- are known to beg for money
- are being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good
- are one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- have not been registered with or attended a GP practice
- are excessively afraid of being deported
- look malnourished or unkempt
- are withdrawn, anxious and unwilling to interact
- are under the control and influence of others
- live in cramped, dirty, overcrowded accommodation
- have no access or control of their passport or identity documents
- appear scared, avoid eye contact, and can be untrusting
- show signs of abuse and/or has health issues

For those children who are internally trafficked within the UK indicators include:

- physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault)
- prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy
- reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation
- evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- being in the community in clothing unusual for a child i.e. inappropriate for age/ borrowing clothing from older people
- relationship with a significantly older partner
- accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones etc. with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding
- persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation
- returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having not been at home
- having keys to premises other than those known about
- low self- image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder
- truancy / disengagement with education
- entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- going missing and being found in areas where the child has no known links
- possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

These behaviours themselves do not indicate that a child is being trafficked but should be considered as indicators that this may be the case.

If staff believe that a child is being trafficked, this will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and will be reported as potential abuse.

Neglect

Staff are aware that 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
- may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse
- once a child is born, 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); or ensure access to appropriate **medical** care or treatment
- may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs
- may potentially be fatal

- causes great distress to children and leads to poor outcomes in the short and long-term
- has possible consequences which may include an array of health and mental health problems, difficulties in forming attachment and relationships, lower educational achievements, an increased risk of substance misuse, higher risk of experiencing abuse as well as difficulties in assuming parenting responsibilities later in life. The degree to which children are affected during their childhood and later in adulthood depends on the type, severity and frequency of the maltreatment and on what support mechanisms and coping strategies were available to the child

We are also mindful of the effects of adolescent neglect as this is as damaging as other forms of maltreatment - increasing the risk of arrest, offending and violent crime in late adolescence, and the risk of arrest and drug use in early adulthood.

If we suspect neglect, we will use the final_combined_neglect_tool.docx

Online Safety

With the current speed of on-line change, some practitioners, parents and carers have only a limited understanding of online risks and issues. Parents may underestimate how often their children come across potentially harmful and inappropriate material on the internet and may be unsure about how to respond.
Some of the risks could be:

Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,

Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; for example: peer to peer at risk, 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: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and

Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk.

The Department has published guidance to support schools to use generative artificial intelligence safely and explains how filtering and monitoring requirements apply to the use of generative AI in education. Generative AI: product safety expectations - GOV.UK

The school therefore seeks to provide information and awareness to staff, pupils and their parents through:

- acceptable use agreements for children, teachers, parents/carers and governors
- curriculum activities involving raising awareness around staying safe online
- information included in letters, newsletters, web site
- parents evenings / sessions
- high profile events / campaigns e.g. Safer Internet Day
- building awareness around information that is held on relevant web sites and or publications
- social media policy

Cyber crime: Preventing young people from getting involved
Children are getting involved in cybercrime, many do it for fun without realising the consequences of their actions – but the penalties can be severe. Cybercrime is a serious criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act. If we become aware of any incidents of cyber crimes, we will consider each case individually as to any criminal act that

may have been committed. The school will pass on information to the police if it feels that it is appropriate, or we are required to do so.

Risks associated with Gaming

Online gaming is an activity that the majority of children and many adults get involved in.

The school raise awareness by:

- talking to parents and carers about the games their children play and help them identify whether they are appropriate
- supporting parents in identifying the most effective way of safeguarding their children by using parental controls and child safety mode
- talking to parents about setting boundaries and time limits when games are played
- highlighting relevant resources
- making our children aware of the dangers including of online grooming and how to keep themselves safe
- making our children aware of how to report concerns

Physical abuse

Staff are aware of the signs of potential physical abuse and that it might involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

They are also aware that physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Prevent, Radicalisation and Extremism

At The Oaks Academy we recognise that children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation . We adhere to the Prevent Duty Guidance, December 2023 and seek to protect children against the messages of all violent extremism and to prevent them being drawn into terrorism; including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Extreme Right Wing Terrorism which includes Cultural Nationalism, White Nationalism, White Supremacism ideology. Prevent also tackles other ideologies and concerns that may pose a terrorist threat. Established terrorist narratives exhibit common themes such as antisemitism, misogyny, anti-establishment, anti-LGBT grievances and religious or ethnic superiority.

Children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a schools or college's safeguarding approach.

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 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.

The school community has been made aware of the exploitation of vulnerable people, to involve them in terrorism or in activity in support of terrorism; they are also aware that the normalisation of extreme views may make children vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation.

In order to raise awareness and reduce risks we ensure that our preventative work is specifically considered, outlined and highlighted in all relevant policies and procedures, including those for Information technology, Special Educational Needs, attendance, assemblies, the use of school premises by external agencies, behaviour and anti-bullying and the RE and PSHE curriculum.

Our taught curriculum includes educating children of how people with extreme views share these with others; we are committed to ensuring that our pupils are offered a broad and balanced curriculum that aims to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Teaching the school's core values alongside the fundamental British Values supports quality teaching and learning, whilst making a positive contribution to the development of a fair, just and civil society.

All staff have received training about the Prevent Duty and tackling extremism.

The Oaks Academy is clear that this exploitation and radicalisation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern; therefore, concerns need to be recorded and discussed with the DSL; with timely, appropriate action then being taken.

The **Prevent Duty** requires that all staff are aware of the signs that a child may be susceptible to radicalisation. The risks will need to be considered for political; environmental; animal rights; or faith-based extremism that may lead to a child becoming radicalised.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

However, it is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist ideology and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being radicalised. As with other safeguarding risks, staff are alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) / **SPOC (Single Point of Contact)** making a Prevent referral on the Cheshire East stopadultabuse.org.uk website (this could be about an adult and/or a child).

> If we suspect a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, including being radicalised we would also contact:
> Cheshire East Integrated Front Door: 0300 123 5012 and complete a Prevent referral on the stopadultabuse.org.uk website.

Where necessary individuals may be discussed at Channel:
Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism.

Prevent referrals are first assessed by police and may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are at risk of being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required.

Whilst the referral is being assessed, should any further or new information come to light, this should also be passed to police.

A representative from the school or college may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment.

An individual will be required to provide their consent before any support delivered through the programme is provided.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse, incidents that may indicate concerns about serious violence or harmful behaviours and/or details of those who are currently receiving support through the 'Channel' programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives.
Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people susceptible to radicalisation (publishing.service.gov.uk)

In Cheshire East the Channel Co-ordinator is Sandra Murphy – Head of Adult Safeguarding.

The CE Channel Panel meets monthly. Attendees sign a Confidentiality Agreement and share case information. Discussion covers the vulnerabilities of individuals and their families, current support, and risks for the individual

and community. Attendees agree if the case is appropriate for Channel and the support plan which is needed. Consent is then sought from the adult / parent with parental responsibility.

For those already open to Panel support plans are tailored, building on existing support, and may consist of help with family problems, mental health support, religious education, mentoring etc.

For those who are not Channel appropriate: a safe exit from Channel or a referral elsewhere is discussed.

This means that schools may be invited to attend the meeting.

Serious Violence

Serious violence is a continuing safeguarding concern. It may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with, or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict or bullying, and it can also be associated with criminal exploitation. Staff should report any concerns about a child carrying or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so) to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

All staff are aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved in committing serious violence. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in education performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

All staff should be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or suspended, spent time in Alternative Provision or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery, having used drugs or alcohol in early adolescence, and having previously been a victim or previously perpetrated violence. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance.

Nudes and semi-nudes, including where generated by AI

For the purposes of this guidance, the term 'making or sharing nudes and semi nudes' refers to the creation, sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images by young people under the age of 18. The term 'images' includes all visual content, such as photographs, videos and livestreams. We use the term 'nudes' because it is the most widely understood by young people and best captures the full range of image-sharing behaviours.

Images may be taken by the child themselves (sometimes referred to as 'self-generated imagery') or taken or created by another person. They may also be digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including what are sometimes described as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes'.. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline.

Producing and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s is illegal, which causes considerable concern in education settings working with children and young people, and amongst parents and carers.

Although the production of such images will likely take place outside of education settings, sharing can take place and the impacts of an incident are often identified or reported here. Our school will respond swiftly and confidently to make sure children and young people are safeguarded, supported, and educated. We will follow the guidance set out in the following document: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024) - GOV.UK

We take a safeguarding approach in response to all incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images, regardless of whether they are consensual or non-consensual. All such incidents require a safeguarding response,

with a proportionate approach that considers the age, development, and circumstances of the children involved, as well as any elements of coercion, exploitation or vulnerability.

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing, causing or inciting a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, such as acts of penetration, whether that is with part of a person's body or an object (e.g. rape or assault by penetration), and non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching over clothing.

Sexual abuse may also include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Sexual abuse can take place online as well as offline, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

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

Children can be sexually abused within the family, an institution or a community setting, and are more likely to know their abuser than not.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff are aware of the school or college's policy and procedures for dealing with it.

There are specific offences for children under 13, who can never provide valid consent to sexual activity and there are specific offences which make clear that sexual activity with a child under 16 is an offence, regardless of whether they agreed to that activity.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education see child-on-child.
The Crime and Policing Act 2026 introduces the Mandatory Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse.

Young carers
We are aware of the needs of young carers recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on their attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Early identification is essential to ensure young carers receive support at the right time and by the appropriate services including additional support from external partners, or local authority and health services.

Acronyms

The policy contains a number of acronyms used in the safeguarding. These acronyms are listed below alongside their descriptions.

Acronym	Long form	Description
CCE	Child criminal exploitation	A form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, for

		the financial advantage or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.
CSC	Children's Social Care	The branch of the local authority that deals with children's social care.
CSE	Child sexual exploitation	A form of sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, for the financial advantage, increased status or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.
DBS	Disclosure and barring service	The service that performs the statutory check of criminal records for anyone working or volunteering in a school.
DfE	Department for Education	The national government body with responsibility for children's services, policy and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.
DPO	Data protection officer	The appointed person in school with responsibility for overseeing data protection strategy and implementation to ensure compliance with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act.
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	A member of the senior leadership team who has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection throughout the school.
EHC plan	Education, Health and Care Plan	A funded intervention plan which coordinates the educational, health and care needs for pupils who have significant needs that impact on their learning and access to education. The plan identifies any additional support needs or interventions and the intended impact they will have for the pupil.
FGM	Female genital mutilation	All procedures involving the 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.
UK GDPR	UK General Data Protection Regulation	Legislative provision designed to strengthen the safety and security of all data held within an organisation and ensure that procedures relating to personal data are fair and consistent.
HBA	'Honour-based' abuse	So-called 'honour or faith-based' abuse involves crimes that have been committed to defend the honour of the family and/or community.
KCSIE	Keeping children safe in education	Statutory guidance setting out schools and colleges' duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
LA	Local authority	A local government agency responsible for the provision of a range of services in a specified local area, including education.
LAC in CE Cared For Children	Looked-after children	Children who have been placed in local authority care or where children's services have looked after children for more than a period of 24 hours.
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer plus	Term relating to a community of people, protected by the Equality Act 2010, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or other protected sexual or gender identities.
MAT	Multi-academy trust	A trust established to undertake strategic collaboration and provide education across a number of schools
NPCC	The National Police Chiefs' Council	The National Police Chiefs' Council is a national coordination body for law enforcement in the United Kingdom and the representative body for British police chief officers.

PLAC/PC4C	Previously looked-after children / cared for	Children who were previously in local authority care or were looked after by children's services for more than a period of 24 hours. PLAC are also known as care leavers.
PSHE	Personal, social and health education	A non-statutory subject in which pupils learn about themselves, other people, rights, responsibilities and relationships.
PHE	Public Health England	An executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care which aims to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing.
RSHE	Relationships, sex and health education	A compulsory subject from Year 7 for all pupils. Includes the teaching of sexual health, reproduction and sexuality, as well as promoting positive relationships.
SCR	Single central record	A statutory secure record of recruitment and identity checks for all permanent and temporary staff, proprietors, contractors, external coaches and instructors, and volunteers who attend the school in a non-visitor capacity.
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator	A statutory role within all schools maintaining oversight and coordinating the implementation of the school's special educational needs policy and provision of education to pupils with special educational needs.
SPOC	Single Point of Contact	This is the person, usually, the Designated Safeguarding Lead who is the named lead for Prevent in school.
SLT	Senior leadership team	Staff members who have been delegated leadership responsibilities in a school.
TRA	Teaching Regulation Agency	An executive agency of the DfE with responsibility for the regulation of the teaching profession.
TRA	Teenage Relationship Abuse	Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children known as teenage relationship abuse
VSH	Virtual school head	Virtual school heads are in charge of promoting the educational achievement of all the children looked after by the local authority they work for, and all children who currently have, or previously had, a social worker.