

# CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2025 – 2026

THIS POLICY INCLUDES EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Policy Author:	Deputy Head Pastoral – Grace Partridge
Date reviewed by author:	August 2025
Next review date:	August 2026

Governor sign – off		
Governor: Iain Regan Smith	Date:	9.9.2025

## I. Contact details for key personnel & agency involvement:

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Grace Partridge	<a href="mailto:gpartridge@pennthorpe.com">gpartridge@pennthorpe.com</a> 01403 822391
Deputy DSLs	Chris Murray (Online & Digital Safety) - <a href="mailto:cmurray@pennthorpe.com">cmurray@pennthorpe.com</a> Charlotte Murray - <a href="mailto:charlottemurray@pennthorpe.com">charlottemurray@pennthorpe.com</a> Charlotte Gallina Breese - <a href="mailto:cgallinabreese@pennthorpe.com">cgallinabreese@pennthorpe.com</a>	
Nominated Safeguarding Governor	Iain Regan-Smith	<a href="mailto:iregansmith@pennthorpe.com">iregansmith@pennthorpe.com</a>

If at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral should be made to the children's social care services (Integrated Front Door) immediately or alternatively call 999/emergency services. Any person can make a referral but they must then inform the DSL.

## **2. Contact details for agency involvement:**

Children in need should be referred to West Sussex Children's Social Care, usually by the DSL. West Sussex's **Integrated Front Door (formerly MASH)** is the single point of contact for safety concerns about a young person or child. They can be contacted as follows:

*Normal Hours:* 01403 229900

*Out of Hours:* 0330 222 6664

[WSChildrenServices@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:WSChildrenServices@westsussex.gov.uk)

### **West Sussex Children Safeguarding Partnership,**

Floor 1,  
County Hall North,  
Chart Way,  
Horsham,  
West Sussex,  
RH12 1XH

[wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk)

- Allegations against adults who work with children should be made to **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)/Children's Safeguarding Managers:** 0330 222 6450

[LADO@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@westsussex.gov.uk)

- **For advice on Extremism, please contact the DfE dedicated helpline/email for staff and Governors to raise concerns about extremism** 020 7340 7264

[counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk)

For emergencies, also note the anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321

- To report **FGM**, please contact Local Police force 101 (the non-emergency police number)

<http://www.sussex.police.uk/>

- For advice relating to FGM, you can call the national FGM helpline on [0800 028 3550](tel:08000283550).

### **West Sussex Safeguarding in Education Team:**

The Safeguarding in Education Team, including the MASH Education Advisers, can be contacted on 0330 222 4030 or by email to [Safeguarding.Education@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Safeguarding.Education@westsussex.gov.uk)

- Support and Advice about Extremism:
- West Sussex Prevent Team: Email [Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk) or call 0330 222 4223
- Local police force: 01273 475432 or email [prevent@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:prevent@sussex.pnn.police.uk)
- Non-emergency telephone number: 101 and talk to the Prevent Officers
- DfE contact telephone helpline and mailbox for non-emergency advice: 020 7340 7264 or [counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk)

### 3. Policy Statement:

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by:

#### A: Guidance, advice, regulations, and statutory duties:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) (KCSIE)
- ISI: Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements (March 2023)
- Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education (September 2025)
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Childcare Act 2006) (revised Sept 2021) updated Jan 2024
- UKCIS guidance: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' (2021, updated March 2024) how to respond to an incident
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales (2015, updated March 2024)
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (January 2021) superseding EU GDPR (2018) (GDPR)
- Domestic Abuse Act (April 2021)
- Education and Training (welfare of children) Act 2021
- When to call the police- Guidance for Schools and Colleges (September 2020)
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act (12 April 2019)
- Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (updated 2019)
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines (2017, updated October 2023)
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (updated 31 August 2018)
- Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners (March 2015, updated May 2024)
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education Act 2002 et al
- 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (December 2023)
- National Referral Mechanism guidance: adult (England and Wales) (updated June 2018) (NRM)
- Data Protection Act (May 2018) (DPA)
- West Sussex County Council Child Missing Education – Policy and Guidance for West Sussex Schools and Colleges (2016) with link to Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (updated August 2024)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2014 (updated July 2017)
- DfE: Definition and a guide for working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (Feb 2017)
- Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (September 2016, updated August 2024)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (May 2022, updated August 2024)
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (updated August 2018)
- Mental health and behaviour in schools (updated November 2018)
- Counselling in schools: a blueprint for the future: Departmental advice (February 2016)
- Revised Code of Practice for Disclosure and Barring Service Registered Persons (November 2015)

- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults Who Work with Children and Young People (Oct 2015)
- Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers (October 2015- updated February 2022)
- Use of Social Media for Online Radicalisation (July 2015)
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused; advice for practitioners (March 2015)
- Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA)
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (November 2014)
- Promoting the education of looked after children: Statutory guidance for local authorities (July 2014, updated February 2018)
- Care Act 2014
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Advice to schools and colleges on gangs and youth violence (August 2013)
- Use of Reasonable Force and other restrictive interventions in Schools (February 2025)
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Teachers' Disciplinary (England) Regulations 2012
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000)
- Terrorism Act 2000
- West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership WSSCP Child Protection Procedures

#### B: Other Sources:

- PHE advice: Mental health and behaviour in school guidance
- DfE advice: Preventing and tackling bullying, mental health, and behaviour in schools
- National Crime Agency CEOP Education Programme: Protecting children and young people from online child sexual abuse through education
- HM Gov: Educate Against Hate ([www.educateagainsthate.com/](http://www.educateagainsthate.com/))
- The UK safer internet centre ([www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)) appropriate filtering and monitoring
- The National Education Network: Digital Responsibility guidance
- When to call the police, non-statutory guidance from the National Police Chiefs' Council.
- DCMS: Online Safety Guidance - A Business Guide for Protecting Children On Your Online Platform

**At Pennthorpe, we are committed to safeguarding children and young people and we expect everyone who works in our schools to share this commitment. Adults in our school take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage children and young people to talk to us about anything that worries them. We will always act in the best interest of the child.**

The governing body takes seriously its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess and support those children who are suffering harm.

We recognise that all adults, including temporary staff, volunteers, contractors and Governors, have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm, and that the child's welfare is our paramount concern.

All staff believe that our school should provide a caring, positive, safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. **All** professionals should make their approach child-centered and consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The school aims to create a culture of safety, equality and protection. The school believes that all pupils have the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation regardless of:

- Race, religion, culture, preferred language or ethnicity
- Age, gender, sexuality, appearance, disability or academic ability

The school recognises that pupils with SEND can face additional safeguarding challenges which can include:

- Assumptions that indicators can relate to a child's disability rather than abuse
- Failure to show outward signs which can be disproportionate to the abuse they may be experiencing
- Communication barriers and difficulties overcoming these barriers
- Vulnerability to Child-on-Child abuse, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment
- Online and offline challenges, particularly in relation to children with cognitive understanding issues, who may struggle to distinguish between fact and fiction online.

The school recognises its legal duty to work with the Local Education Authority (LEA), West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and specifically the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP), Social Services and police in protecting children from harm and responding promptly and positively towards actual and alleged child abuse.

The school recognises that terrorism is a very real threat to young people. Normal referral processes are available where there are concerns about children who may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

All parents, carers and guardians are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members with regard to child protection procedures, through publication of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on our school website and in our information pack for all new parents.

This policy seeks to inform all those in the school community who work closely with children about the most common signs of child abuse and to prescribe the procedures that must be followed to protect the child.

This policy takes into account the following policies:

- Behaviour Management: Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Anti-Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Policy
- EYFS Personal Care Policy (with a clear link to physical intervention)
- Use of Children's Images Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct (which includes the Low-Level Concerns Policy)
- Visitors in School Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy

Additional and relevant information on the expectations and conduct for staff can be found in the Staff Code of Conduct and the Staff Handbook.

#### 4. Policy Aims:

This policy seeks:

- a. To safeguard and promote the welfare of all children by:
  - Protecting children from maltreatment.
  - Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health and development.
  - Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
  - Taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.
- b. To ensure children receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. When doing so, the school assesses the risks and issues in the wider community when considering the well-being and safety of its pupils.
- c. To emphasise the importance of acting and/or referring the early signs of abuse and neglect, sharing information and challenging inaction.
- d. To provide pupils with relevant information, skills and attitudes to help them to resist abuse and prepare for the challenges faced at senior school and then for the responsibilities of adult life including home and family.
- e. To increase pupils' self-confidence, mutual respect and trust and develop their emotional awareness and vocabulary so that they can be conscious, clear, and confident in their assessment of their emotional well-being.
- f. To make pupils feel confident that they can confide in staff on issues of neglect, abuse, and deprivation.
- g. To allow staff to be familiar and confident with the appropriate child protection procedures and issues.
- h. To give clear guidance to all staff (teaching and non-teaching) on:
  - The signs that may indicate the possibility of abuse
  - The procedures to follow if a child discloses abuse or a member of staff suspects abuse.

- i. To work with parents to build an understanding of the school's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children and a recognition that this may occasionally require cases to be referred to other investigative agencies as a constructive and helpful measure.
- j. To monitor children who have been identified as 'at risk' including those who may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism.
- k. To contribute to an inter-agency approach to child protection by developing effective and supportive liaison with other agencies and schools – thereby contributing towards a more effective detection of the incidence of child abuse.
- l. To review the school procedures and improve the way child protection issues are managed.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities:

### The Governing Body:

The Governing Body has a strategic leadership responsibility and oversight of Pennthorpe's safeguarding arrangements and ensures that they comply with our duties under the legislation, including the guidance of the Charity Commission. The Governing Body has regard for the guidance outlined in KCSIE 2025, and ensures that policies, procedures and training are effective and comply with the law at all times.

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there is a whole school approach to safeguarding and that safeguarding, and child protection, including online safety, are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development.
- Ensuring that the school operates with the best interests of the child at heart, including when there is a safeguarding concern, the child's wishes are taken into account when determining what actions to take and services to provide.
- Ensuring that systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidentially report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously and knowing they can safely express their views and feedback.
- Ensuring children are taught about safeguarding including online through the curriculum and teaching and learning opportunities, including when they are online at home or working remotely.
- Appointing a Governing Body level lead to take leadership responsibility for the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensuring that an appropriate senior member of staff is appointed to the role of DSL.
- Ensuring that Child Protection files are maintained as set out in Annex C (KCSIE 2025).
- Ensuring that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order to ensure appropriate action can be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare including:
  - An effective Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy which:

- describes procedures in accordance with legislation and put in place by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP).
- is updated annually.
- is available publicly on the school's website.
- is followed by all staff.
- A Staff Code of Conduct which includes acceptable use of technologies, staff/pupil relationships and communications including the use of social media.
- That these policies are provided to staff during the induction process and, on a risk-based approach, to volunteers and temporary staff (including contractors).
- Ensuring that any deficiencies or weaknesses identified in the arrangement are remedied immediately.
- Review the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy at least annually and ensure policy and procedures marry.
- Ensuring that staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Creating an environment where staff feel supported in their safeguarding role and able to raise concerns.
- Ensuring the school creates the right culture and environment so that staff feel comfortable to discuss matters both within, and where it's appropriate, outside of the workplace (including online), which may have implications for the safeguarding of children.
- Recognising the expertise staff build by undertaking safeguarding training and managing safeguarding concerns. Opportunity should be provided for staff to contribute and shape safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Ensuring staff undergo regular training (including online safety training) which is integrated, aligned and considered part of the whole school approach to safeguarding, including in curriculum planning. This training includes an expectation that staff manage behaviour effectively to ensure a safe educational environment.
- Recognising and ensuring the sharing of information between professionals and local agencies, including understanding their role in the three safeguarding partner arrangements.
- Ensuring appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to safeguard children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material without an unreasonable level of blocking.
- Ensuring that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness alongside Pennthorpe's provision for a safe learning environment.
- Ensuring all Governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction and at regular intervals afterwards.
- Ensure appropriate safer recruitment policies in accordance with Part three of KCSIE 2025 are in place, embedded and effective.
- Ensure that the school, where reasonably possible, holds more than one emergency contact for each pupil.

The designated safeguarding Governor monitors child protection procedures at the school in conjunction with the DSL. They meet with the Designated Safeguarding Lead termly to review current cases and safeguarding practices within the school and reports annually to the Governing Body. In

addition, the DSL produces and presents for discussion a termly report for the Education and Welfare Committee.

### *Sharing of Information and Compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR*

Governors have an obligation to fulfill the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR duties on organisations to keep information the school holds safe and secure and to share and withhold personal information. They should ensure that staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (or withhold) personal information. This includes:

- Being confident in the processing conditions which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal and should be treated as 'special category personal data.'
- Understanding that 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing is done confidentially and in-keeping with the requirements of KCSIE (2025).'

Before sharing any personal data or considering the need for consent to share personal data, the DSL will refer to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' document, December 2023 [here](#)

### *Non-School Activities on School Premises*

Where the school hires or rents out school facilities/premises to other organisations or individuals, the Governing Body must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep children safe.

- When activities are provided by the school under the direct supervision or management of the school, the school's safeguarding policy and processes will apply.
- When activities are provided by a separate body, the Governing body should seek assurance that the hirer has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place (inspecting these if necessary), and that there are arrangements in place to liaise with the school on these matters.

The Governing Body should ensure that safeguarding requirements are included in any hire/lease agreements as a condition of the occupation of the premises and that failure to comply with these would result in termination of any agreement.

Further guidance can be found in **After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers:** [here](#)

### **The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (as detailed in KCSIE 2025 Annex C). This lead responsibility should not be delegated to the deputies.

The DSL is the person responsible for maintaining an overview of safeguarding within the school and monitoring the effectiveness of policy and practice.

The DSL should aim to create a child-centred environment which encourages a culture of listening to children and taking into account their wishes and feelings among all staff, and in any measures the school puts in place to protect them. The DSL should understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching the staff and consider how to build trusting relationships which facilitate communication.

The DSL is responsible for working collaboratively with external agencies so that the child's needs are met holistically. They are responsible for contacting the social services to register concern about a child's welfare and implementing procedures relating to child protection and working with all safeguarding partners. They must have a thorough understanding of the local arrangements for working with all three safeguarding partners including the local authority, a clinical commissioning group for an area within the local authority and the chief officer of police for an area (any part of which falls) within the local authority areas.

The DSL will utilise the guidance issued by West Sussex County Council, referring specifically to the West Sussex Threshold document found [here](#). The DSL will always consider the context in which incidents or behaviours occur (contextual safeguarding).

The job description of the DSL at Pennthorpe is presented in [\*\*Appendix G\*\*](#).

**Staff (including temporary, supply, visiting and volunteers):**

Abuse of children in attendance at school is most likely to be first noticed by teaching staff. Teachers bring several particular advantages to the recognition of child abuse, i.e.

- They have regular and frequent opportunities to observe children, including opportunities to observe changes in their behaviour.
- They have an ongoing relationship with children, who may confide in them about difficulties they are experiencing and therefore the staff's ability to fulfill the requirements of contextual safeguarding are increased.
- They have knowledge of the wide range of behaviour likely to be seen in children of a particular age.
- They have opportunities to observe the response of a group of children to situations. They will, therefore, be sensitive to surprising or unusual responses.

**Teachers have a professional duty to**

- Observe and be alert to signs of abuse.
- Take immediate action in the child's best interest by reporting any suspicion or evidence of abuse or non-accidental injury to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Know the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and WSSCP Procedures.
- Enquire about the progress of individual cases in which they are/have been involved.
- Identify pupils who are absent for long periods and fulfil their responsibility to complete daily attendance registers.
- Understand the expectations of them to discuss matters outside of work and to understand that their conduct and relations or associations both within and outside of the workplace (including online) have implications for the safeguarding of children.
- Be aware of the Staff Code of Conduct. Staff should not place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.
- Have read the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in its entirety and accept their duty:

- To be familiar with this policy.
- To implement this policy and co-operate with the school management in promoting child protection.
- Undertake in-house safeguarding training delivered at regular intervals dictated by WSSCP including training regarding radicalisation and online safety.
- To update their training every year along with reading and digesting regular updates provided by the DSL.

**Whistleblowing:**

The school has a separate Whistleblowing Policy. This guidance is written for staff (which includes any adult, paid or voluntary worker) who work with children and young people in a school.

Staff have an individual responsibility to bring matters of concern (including the attitude or actions of colleagues, in and out of the workplace) to the attention of the Senior Leadership Team and/or relevant agencies.

**Reasons for Whistleblowing:**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable or unsafe practice or behaviour, including potential failures in the school's safeguarding procedures (there is provision for mediation and dispute resolution where necessary).
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risk to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

A whistleblowing disclosure must be about something that affects the general public such as:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed
- a legal obligation has been breached
- there has been a miscarriage of justice
- the health or safety of any individual has been endangered
- the environment has been damaged
- information about any of the above has been concealed.

**How to Raise a Concern:**

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions, or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice concerns you and why.
- If your concern is about a member of staff this should be raised with the Head immediately (who is also DDSL).
- Inform the DSL immediately, who may then contact the LADO.
- If your concern is about the DSL, contact the Head.
- If your concern is about the Head, contact the Chair of Governors, or, if you feel you need to take it to someone outside the school, the LADO.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response.

- You should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places where you can.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of the allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.
- The NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0808 800 5000 from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

### *What Happens Next?*

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Pennthorpe has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concerns prove unfounded and were raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.
- We recognise that whistleblowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support are available from your line manager, Head and/or your professional or trade union. Support could include mediation and dispute resolution where necessary.

### *Self-Referring:*

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know may be impinging on their professional competence.

Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. While such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where issues raise concerns about the welfare and safety of children.

### *Physical Intervention:*

We acknowledge that staff must only use physical intervention as a last resort—when a child is at risk of harming themselves, others, or to prevent serious damage to property. Any use of force must always be proportionate, reasonable, and the minimum necessary to manage the situation safely.

All such incidents should be clearly recorded and signed by a witness. Parents and carers must be informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

We recognise that appropriate physical contact can be part of positive, professional relationships with children. Staff have been given clear guidance on maintaining professional boundaries.

Staff who are likely to need to use physical intervention will receive appropriate training to ensure safe and lawful practice.

We understand that any physical intervention resulting in injury or distress to a child may be subject to child protection procedures or disciplinary action, depending on the circumstances.

### *Anti-Bullying and Cyber-Bullying:*

The school has a separate Anti-Bullying and Cyber Bullying Policy document. The school acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. This

includes all forms of cyber-bullying, racist, homophobic and gender-related bullying. We keep a record of known bullying incidents. All staff are aware that children with SEND and/or differences/perceived differences are more susceptible to being bullied / victims of child abuse.

***Staff Use of Mobile Devices:***

Guidance on the use of mobile devices is outlined in the 'Staff Code of Conduct', the 'Use of Children's Images' Policy and the 'Staff Use of Mobile Devices' policy document.

Many mobile devices include a camera, video and sound recording facilities. For reasons of confidentiality, safeguarding of children and respect for individual human rights, it is not appropriate to record school pupils/activities on personal equipment. Please refer to the 'Use of Children's Images' Policy.

Staff should not give out their mobile phone numbers to pupils. Communication using mobile phones with pupils is not permitted and could result in disciplinary action.

In addition to this staff are not permitted to use mobile phones whilst carrying out any duty that involves supervision or contact with children - with the exception of trips and visits where their use is permitted to facilitate the health and safety of the members of the party.

In the EYFS, all staff must keep and use their personal mobile phones in staff areas only or when in classrooms, under lock and key or kept in staff only rooms. Phones should not be kept in areas where children have access. Mobile phones may be taken to the sports field or on outings to ensure communication with the school but should only be used in the event of an emergency. Should they be used, a member of SLT should be noted at the earliest convenience.

***Pupil Use of Mobile Devices:***

Mobile Electronic Devices include, without limitation, mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, laptops, MP3 players and smartwatches. All Mobile Electronic Devices brought onto the school premises must be registered with our Network Manager if used for educational purposes.

Mobile phones, or any mobile device that can access a mobile network e.g. 3G/4G/5G, are not permitted in school. Should a pupil need to bring a mobile phone into school, for example if they walk to and from school without adult supervision, a request from a parent must be put in writing to the child's Form Tutor who will then seek authorisation for this from a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Mobile phones that have been authorised for such purposes must be handed into the School Office during school hours.

In emergencies, pupils may request to use the school telephone. Parents wishing to contact their children in an emergency should always contact the School Office and a message will be relayed promptly.

Pupils are not permitted to bring Mobile Electronic Devices into examination rooms under any circumstances, except when special arrangements for the use of a tablet or a laptop have been agreed with the Head.

Pupils are not permitted to communicate with staff using a mobile phone (or other mobile electronic device) except when this is expressly permitted by a member of staff, for example when necessary during an educational visit. Any such permitted communications should be brief and courteous.

Use of electronic devices of any kind that are used to bully, harass, intimidate or attempt to radicalise others will not be tolerated and will constitute a serious breach of discipline, whether or not the pupil is in the care of the school at the times of such use. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken where the school becomes aware of such use in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Management and Sanctions Policy. Safeguarding Procedures will be followed in appropriate circumstances in line with this Safeguarding Policy.

Where a member of staff feels there is good reason to do so, an agreed member of staff may examine an electronic device, and files or data in accordance with the Government document 'Searching, Confiscation and Screening, July 2022 [here](#)'. The DSL must be notified of any search made. If any material is found which could be construed as offensive, bullying or threatening, the device must be presented to the Head, without delay.

**It is important to note that if you suspect content may be a child protection matter, you must pass this device directly to the DSL. In their absence it should be passed to one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. Content MUST NOT be viewed. Advice will be sought from the relevant local authority in such circumstances, which may include informing the police.**

The school reserves the right to confiscate a pupil's Mobile Electronic Device for a specified period of time if the pupil is found to be in breach of these rules. The pupil may also be prevented from bringing a Mobile Electronic Device into school temporarily or permanently and at the sole discretion of the Head.

The school does not accept any responsibility for the theft, loss or damage to Mobile Electronic Devices brought onto the school premises, including devices that have been confiscated or which have been handed to staff.

**Parents:**

Our Safeguarding Policy is available to all parents on the school website. Parents have access to the DSLs and are familiar with the school's policies and procedures. For any concerns, parents are encouraged to contact the DSL as soon as possible.

**6. Training, Education and Support:**

**Pupil Education:**

**At Pennthorpe, pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online, through various teaching and learning opportunities, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are taught to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it.**

We try to create a child-centred environment and ethos in which children feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, they are encouraged to talk, and they are listened to. We encourage a culture of listening to children and taking into account their wishes and feelings, among all staff. We understand the difficulties

that children may have in approaching the staff and consider how to build trusting relationships which facilitate communication.

We provide suitable support and guidance so that pupils have a range of appropriate adults whom they feel confident to approach if they are in difficulties, including inspectors during the course of an inspection process. Pupils can raise a concern with any staff member if they are concerned about themselves or a friend, either in person, in writing or via email.

We use the entire school curriculum, including RSE and PSHEE, to raise pupils' awareness and build confidence so that they have a range of contacts and strategies to ensure their own protection and understanding in an age-appropriate manner:

- Adjusting their behaviours to reduce risks and build resilience, including radicalisation.
- How to build and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults.
- How to be healthy.
- The definition of online content-related risks, including **misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories**.
- The safe use of electronic equipment and the internet, at home and in school.
- The risk posed by adults or young people who use the internet and social media to bully, groom, abuse or radicalise other young people, especially children and vulnerable adults.

Staff treat the children with respect and all pupils are expected to treat each other and staff with respect. Our 'Anti-Bullying & Cyber-Bullying' Policy is stored on the school system with all school policies, and it acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. This includes homophobic or gender-related bullying. It is publicised on the website and regularly reviewed.

We have a clear and full 'Behaviour Management: Rewards & Sanctions' Policy which is available to all staff and parents, and which is regularly re-visited by pastoral staff.

We look carefully at the role models the school offers pupils through staffing, materials used, selection of curricular content and other experiences.

We try to impress upon pupils the importance of rejecting violence or emotional abuse as a means of resolving conflict.

We give pupils opportunities to understand, and strategies for coping with, stress.

#### ***Relationships and Sex Education:***

The school utilizes the mandatory RSE curriculum across the school. Pupils in Year 7 and 8, are introduced to a more detailed education concerning sex and relationships which is delivered in a phased approach.

**Online Safety:**

The school has a separate Online Safety Policy. Pupils are educated in online safety, and this is filtered into their weekly computing lessons, RSE and PSHE in addition to the overall curriculum. Pupils understand that there are constant risks to working online, both in school and when working remotely.

The school does all that is reasonably possible to limit pupil's exposure to the following risks:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate and harmful material.
- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users.
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of or causes harm.
- Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams.
- Sexting/Shared Images i.e. when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video on their mobile devices, usually in a text message.

The school does not permit the use of mobile phones by pupils. The only exception to this is those pupils who have an emergency situation in which case, the mobile phone is given to the Head of Year on arrival at school and collected on departure for home.

Pupils have their own laptops in school, but these are controlled and managed by the school and utilise the schools' high-level filters. Pupils are unable to access inappropriate material, download items from the internet nor upload their own software.

The school provides an appropriate level of filters and monitoring systems to enable the pupils to minimise risk while not 'over blocking' their exposure and restricting pupil access. These monitoring systems are regularly reviewed for the effectiveness.

Guidelines are outlined in the 'Acceptable Use' Policy and the 'Online Safety' Policy and make use of the DfE Guidance 'Teaching Online Safety in School.'

The school conducts an annual review of the effectiveness of its approach to Online Safety.

**Staff Education and Training:**

We try to create an environment where staff feel able to communicate and liaise with the relevant staff over any concerns related to safeguarding or whistleblowing.

We provide a three-model Child Protection training programme for all staff every year. Staff are also required to complete three further questionnaires to evidence their reading and understanding of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Training is provided in online safety, which includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring, both at induction and appropriate intervals.

Less formal training is conducted at more frequent intervals, and at least annually, in response to changes in legislation or because of matters arising in school. These sessions are conducted through Staff

Meetings, RADAR, Pastoral meetings, email, e-bulletins and are recorded in the Safeguarding training register.

Staff must also read, and sign to evidence, annual safeguarding documents, including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct, and Part One and Annex B of the KCSIE document (2025) .

Mechanisms are in place to assist staff in understanding the school's policies and procedures including KCSIE 2025 Part I and Annex B, in full. All staff are required to electronically sign all safeguarding policies (including the Online Safety Policy) to confirm that they have read and understood the content. Staff meetings and other staff team forums which use mechanisms such as quizzes or discussions, check understanding from staff.

Regular formal and informal staff training provide all staff with the opportunity to be involved in the development of policies and procedures. Feedback is sought on the success of systems, for example.

#### Staff Induction:

All staff, including volunteers, peripatetic staff, external agencies, contractors and extra-curricular club providers undergo induction training in child protection during the induction programme for new staff and volunteers. All temporary and voluntary staff, including visiting speakers and contractors who work with our pupils or may work near our pupils, are made aware of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

The induction training includes and emphasises:

- The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including information about the role of the DSL and their identity)
- Behaviour Management: Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- The Staff Code of Conduct including the Whistleblowing procedure
- Information about the Prevent Duty
- A copy of the complete Part I of KCSIE (September 2025) and Annex B as appropriate
- A list of contacts outlined in [Appendix A](#)
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- For Senior Leadership, including Governors, the entire KCSIE document
- Where applicable, staff should have the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to keep children safe who are looked after by the Local Authority (LA).

Each new member of staff, including temporary staff are given a full copy of this policy, along with the 'Behaviour Management: Rewards and Sanctions' Policy, 'Anti-Bullying & Cyber-Bullying' Policy and Part I (in full) and Annex B of the Department of Education (DfE) document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2025. Specific attention is given to those teaching staff in one-to-one teaching e.g., specialist performing arts and sports provision.

New staff will also complete the Safeguarding Children online training module, accessed via their Educare training package and the Prevent Duty training, to improve understanding and identify signs of radicalisation

A record of completion for both of these is kept by the school.

## **7. DSL Training:**

Training for the DSL and the DDSLs is provided through West Sussex County Council (WSCC) either by WSSCP or by their official recommended partners. The DSL and the DDSLs are trained to the same level.

The training team can be contacted by email at:

[wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk) or by phone on 0330 222 7799

Training incorporates:

- Interagency working.
- Participation in child protection case conferences.
- Supporting children in need.
- Identifying children at risk of radicalization.
- Record keeping.
- Promoting a culture of listening to children.
- Prevent Duty.
- [Understanding of the West Sussex Threshold Guidance](#)

The DSL and the DDSLs receive formal training every two years in child protection and inter-agency working to ensure that their skills and expertise are up to date but should ensure that their knowledge and understanding is updated at least annually and as legislation changes.

## **8. Definition of Child Abuse:**

See [Appendix D](#) for definitions and more detail.

Abuse is 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.

Child abuse includes abuse of a pupil by a staff member or other adult, abuse at home, which a pupil reports to staff, abuse by a stranger outside school and Child on Child Abuse.

- **All** staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may need help or protection. Knowing what to look for is vital and specific safeguarding issues such as child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation so that staff can identify cases of children who may need help or protection. If staff are unsure, they should **always** speak to the DSL.

- **All** staff should be aware that abuse, neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues overlap one another and therefore staff should be extra vigilant and always raise concerns with the DSL.
- **All** staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside of school and can occur between children outside of these environments.
- **All** staff, but especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead, should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside of their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), Domestic Abuse in their own intimate relationships (Teenage Relationship Abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines and radicalisation.
- **All** staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse online (including when working remotely) as well as face-to-face. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images especially around chat groups and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

## **9. Children in Need and/or at Risk:**

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Assessment of need is likely to be determined through an inter-agency assessment using local processes and consideration of WSSCP thresholds, including use of the 'Early Help Assessment (EHA)' and 'Team around the Child' (TAC) approaches.

Action should be taken immediately if concerns arise about a child in need.

A child at risk is one who is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so. Action should be immediate. Concerns should be reported by staff to the DSL via My Concern who will refer to Social Services, and/or the police if a crime is committed, as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the report being received by the DSL.

If at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child, a referral should be made to the children's social care services (Integrated Front Door) immediately. ANY PERSON CAN MAKE A REFERRAL, but they must then inform the DSL.

### **Children who need a social worker:**

At Pennthorpe we recognise that when a child has a social worker, it is an indicator that the child is more at risk than most pupils.

This may mean that they are more vulnerable to further harm, as well as facing educational barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and poor mental health.

We take these needs into account when making plans to support pupils who have a social worker. Local authorities should share the fact a child has a social worker, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead should hold and 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).

#### **Children requiring mental health support:**

All staff Pennthorpe are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

School staff are not expected or trained to diagnose mental health conditions or issues but may notice behaviours that may be of concern. Staff are however, well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behavior suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. The Deputy Head Pastoral, has strategic responsibility for mental health across the school. We also have an onsite 'Wellbeing Guardian' who is employed to provide more formal wellbeing and mental health support to those in need of it.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures, speaking to the DSL or a deputy or raising a concern via 'My Concern.'

#### **Extremism and Radicalisation – The Prevent Strategy:**

Pennthorpe acknowledges and, if needed, participates in the Prevent program. It is the DSL's responsibility to report any concerns to Channel via the local Prevent Officer.

Staff are briefed on the signs to identify children at risk which can include things such as racist graffiti or comment being made on school premises, extremist content being shared on social media, terrorist or extremist propaganda being shared with pupils or vulnerable pupils being influenced with extreme views.

Definitions of radicalisation and extremism, and indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation are in [Appendix C.](#)

When any member of staff has concerns that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, they should speak with the Head and/or to the DSL although anyone can make a referral if necessary. They should then follow normal safeguarding procedures. If the matter is urgent then West Sussex Police must be contacted by dialing 999. In non-urgent cases where police advice is sought then dial 101. The Department of Education has also set up a dedicated telephone helpline for staff and Governors to raise concerns around Prevent (020 7340 7264).

**Missing Children:**

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. A child who is absent from education can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about others safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always follow up with parents when pupils are not at school. This means we need to have at least two up to date contacts numbers for parents. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if the numbers change.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) the school has:

- Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for pupils who are missing or absent from education (especially on repeat occasions).
- Staff who know the signs and triggers for travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.
- Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take pupils off-roll when they:
  - leave school to be home educated
  - move away from the school's location
  - remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
  - are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or
  - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the school, but fail to take up the place, will be referred to the local authority.

When a pupil leaves the school, we will record the name of the pupil's new school and their expected start date.

**Reporting Missing children:**

The local authority must be notified when the school is to delete a pupil from its register under the above circumstances. This should be done as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, but no later than deleting the pupil's name from the register. It is essential that the school complies with this duty, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Pennthorpe will notify the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, in accordance with agreed procedures and intervals set by the local authority.

Where a pupil known to Children's Social Care is absent without explanation for more than two consecutive school days, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must inform the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) without delay. In such cases, if a child is absent at morning registration, contact with parents or carers should be made as soon as possible to establish the reason for absence.

Depending on the response, it may be necessary to escalate the concern and make an immediate safeguarding referral.

Staff will also report any regular failure to attend and any case of deletion from the register when the next school is not known. In the latter case the school will report the circumstances as soon as possible to the Local Authority in which the pupil lives.

***Elective Home Education:***

Most home educated children have a positive experience; however, these children can be less visible to external agencies and services.

Where a parent has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, the school and any other professional involved e.g. an allocated social worker, will co-ordinate a meeting where possible and before a final decision is made to ensure that the parents have considered the best interests of the child. This is particularly critical for children with SEND, vulnerable children or those with a social worker. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan local authorities will need to review the plan working closely with parents and carers.

***Children with SEND or Certain Health Conditions:***

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. The Governing body at Pennthorpe ensures that the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

At Pennthorpe we provide extra pastoral support and attention for these children, along with ensuring any appropriate support for communication is in place, for example, the school's SENCo is a DDSL and consistently liaises with the DSL and has a specific focus on children with SEND.

***Children in Private Fostering:***

***Definition***

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, in their own home, 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; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents, or cousins.

### **Reporting Requirements**

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, 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 be involved in trafficking, child sexual exploitation or modern-day slavery.

The school has a mandatory duty to report to the local authority where we are aware or suspect that a child is subject to a private fostering arrangement. Although we have a duty to inform the local authority, there is no duty for anyone, including the private foster carer or social workers, to inform the school. However, it should be clear to us who has parental responsibility.

Our staff should notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead when they become aware of private fostering arrangements. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will speak to the family of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform the Local Authority. The school has a duty to inform the local authority of the private fostering arrangements.

On admission to the school, we will take steps to verify the relationship of the adults to the child who is being registered.

### **10. Safeguarding Procedures:**

Our school procedures for safeguarding children will be in line with West Sussex (WSSCP) procedures. We will ensure that:

- a. All members of the governing body understand and fulfil their responsibilities by taking advantage of the West Sussex Safeguarding Procedures Manual. This can be accessed at: <https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/>
- b. We have designated Deputies, and these are named on the front of the policy document. The Deputies have also undertaken relevant Levels 1 and 2 CPLO training. Training is kept up to date regularly and undertaken at least every 2 years.
- c. Staff are frequently reminded about the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures, to allow them to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse, through staff training, updates and Staff Meetings.
- d. All members of staff, volunteers and Governors know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse and know that anyone can make a referral if necessary.
- e. All parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members regarding child protection procedures through publication of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on the school website.

- f. We have clear guidelines for outside agencies using our facilities for lettings to external organisations. These are outlined in the Hire Agreement.
- g. Community users or any other groups organising activities for children on our site but not working with our pupils, are aware of the school's requirements with regard to child protection. These are clearly outlined in the Hire Agreement.
- h. Assurance is obtained by the school that appropriate child protection checks, and procedures apply to staff employed by other organisations but working with the school's pupils on other sites or in other institutions. These are stored securely in the Pastoral Office.
- i. Our selection and recruitment of staff procedures include checks for their suitability with the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- j. Any member of staff found not suitable to work with children will be notified to the appropriate bodies (including the DBS and TRA) as soon as possible after leaving the school. This includes where a teacher has been dismissed or would have been dismissed had he/she not resigned; a prohibition order may be appropriate. The reasons such an order would be considered are: 'unacceptable professional conduct', 'conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute' or a 'conviction, at any time, for a relevant offence'.
- k. The name of the designated member of staff for Child Protection, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, will be clearly advertised in the school, with a statement explaining the school's role in referring and monitoring cases of suspected abuse.
- l. All new members of staff (including volunteers) and Governors will be given a copy of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Part I (in full) and Annex B where appropriate, of the KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2025), with the Designated Safeguarding Lead's name clearly displayed, and access to further information to develop their understanding of safeguarding as part of their induction into the school.
- m. All recruitment will be carried out in line with our 'Safer Recruitment' Policy which details rigorous checks required including appropriate checking of references, career history and reasons for leaving previous employment. Wherever possible, applicants will be interviewed by at least two people, one of whom will be accredited for Safer Recruitment in Education.
- n. Our policy and procedures will be reviewed annually, and any deficiency will be remedied immediately and without delay.

## **11. Reporting and Referral Procedures:**

It is important the child receives the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Pennthorpe provides a multitude of forums, discreet and other, as provision for listening. A member of staff only requires reasonable cause for concern regarding potential child abuse in order to act.

## Early Help:

Intervening to support a child before they experience problems lies at the heart of early help.

*Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) defines Early Help as follows:*

*Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area. Some early help is provided through "universal services"<sup>45</sup>, such as education and health services. They are universal services because they are available to all families, regardless of their needs. Other early help services are coordinated by a local authority and/or their partners to address specific concerns within a family and can be described as targeted early help. Examples of these include parenting support, mental health support, youth services, youth offending teams and housing and employment services. Early help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's consent to receive support and services offered. These may be provided before and/or after statutory intervention.*

Any child may benefit from early help, but staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social behavior or criminal behavior, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- 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 or drugs themselves
- has returned to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child
- has an allocated social worker

Pennthorpe understands the importance of children receiving the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating, the importance of acting on and referring the early signs of abuse and neglect, keeping clear records and listening to the views of the child. Central to this is reassessing concerns when situations do not improve, sharing information quickly and challenging inaction.

**Staff who have a concern that a child may be in need, no matter what the level of concern, should report their concerns to the DSL.** All staff should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. Action should be taken to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are at immediate risk.

These concerns will be recorded and tracked internally and discussed with the team of DSLs who will refer to West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP)

<https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/professionals/working-together/west-sussex-continuum-of-need-threshold-guidance/> to decide the next action.

In summary:

***Universal (Level 1):***

Children requiring universal services in the community. They are achieving expected outcomes, and their needs met within universal provision without any additional support.

***Early Help (Level 2):***

Vulnerable children and young people requiring an Early Help offer. Agencies focus on social groups that are at higher risk and those children who are starting to divert from expected outcomes and require additional support for a limited time.

***Targeted Early Help (Level 3):***

Vulnerable children and young people requiring timely intervention. Children are not achieving their expected outcomes and require more intensive, but time limited support from a range of services including Children's Social Care.

***Specialist (Level 4):***

Vulnerable children and young people requiring specialist help. Children require intensive help and support from a limited range of specialist services including Children's Social Care.

Early help is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Timely intervention:** partnership resource is directed at preventing problems before they arise.
- **Integrated working:** children and young people and families receive support for all of their needs through a single offer.
- **Flexible pathway:** that recognises that children and young people will move between different levels of need as their needs and circumstances change.
- **Participation and co-design:** with children and young people and their families.
- **Early help is everyone's responsibility:** it requires everyone to work together to put the child or young person at the centre of everything they do to meet their needs and improve outcomes.

The Early Help Partnership Service can offer support and guidance on all aspects of Early Help Assessment, Family Action Plans and Lead Professional. This includes completing the EHA, signposting of local service to support the identified need, attending TAF meeting. The Early Help Team can be accessed by contacting West Sussex's Integrated Front Door:

Tel: 01403 229900

Email: [WSSchildrensservices@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:WSSchildrensservices@westsussex.gov.uk)

Decisions to seek support for a child in need, or about whom there are concerns relating to radicalisation, would normally be taken in consultation with parents and the child. However, there is no suggestion that their consent is required for a referral when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm. The LSCP referral thresholds will be used by the DSL to assess the most suitable action in each case and determine the difference between a child in need and a child in immediate danger.

### Pennthorpe Procedures:

Key Points in dealing with a disclosure are outlined in more detail in [Appendix D](#):

- It is important to act on and refer early signs of abuse, neglect or radicalisation
- Keep clear records
- Listen to the views of the child
- Reassure if the situation does not improve
- Share the information quickly
- Challenge any inaction

I. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should at all times exercise **professional curiosity** and act on these concerns immediately, following the school's child protection procedures outlined in this policy and speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected. They may also not recognise their experiences as harmful. Children may feel embarrassed, humiliated or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers.

Options will then include:

- managing any support for the child internally via the school's pastoral support processes
- an early help assessment
- a referral to statutory services, (outlined by the West Sussex Threshold document, that includes the criteria, including the level of need) as the child might be in need, is in need or suffering or likely to suffer harm

II. Arriving at the point where information and its interpretation give reasonable cause for concern depends upon the source of information. If the information comes from the child, then the teacher should act immediately and contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead and keep the Head informed. One sentence from the child indicating child abuse or non-accidental injury provides you with 'reasonable grounds' and is sufficient for you to act. This may also apply if clear information comes from a sibling or other adult.

- III. However, considering that many of the signs of child abuse are commonly associated with other medical, social or psychological problems or simply normal child development, a teacher may naturally discuss some initial concerns about a child's mental or physical well-being with other staff (often the Class Teacher or Form Tutor) or the parents/guardians. However, in some cases the parents/guardians may be the abusers and explanations, or comments made by the parents may be sufficient to give the teacher reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse or non-accidental injury.
- IV. Once there are reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse or non-accidental injury, teachers must not contact the parents any further and the following procedure must be implemented immediately.
- V. Make a written report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately via My Concern. When a child has reported what amounts to suspected child abuse or non-accidental injury, then they should be taken to the Designated Safeguarding Lead even before the written report is made. The written report should include the information revealed by the child using their words as best as possible, when the disclosure was made, to whom the disclosure was made, and action taken.
- VI. In dealing with pupil disclosures staff **must**:
  - Remember that the priority is to protect the child (staff and pupils reporting will be protected against retribution)
  - Treat the matter seriously – research has shown that children are very unlikely to fabricate allegations of sexual abuse
  - Receive the child's story and remain calm and reassuring without making promises about confidentiality, listen but do not judge – children who have suffered abuse may have low self-esteem and may withdraw if they detect signs of doubt or revulsion
  - React to what the child tells you with belief and tell the child that they have done the right thing in telling you
  - Indicate to the child what action you will take and make it clear that you will have to inform others (no secrets). Only inform those with a need to know
  - Keep an accurate record of what you have become aware of and what you have done
  - Limit any questioning bearing in mind the 'must not' points below.

**Staff **must not**:**

- Contact the parents: this is the job of the social services
- Interrogate the child if that child has disclosed information, or ask leading questions
- Attempt to investigate the allegations of abuse
- Speak to anyone about whom allegations are made (including colleagues)
- Promise to keep secrets/confidentiality
- Ask a child outright if they or others have suffered abuse
- Make the child feel like they are creating a problem in disclosing any form of abuse or neglect
- In the case of Child-on-Child abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment, staff must not view or forward illegal images of a child. At this point, the school will seek guidance from the DfE 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' and the UKCCIS sexting advice.

The teacher may now withdraw from the immediate process but should remain vigilant. If, however, staff consider that action is not quick enough or insufficient action is being taken by either the Local Authority or the school, staff should raise their concern again.

- VII. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must then seek advice from the Integrated Front Door service and must report all matters of abuse within 24 hours. If the time is outside normal office working hours, then the Designated Safeguarding Lead must contact the Out of Hours Team. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the relevant pastoral staff that a child has been referred to them and “may be the subject of a case conference should the Social Services wish to pursue matters further”.
- VIII. Children who have suffered or who are likely to suffer significant harm should be reported to Children’s Social Care immediately. Those children in need of additional support from one or more agencies should lead to an inter-agency assessment using local WSSC procedures including the West Sussex Continuum of Need and Team Around the Child (TAC) approaches.
- IX. In the case of a pupil being identified as being at risk of radicalisation, the school will consider the level of risk to identify the most appropriate referral which could include Channel or WSSCP.
- X. The Serious Crime Act 2015 sets out a duty on professionals (including teachers) to notify police when they discover that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. In schools, this will usually come from a disclosure (unlike in the medical profession where an observation may have been made).

Teachers must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out; and discuss any such cases with the safeguarding lead and children’s social care. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases.

(Contacts in [Appendix A](#))

- XI. In the case of children absent from education, these should be reported to the Local Authority by the DSL.

**NOTE: Anybody can make a referral and the consent of parents may not be required when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm.**

- XII. If it is necessary for the child to be taken to hospital, then hand the child over to the direct care of medical staff informing them that non-accidental injury is suspected. A member of staff must stay with the child until the social worker arrives.
- XIII. A social worker will arrive either at the school or the Hospital as is appropriate. The Designated Safeguarding Lead in collaboration with staff involved in the case must complete a report form, detailing signs observed, action taken and outcomes of contact with other agencies, and send it as soon as possible to the appropriate department of the Local Education Authority (LEA), SSCB and Social Services.

- XIV. If a parent arrives to collect the child before the social worker has arrived, then the member of staff must remember that he/she has no right to prevent contact between the child and the parents/guardians. However, if there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, the Police should be immediately contacted and fully informed.
- XV. The social worker(s) will decide on what action to take, and it is the Social Services who must contact the parents/guardians. The Designated Safeguarding Local Authority (LA) should inform the member of staff who first reported the concern as to what action has been taken.
- XVI. Once a strategy for procuring support has been agreed, all parties should be kept well informed of developments as appropriate. Following procedures need not necessarily imply that further action is inevitable.
- XVII. If staff are still concerned about the child after Social Services have acted or even after a case conference has occurred then they must ask the Designated Safeguarding Lead to inform the Key Worker, and if necessary, request that the case conference be reconvened.
- XVIII. It is important that at all stages in the above procedure staff make detailed written records of all their reports and actions. Before forwarding reports on for further action to take place, it is recommended that staff make and securely retain copies of any reports or notes that they forward. Notes should be made of the relevant parts of conversations and phone calls, e.g. their general content and 'Who is to do what?' – these notes should be included in reports.
- XIX. Once you have passed the child into the system, withdraw from the process. It is not appropriate to talk to the child or to support further. However, when a pupil has trusted you enough to disclose, they may feel the desire to return to talk (remember that investigations can sometimes take months). In such a situation, tell them that you cannot comment or advise, as to do so may affect their security and safety both in the short and long term – however, you can listen! Any 'discussion' could be misused in court by the defense lawyers as evidence against the teacher and the child.

**12. Allegations and Concerns Related to Adults Working within school (as a teacher, supply teacher, other staff, volunteers or contractors):**

At Pennthorpe we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may harm children, including governors, volunteers, supply teachers, contractors, volunteers and agency staff. Any concerns about the conduct of other adults in the school should be taken to the Head without delay; any concerns about the Head should go to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted by the Clerk to the Governors.

Staff (including volunteers, supply staff and contractors) must protect themselves and staff should bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can sometimes be misconstrued. It is important not to touch pupils, however casually, in ways or on parts of the body that might be considered indecent.

Staff should also exercise prudence and common sense in ensuring that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or allegations of harm to a pupil. Pennthorpe's expectations are laid out clearly in the Staff Code of Conduct. One-to-one tuition, for example, should take place in public areas; in rooms which are easy to see into and, ideally, with the door ajar. Staff should be particularly wary of inappropriate electronic communication with pupils. No staff should accept current pupils as 'friends' on social networking sites for example. (See the Acceptable Use Policy)

Concerns may come from various sources, for example, a suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

The Head has to decide whether the concern is an allegation or low-level concern. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

There are two levels of allegations/concerns:

- Allegations that may meet the harm threshold (allegations that might indicate that a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in their present positions, or in any capacity with children in a school.)
- Allegations/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold i.e. low level concerns

#### *Allegations and Concerns:*

It is an allegation if the person has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates 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 (also includes behaviour outside the school).

The school has procedures for dealing with allegations/concerns against staff (including teachers, volunteers, supply staff and contractors) who work in school that aim to strike a balance between the need to protect children from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded allegations. The Whistleblowing Policy outlines the procedures for staff members to raise their concerns in confidence.

When pupils or other adults make such an allegation against or raise a concern about a member of staff, the '*Procedure for Investigating and Supporting Allegations/ Concerns raised in Relation to Staff*' must be followed (see [Appendix F.](#)) This is in line with the local authority arrangements for managing allegations.

The school will have two priorities:

- Looking after the welfare of the pupil. The DSL is responsible for ensuring the child is not at risk and referring cases.

- Investigating and supporting the person subject to the allegation. In all cases, if an allegation is made against a member of staff, the quick resolution of that allegation will be a clear priority to the benefit of all concerned and all unnecessary delays will be eradicated.

If any allegation is made against a member of school staff, the Head must be informed immediately and without delay. A 'Case Manager' will lead any investigation. If the Head is unavailable, the Chairman of Governors should be told at once, through the Clerk to the Governors. The Head or Chairman of Governors will then report the matter to the LADO without delay and within one working day. Before contacting the LADO, the school will conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation.

If the Head is involved in the allegation, staff should immediately contact the Chairman of Governors via the clerk to the Governors without the Head being informed. If suspicions concern the conduct of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, then the member of staff must report directly to the Head. At this stage, after hearing a child's allegation, no discussion should be initiated by school staff with the Head. The Chairman of Governors will then report the matter to the LADO without delay and within one working day.

Where there is a lack of resource within the school or the nature of the allegation requires it, the allegation will require an independent investigator. These can be allocated via the local authority or via the school's association membership.

*Low-level Concerns (concerns that do not meet the Harms Threshold) (see also staff code of conduct which includes low level concerns policy):*

Concerns may be graded Low-level if the concern does not meet the criteria for an allegation and the person has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work.

A low level concerns 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, may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct or doesn't meet that allegation threshold or will otherwise not be considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO. The LADO should be liaised with where there is any doubt as to whether a report should be made.

Example behaviours include, but are not limited to:

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

Low level concerns may arise from a variety of sources including: suspicion, complaint, a disclosure (by child or adult) or during vetting checks.

Low Level Concerns should be reported to the Head. Staff should be encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards. Reports about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If the concern has been raised via a third party, the Head should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

*Record Keeping of Low-Level Concerns:*

Low-level concerns should be recorded in writing, including:

- details of the concern
- context in which the concern arose
- evidence collected by the Head/DSL where the concern has been raised via third party
- the decision, categorising the type of behaviour
- action taken
- the rationale for decisions and action taken
- name of individual sharing their concerns (if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible)

Records will be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. The school will fulfill its Data Retention Policy and determine how long it retains such information, but it is recommended that it is kept at least until the individual leaves their employment.

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. If a concerning pattern of behaviour is identified and now meets the criteria for an allegation, then the matter should be referred to the LADO.

The records' review might identify that there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the behaviour to occur. This might mean that policies or processes could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

*Record Keeping Of all Allegations:*

For all allegations, other than those found to have been malicious or false, the following information will be kept on the file of the person accused:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, and decisions reached and whether the outcome was substantiated, unsubstantiated, or unfounded.
- A copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by children's social care or the police.

- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference. Substantiated allegations will be included in references; the information will be factual and will not include opinions.

### 13. Record Keeping:

All staff are required to record accurately information that may be required in respect of child protection. If a child discloses, record the precise information as soon as possible, with date, event, action taken, and sign and date the record via My Concern. It is very important for staff to distinguish between fact, observation, allegation, and opinion but if staff have any doubts, staff should discuss with the DSL. Failure to make a report constitutes an offence.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions are recorded in writing on 'My Concern.' Records include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

All staff records will be automatically passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead via the My Concern software for storage and action. Records should not be kept in the child's normal record file but in a separate and secure place. We keep records in a secure location online, have clear records of pupil progress, maintaining sound policies on confidentiality, providing information to other professionals, submitting reports to case conferences and attending case conferences if required.

Records are kept confidential and stored securely until the child's 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday on My Concern. Records are copied and passed on to the child's next school. In accordance with the terms of reference of the 'Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse' all schools are required to retain information which relates to allegations (substantiated or not) of organisations and individuals who may have been involved in, or have knowledge of, child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation; allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals having engaged in sexual activity with, or having a sexual interest in, children; institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse or other exploitation.

#### Information Sharing:

The school's normal policies for data retention and destruction are subject to our overriding responsibilities to cooperate with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) and are based on the guidance document 'Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services' (DfE, 2018). The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent.

In cases of alleged child abuse which come to court, child protection records may be required by the court. Information required by the court should be given to the officers of the court and not to other persons who may use it as evidence. It is not necessary for other background information on the child to be released and this can only be done with parental permission.

In all cases which involve death or serious harm to a child when abuse is confirmed or suspected, the West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSSCP) will require a swift response to requests for information from all agencies including schools. Records must be made available to the Case Review Committee. In addition, interviews within the Education Department involving key personnel may be required, to assess the quality of decisions made and actions taken.

#### **14. Compliance:**

This policy is regularly updated in order that Pennthorpe School complies with new legislation and good practice.

Currently the school's policy for 'Child Protection' is consistent with, and so reinforces:

- The Children Act 1989, sections 175 and 176, and 2004
- The Framework for the assessment of Children in Need and their Families 2002
- Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (SCSRE 2007)
- The Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the Scene from Birth to Five
- Every Child Matters: Change for Children
- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation 2009
- Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 2
- DfE Singleton Report – the review of safeguarding in Independent Schools and Boarding Schools in England
- Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff 2011
- The Education Act 1993 & 2002
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which contends that all children have an inalienable right to protection from harm and the principles of the Children Act (1989 and 2004) which states that the welfare of the child is of paramount consideration.
- Inspecting Safeguarding: WHO 2013
- Runaways: DfE 2014
- Child Sexual Exploitation: Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Nov 2011
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (SVSH), 2021
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education 2025
- Actions for Early Years and Childcare Providers during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak 2021

and is in line with government publications:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023, incorporating Information Sharing
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), September 2025
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales (updated March 2024) incorporating The Prevent duty: Departmental advice for schools and childminders (June 2015) and The use of social media for on-line radicalization (July 2015).

**Further advice on child protection is available from:**

NSPCC: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Childline: <http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>

National Crime Agency [CEOP](#) Education Programme: Protecting children and young people from online child sexual abuse through education

National Crime Agency's [CEOP](#) Safety Centre

Anti-Bullying Alliance: <http://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>

Beat Bullying: <https://www.bullying.co.uk/>

The UK Safer Internet Centre: <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about>

**The school will remedy any deficiencies and weaknesses found in this policy and procedures without delay, and the policy and procedures, and their implementation, will be shaped and discussed by all Pennthorpe staff, monitored and evaluated by the SLT. The Governors review and agree this policy annually.**

## 15. Appendix A: Contacts

**DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL):** Grace Partridge - [gpartridge@pennthorpe.com](mailto:gpartridge@pennthorpe.com)

**Telephone:** School Office – 01403 822438

**Safeguarding Deputies (DDSL's):**

Victoria Tso – [vtso@pennthorpe.com](mailto:vtso@pennthorpe.com)

Chris Murray – [cmurray@pennthorpe.com](mailto:cmurray@pennthorpe.com)

Charlotte Murray - [charlottemurray@pennthorpe.com](mailto:charlottemurray@pennthorpe.com)

Charlotte Gallina Breese - [cgallinabreese@pennthorpe.com](mailto:cgallinabreese@pennthorpe.com)

Children in need should be referred to West Sussex Children's Social Care, usually by the DSL .

West Sussex's **Integrated Front Door** is the single point of contact for safety concerns about a young person or child. They can be contacted as follows:

**Normal Hours:** 01403 229900

**Out of Hours:** 0330 222 6664

[WSChildrenServices@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:WSChildrenServices@westsussex.gov.uk)

**West Sussex Children Safeguarding Partnership,**

Floor 1,  
County Hall North,  
Chart Way,  
Horsham,  
West Sussex,  
RH12 1XH

[wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:wsscp@westsussex.gov.uk)

- Allegations against staff should be made to **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)/Children's Safeguarding Managers:** 0330 222 6450

[LADO@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@westsussex.gov.uk)

- **For advice on Extremism, please contact the DfE dedicated helpline/email for staff and Governors to raise concerns about extremism** 020 7340 7264

[counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk)

- To report **FGM**, please contact Local Police force 101 (the non-emergency police number) Ext 530214.

<http://www.sussex.police.uk/>

**West Sussex Safeguarding in Education Team:**

The Safeguarding in Education Team, including the MASH Education Advisers, can be contacted on 0330 222 4030 or by email to [Safeguarding.Education@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Safeguarding.Education@westsussex.gov.uk)

**Support and Advice about Extremism:**

West Sussex Prevent Team: Email [Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Beverly.knight@westsussex.gov.uk)

Local police force: 01273 475432 or email [prevent@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:prevent@sussex.pnn.police.uk)

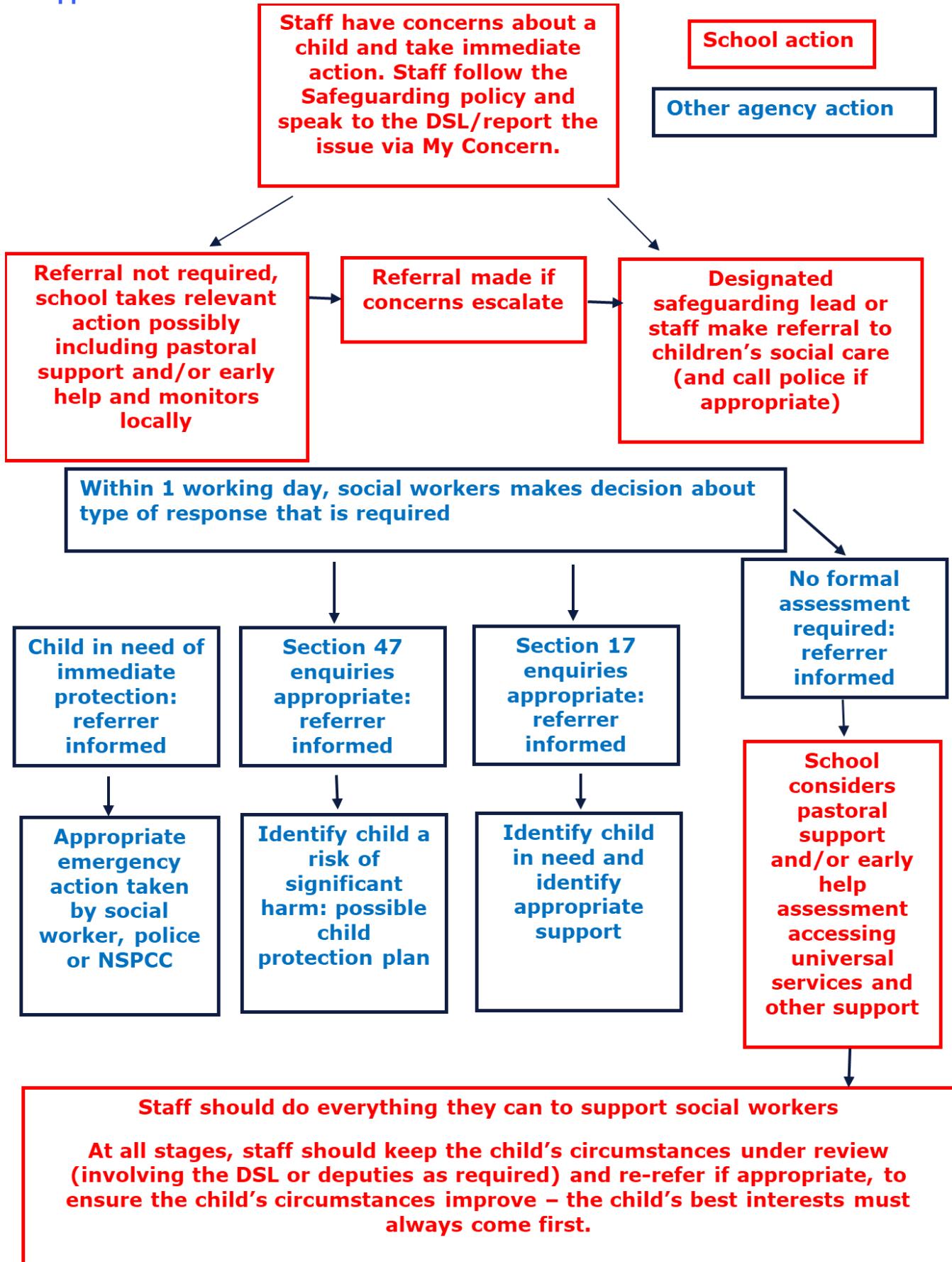
Non-emergency telephone number: 101 and talk to the Prevent Officers  
DfE contact telephone helpline and mailbox for non-emergency advice: 020 7340 7264 or  
[counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk)

**Whistleblowing:**

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. The NSPCC's 'What You Can Do To Report Abuse' dedicated helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled in their school.\_

Staff can call: 0808 800 5000 or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

**16. Appendix B: Actions where there are concerns about a child**



## 17. Appendix C: Types of child abuse and symptoms

All definitions in this appendix as noted in quotation marks, are taken from (*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025*)

### 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.

Child abuse can be categorised into:

- Physical Abuse (including self-harming)
- Emotional Abuse (including mental health, body image and stress)
- Sexual Abuse
  - By adults
  - By other young people
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Neglect
- Ill treatment that is not physical and includes the impact of witnessing the ill-treatment of others  
e.g. all forms of Domestic Abuse
- Child on Child Abuse
- Serious Violence
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE): Sexual Violence and sexual harassment between children in schools
- Domestic Abuse
- Homelessness
- Children and the Court System
- Children Absent from Education
- Children with family members in prison
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- County lines
- Honor Based Violence (HBV):
  - Forced Marriage
  - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

These different types of abuse require different approaches. A child suffering from physical abuse may be in immediate and serious danger. Action should, therefore, be taken immediately. With other forms of abuse there is a need to ensure that adequate information is gathered. There is also a need to make sure that grounds for suspicion have been adequately investigated and recorded. The need to collate information must be balanced against the need for urgent action. If there are reasonable grounds for

suspicion, then a decision to monitor the situation should only be taken after consultation. A situation that should cause particular concern is that of a child who fails to thrive without any obvious reason. In such a situation, a medical investigation will be required to consider the causes.

### Physical Abuse:

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

Typical signs include:

- Bruising:
- Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered as non-accidental unless there is evidence, or an adequate explanation provided:
  - Any bruising to a non-independently mobile child e.g. disabled or pre-walking. This should be immediately referred to SSCB.
  - Bruising in or around the mouth, particularly in small babies
  - Repeated or multiple bruising to the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
  - Two simultaneously bruised eyes without bruising to the forehead
  - Variation in colour possibly indicating bruising at different times
  - The outline of an object e.g. a belt, handprints, or hair brush
  - Bruising or tears around or behind the ears
  - Bruising around the face
  - Grasp marks on small children
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks, or thighs.
- Slap marks – these may be visible on cheeks or buttocks.
- Twin bruises on either side of the mouth or cheeks – can be caused by pinching or grabbing, sometimes to force a child to eat or to stop a child from talking.
- Cuts related to self-harming using scissors, knives, razor blades
- Grip marks on arms or trunk – found on babies who are handled roughly or held down in a violent way. Gripping bruises on the arm or trunk can be associated with shaking a child. Shaking can cause one of the most serious injuries to a child, a brain hemorrhage. X-rays and other tests are required to fully diagnose the effects of shaking. Grip marks can also be indicative of sexual abuse.
- Black eyes – are mostly caused by an object such as a fist meeting the eye socket. NB A heavy bang on the nose, however, can cause bruising to spread around the eye but a doctor will be able to tell if this has occurred.
- Damage to the mouth – e.g. bruised/cut lips or torn skin where the upper lip joins the mouth.
- Bite marks
- Fractures – especially in children under the age of 2
- Poisoning and other drug misuse – e.g. overuse of sedatives
- Burns and/or scalds – a round red burn on tender, non-protruding parts like the mouth, inside arms and on the genitals will almost certainly have been deliberately inflicted. Any burns that appear to be cigarette burns should be cause for concern. Some types of scalds known as 'dipping scalds' are always cause for concern. An experienced person will notice skin splashes caused

when a child accidentally knocks over a cup of tea. In contrast, a child who has been deliberately 'dipped' in a hot bath will not have splash marks.

**Emotional Abuse:**

*'the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.'*

*'It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say, how they communicate or their physical body. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.'*

**Sexual Abuse:**

*'involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware what is happening.'*

*'The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, running and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. This includes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).'*

Typical signs include:

- A detailed sexual knowledge inappropriate to the age of the child.
- Behaviour that is excessively affectionate or sexual towards other children or adults.
- Lack of trust in adults (particularly any marked fear of men)
- Attempts to inform by making a disclosure about sexual abuse often begins by the initial sharing of limited information with one adult. It is also very characteristic of such children that they have an excessive pre-occupation with secrecy and try to bind the adults to secrecy or confidentiality.
- A fear of medical examinations.
- A fear of being alone – this applies to friends, families, neighbours, baby-sitters
- A sudden loss of appetite, compulsive eating, or development of an eating disorder.
- Self-harming
- Excessive masturbation is especially worrying when it takes place in public.
- Promiscuity
- Unusually explicit or detailed sex play in younger children.
- Sexual approaches or assaults – on other children or adults.
- Pregnancy, urinary tract infections (UTI), sexually transmitted disease (STD) are all cause for immediate concern in young children, or in adolescents if his/her partner cannot be identified.

- Bruising to the breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen, thighs, and genital/rectal areas. Bruises may be confined to grip marks where a child has been held so that sexual abuse can take place.
- Discomfort or pain particularly in the genital areas.
- The drawing of pornographic or sexually explicit images.

### **Sexual Abuse by Young People**

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate, or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers, or children.

### **Developmental Sexual Activity**

Encompasses those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional, and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

### **Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour**

Can be inappropriate socially, in appropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person. It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. it may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed.

If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity included any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base.

### **Assessment**

In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration. The presence of exploitation in terms of:

- **Equality** – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies
- **Consent** – agreement including all the following:
  - Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience
  - Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed
  - Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives

- Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally
- Voluntary decision
- Mental competence
- **Coercion** – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance.

In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide. Further information and advice are available in the West Sussex multi-agency protocol “Working with Sexually Active Young People” available at <http://www.westsussexscb.org.uk/> by choosing Safeguarding Children – Protocols and Guidance for Professionals. Assessment, Consultation and Therapy (ACT) 01306 745310 can also assist professionals in identifying sexual behaviour of concern in children and adolescents.

### Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

*‘Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.*

*The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology. ‘*

Indicators of child sexual exploitation may include:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones, etc. without plausible explanation
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections
- Evidence of/suspicion of physical or sexual assault
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers)
- Frequenting areas known for sex work
- Concerning use of internet or other social media
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Although the following vulnerabilities increase the risk of child sexual exploitation, it must be remembered that not all children with these indicators will be exploited. Child sexual exploitation can occur without any of these issues.

Potential vulnerabilities include:

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse

- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Social isolation or social difficulties
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality
- Economic vulnerability
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited
- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
- Sexual identity.

More information can be found in: 'Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners' (DfE 2017)

### **Neglect:**

*'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.'*

*Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:*

- *Provide adequate food and clothing (including exclusion from home or abandonment)*
- *protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger*
- *ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)*
- *ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

*It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.'*

Typical signs of Physical Neglect are:

- **Underweight** – a child may be frequently hungry or pre-occupied with food or in the habit of stealing food or with the intention of procuring food. There is cause for concern where a persistently underweight child gains weight when away from home, for example, when in hospital or on a school trip. Some children lose weight or fail to gain weight during school holidays when school lunches are not available, and this is a cause for concern.
- **Inadequately clad** – a distinction needs to be made between situations where children are inadequately clad, dirty or smelly because they come from homes where neatness and cleanliness are unimportant and those where the lack of care is preventing the child from thriving.

Persistent stomach-aches, feeling unwell, and apparent anorexia can be associated with Physical neglect.

### **Child-on-Child Abuse:**

**All** staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as Child-on-Child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff

recognise the indicators and signs of Child-on-Child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

**All** staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in school it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding Child-on-Child abuse, they should speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy).

**Pennthorpe has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.** It is essential that **all** staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it. It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys’ perpetrators, but all Child-on-Child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Children who identify as LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+, can be targeted by other children and may be at an additional risk of safeguarding concerns.

#### *Forms of CHILD-ON-CHILD Abuse*

Child-on-Child Abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between young people
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and seminude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

**All** staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regards to Child-on-Child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

Children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers and other children, specifically pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. Such abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

*Procedures to Minimise Child on Child Abuse:*

All pupils and members of staff have a responsibility to work together to ensure that abuse does not occur, or where it is found, action is taken.

For this to happen, 'ground rules' are set in an age-appropriate manner, during the pupil induction process, to ensure that pupils are aware of:

- How they are expected to behave in accordance with the school's set of rules and core values.
- What constitutes as abuse
- How any incidents of abuse will be addressed by the school
- The importance of adhering to fundamental British values.

The school will minimise the risk of allegations against other pupils by providing the following:

- PHSE and RSE as part of the curriculum
- An effective system for pupils to raise concerns with staff which:
  - Is well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children through public promotion and consistent support in pastoral periods
  - Assures children have confidence to report abuse
  - Enables children to know that their concerns will be treated seriously
- A robust risk assessment for pupils that are identified as posing a potential risk
- Appropriate targeted work for pupils identified as being at a potential risk
- Pastoral support systems – this includes Form Tutors, Heads of Year, Student Wellbeing Ambassadors, availability of an onsite Wellbeing Guardian and Designated Safeguarding Team.
- Providing a safe space for LGBT children to speak with a trusted adult using our Pastoral Support Systems outlined above.

*Systems for Managing Child-on-Child Abuse:*

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse but reference should be made to the local authority threshold document: bullying, fighting and harassment between children are not generally seen as child protection issues. These issues will be dealt with using the processes defined in the 'Behaviour Management: Rewards and Sanctions' Policy and the 'Anti-Bullying and Cyber-Bullying' Policy.

Any professional who feels that a child has abused another child should notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, including if the incident of abuse takes place off the school premises, although any member can make a referral to the children's social care services (Integrated Front Door).

If the concern indicates that a potential crime has taken place, or that with safeguarding implications, it may be necessary to call the children's social care services or the police. In cases where nudes or semi-nudes have been shared, we follow guidance given to schools by the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS): Sharing nudes and semi-nudes (December 2020).

The concern should be recorded in the school's child protection concerns record via 'My Concern', along with any further details or outcomes and should be made in accordance with the referral threshold set by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

After the concern has been recorded, a strategy discussion will be held with the relevant referring agency, and where necessary the police, youth offending service or sexually harmful behaviour team.

This discussion will consider:

- Whether the perpetrator poses a continuing risk to any child.
- How to protect any child at immediate risk of significant harm.
- Whether a section 47 enquiry should be made and how it should be handled.
- What action should be taken in respect of the alleged perpetrator, such as arranging a risk management meeting.

A section 47 enquiry is initiated if a child is taken into police protection, is the subject of an emergency protection order, or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. It is not appropriate to initiate a section 47 enquiry unless the perpetrator is continuously at risk of causing harm.

Any action taken in respect of the perpetrator will be based on the risk they pose to other children and what actions can be taken to minimise this risk. If the perpetrator is over 10 years old, consideration will be given to whether action under the criminal justice system is appropriate.

It is essential that the alleged perpetrator be provided with an education and safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions required under the school's 'Behaviour Management: Rewards and Sanctions' Policy.

An assessment of the perpetrator's needs will be carried out, taking into consideration:

- The nature, extent, and context of the abusive behaviour.
- The child's development, family, and social circumstances.
- Whether the child appears to pose a continuing risk, and who is likely to be at risk from him/her.
- The nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress because of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- The proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children

may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials.

Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from the children's social care services, specialist sexual violence services and the police.

It is important that if the alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file.

The parents/carers of all children involved will be informed of the incident and included in a strategy discussion about what will happen next. A risk assessment will be considered at this time to protect all parties involved, as well as arrangements for a supervision plan.

Any investigation will be led by the police or social care team, unless thresholds for these services are not met, in which case the school will undertake a thorough investigation.

In the event of disclosures, victims and perpetrators will be treated as being 'at risk'. Support will be offered to the victim and to any other child affected through counselling and support in and out of school.

During the strategy discussion it is important to consider what action is necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the victim, and what further enquiries are required to assess any further risk.

If the victim is still at risk of harm, a child protection conference may be arranged during the strategy discussion.

A child protection conference may conclude that the victim is not in need of a child protection plan but may be in need of support to address any issues arising from the abuse, e.g. the school may need to provide a counselling service to help with the victim's anxiety following an incident of abuse.

If the victim and perpetrator are members of the same family/household, before making any arrangements to return the perpetrator to the family/household, it is critical to ensure that the victim's views have been heard and that they feel safe.

A supervision plan may be implemented, in order to ensure that the victim is suitably protected from the incident reoccurring; this is often achieved by ensuring the children involved in the incident are separated.

Allegations will be recorded on My Concern and/or the sanctions register. All incidents and behaviours will be signed and dated by a senior member of staff.

Full details of how to respond to a report of Child-on-Child abuse, sexual harassment or sexual violence can be found in [Appendix E](#).

### **Serious Violence:**

**All** staff should be aware of indicators which may signal that a child is at risk from or is involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships and relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in 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.

**All** staff should be aware of the associated risks and understand the measures in place to manage these. Further advice is available in the Governments '*Preventing Youth Violence and Gang Involvement*' and '*Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines guidance*'.

### **Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children:**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, likely, adversely affect their educational attainment. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBTQ+ children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

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

Details for managing a report of Child-on-Child abuse, sexual harassment or sexual violence can be found detailed in [Appendix E](#).

### **Rape:**

A person commits an offence of rape if:

- he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with his penis,
- the other person does not consent to the penetration and
- does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.

### **Assault by Penetration:**

A person commits an offence if:

- s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person with a part of her/his body or anything else,

- the penetration is sexual
- the other person does not consent to the penetration and does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.

**Sexual Assault:**

A person commits an offence of sexual assault if:

- s/he intentionally touches another person,
- the touching is sexual,
- the other person does not consent to the touching and does not reasonably believe that the other person consents.

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

**Sexual harassment:**

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

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

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual "jokes" or taunting
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
  - non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos
  - sexualised online bullying
  - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and
  - sexual exploitation; coercion and threats

**Domestic Abuse:**

In April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent and introduced a statutory definition for the first time. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Part 1) defines domestic abuse as any of the following behaviours, either as a pattern of behaviour, or as a single incident, between two people over the age of 16, who are 'personally connected' to each other:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour

- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic/financial abuse (adverse effect of the victim to acquire, use or maintain money or other property; or obtain goods or services); and
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

People are 'personally connected' when they are, or have been, married to each other or civil partners; or have agreed to marry or become civil partners. If the two people have been in an intimate relationship with each other, have shared parental responsibility for the same child, or they are relatives.

The definition of Domestic Abuse applies to children if they see or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse; and they are related to the abusive person.

The definition can be found here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/part/1/enacted>

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child/adolescent to parent violence and 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.

Operation Encompass assists police and schools to work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. If police are called to a domestic abuse incident, they will call the DSL in school before the children arrive at school the next day.

There is also a National Domestic Abuse Helpline which can be called, free of charge, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.

#### **Homelessness:**

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes 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, this does not, and should not, replace a referral to the children's social care services where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

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

### **Children and the Court System:**

Children are sometime 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 produced by the DfE which explain each step of the process and support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

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

### **Children with family members in prison:**

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

### **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE):**

Criminal exploitation of children is where an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or threat of violence.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology.

Some of the following can be indicators of CCE:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- children who misuse drugs and alcohol
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

### **County Lines:**

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas within the UK using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

Exploitation is an integral part of the county lines offending model with children and vulnerable adults exploited to move (and store) 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 several locations including schools. Children are often recruited to move drugs and money between locations and are known to be exposed to techniques such as ‘plugging’, where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection. Children can easily

become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

One of the ways of identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes (both from home and school), when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs and a referral to the National Referral Mechanism<sup>103</sup> should be considered. If a child is suspected to be at risk of or involved in county lines, a safeguarding referral should be considered alongside consideration of availability of local services/third sector providers who offer support to victims of county lines exploitation.

**So Called Honor Based Abuse (HBA):**

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses 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. All forms of so called HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such.

Where staff are concerned that a child might be at risk of HBA, they must contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a matter of urgency. As appropriate, they will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multiagency liaison with the police and the children's social care services.

**Forced Marriage (FM):**

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales (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 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used). A forced marriage is one entered 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. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture to coerce a person into marriage. Schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

The Forced Marriage Unit has published statutory guidance and multi-agency guidelines, with pages 35-36 of which focus on the role of schools and colleges. School and college staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email [fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk).

Additional resources: [Forced Marriage Resource Pack](#)

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):**

Female genital mutilation refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is illegal in the UK. FGM typically takes place between birth and around 15 years old; however, it is believed that most cases happen between the ages of 5 and 8.

Risk factors for FGM include:

- low level of integration into UK society
- mother or a sister who has undergone FGM
- girls who are withdrawn from PSHE
- visiting female elder from the country of origin
- being taken on a long holiday to the country of origin
- talk about a 'special' procedure to become a woman

**Symptoms of FGM:**

FGM may be likely if there is a visiting female elder, there is talk of a special procedure or celebration to become a woman, or parents wish to take their daughter out-of-school to visit an 'at-risk' country (especially before the summer holidays), or parents who wish to withdraw their children from learning about FGM. Staff should not assume that FGM only happens outside the UK.

Indications that FGM may have already taken place may include:

- difficulty walking, sitting or standing and may even look uncomfortable.
- spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating.
- spending long periods of time away from a classroom during the day with bladder or menstrual problems.
- frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems.
- prolonged or repeated absences from school or college, especially with noticeable behaviour changes (e.g. withdrawal or depression) on the girl's return
- reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations.
- confiding in a professional without being explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.
- talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

It is essential that staff are aware of FGM practices and the need to look for signs, symptoms, and other indicators of FGM.

***The 'One Chance' rule***

As with Forced Marriage there is the 'One Chance' rule. It is essential that settings/schools/colleges act **without delay** and call the Contact centre. All staff have a **legal obligation** to report to the police if they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.

***Reporting FGM***

Reporting guidance can be found at: <http://safeguarding.link/fgmreporting>

The mandatory reporting procedures state:

- Make and oral report by calling 101
- Where there is a risk to life or serious immediate harm, report to the police dialing 999
- Reports should be made as soon as possible and best practice is for them to be made by close of the next working day

### Counter Terrorism (The Prevent Duty):

- As part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, schools have a duty to 'prevent people being drawn into terrorism'. This has become known as the 'Prevent Duty'.
- Where staff are concerned that children and young people are developing extremist views or show signs of becoming radicalized, they should discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead has received training about the Prevent Duty and tackling extremism and is able to support staff with any concerns they may have.
- We use the curriculum to ensure that children and young people understand how people with extreme views share these with others, especially using the internet.
- Staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may need help or protection. Staff should 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) making a Prevent referral. See [guidance](#).
- 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.

### Recognising Extremism

Early indicators of radicalisation or extremism may include (see [guidance](#)):

- showing sympathy for extremist causes
- glorifying violence, especially to other faiths or cultures
- making remarks or comments about being at extremist events or rallies outside school
- evidence of possessing illegal or extremist literature
- advocating messages like illegal organisations or other extremist groups
- out of character changes in dress, behaviour and peer relationships (but there are also very powerful narratives, programmes and networks that young people can come across online so involvement with particular groups may not be apparent.)
- secretive behavior
- online searches or sharing extremist messages or social profiles
- intolerance of difference, including faith, culture, gender, race, or sexuality
- graffiti, artwork or writing that displays extremist themes
- attempts to impose extremist views or practices on others
- verbalising anti-Western or anti-British views
- advocating violence towards others

The Department of Education guidance [The Prevent Duty](#) can be accessed via this link.

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism when they consider all the other factors relevant to how they carry out their usual functions. Prevent referrals may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they

are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the school may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment.

### The Symptoms of Stress and Distress:

When a child is suffering from any one or more of the previous four 'categories of abuse', he/she will nearly always suffer from/display signs of stress and distress. An abused child is likely to show signs of stress and distress as listed below:

- A lack of concentration and a fall-off in school performance
- Aggressive or hostile behaviour
- Moodiness, depression, irritability, listlessness, fearfulness, tiredness, temper tantrums, short concentration span, acting withdrawn or crying at minor occurrences
- Difficulties in relationships with peers
- Regression to more immature forms of behaviour, e.g. thumb sucking, bed-wetting (or its persistence)
- Self-harming or suicidal behaviour
- Negative body image
- Low self esteem
- Wariness, insecurity, running away or truancy – children who persistently run away from home may be escaping from sexual/physical abuse
- Disturbed sleep
- General personality changes such as unacceptable behaviour or severe attention seeking behaviour
- A sudden change in school performance.

### Signs of Parental Child Abuse:

Particular forms of parental behaviour that could raise or reinforce concerns are:

- Implausible explanations of injuries
- Unwillingness to seek appropriate medical treatment for injuries
- Injured child kept away from school until injuries have healed without adequate reason
- A high level of expressed hostility to the child
- Grossly unrealistic assumptions about child development
- General dislike of child-like behaviour
- Inappropriate labelling of child's behaviour as bad or naughty
- Leaving children unsupervised when they are too young to be left unattended

### Cybercrime

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer).

### Cyber-dependent crimes include:

- unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a school's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded

- ‘Denial of Service’ (Dos or DDoS) attacks or ‘booting’. These are attempts to make a computer, network or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources, and,
- making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above.

Children with particular skills and interest in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime. If there are concerns about a child in this area, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), should consider referring into the Cyber Choices programme. This is a nationwide police programme supported by the Home Office and led by the National Crime Agency, working with regional and local policing. It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low-level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests. Note that Cyber Choices does not currently cover ‘cyber-enabled’ crime such as fraud, purchasing of illegal drugs on-line and child sexual abuse and exploitation, nor other areas of concern such as on-line bullying or general on-line safety. Additional advice can be found at: Cyber Choices, ‘NPCC- When to call the Police’ and National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.GOV.UK.

## 18. Appendix D: Key points to follow if you suspect, or are told of, abuse

Please refer to the full Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy document for more detail, specifically [Section 11 on the Reporting Procedure](#). What follows is a very much condensed version of key actions. **Remember – it could happen here.**

Adults looking after children or young people must be aware of the risk of abuse by adults or other young people. Child abuse can occur in all walks of life and Pennthorpe should not be considered in some way immune. All staff should know what to do if they suspect abuse or are told of abuse. All staff must act if there is reasonable cause for concern.

We believe that all pupils have the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation.

1. **The priority is always to protect the child.**
2. **ALWAYS stop and listen** straightaway to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse. Treat it seriously. A voluntary disclosure from a pupil is nearly always of significance.
3. **Believe, remain calm and reassuring, and do not judge.**
4. **Keep accurate records, keep all original notes however rough they are.**
  - Records must be factually accurate as may be used later in court.
  - The pupil’s own words must be recorded, not your version.
  - Do not embellish or speculate. Clearly state if reporting your view interpretation of their state of mind.
4. **All notes must be signed, dated, and timed.** A form is provided.
5. **DO NOT guarantee confidentiality.**  
Explain that you will pass the matter on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to keep them safe. Reassure that only those needing to know will be informed.

6. **DO NOT ask leading questions** such as: did he/she do X to you? Keep your questions open (is there anything else you want to tell me?) and **do not interrogate**. Neither you nor the Designated Safeguarding Lead is qualified to investigate allegations. Leading questions may jeopardise or compromise possible criminal procedures.
7. **IMMEDIATELY tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead** and pass on your notes as soon as possible. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will refer the matter to the Social Services (and possibly the Police) within 24 hours.
8. **NEVER** think abuse is impossible in the school or that an allegation against someone you know well, and trust is bound to be wrong.
9. Pupils who may be confided in by those being abused (e.g. prefects or Student Wellbeing Ambassadors) are also aware of these main points.
10. In the case of Child-on-Child abuse, **DO NOT** view or forward illegal images of a child. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be directed by the relevant DfE guidance.

## **19. Appendix E: How to respond to a report of child-on-child abuse (including sexual harassment/sexual violence)**

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

If staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they should follow the referral process set out in this Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

### **The immediate response to a report of abuse**

It is important to note that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report, or a member of school staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

The school's initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How we respond to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward. It is essential that 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. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the school should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report or their experience minimised.

**All** staff should be trained to manage a report. Local policies (and training) will dictate exactly how reports should be managed. However, effective safeguarding practice includes:

- if possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy). However, this might not always be possible.
- where the report includes an online element, being aware of searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools) and UKCIS 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education setting.' The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection.
- not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to.
- recognising that a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be anyone on the school staff. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child.
- recognising that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse.
- keeping in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.
- listening carefully to the child, reflecting, using the child's language, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc. It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was.
- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary, including the time and location of the incident. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made.
- only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the opinion of the note taker. Schools and colleges should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation; and;
- informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy), as soon as practically possible, if the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) is not involved in the initial report.
- Any risk and needs assessment should now also consider whether they may have been other victims.

### Risk assessment

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support
- whether there may have been other victims
- the alleged perpetrator(s); and
- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

Risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronic) and will be kept under review. At all times, the school will be actively considering the risks posed to all their pupils and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The school assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals.

Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the school's approach to supporting and protecting their pupils and students and updating their own risk assessment.

### Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment:

Following the report of sexual harassment or sexual violence, it is important for the school to consider:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Some victims may ask the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment experienced. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect the victim and other children. Staff may still lawfully share information if necessary, under the guidance of the DSL.
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed
- the ages of the children involved
- the developmental stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature)
- where a pattern is identified, the school will not only decide on a course of action, but consider whether there are wider cultural issues within the school that enable the inappropriate behavior to occur and what could be done to minimize the risk of it happening again.

- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between young people
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school staff; and
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation
- intra-familial harms and the impact and support that may be required for the victims' siblings

As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, all staff should act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, the school should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this policy. Immediate consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).

***Children sharing a classroom:***

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Whilst the school establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with children's social care and the police, the alleged perpetrator(s) should be removed from any classes they share with the victim. The school will also carefully consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) a reasonable distance apart on school premises (including during any before or after school-based activities) and on transport to and from the school, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of all children involved and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator(s).

For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing school premises and school transport, should be considered immediately.

***Options to Manage the Report:***

It is important that school considers every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a rule, the school should speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this does not and should not stop the school taking immediate action to safeguard their children, where required.

It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learnt. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the school will decide on a course of action. Consideration should be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur and where appropriate extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The school will either:

***Manage internally***

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the school may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or that referrals need to be made to statutory services and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.

Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. All concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions should be recorded on My Concern.

***Early Help***

In line with above, the school may decide that the children involved do not require referral to statutory services but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent HSB and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. It is particularly important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) know what the Early Help process is and how and where to access support.

Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive: a school could manage internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s).

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded on My Concern.

***Referrals to children's social care***

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, the school will make a referral to local children's social care. At the point of referral to children's social care, the school will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision will be made with the support of children's social care.

If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services. The school will work alongside the social worker. The schools will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the school.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the school takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The school (generally led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy) will be prepared to refer again if we believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm.

If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

*Reporting to the Police*

Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above). It is important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) are clear about the local process for referrals and follow that process.

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed on to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

Where a report has been made to the police, the school will consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

At this stage, the school will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

If it becomes clear that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action, the school will continue to engage with specialist support for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required.

Whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school take do not jeopardise the police investigation.

If the school has questions about the investigation, we will ask the police.

*Considering bail conditions*

The police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm. This could involve the use of police bail with conditions, prior to a suspect appearing in court, or court bail with or without conditions after the first appearance.

Alternatively, the person suspected of an offence could be 'released under investigation' (RUI). People released under RUI can have no conditions attached to their release from custody and it is possible for a person on bail also to have no conditions.

Whatever arrangements are in place, the school will consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within their institution. Particular regard will be given to the additional stress and trauma that might be caused to a victim within the institution; the potential for the suspected person to intimidate the victim or a witness; the need to ensure that any risk management measures strike a balance between management of risk and the rights of an unconvicted person (e.g. rights to privacy, family life, etc.).

### *Managing any delays in the criminal process*

When there are delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system, the schools will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and other children in the school.

### *Response to a Conviction*

If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the school will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children at the school and consider any suitable action in line with the Behaviour Management and Sanctions Policy. This process should include a review of the necessary actions to keep all parties safe and meet their needs. If the perpetrator(s) remains in the same school as the victim, the school will be very clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator(s) now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the school thinks are reasonable and proportionate regarding the perpetrator(s)' timetable.

Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other pupils or students in the school but the school will continue to protect both the victim and the perpetrator especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

Where cases are classified as “no further action” (NFA’d) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the school should continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated or was withdrawn does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded.

### **Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, false or malicious reports**

All concerns, discussions and decision made, and the reasons for these decisions, should be recorded in writing on My Concern. Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children’s social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per our Behaviour Management and Sanctions Policy.

### **Safeguarding and Supporting the victim**

The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim’s daily experience as normal as possible, so that the school is a safe space for them.

The school will consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse. The school is aware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s).

The victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.

The school will consider the proportionality of the response. Support will be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.

***Additional support can include:***

- Early help and children's social care
- SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse.
- Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs) provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- The specialist sexual violence sector can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence. Contact Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust for details of local specialist organisations.
- NHS - Help after rape and sexual assault
- Rape and sexual assault referral centres services can be found at: [Find Rape and sexual assault referral centres](#).
- Childline provides free and confidential advice for children and young people.
- Internet Watch Foundation works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.
- Childline / IWF: Remove a nude image shared online Report Remove is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves

Victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When ongoing support will be required, the school will ask the victim if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult (for example, their form tutor or Designated Safeguarding Lead) to talk to about their needs.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal classroom environment. While the school will avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the victim, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities.

It may be necessary for the school to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time. The school will be prepared for this and will work with children's social care and other agencies as required.

Whilst they should be given all the necessary support to remain in the school, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another school should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers). It is important that if the victim does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens (and should discuss with the victim and, where appropriate their parents or carers as to the most suitable way of doing this) as well as transferring the child protection file.

## **20. Appendix F: Procedure for investigating and supporting allegations/concerns raised in relation to staff**

### **Introduction:**

This procedure should be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a teacher or member of staff (including volunteers and supply staff) has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she will pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children; or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching should be referred to the police.

Where the school is not the employer of the staff member, the school has responsibility to ensure allegations are dealt with appropriately and that they liaise with relevant parties. This includes volunteers and supply staff.

Allegations that a member of staff has abused a pupil or pupils either inside the school premises or during a school trip or visit could be made by:

- Parents
- The abused pupil
- Other members of staff
- Other pupils
- The Police or Social Services
- A third party

An allegation of such seriousness would normally be made immediately and directly to the Head without delay; but if another member of staff is told first, he/she must ensure that the Head is informed immediately. The school's 'Whistleblowing' Policy aims to strike a balance between the need to protect

children from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded allegations. A copy of the policy is available on the school's website.

If the Head is unavailable, the Chairman of Governors should be told at once, through the Clerk to the Governors.

Such allegations are among the most testing issues that any Head or Chairman of Governors is likely to face, and these procedures have been established to meet the need to handle such a situation as sensitively and efficiently as possible. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

In all cases, the quick resolution of any allegation against a member of staff will be a clear priority to all concerned and all unnecessary delays will be eradicated.

These procedures are reviewed on an annual basis by the Safeguarding Governor and DSL.

#### **Allegations Involving the Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead**

In the case of suspected or identified abuse of a child by the Head, the police and/or Social Services have a duty to investigate.

The first person to receive an allegation regarding the Head should take it directly to the Chairman of Governors who should inform the LADO within one working day. At this stage, after hearing a child's allegation, no discussion about the allegation should be initiated by school staff with the Head.

The Chairman of Governors will obtain legal advice before proceeding to the steps outlined above. The Head will normally be suspended for the duration of the investigatory process and asked to vacate his/her school residence, and the Deputy Head will be made acting Head until the conclusion of the investigation and resolution of the issue.

The Head should similarly be told at once of any allegation involving the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. The Chairman of Governors should normally be informed on the same day, and legal advice obtained. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will normally be suspended for the duration of the investigatory process and asked to vacate his/her schoolhouse where appropriate. The Head will be made acting Designated Safeguarding Lead until the conclusion of the investigation and resolution of the issue.

#### **Anonymous Allegations:**

If the Head receives an anonymous allegation of child abuse which names both a member of staff and a child, it will be handled in the same way as if the identity of the person making the allegation was known. Where the allegation names the member of staff; but not the pupil, the Head will normally interview the member of staff, and ask for his or her version of events. It could be appropriate to establish a mentoring or review programme for that individual, or to provide him or her with further training. A record would be kept on the individual's personal file.

### The First Response:

If an allegation is raised against a member of staff or the Head, the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP) Procedures must be followed. A full copy of the WSSCP Procedures Manual is available via their website: <https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/>

We will respond promptly and sensitively to the legitimate concerns of the victim and his or her family. We undertake to:

- Take any allegation of abuse, involving a member of staff, very seriously,
- Establish the facts before jumping to any conclusion,
- Discuss the allegation with the LADO within one working day, see [Appendix G](#) for contact details. It may be necessary at this point to involve and consult with the police or the children's social care services.
- The Head must be informed, if after the initial enquiry; there might be the need for a formal investigation and the school's insurers must be informed.

### The Next Step:

Although a formal investigation is a matter for specialists, where the facts suggest that there may be reasonable grounds for suspecting actual abuse, or grooming of a child, or other criminal behaviour, we will always respond to advice from the LADO which may include:

- Invite the police to conduct the investigation,
- Consider suspending the member of staff (or volunteer or supply staff) concerned. Full consideration will be given to all the options, subject to the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the pupils or pupil concerned and the need for a full and fair investigation.
- Inform the member of staff concerned honestly of the allegation that has been made, unless advised not to by the police or social services. We recognise our duty of care to employees and will provide effective support for anyone facing an allegation. Staff who are the subject of an allegation of this nature will invariably feel threatened and isolated we will advise him or her to contact their Trade Union or Professional Association for advice and support.
- Inform the child's parents or carers in confidence, inviting them to maintain confidentiality whilst the investigation takes place, unless the allegation involves the parents, in which case we will contact the Social Services before making contact. Parents or carers should be made aware of the prohibition on reporting or publishing allegations about teachers in section 141F of the Education Act 2002. If they wish to have reporting restrictions removed, they should seek legal advice.
- In the case of supply staff, agencies should be fully involved and full co-operation should be offered to any investigation. Supply staff should be advised to contact their trade union where possible or a colleague for support. The LO will address information sharing issues to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account by the school during the investigation. The agency will be informed of the school's processes for managing allegations and an HR representative from the agency will be invited to all meetings.

### Support for the Pupil:

Our priority is to safeguard the young people in our care. We will give all the support that we can to a pupil who has been abused. The Head, together with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, will consider how best to support and monitor the pupil concerned through any process of investigation,

liaising closely with parents, guardians, WSSCP agencies involved to identify the support strategies that will be appropriate.

**Suspension:**

Suspension of a member of staff is a neutral act and does not imply that any judgement has been reached about his or her conduct. Suspension is not the default position and will be used only when there is no reasonable alternative. It is a serious step, and we will take legal advice as well as advice from the DO beforehand, and will normally only suspend a member of staff where:

- There is cause to suspect that there is a serious risk of harm to the child,
- The allegations are so serious as to constitute grounds for dismissal, if proven,
- The police are investigating allegations of criminal misconduct.

We recognise fully that we have a duty of care towards all our staff, and we will always:

- Keep an open mind until a conclusion has been reached.
- Interview a member of staff before suspending him or her.
- Keep him or her informed of progress of the investigation.

Any member of staff is entitled to be accompanied by a friend or Trade Union representative.

In cases where the school is made aware that the Secretary of State has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual at the school, it will be necessary to immediately suspend that person from teaching pending the findings of the TRA's investigation.

**Alternatives to Supervision:**

We will always consider whether an alternative to suspension might be appropriate. Possibilities include:

- Giving him or her non-direct contact duties with the child or children concerned
- Ensuring that a second adult is always present in the classroom when the member of staff has contact with children.
- Sending the member of staff on leave
- Moving the child or children to alternative adult supervision, e.g. where the member of staff is a teacher, moving the child to an alternative class making sure that it is clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted

**If the Staff Member resigns:**

The resignation of a member of staff or volunteer mid-way through an investigation would not lead to the investigation being abandoned. The school will always complete every investigation into allegations of child abuse.

**Compromise Arrangements:**

The school's policy is to follow the DfE guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 on the use of compromise agreements in cases of child abuse which is:

*'Compromise agreements, by which a person agrees to resign, and a school... agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future reference, must not be used in these cases. In any case, such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate. Nor can it override the statutory duty to make a referral to the DBS where circumstances require it.'*

A compromise agreement can also not override any duty to make a referral to the TRA as detailed in the Introduction section of the main Safeguarding [Child Protection] policy.

*Length of Investigation Process:*

It is in everyone's interests that the school completes any investigatory process as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough investigation. It is the aim that almost every case is completed within one month without compromising on the fair and impartial processes of the investigatory process.

For cases where it is immediately clear that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious, it is the aim to resolve the case within 5 working days. If the nature of the allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, action should be taken within 3 working days. If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, the hearing should be held within 15 working days.

*Determining the Outcomes of Allegation Investigations:*

The following definitions will be used:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there have been a deliberate act to deceive
- **False:** there insufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

*Recording Allegations of Abuse:*

All allegations of abuse will be recorded together with subsequent actions, including any disciplinary actions.

*Handling Unsubstantiated or Malicious Allegations of Abuse:*

The Child:

A child who has been the centre of malicious or unsubstantiated allegations of child abuse needs professional help in dealing with the aftermath. We will liaise closely with the DO and WSSCP to set up a professional programme that best meets his or her needs, which may involve the Adolescent Mental Health Services and an Educational Psychologist, as well as support from a Counsellor. We shall be mindful of the possibility that the allegation of abuse was an act of displacement, masking abuse that is occurring within the child's own family and/or community.

However, much support the child may need in such circumstances, we need to be sensitive to the possibility that the aftermath of a malicious or unsubstantiated allegation of abuse may result in the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship with the teacher. In such circumstances, we may conclude that it is in the child's best interests to move to another school. We would do our best to help her to achieve as smooth a transition as possible, working closely with the parents or guardians.

If an allegation against a member of staff is found to be malicious, the pupil involved is likely to have breached school behaviour policies and may be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanctions, as well as possible referral to the police if there are grounds to believe that a criminal offence may have been committed.

**The Member of Staff:**

A member of staff could be left at the end of a malicious or unsubstantiated allegation of child abuse with severely diminished self-esteem, feeling isolated and vulnerable, all too conscious that colleagues might shun him/her on the grounds of “no smoke without fire”. If issues of professional competency are involved, and though acquitted of child abuse, disciplinary issues are raised; we recognise that he or she is likely to need both professional and emotional help. We will undertake to arrange a mentoring programme in such circumstances, together with professional counselling outside the school community. A short sabbatical or period of re-training may be appropriate. Support will be provided for the return to work.

Allegations found to have been malicious or false will be removed from personnel records and any that are unsubstantiated, false or malicious will not be referred to in employer references.

***Allegation of Abuse of a Child who is not a Pupil at the School***

If we were given information that suggested that a member of staff was abusing a child who was not a pupil at the school, we would immediately pass such information to WSSCP to handle. We would then interview the member of staff and formally advise him/her of the allegations, making it clear that the school would not play any part in the investigatory process. He or she would be advised of the possibility of facing suspension, for example, re-assignment to other duties, in the same way as if the allegation had involved a school pupil. If the allegation subsequently proved to be unfounded, he or she would be given full support by the school in resuming his/her career.

***On Conclusion of an Allegation of Abuse:***

- If the allegation is substantiated, the Head will work with the DO to decide whether to make a referral to the DBS and for teaching staff to the TRA.
- If there is sufficient concern that an individual has engaged in conduct that harmed, or is likely to harm, a child, or if they otherwise pose a risk of harm to a child, a referral will be made to the DBS.
- Parents will be kept informed about the progress of a case and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution and where possible, being invited to maintain confidentiality.

The Head will review the circumstances of the case to determine whether any improvements can be made to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

***Referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service:***

The school recognises the statutory legal duty to refer an individual, where they have harmed, are likely to harm, or otherwise pose a risk of harm to a child or have committed one of a number of listed offences, to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as soon as possible after the individual's dismissal or resignation from a regulated activity or when the school ceases to use a person's services. This includes:

- Non-renewal of a fixed term contract
- No longer engaging/refusing to engage a supply teacher provided by an employment agency
- Terminating the placement of a student teacher or other trainee

- No longer using staff employed by contractors
- No longer using volunteers
- Resignation
- Voluntary withdrawal from supply teaching
- Contract working
- Initial teacher training
- Volunteering.

In borderline cases, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will discuss doubts and concerns with the DO, tentatively, and without giving names in the first instance.

Reports concerning members of staff or volunteers are normally made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is involved, the report is made by the Head. If the Head is involved, the report is made by the Chairman of Governors.

The school must consider whether to refer the matter to the TRA to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

The school plays no part in the subsequent process of barring individuals from working with children and/or vulnerable adults. We also have a legal duty to respond to any requests for information that we receive from the DBS at any time. Failure to make a report when required constitutes an offence.

## 21. Appendix G: DSL Job Description

### General Role:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputies will ensure that they:

- Are fully conversant with West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSSCP) procedures and aware of the role of other agencies in this area. This will include local inter-agency working protocols and training in the LSCP's approach to Prevent duties.
- Works collaboratively with external agencies so that the children's needs are met holistically.
- Keeps the Head informed as appropriate.
- Is aware of pupils who have a social worker.
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise within the school when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with the relevant agencies.
- Liaise with other DSLs (and the mental health lead) to discuss concerns, current issues, policy, and updates.
- Meet half termly to discuss and monitor provision within school.
- Ensure the policy is implemented and promoted across the school.
- Liaise with West Sussex for training, advice, and guidance.
- Understand the Threshold Framework Document and terminology used.
- Update Policy and review annually, or as required by changes in legislation.
- Promote best safeguarding practice.
- When a child transfers year group, ensure the child protection information is shared with the relevant staff.

### Availability:

- During term time the DSL (or a deputy) should always be available during school working hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. This may be in person as a preferable option but can be via telephone or email
- Outside of term time, the DSL (or a deputy) will be available via telephone or email.

### Cultural Impact:

- Create a child-centred environment which encourages a culture of listening to children and consider their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school puts in place to protect them.
- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching the staff and consider how to build trusting relationships which facilitate communication.

### Manages Referrals:

- Is the first point of contact for parents, pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff and external agencies in all matters of child protection.
- Refers to local guidance on thresholds and makes clear the route for obtaining informal advice on borderline cases from local agencies.
- Works with all three safeguarding partners and work with other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children. The NSPCC – When to Call the Police will assist in considering when to call the police and what to expect them to do.
- Consults and refers all cases of suspected abuse to SSCB in line with WSSCP procedures and to the police where a crime may have been committed.
- Refers cases involving staff to the DO, DBS (where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child), TRA and to the Charity Commission as appropriate. The Charity Commission can be contacted [here](#).
- Refers cases to the Channel programme where there is radicalisation concern and supports staff who make referrals to the Channel programme.
- Acts as a source of support, advice, and expertise to staff on matters of safety, safeguarding and when deciding to make a referral to relevant agencies.
- Supports staff in liaising with other agencies and setting up other inter-agency assessments as appropriate.
- Liaises with the Head to inform her of issues especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigation.
- Monitors the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to child protection and liaises with the Head of Finance regarding GDPR legislation and ensures this information is transferred to a pupil's new school when required.
- Ensures representation/reports to Child Protection Conferences and keep appropriate records.
- Ensures children on the Child Protection Register are known and that protection plans are followed, and feedback given.
- In collaboration with individual staff members, completes report forms detailing signs observed, action taken and outcomes of contact with other agencies and send it as soon as possible to (West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSSCP)).

- Is prepared to attend case conferences (usually called by the Social Services Department) at very short notice. This may well prove to be inconvenient and may well be during school holidays.
- Pursues referrals if the child's situation does not appear to be improving to ensure that concerns have been addressed and the child's situation does improve.

**Child Protection training:**

- Ensure that own training is up to date and regularly attend training to maintain this. Training should provide a good understanding of their own role, and the processes and procedures and responsibilities of other agencies specifically social care.
- Knowledge and skills should be refreshed aside of the formal training through e-bulletins and meeting other DSL's for example.
- Develop and deliver the in-school training programme with other DSLs.
- Have a working knowledge of how referrals work and the procedures we follow (contacting the Designated Officer (DO), West Sussex, Early Help intervention).
- Support colleagues with referrals and concerns.
- Ensure colleagues are aware of the policies and how to access them especially new staff and external providers (such as peripatetic staff and speech and language therapists).
- Ensures that all staff know about and have access to this Safeguarding [Child Protection] policy, to relevant WSSCP guidelines and to Part I and Annex B of KCSIE (September 2025).
- Organises training on Child Protection within the school and consistently updates the knowledge and skills of both themselves and all staff via e-bulletins, reading or digesting safeguarding development.
- Obtains access to resources and attends relevant refresher training courses, including attending appropriate training every two years.
- Has a working knowledge of the assessment process for providing early help and intervention; of how the Local Education Authority (LEA) conducts child protection case conferences.
- Encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school may put in place to protect them.
- Is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.

**Raises Awareness of Child Protection:**

- Shares information about who the school's safeguarded children are and promote educational outcomes whilst understanding the challenges these children might face.
- Advises the Head, Deputy Head and Heads of Schools about curriculum issues pertaining to Child Protection.
- Ensures the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is updated and reviewed regularly and work with the governing body regarding this. (Designated Safeguarding Lead/Head).
- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness and implementation of the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and ensures that this policy is reviewed annually, the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly and work with the governing body regarding this.
- Works with other DSLs to share updates from training.

- Ensures that parents are aware and have access to the policy and that the school's Safeguarding statement is included on the school's website.
- Shares and updates good practice within school.
- Informs the Governor responsible for Safeguarding of any issues, training and updates that are suitable and current and assists in providing information about safeguarding for the Board of Governors.
- Ensures that all staff and Governors are up to date with their knowledge about Safeguarding issues.
- Monitors pupil absence and informs the Local Authority when a pupil's name is going to be deleted from the admissions register when the child has been taken out of school:
  - To be home educated
  - Because the family has apparently moved away
  - Because the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend
  - Because the child is custody for more than four months
  - Because the child has been permanently excluded.
- Reports to the Local Authority any child:
  - Who has been absent from school for a period of ten days on an unauthorised basis
  - Who fails to attend regularly
  - Who is deleted from the register but the next school is unknown
- When a child joins Pennthorpe, ensure that the child protection file and paperwork is transferred separately from the main pupil file and make contact with previous setting to ensure all records are up to date and accurate.
- When a child transfers year group, ensure the child protection information is shared with the relevant staff.

Where applicable, in the case of Looked after Children, acts as the designated member of staff with responsibility for the welfare and progress of looked after children, having up-to-date assessment information from the Local Authority, the most recent care plan and contact arrangements with parents and designated authority carers.

If the child moves to a new address, then the Key Worker and Register Custodian must be informed as appropriate. If the child's new address is unknown, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must forward any information which she has which might prove helpful in tracing a child.

The school recognises that safeguarding pupils on the network and whilst using IT, is crucial. The Head oversees all Online Safety in the school, with support from the Deputy Head Pastoral. This includes ensuring an up to date 'Acceptable Use' Policy usage and its speedy circulation around all areas of the school community.

#### Raises Awareness of the Prevent Order:

- Have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.
- Identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalization.
- Know what to do when they are identified.

- Build pupils resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enable children to challenge extremist views.
- Promote awareness specifically of the online environment.
- Refer children to the Channel programme, including those who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
- Continue to enable pupils to debate controversial issues through PSHEE.
- Engagement with Channel is voluntary at all stages.
- Undertake the Home Office Prevent training and offer advice and support to other staff where required.
- Be aware of the local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

**Promotes Online Safety:**

- Work with the Head of Digital Learning to ensure that all appropriate processes are in place to educate pupils, and provide hardware which promotes and protects young people.
- Take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.