

Child Protection Policy



Formby High School
Determined to Achieve

Formby High School Child Protection Policy

Terminology

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children (under the age of 18) who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

Staff refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

Child includes everyone under the age of 18 or who is a student of Formby High School.

Parent refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role; for example, step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

Contextual Safeguarding all assessments of children should consider the wider environmental factors affecting the child's life that may pose a threat to their safety and / or welfare

Formby High School's core safeguarding principles are that:

- We will seek at all times to ensure that we meet our obligation to safeguard all young people and adults within the school community.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.
- We recognise that safeguarding is about both creating a safe environment in which all young people can thrive and protecting children from deliberate harm.
- We will ensure we remain fully compliant with legislation and guidance regarding safeguarding and will regularly review and update our practice.
- We will provide training to staff as appropriate regarding safeguarding.
- We provide an appropriate safeguarding response in accordance with the Sefton Level of Need Framework.
- We will refer to locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by Sefton Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP).

Child Protection Statement

- We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.
- The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, governors, volunteers and student teachers, and are consistent with those of the SSCP.

Child protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm:

- **A Victim** is a widely understood and recognised term, but in our school we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will consult with the child and use any term with which the child involved feels most comfortable.
- **Alleged perpetrator(s)** and **perpetrator(s)** are widely used and recognised terms. As a school we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what is appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by-case basis.
- The following three **safeguarding partners** are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education. They will plan to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs:
 - **The Local Authority (LA)**
 - **Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) for an area within the LA**
 - **The Chief Officer of Police for a police area in the LA**

This policy has been written using the following safeguarding legislation and guidance, and a copy of the Child Protection Policy is available in the staff handbook.

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.
- The Teacher Standards 2012.
- The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2022e statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2023)
- Locally agreed inter-agency Sefton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) protocols, including the revised Sefton Level of Need Guidance 2023.
- Information Sharing; advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (July 2018).
- Part 3 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of students at the school.
- The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children.
- Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children.
- Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children.
- Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.
- Preventing youth violence and gang involvement (Aug 2013).
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance (September 2018).
- The Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 (and 2018 amendment) and Childcare Act 2006, which set out who is disqualified from working with children. *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 – Advice for practitioners* is non-statutory advice which helps practitioners (everyone who works with children) to identify abuse and neglect and take appropriate action. Staff can find a copy of this in the Staff Handbook.

- Sharing nudes and semi- nudes UKCIS, 2020 guidance.

Sefton Local Safeguarding Board

We will work in partnership with Sefton Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the local area, and follow relevant local arrangements, policies and procedures.

Core safeguarding principles are:

- **Prevention:** positive, supportive, safe culture, curriculum and pastoral opportunities for children, safer recruitment procedures.
- **Protection:** following the agreed procedures, ensuring all staff are trained and supported to recognise and respond appropriately and sensitively to protection and safeguarding concerns.
- **Support:** for all children, parents and staff, and where appropriate specific interventions are required for those who may be at risk of harm.
- **Working with parents and other agencies:** to ensure timely, appropriate communications and actions are undertaken when safeguarding concerns arise.

Policy Statements

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm.
- Students and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support.
- We aim to provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities.
- We aim to ensure consistent good practice.
- We aim to demonstrate the school's commitment with regard to child protection to students, parents and other stakeholders.
- We recognise the voice of the child is paramount and will listen to what they say, take their views seriously and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.
- Children and young people should never be made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment.
- Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur.

Equality Statement

To ensure that all of our students receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to the following groups:

- disabled or persons with specific additional needs
- those who have special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education and Health Care Plan)
- young carers
- those showing signs of being drawn into anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement
- those who are frequently missing or go missing from home or from care
- those at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- those affected by parental substance misuse, adult mental health issues or domestic abuse

- asylum seekers
- those who are vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying
- those living in temporary accommodation or away from home, such as in private fostering
- those living transient lifestyles
- those who are vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
- those involved directly or indirectly in, or at risk of, sexual or criminal exploitation
- those demonstrating sexually harmful behaviour, misusing drugs or alcohol
- students without English as a first language
- students who have returned home to their family from care
- those at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) or forced marriage
- those at risk of exposure to radicalisation and extremism

This list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body ensures that:

- they are fully aware of the contents of KCSIE (and are required to sign to confirm that this has been read).
- all Governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction.
- the Child Protection Policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff.
- responsibility is devolved to the Headteacher to ensure guidance in this policy is followed.
- the school appoints a Designated Senior Lead (DSL) for child protection.
- the school has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff, including allegations made against the Headteacher, and allegations against other children.
- a nominated member (normally the Chair) is responsible for liaising with the Local Authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the Headteacher.
- the school's safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations procedures are in accordance with the LSCB and national guidance.
- an annual report (Section 175 audit) will be submitted to the Local Authority about how the Governing Body's duties have been carried out with weaknesses being rectified without delay.
- a designated teacher is appointed to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after by the Local Authority and that the designated teacher has received appropriate training.
- the school contributes to inter-agency working and plans and that the school's safeguarding arrangements take into account the procedures and practice of the Local Authority as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures set up by the LSCB. This should include understanding and reflecting local protocols for assessment and the LSCB's threshold document, along with supplying information as requested by the LSCB. The school contributes towards financing Sefton LSCB support.
- the school participates in the Early Help process and offers to initiate the Early Help Assessments Tool for students with additional needs in order to provide a co-ordinated offer of early help.
- students are taught about safeguarding and how to keep themselves safe at all times, including when online, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- there are clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems
- the school follows guidance from the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) in relation to cyber bullying and sexting.

The Headteacher ensures that:

- the DSL for child protection is appointed. This will be a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has undertaken training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic child protection training.
- the role of DSL is explicit in the role holder's job description.
- sufficient time, training, support and resources are allocated to enable the DSL and Deputy DSLs to carry out their roles effectively.
- all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistle blowing procedures. Staff are encouraged to use the National Society for Protection of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) whistleblowing helpline should their concerns not be acted upon.
- students are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn about safeguarding, including keeping themselves safe online.
- anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk to a child is referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- the school has a Child Protection Policy and procedures, including a staff code of conduct that is reviewed annually and made available publicly on the school's website and by other means.
- the school follows safer recruitment procedures that include statutory checks on staff suitability to work with children.
- the Designated Officer for the Local Authority (DO) is informed where an allegation is made against a member of staff or a crime is committed against a child.
- decisions regarding low-level concerns are discussed, if appropriate, with the DSL and recorded.

The Designated Senior Lead (DSL)

Mrs Blanchard (Deputy Headteacher Pastoral Care and Welfare) is the member of the Senior Leadership Team appointed to coordinate child protection arrangements and is the nominated DSL.

The DSL:

- is appropriately trained, with updates at least every two years, and acts as a source of support and expertise within the school community.
- has a working knowledge of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) procedures and locally agreed processes for providing early help and intervention.
- attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences and works with the Headteacher to ensure cases concerning a member of staff are referred appropriately to the Local Authority's Designated Officer (DO) and/or the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) following guidance from Sefton LSCB.

The DSL ensures that:

- a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings is encouraged.
- all cases of suspected abuse or allegations are immediately referred to Sefton INTEGRATED FRONT DOOR (IFD). If at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to the child the police are contacted.
- the school is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- detailed written records of all concerns are maintained, ensuring that such records are stored securely and flagged on, but kept separate from, the student's general file. Archive records are in accordance with the School's Records Management Policy.
- Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMs) is used securely and effectively by pastoral staff.
- children's social care are notified if a child with a social worker is absent from school without explanation
- when a student with a Child Protection Plan leaves the school, their information is passed to their new school /placement and the student's social worker is informed.

- where children leave the school, the Child Protection file is copied for any new school as soon as possible but transferred separately from the main student file.
- effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies, including the LSCB, are developed and maintained.
- all staff and Governors sign to indicate that they have read and understood the Child Protection Policy and Part 1 KCSIE.
- the Child Protection Policy is regularly reviewed and updated annually.
- a record of staff attendance at child protection training is kept.
- the Child Protection Policy is available publicly on the school's website.
- parents are aware of the school's role in safeguarding and that referrals about suspected abuse and neglect may be made.
- training is in place which ensures that all staff, including the Headteacher, receive information about the school's safeguarding arrangements on induction and appropriate child protection training, which is regularly updated.
- all temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the school's arrangements for child protection.
- staff have access to a Safeguarding Lead at all times and are informed who this is in the absence of the DSL.
- support and expertise are provided to the school community.
- all staff are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs, looked after children and young carers.
- the educational outcomes for children are promoted by sharing appropriate information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children (including those with a social worker) are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and other staff.
- all cases of suspected abuse are referred to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) / children's social care or the police as appropriate.
- a member of staff attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences, strategy meetings and multi-agency child sexual exploitation (MACSE) meetings.
- the Headteacher is aware of the responsibility, under *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (July 2022) to refer all allegations that a child has been harmed by or that children may be at risk of harm from a member of staff or volunteer to the Local Authority's Designated Officer (LADO), within one working day prior to any internal investigation; and to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as appropriate.
- the appropriate members of staff in school are confident about what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment and be confident as to how to access this support.
- the appropriate members of staff in school are aware that children must have an 'appropriate adult' to support and help them in the case of a police investigation or search as outlined in the statutory guidance – PACE Code C.

The Deputy Designated Senior Lead(s) (Deputy DSL)

The Deputy Designated Senior Lead(s) is appropriately trained and, in the absence of the DSL, or when directed, carries out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of students. In the event of the long-term absence of the DSL, the Deputy will assume all of the functions above. The Deputy DSLs are:

- (1) Mrs S Taylor (Pastoral Support Manager)
- (2) Mrs G Edey (Climate for Learning Leader)
- (3) Mrs A Harrison–Forsyth (Assistant Headteacher)
- (4) Miss K MacDougall (Year 11 Achievement Leader)

All staff must:

- remember that the welfare of the child is paramount.

- attend annual safeguarding updates and read termly bulletins.
- follow practices and procedures identified in this policy.
- report all concerns to the DSL and be aware that they do not need 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk.
- only discuss their concerns with the DSL or Deputy DSL, not other colleagues, unless they have been directed to do so by the DSL.
- recognise that it is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.
- follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they must also share information directly with children's social care, the police or the NSPCC if:
 - the situation is an emergency and the DSL, the Deputy DSLs, the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors are all unavailable.
 - they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the student's safety.
 - for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.
- understand the school plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-school approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by our:
 - Rewards & Behaviour Policy
 - Pastoral support system
 - Planned programme of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:
 - Healthy and respectful relationships
 - Boundaries and consent
 - Stereotyping, prejudice, and equality
 - Body confidence and self-esteem
 - How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
 - The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and how to access support

What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they are always unacceptable

Practices and Procedures

Induction

All staff should be aware of systems within school which support safeguarding and these are explained to them as part of staff induction.

These include:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (read part 1 and annex A).
- Child Protection Policy and the Behaviour Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education.
- the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (including the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and any deputies) and how to report a concern.

Early Help Assessment Tool Process

- The school recognises that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later.
- The school recognises that the cohorts identified on page 4 may potentially need early help.
- Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police), the school will use the Early Help process to complete an assessment and identify what help the child and family require to prevent their needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.
- The Early Help process can only be effective if it is undertaken with the agreement of the child's parents/carers. The Early Help offer should involve the child and family as well as all the professionals who are working with them. The Pastoral Support Manager has been trained to undertake Early Help assessments.
- The school will keep the needs and circumstances of children receiving Early Help under constant review. If the child's situation does not improve and/or the child's parents and/or the child do not consent to Early Help or the Early Help assessment being initiated, the school will make a judgement about whether, without help, the needs of the child will escalate. If so, a referral to children's social care may be necessary. (Sefton Level of Need Guidance)
- The school provides counsellors, works with outside agencies such as the Liverpool Football Club Foundation and provides extensive pastoral support for individual students and their families.

Mental Health (to be read in conjunction with Mental Health and Well-being Policy)

- Only trained professionals should make a diagnosis of a mental health problem, but staff are well placed to observe children and identify those whose behaviour suggests they may be experiencing a mental health problem, or be at risk of developing one.
- Abuse, neglect and other traumatic adverse childhood experiences can have a lasting impact, and it is key that staff are aware of how these experiences can affect children's mental health, behaviour and education.
- Staff should take action on any mental health concerns that are also safeguarding concerns, following the school's Child Protection policy and speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy.

Missing Children

The school follows the Sefton LSCB produced protocol 'Identifying and Maintaining Contact with Children Missing from Education'.

Where a student has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish his/her whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Sefton Council Children Missing Education Co-ordinator (0151 934 3181 CME@sefton.gov.uk). Sefton Protocols will be followed at all times.

The school is required to inform the Local Authority of any student who is going to be deleted from the admission register where he/she:

- has been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system (e.g. home education).
- has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school.
- has been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the school does not reasonably believe he/she will return to the school at the end of that period.
- has been permanently excluded.

The school will notify the Children Missing Education Officer in the Local Authority within five working days when the grounds for deletion are met and no later than deleting the student's name from the register.

Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care

The school recognises that children who run away or go missing are potentially vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, offending and placing themselves in situations where they may suffer physical harm.

In such situations, the school will work closely with the parents and of any missing children and other relevant agencies.

The DSL and Pastoral Support Team will monitor unauthorised absence, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions.

Further guidance is available via the following link:

http://seftonlscb.safeguardingpolicies.org.uk/assets/1/pan_merseyside_missing_children_procedure.pdf

Helping Children to Keep Themselves Safe

- Children are taught to understand and manage risk through our Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (Personal Development lessons and through all aspects of school life. Our approach is designed to help children to think about risks they may encounter and, with staff, work out how those risks might be overcome.
- Children are taught how to conduct themselves and how to behave in a responsible manner. Children are also reminded regularly about e-safety and tackling bullying procedures.
- The school continually promotes an ethos of respect for children, and students are encouraged to speak to a member of staff in confidence about any worries they may have.

Support for Those Involved in a Child Protection Issue

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved.

We will support students, their families and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously.
- ensuring the DSL keeps all parties informed and is the central point of contact.
- ensuring school procedures are followed where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation.
- responding sympathetically to any request from students or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety.
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies.
- storing records securely.
- offering details of help lines, counselling or other avenues of external support.
- following the procedures laid down in our whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures.
- cooperating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

Child Protection Complaints

- Complaints from staff, students and parents are dealt with under the school's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Concerns about a Colleague

- The school's whistleblowing procedures enable staff to raise concerns or allegations in confidence and allow for a sensitive enquiry to take place.
- All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues should be reported to the Headteacher.
- Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors.
- Staff may also report their concerns directly to children's social care or the police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.

Allegations against Staff

- The approach to dealing with allegations against members of staff is set out in KCSIE Part 4. The process followed when investigating an allegation will be that set out in the Staff Discipline Policy.
- Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress.
- Allegations against staff should be reported to the Headteacher.
- Allegations against the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors.
- Staff, parents, students and Governors are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a teacher who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including social media postings.
- Staff may also report their concerns directly to the police or children's social care via the MASH team if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.

Low Level Concerns

A low level concern is any concern that an adult has acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is not considered serious enough to refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Examples of low-level concerns could include:

- being over friendly with children, having favourites, taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, engaging with a child one-to-one in a secluded area or behind a closed door, using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

To help prevent low level concerns, policies and procedures will be implemented effectively and appropriate, timely action will be taken to deal with any concern.

Staff Training

- All staff are trained to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a concern.
- New staff and Governors will receive an explanation during their induction which includes the school's Child Protection Policy, the Behaviour Policy, our safeguarding response to children who go missing from education, the Staff Code of Conduct and details and the role of the DSL and deputy DSLs.
- All staff are required to read (and sign to confirm they have read) KCSIE (September 2023) Part 1 and any associated updates.

Safer Recruitment

To ensure that we do our utmost to employ 'safe' staff by following the guidance in Keeping

Children Safe in Education (September 2023) together with the SSCP and the school's procedures, the school will ensure the measures detailed below are followed:

- All applicants will:
 - complete an application form which includes their employment history.
 - provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children.
 - provide evidence of identity and qualifications.
 - be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations as appropriate to their role.
 - provide evidence of their right to work in the UK.
 - be interviewed and rigorously tested.
 - if the applicant (employee or governor) is in any managerial role a section 128 direction check will be conducted.
 - for those from outside the EEA additional checks will be carried out.

The school will also:

- verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.
- verify the person's right to work in the UK. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, following the advice on the www.gov.uk website. where possible the school will obtain references, from a senior person, prior to interviews to allow any concerns to be explored.
- make further checks if the person has lived or worked outside the UK.
- ensure that a teaching candidate is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State or that any sanction or restriction was imposed by the GTCE prior to 2012.
- The school obtains written confirmation from supply agencies that agency staff have been appropriately checked.
- If an individual moves from a position that did not involve the provision of education to one that does, they will be treated as if the individual were a new member of staff and all required pre-appointment checks carried out.
- The school maintains a Single Central Record of recruitment checks undertaken.

Volunteers

- Volunteers, including Governors, will undergo checks commensurate with their work in the school and contact with students.

Supervised Volunteers

- Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are not in regulated activity will undergo the safe recruitment checks appropriate to their role, in accordance with the school's risk assessment process and statutory guidance. This risk assessment will be recorded.

Contractors

- The school checks the identity of all contractors working on site and requests DBS checks where appropriate.

Governors

- All Governors will have an enhanced DBS check without barred list information.
- They will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information if working in regulated activity.

- The Chair of Governors will have his/her DBS check countersigned by the Secretary of State for Education.
- Governors and embers will also have the following checks if involved in management activity:
 - Identity
 - Right to work in the UK
 - Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK

Site Security

- **Security gates will be closed throughout the school day.**
- Visitors to the school must sign in and out at the Main Office Reception and wear a red lanyard and school visitor badge.
- Staff must challenge strangers in the school if they are not wearing appropriate identification.
- All adults on the campus are required to wear an ID badge and lanyard at all times. Different coloured lanyards are used to denote the various levels of clearance as follows:
 - **Green** – employees and trainee teachers who have been DBS (Disclosure and Barring Scheme) checked wear a green lanyard.
 - **Orange** – regular visitors to the school who have undergone a DBS check and who do not require supervision (for example, Governors).
 - **Red** – occasional visitors to the school who are accompanied at all times and do not have unsupervised access to students (for example, contractors and parents).
 - **Black** – Sixth Form students.

Extended School and Off-site Arrangements

- Where extended school activities are provided and managed by the school, our own Child Protection Policy and procedures apply. If other organisations provide services or activities on our site, we will check that they have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures.
- When our students attend off-site activities, including alternative provision, day and residential visits, and work-related activities, we will check that effective child protection arrangements are in place.

Photography and Images

To protect students we will:

- seek their consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications).
- seek parental consent.
- use only the student's first name with an image.
- ensure students are appropriately dressed.
- encourage students to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

Online Safety

- There is a whole school approach to online safety.
- Online safety is taught as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- The school's Online Safety Policy explains how we try to keep students safe in school.
- Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to limit student exposure to online risks. Any breaches are dealt with in line with school policy and reported to Governors.
- Governors have knowledge in relation to online safety.
- The school ensures the importance of online safety when communicating with parents.

- All students and staff are required to adhere to the school's ICT Acceptable Use Policy.
- Cyberbullying and sexting by students, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures.
- Incidents of sexual harassment between students via mobile or smart technology will be treated seriously and managed through the appropriate channel.
- Where students are asked to learn online at home, advice from the DfE on safeguarding and remote education will be followed.
- Appropriate usage of mobile phones in school is identified in the school's Mobile Phone Policy.
- Staff, parents and students receive advice regarding the use of social networking and electronic communication with students.
- The school ensures that staff can access resources, information and support set out in Annex C of KCSIE (September 2023).
- Guidance supporting schools to teach their students how to stay safe online, within new and existing school subjects 2019 can be found at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811796/Teaching_online_safety_in_school.pdf (lucy I couldn't load this ?)
- Staff use of mobile phones and cameras in school is covered in the school's Staff ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Data Protection Policy.

Recognising Abuse

- The school recognises the four categories of abuse as identified in *Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, updated February 2019)*.
 - **Physical abuse**
 - **Emotional abuse**
 - **Sexual abuse**
 - **Neglect**
- Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people.
- Abuse can manifest itself as peer on peer abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyberbullying), gender based violence/sexual assault and sexting.
- All staff should be 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.

Indicators of Abuse

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons, it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the DSL. Additional support is available in the DfE document ['What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' advice for practitioners](#) (March 2015).

A child who is being abused or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming

- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm or have poor mental health
- frequently miss school or arrive late
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- become disinterested in their school work
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw and each small piece of information will help the DSL to decide how to proceed.

Key Points for Staff to Remember for Taking Action are:

- In an emergency take the action necessary to help the child; for example, call 999.
- Report your concern to the DSL immediately (Internal Ext 127 or External 01704 835655).
- Do not start your own investigation.
- Share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family.
- Complete a record of concern.
- Seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

If a Student Discloses to You:

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a student talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member will need to let the student know that they must pass the information on** – staff are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which they tell the student this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the student may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the student may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the students, staff will:

- **not promise confidentiality.**
- allow them to speak freely.
- remain calm and not overreact – the student may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener.
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'.
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the student.
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the student's mother think about all this.

- at an appropriate time tell the student that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on.
- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be the staff member's way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong.
- tell the student what will happen next. The student may agree to go to see the DSL. Otherwise, let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.
- report verbally to the DSL even if the child has promised to do it by themselves.
- write up their conversation as soon as possible and hand it to the designated person.
- seek support if they feel distressed.
- do not assume someone else has taken action.
- do not make assumptions about what is being said.

Listening to Children

- For children with communication/language difficulties or who use alternative/augmented communication systems, staff and other adults may need to take extra care to ensure that signs of abuse and neglect are identified and interpreted correctly, but concerns should be reported in the same manner as for other children. In some cases, it may be appropriate to seek the services of a professional interpreter.

Bear in mind that some children may:

- Not feel ready, or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected
- Not recognise their experiences as harmful
- Feel embarrassed, humiliated, or threatened due to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation and/or language barriers.

None of this should stop you from having a 'professional curiosity' and speaking to the DSL if you have concerns about a child.

Notifying Parents

- The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a student with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.
- If the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from children's social care.
- Where there are concerns about fabricated illness, forced marriage or honour-based abuse, parents should not be informed a referral is being made as to do so may place the child at a significantly increased risk.
- in the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.
- The DSL will, along with any relevant agencies (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis):
- Meet with the victim's parents or carers, with the victim, to discuss what is being put in place to safeguard them, and understand their wishes in terms of what support they may need and how the report will be progressed.
- Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss support for them, and what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g. moving them out of classes with the victim, and the reason(s) behind any decision(s).

Referral to Children's Social Care

- The DSL will usually make the referral to Children's Social Care via Sefton Integrated Front Door if it is believed that a student is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm.
- If a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the DSL, he/she should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made.
- The student (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.
- Where children are allocated a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs, such as abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances, then these experiences can leave children vulnerable to further harm, as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.
- If a child has a social worker, the DSL should hold and use this information in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes, such as when decisions are made on responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks and the provision of pastoral and/or academic support.

Confidentiality and Sharing Information

Effective sharing of information between practitioners and local organisations is essential for early indication of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe.

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes. Schools and colleges have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children (KCSIE 2022).

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the student and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible. Discussing concerns with the DSL (and deputies) who are the best placed to have a complete safeguarding picture. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

However, following a number of cases where senior leaders in school had failed to act upon concerns raised by staff, Keeping Children Safe in Education emphasises that **any** member of staff can contact children's social care if they are concerned about a child (Tel: MASH 0151 934 4013).

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with Data Protection Act (1998) principles. Such information is:

- processed for limited purposes.
- adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- accurate.
- kept no longer than necessary.
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights.
- secure.

Data Protection and Management of Records

All staff and practitioners must have due regard to data protection law (UK GDPR). Please refer to the school's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice for full information.

To share information effectively all practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions under DPA and GDPR which allows storing and sharing of information for safeguarding purposes and will be treated as 'special category' personal data. The school is aware that we can share special category personal data without consent, if it is not possible to gain consent or if the gaining consent would place the child at risk.

The management of the school's Child Protection Records (recording, storage, sharing and retention) is as outlined in our Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule.

Cared for Children (LAC)

- The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. The school ensures that appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after status and care arrangement, and work closely with other agencies to protect this vulnerable cohort.
- The designated teacher for Looked After Children and the DSL have details of the child's social worker and the name and contact details of the local authority's virtual head for children in care.
- The designated teacher will also promote the educational achievement of children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders.

Contact Details for Sefton Virtual School

Nicola Walsh	Virtual Headteacher	nicola.walsh@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 2226
Sue Ingham	Education Co-ordinator	sue.ingham@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 4593
Susan Flynn	Education Co-ordinator	susan.flynn@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 3053
Charlotte Royle	Education Coordinator	charlotte.royle@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 3859
Gemma Stevenson	Family Intervention Worker (Responsible for Attendance)	gemma.stevenson@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 3152
Alison Larkin	PEP Officer	admin.virtualschool@sefton.gov.uk 0151 934 2221

Work Experience

- The school has detailed procedures to safeguard students undertaking work experience, including arrangements for checking people who provide placements and supervise students on work experience which are in accordance with the guidance in KCSIE (2022).

Preventing Radicalisation

- The school has detailed procedures to safeguard students to prevent radicalisation and extremism detailed in the Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism Policy 2017.
- Any concerns regarding radicalisation or extremism should be raised using the school's safeguarding procedures.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity.

- The imbalance can be due to age, as well as other factors like gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.
- CSE is a form of sexual abuse and can be a one off occurrence or might happen over time.
- All children and young people, including 16 and 17 year olds, can experience CSE.
- In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (e.g. increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or be a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.
- It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and can involve violence or threats of violence.
- Victims can be exploited even when activity appears to be consensual.
- It can happen online as well as in person.
- Victims can be boys or girls.
- Children and young people are often unwittingly drawn into sexual exploitation through the offer of friendship and care, gifts, drugs and alcohol, and sometimes accommodation. Sexual exploitation is a serious crime and can have a long-lasting adverse impact on a child's physical and emotional health. It may also be linked to the trafficking of children.
- The school teaches children about consent and the risks of sexual exploitation in RESPECT (PSHEE) lessons.
- A common feature of sexual exploitation is that the child often does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see her/himself as a victim. The child may initially resent what she/he perceives as interference by staff but staff must act on their concerns, as they would for any other type of abuse.
- All staff are made aware of the indicators of sexual exploitation of children and all concerns are reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL will consider the need to make a referral to children's social care via the MASH team and with particular reference to Sefton LSCB Child Sexual Exploitation procedures. In this case, parents will be consulted and notified.
- Following a referral to children's social care, a Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meeting may be convened under Sefton LSCB inter-agency safeguarding procedures. The school will attend and share information at MASE meetings as required. Parents and young people will be invited to attend MASE meetings by children's social care as required.

Gender Based Violence / Violence against Women and Girls

- The government has a strategy looking at specific issues that women and girls face. Female genital mutilation, forced marriage, honour based violence and peer on peer abuse all fall under this strategy. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/violence-against-women-and-girls>. Within the context of the school's policy the following sections are how we respond to violence against girls.

So-called 'Honour Based' Violence

- 'Honour based' violence (HBV) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of a family and/or community. Such crimes include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and practices such as breast ironing.
- Staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBV or already having suffered HBV.
- All forms of HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and staff will record and report any concerns about a child who might be at risk of HBV to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The DSL will consider the need to make a referral to the Police and/or children's social care.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse. It is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons or other injury to the female genital organs.

- Teachers are subject to a statutory duty defined by Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) and all staff are expected to report to the Police personally where they discover (for example, by means of a disclosure) that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18.
- FGM is carried out on girls of any age, from young babies to older teenagers and adult women, so school staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators.
- Many such procedures are carried out abroad and staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns expressed by a female student about going on a long holiday during the summer vacation period.
- In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. Any person found guilty of an offence under the Act 2003 is liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment or a fine, or both.
- If staff have a concern that a girl may be at risk of FGM, they must record their concern and inform the DSL as they would any other safeguarding concern.
- In this situation, the member of staff will record his/her concerns and inform the DSL who will support him/her in making a direct report to the police. The DSL will follow the agreed Pan Merseyside FGM Multi Agency Protocol:
http://seftonlscb.safeguardingpolicies.org.uk/assets/1/merseyside_fgm_protocol_final_feb_2016.pdf

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which a female (and sometimes a male) does not consent to the marriage but is coerced into it. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. It may also involve physical or sexual violence and abuse.

- Children may be married at a very young age and well below the age of consent in England.
- Staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns raised by a student about being taken abroad and not be allowed to return to England.
- Since June 2014 forcing someone to marry has become a criminal offence in England and Wales under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Modern Slavery Trafficked Children

- The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places a new statutory duty on public authorities, including schools, to notify the National Crime Agency (NCA) (section 52 of the Act) on observing signs or receiving intelligence relating to modern slavery.
- The public authority (including schools) bears this obligation where it has 'reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking'.
- Child trafficking involves moving children across or within national or international borders for the purposes of exploitation.
- Exploitation includes children being used for sex work, domestic work, restaurant/sweatshop, drug dealing, shoplifting and benefit fraud. All concerns will be shared with the MASH Team.

Gang Related Violence

We recognise the risks posed to children in gang related activity (street gang, peer group or organised crime). Students may suffer harm themselves, through retaliatory violence, displaced

retaliation, and territorial violence with other gangs. In addition, children may experience violence as part of an initiation or hazing practices.

- The school will provide an Early Help response when concerns are raised about indicators of gang activity.
- If information suggests a child may be at risk of significant harm or exploitation due to gang related activity, a referral will be made to Sefton Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Serious Violence

The Serious Violence Strategy, introduced by the government in 2018, identifies offences such as homicide and knife and gun crime as key factors which account for around 1% of all recorded crime. The impact of serious violent crime on individuals and the community is significant.

All staff are aware of indicators which may signal that children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime.

These may include:

- increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups.
- a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in well-being.
- 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.

The range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence include:

- being male
- having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- having experienced child maltreatment
- having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery

All concerns that a student is vulnerable to exploitation or at increased risk from serious violence should be raised with the DSL immediately so support can be offered.

Additional advice is provided in the Home Office's '[Preventing youth violence and gang involvement](#) and its [criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance](#)'.

Child on Child Abuse

All staff are aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child on child abuse.

We recognise that children can abuse their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "boys will be boys" or "part of growing up", as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

We also recognise the gendered nature of child-on-child abuse. However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of school and online. All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying and cyber bullying
- Physical abuse
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (sexting)
- Initiation / hazing type violence and rituals

- Upskirting which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography to those who do not want to receive such content.

All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, should be reported and will be managed through our tackling bullying procedures. Any incidents of a safeguarding nature will be managed through the school's safeguarding procedures.

Managing Allegations against Other Students (child-on-child abuse)

- The school strives to create an environment that actively discourages abuse and challenges the attitudes which underlie it.
- Students can speak with a member of staff or use the online SHARP reporting system to report abuse anonymously.
- Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up" as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment for children and a culture that normalises abuse.
- It must be recognised that child-on-child abuse is happening, even if reported incidents are low.
- Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by others in the school which are of a child protection nature (physical, emotional, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation). It is likely that to be considered a child protection allegation against a student, some of the following features will be found:

The allegation:

- is made against an older student and refers to their behaviour towards a younger or a more vulnerable student
 - is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
 - raises risk factors for other students in the school
 - indicates that young people outside the school may be affected by this student
 - Older children may attempt to recruit younger children using any or all the above methods. Children and young people suffering from Criminal and Sexual Exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people under threat of violence.
- A factual record will be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.
 - DSL will contact Children's Social Care to discuss the case. It is possible that they may be already aware of safeguarding concerns around this young person. The DSL will follow through the outcomes of the discussion and make an IFD referral where appropriate.
 - The DSL will make a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome and keep a copy on both children's files.
 - If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police should be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the children being complained about and the alleged victim).
 - It may be appropriate to exclude the child being complained about for a period according to the school's Rewards & Behaviour Policy and procedures.
 - Where neither Children's Social Care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation should take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.
 - In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be prepared along with a preventative, supervision plan. This will include considering school transport as a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s). The plan should be monitored and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned

- If the incident is a criminal offence and there are delays in the criminal process, the DSL will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator. We will ask the police if we have any questions about the investigation.
- The DSL will take the lead role in any disciplining of the alleged perpetrator(s). We will provide support at the same time as taking any disciplinary action.
- We will reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them.

Examples of child-on-child abuse could include:

- Physical Abuse: violence, particularly pre-planned, forcing others to use drugs or alcohol, teen dating violence.
- Emotional Abuse: blackmail, extortion, threats, intimidation and defamation, bullying (including cyberbullying), racial or sexual harassment or other imbalance of power, hazing (any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers participants regardless of a person's willingness to participate), stalking.
- Sexual Abuse: indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assaults, forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting.
- Sexual Exploitation: encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties, photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts.

Child-on-Child Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Sexual harassment relates to 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. It 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.

Sexual violence relates to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault).

Our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are no reports, that does not mean that this kind of abuse is not happening.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any sex. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single or group of children. It is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence.

Managing Allegations of Sexual Violence and Harassment

The initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. It is also important to understand that children might not find it easy to talk about their abuse verbally.

The school response will follow the guidance identified in the DfE's Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (May 2018) and Section 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) and the school Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy (2021)

On occasion, some students may present a safeguarding risk to other students. The school may well be informed by the relevant agency that the young person raises safeguarding concerns. These students will need an individual Risk Management Plan to ensure that other students are kept safe and they themselves are not laid open to malicious allegations.

Reports of sexual violence will be reviewed regularly to look for patterns. Where an allegation has been found unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, support will be offered and consideration given that the student may have been abused themselves.

The possible health needs of the student following sexual assault (such as physical, mental and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy) will be considered.

Additionally, the school will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them.
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt.
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns.
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again.
- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence and show sensitivity to their needs.
- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes, and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners.
- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape or assault by penetration. We will do all we can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed.

Self-Harm

Self-harm is defined as 'self-poisoning or injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act'. It is an expression of personal distress, not an illness, and there are many varied reasons for a child to self-harm.

Many children struggle to express their feelings and require support to assist them to explore their feelings and possible outcomes.

Examples of self-harm include:

- Self-cutting or scratching
- Burning or scalding
- Head banging / hair pulling
- Over / under medicating; eg misuse of insulin
- Punching / hitting
- Swallowing objects
- Self-poisoning

All staff should be vigilant in preventing self-harm by:

- being aware of students who display the characteristics associated with self-harm.
- being alert to changes in their demeanour and behaviour that suggest anxiety or low mood.
- holding an awareness of any specific incident that might trigger an act of self-harm.

All incidents should be reported to the DSL (and deputies) who will follow the Sefton Multi Agency Self-Harm Practice Guidance (June 2018):

https://seftonlscb.org.uk/assets/1/sefton_self_harm_practice_guidance_final_2018.pdf

Prejudice Based Abuse

Prejudice based abuse or hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's real or perceived:

- Disability
- Race
- Religion
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation

Prejudice based abuse or hostility will not be tolerated and any member of the school community who abuses others on this basis will be sanctioned in line with the school's Behaviour Policy or Code of Conduct.

Children at Risk of Criminal Exploitation

The safeguarding risks posed by serious and organised crime and criminal exploitation are a concern for Sefton. Gang culture has become a persistent problem recently and is a major issue for all agencies working to safeguard children.

Child Criminal Exploitation is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity

- The imbalance can be due to age, as well as other factors like gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources
- In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (e.g. increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator
- It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults
- It can be a one-off occurrence or be a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse
- It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and can involve violence or threats of violence
- Victims can be exploited even when activity appears to be consensual
- It can happen online as well as in person

The following signs indicate that a child may be involved or at risk of becoming involved in serious and organised crime via criminal exploitation:

- Withdrawn from family
- Sudden loss of interest in school, decline in attendance or academic achievement
- Use of new or unknown slang words
- Holds unexplained money or possessions or cannot explain where large sums of money have gone (financial exploitation)
- Staying out unusually late without reason
- Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform' or colour similar to that of other young people they hang around with
- Dropped out of positive activities
- New nickname
- Unexplained physical injuries
- Graffiti style 'tags' on possessions, school books or walls
- Constant mention of other young people or adults who seems to have a lot of influence over them
- Broken off with old friends and hangs around with one group of people
- Increased use of social networking sites
- Use of certain codes of group behaviour; for example, ways of talking and hand signs
- Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past
- Signs of sexual exploitation e.g. pregnancy, abortion (perhaps forced), sexually transmitted infections and injuries
- Signs of psychological effects of exploitation; for example, depression and suicide attempts
- Fearful when entering certain areas

- Concerned by the presence of unknown youths in their neighbourhoods

Where concerns are identified the DSL (or deputies) should be informed and Sefton LSCB protocol followed:

<https://seftonlscb.safeguardingpolicies.org.uk/may-2017/sec-10-children-at-risk-of-criminal-exploitation/101-children-at-risk-of-criminal-exploitation-introduction>

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 a number of 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 should be considered.

The school is cognisant of the local threat of cuckooing where vulnerable people are targeted by criminal gangs. Most at risk are young people who are isolated, mentally ill, disabled or drug dependant. They are at risk of intimidation from gangs who then move into their home. More information is available at: www.youknowwho.info.

Where a young person is believed to be at risk of criminal exploitation, in accordance with the local procedures a referral to Sefton’s Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel [MACE] will be made: <https://www.seftonlscb.org.uk/lscb/child-sexual-exploitation/child-exploitation-referrals-ce1-form>.

Gaming

Online gaming is an activity that may affect large numbers of our students. We aim to raise awareness by:

- Talking to parents and carers about the games students play and if they are appropriate
- Supporting parents to use parental controls
- Talking to parents about setting boundaries and time limits when games are played
- Making students aware of how to report concerns

Youth Generated Sexualised Imagery

- We recognise the impact of online social communication and the issue of sending or posting sexually suggestive images including nude or semi-nude photographs via mobiles or over the internet.
- We pay due regard to the Guidance issued by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety in relation to how we respond to incidents.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf

In all cases where an incident of youth produced sexual imagery is reported the following actions will be undertaken:

- The incident should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead should hold an initial review discussion or meeting with appropriate school staff.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate).
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to Sefton MASH and/or the police immediately.

Online Hoaxes Online and Harmful Online Challenges

A hoax is a deliberate lie designed to seem truthful and online challenges generally involve users recording themselves taking a challenge, and then distributing the video through social media channels, inspiring or daring others to repeat the challenge. Appropriate filters exist to limit harmful online hoaxes and challenges within school. Children are taught about how to respond to online challenges and online hoaxes.

Where a harmful online challenge or hoax is circulating then the DSL will respond with a formal response if deemed necessary. Quick local action may prevent the online challenge / hoax going viral.

Further guidance to support forward planning is available via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/harmful-online-challenges-and-online-hoaxes/harmful-online-challenges-and-online-hoaxes>

Contextual Safeguarding

Staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside school and/or can occur between children outside of this environment.

They should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families (e.g. sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, serious youth violence). To support Children's Social Care staff, referrals will provide as much contextual detail as possible.

Elective Home Education

For some children, elective home education means they are less visible to services that are there to keep them safe and supported. If a parent expresses their intention to educate a child at home, the Local Authority, school and other professionals should work together to coordinate a meeting with the parent, especially if a child has SEND, is vulnerable or has a social worker.

Homelessness

We will work closely with the Housing Options Team and other services if children in our school are homeless or are at risk from becoming homeless. The Housing Options Team can be contacted on 0151 934 3541.

Operation Encompass

Our school is part of Operation Encompass. Operation Encompass is a national police and education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people who experience Domestic Violence and Abuse and which is in place in every police force in England and Wales. Children were recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act. Operation Encompass means that the police will share information with our

school about all police attended Domestic Abuse incidents which involve any of our children prior to the start of the next school day.

We ensure that parents are fully aware that we are an Operation Encompass school through the school website.

As a staff we have discussed how we can support our children who are experiencing Domestic Abuse on a day-to-day basis and particularly following the Operation Encompass notification. We are aware that we must do nothing that puts the child/ren or the non-abusing adult at risk.

Operation Encompass notifications are stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information.

Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

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.

Domestic abuse as defined under the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) is: behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is "domestic abuse" if A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive. The Act says behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

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

Teenage Relationship Abuse is when there is actual or threatened abuse within a romantic relationship or a former relationship. One partner will try to maintain power and control over the other. This abuse can take many forms: physical, sexual, financial, emotional, or social. This includes coercive and controlling behaviour.

Recognising Domestic Abuse and supporting victims is a key local area safeguarding concern and the following agencies can help:

- **Sefton Independent Domestic Violence Advisors [IDVA]** – offer free crisis intervention support to high-risk victims of domestic abuse; provide practical help including safety planning for the whole family; support through the Criminal Justice System, and home security checks; work with male and female victims aged 16+ and work with victims even if they choose to remain in their relationship. They can be contacted by phone on 0151 934 5142 between Monday and Friday 9.00am until 5.00pm or at IDVA.Team@sefton.gov.uk
- **Sefton Women & Children's Aid [SWACA]** – help women, young people and children survive the impact of domestic violence and abuse by giving free practical and emotional support. SWACA will see people in the community, including the family and well-being centres. They also work with young people who are experiencing relationship abuse. They can be contacted on 0151 922 8606 or help@swaca.com

- **Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (RASA)**- provide **essential** crisis and therapeutic support to individuals of all ages who have been affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives. This includes specialised counselling, support, and an Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy (ISVA) service, which includes support through the Criminal Justice process. They provide an opportunity to give anonymous intelligence in relation to sexual violence if an individual does not want to make a formal complaint and operate a help line on Tuesdays and Thursdays 6pm until 8pm, Friday 12 noon until 2pm, Sunday 10am until 3pm. They can be contacted on 0151 558 1801 or sefton@rasamerseyside.org
- **Operation Encompass Scheme**- Sefton in partnership with Merseyside Police are part of the Operation Encompass Scheme. As an Operation Encompass school, we are alert to the indicators of abuse, and we have a planned approach to supporting children in a proactive way.
- Other advice on identifying children who are affected by domestic abuse and how they can be helped is available at:
 - <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/advice-benefits/crime-and-emergencies/domestic-abuse.aspx>
 - [NSPCC-UK domestic-abuse signs symptoms effects](#)
 - [Refuge what is domestic violence/effects of domestic violence on children](#)
 - [Safelives: young people and domestic abuse](#)
 - Disrespect Nobody <https://www.disrespectnobody.co.uk/relationship-abuse/what-is-relationship-abuse/>

Where the concerns about abuse linked to Domestic Violence a contact to Sefton MASH must be made.

Parental Mental Health

The term "mental ill health" is used to cover a wide range of conditions, from eating disorders, mild depression and anxiety to psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. Parental mental illness does not necessarily have an adverse impact on a child's developmental needs, but it is essential to always assess its implications for each child in the family. It is essential that the diagnosis of a parent/carer's mental health is not seen as defining the level of risk. Similarly, the absence of a diagnosis does not equate to there being little or no risk. For children, the impact of parental mental health can include:

- The parent / carer's needs or illnesses taking precedence over the child's needs
- The child's physical and emotional needs neglected
- A child acting as a young carer for a parent or a sibling
- A child having restricted social and recreational activities
- A child finds it difficult to concentrate- impacting on educational achievement
- A child missing school regularly as (s)he is being kept home as a companion for a parent / carer
- A child adopting paranoid or suspicious behaviour as they believe their parent's delusions.
- Witnessing self-harming behaviour and suicide attempts (including attempts that involve the child)
- Obsessional compulsive behaviours involving the child

If staff in our school become aware of any of the above indicators, or others that suggest a child is suffering due to parental mental health, the information will be shared with the DSL who will undertake an assessment of the situation and seek support from Children's Social Care.

Child Abuse Linked to Faith and Belief

The term 'belief in spirit possession' is the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. There is also a range of other language that is connected to such abuse. This includes black magic, kindoki, ndoki, the evil eye, djinns, voodoo, obeah, demons, and child sorcerers.

In all these cases, genuine beliefs can be held by families, carers, religious leaders, congregations, and the children themselves that evil forces are at work. Families and children can be deeply worried by the evil that they believe is threatening them, and abuse often occurs when an attempt is made to 'exorcise', or 'deliver' the child.

Exorcism is the attempt to expel evil spirits from a child. The belief in 'possession' or 'witchcraft' is widespread. It is not confined to particular countries, cultures or religions, nor is it confined to new immigrant communities in this country. Any concerns about a child which arise in this context must be taken seriously. (Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession 2007)

Where the concerns about abuse linked to witchcraft and spirit possession for the welfare and safety of the child or young person are such that a contact to Sefton MASH must be made.

Further information is available at the following link: [National action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief](#).

Curriculum and Staying Safe

- Our school plays an essential role in helping children to understand and identify the parameters of what is appropriate child and adult behaviour, including what is 'safe', to recognise when they and others close to them are not safe, and how to seek advice and support when they are concerned.
- We use the curriculum, Relationships and Sex Education, to provide opportunities for increasing self-awareness, self-esteem, social and emotional understanding, assertiveness and decision making so that students have a range of contacts and strategies to ensure their own protection and understand the importance of protecting others.
- Systems have been established to support the empowerment of children to talk to a range of staff when they are in difficulty and to make comments, raise concerns or provide feedback about their school experience and any other external issues which affect their well-being.
- Children will be listened to and heard, and their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon as appropriate. Records will be kept of reported incidents in line with guidance.
- Our school will assess the suitability and effectiveness of input from external agencies or individuals to ensure that:
 - any messages communicated to students are consistent with the ethos of the school and do not marginalise any communities, groups or individuals.
 - any messages communicated to students do not seek to glorify criminal activity or violent extremism or seek to radicalise students through extreme or narrow views of faith, religion, culture or other ideologies.
 - activities are properly embedded in the curriculum and clearly mapped to schemes of work to avoid contradictory messages or duplication.
 - Activities are matched to the needs of students.
- We recognise, however, that the ethos of our school is to encourage students to understand opposing views and ideologies, appropriate to their age, understanding and abilities, and to be able to actively engage with them in informed debate. We may use external agencies or speakers to facilitate and support this.

Supervision and Support

- Supervision of all employees occurs through the school's line management structure.
- Any member of staff affected by issues arising from concerns for a child's welfare or safety can seek support from the DSL and/or Human Resources department.
- The DSL /Human Resources department will put staff and parents in touch with outside agencies for professional support if they so wish.

Submitting Child Protection Referrals

All Safeguarding incidents are considered within the context within which such incidents occur (contextual safeguarding). The DSL will help assess whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare and will provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process.

All child protection referrals should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by completing an online Multi-Agency Referral and submitting it to the MASH. All urgent child protection referrals (i.e. where there is an immediate concern about a child's safety) should be made in the first instance by telephoning the MASH on: 0151 934 4013. This should be followed by submission of a form as above. Consultation with the MASH team prior to a referral being made can be made via 0151 934 4388.

Outside of office hours, immediate concerns about a child should be referred to the Emergency Duty Team on telephone number: 0151 920 8234.

If staff are ever concerned that a child is in immediate danger, they must contact the Police by dialling 999.

Records of the referral must 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

Contact Numbers

NAME	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Sefton Integrated Front Door (IFD)	0151 934 4013 / 0151 934 4481
Out of Hours Service	0151 934 3555
PREVENT (Single point of contact) Steve Martlew	0151 934 3370
Dovetail Channel Coordinator – Claire Wright	07394559107
Merseyside Police	101 / Emergency 999
Local Authority Designated Officer Tracey Holyhead	0151 934 3783
Education Safeguarding Tracy McKeating	0151 934 3359
Children Missing Education Co-ordinator Carole Blundell	0151 934 3181
CAMHS (single point of access)	0151 282 4527
Bully Busters	0800 169 6928
Sefton Women & Children's Aid (SWACA)	0151 922 8606
OPERATION ENCOMPASS - Lawry Simm	Lawrence.E.Simm@merseyside.police.uk
Independent domestic abuse advisors (IDVA)	0151 934 5142
VENUS	0151 474 4744
CATCH 22 CSE/CCE	0151 934 2535
Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre [RASA] Sefton	0151 558 1801
Parenting 2000	01704 380047 / 0151 932 1163
Housing Options	0151 934 3541
We Are With You (formerly Addaction)	0707983430995
LSCB Business Manager - Deb Hughes	0151 934 4706
LSCB Administrator Donna Atkinson	0151 934 4706

Safeguarding COVID-19

Where a school closure is necessary, an addendum to the Child Protection Policy will be implemented in order to maintain safeguarding support for students of the school.