

Child protection and safeguarding (including safer recruitment and allegations against staff)

Little Acorns School



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| Approved by: | Alison Neal |
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Important contacts

| ROLE/ORGANISATION | NAME | CONTACT DETAILS |
|---|----------------|--|
| Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) | Alison Neal | alison.neal@littleacornstc.com |
| DSL | Joanna Curley | joanna.curley@littleacornstc.com |
| Local authority designated officer (LADO) | | 03000 41 08 88 |
| Chair of governors | Barbara Dansey | bmdconsultancy@btinternet.com |

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| Channel helpline | 020 7340 7264 |
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1. Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare

All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities with respect to safeguarding

Staff are properly training in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues

2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2022\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#), and the [Governance Handbook](#). We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

Part 3 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils 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

[Statutory guidance on FGM](#), which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

[The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#), which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children

Schedule 4 of the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#), which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

[Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty](#), which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism

[The Human Rights Act 1998](#) **which states** being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to schools under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

[Equality Act 2010](#): governing bodies and proprietors should carefully consider how they're supporting their pupils and students regarding particular protected characteristics (including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race) under the Equality Act.

[Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#): you can take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils (where you can show it's proportionate). This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. We must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation at Little Acorns School .

3. Definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

Protecting children from maltreatment

Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development

Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child, and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 1 explains the different types of abuse.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Appendix 1 defines neglect in more detail.

Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) is the sharing of sexual imagery (photos or videos) by children

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

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

The local authority (LA)

An Intergrated Care Board for an area within the LA

The chief officer of police for a police area in the LA area

Scope and responsibilities

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children at Little Acorns School is everyone's responsibility. Staff should at all times consider what is in the best interest of the child.

Little Acorns is committed to Safeguarding the welfare of Children. We offer a range of services to Children which we recognise may have a powerful and positive influence on them. It is our aim to aid the development of self-esteem and social awareness and to provide opportunities for enjoyment with personal achievement and positive experiences.

It is important for that improving sense of self that the children at our school are aware that there is strategy and procedure for their protection and that all adults in their environment are able to protect them adequately. Appropriate to age and stage it is also important that children are able to have a knowledge themselves of the procedures and have a forum to make suggestions so that they may help shape our Service.

The wide ranging nature of the Little Acorns work gives many staff substantial one-to-one access to Children in order to build the high quality relationships that these children require, however, it is not only these staff who are addressed in this Policy. This Policy applies to all staff that may come into contact with Children in the course of their work, whether in School, Home or anywhere else on our Services premises or in the wider community.

As many staff are in regular contact with Children they are in a position to observe outward signs of abuse and can and should alert others when such signs are observed. Little Acorns and all of its staff have a responsibility to be proactive, and to refer suspected cases of abuse to Kent Safeguarding Children Multi Agency Partnership (KSCMP).

All staff and volunteers, and any contractors who visit the site more frequently than once per month on a regular basis will have an enhanced DBS disclosure. Any professionals offering additional services to the Children in our care such as sports clubs, therapies etc. will have their own Safeguarding Policy to abide by and an enhanced DBS disclosure. Little Acorns must be familiar with the service or club and satisfied that the individual has these relevant documents before a Child can be left unattended in their care.

Those who work with Children have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare. This is an important responsibility and requires vigilance. You will need to be able to recognise when a Child may not be achieving their developmental potential or their health may be impaired, and be able to identify appropriate sources of help for them.

The responsibility for decision making over issues of child protection lies with Kent County Council, the local authority for the area we are based. Little Acorns has developed links with the KSCMP and will ensure that our Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures are in accordance with both Kent Safeguarding Children procedures and the children's responsible/placing authority procedures. These will be available on site. See contact details below.

For children placed outside of their 'home' authority, the local authority in which they are placed may choose to liaise with the child's responsible authority over aspects of child protection investigations.

It is not Little Acorns responsibility to determine who does what externally, but staff do have a role in supporting investigations e.g. through providing timely and accurate information.

4. Equality statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

Have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities (see section 9)

Are already LAC children and are cared for at Little Acorns Therapeutic Community.

Have experienced high levels of trauma from sexual, physical and emotional abuse and/or neglect.

May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality

Have English as an additional language

Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, radicalization or honour based abuse

Are asylum seekers

Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs

Are looked after children. (see section 11)

Pupils with health conditions

Pupil with mental health needs

Pupils with a family member in prison or are affected by parental offending

Pupils who are persistently absent from school, including persistent absences for part of the school day

Pupils who are missing or absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions

All staff should be aware of the language used when talking to the pupil involved.

- 'Victim' is a widely understood and recognised term, but not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim, or would want to be described that way. Staff should be prepared to use any term the child feels most comfortable with when managing an incident
- 'Alleged perpetrator(s)' and 'perpetrator(s)' are widely used and recognised terms, but staff should think carefully about what terminology you use (especially in front of children), as in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. Each case should be considered on an individual, case by case basis.

5. Roles and responsibilities

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

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, transphobia and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by our:

Behaviour policy

Pastoral support system

Planned programme of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
- The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and FGM and how to access support
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

5.1 All staff

Staff who work directly (or indirectly) with children are expected to read at least part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

Staff who work directly with children are also expected to read annex B of KCSIE (about specific safeguarding issues).

All staff will:

- ❖ Read and understand part 1 and annex B of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), and review this guidance at least annually
- ❖ Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance
- ❖ Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g. sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- ❖ Provide a safe space for pupils who are LGBTQ+ to speak out and share their concerns

All staff will be aware of:

- ❖ Our systems which support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff behavior policy, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies, the behaviour policy, Online Safety Policy and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
- ❖ The early help assessment process (sometimes known as the common assessment framework) and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment
- ❖ The process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play
- ❖ What to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals
- ❖ The signs of different types of abuse and neglect, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)
- ❖ The importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- ❖ The fact that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their home, at school and online
- ❖ The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children
- ❖ What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

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

5.2 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team. Our DSL is Alison Neal. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding, our second DSL is Class Teacher, Joanna Curley. In the unlikely event of all 3 of the DSL's being off site Charlotte Bateman, house DSL or Lisa Bouchat Deputy DSL for the home can offer advice and guidance to the school team.

During term time, the DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

Alison can be contacted by email alison.neal@littleacornstc.com or by phone 01233850422 if she is not in the classroom or in the office.

Joanna Curley can be contacted on joanna.curely@littleacornstc.com and/or the same phone number as Alison Neal.

The DSL will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to:

Provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters

Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so

Contribute to the assessment of children

Refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly

The DSL will liaise with the assigned Social Worker for each child and parents where appropriate.

The full responsibilities of the DSL are set out in their job description.

The DSL will ensure children have an 'appropriate adult'.

The DSL will ensure online safety, including filtering and monitoring processes are in place.

The responsibility for decision making over issues of child protection lies with Kent County Council, the local authority for the area we are based. Little Acorns has developed links with the KSCMP and will ensure that our Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures are in accordance with both Kent Safeguarding Children procedures and the children's responsible/placing authority procedures. These will be available on site. See contact details below.

Play a part in preventing abuse by discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children's social care colleagues to prepare the school's or college's policies (especially the child protection policy) and responses, and be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment, and be confident as to how to access this support

5.3 The governing board

The governing board will:

- Facilitate a whole-school approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development
- Evaluate and approve this policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and our school's local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with advice from the safeguarding partners
- Ensure that the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, and review their effectiveness. This includes:
 - Making sure that the leadership team and staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training
 - Reviewing the [DfE's filtering and monitoring standards](#), and ensure these are being actioned.

Make sure:

- The DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support
- Online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-school approach to safeguarding and related policies
- The DSL has lead authority for safeguarding, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place
- The school has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors). Please see separate Low-Level Concern Policy.
- That this policy reflects that children with SEND, or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to any abuse or neglect being recognised

The chair of governors will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher, where appropriate

All governors will read Keeping Children Safe in Education in its entirety.

Section 15 of this policy has information on how governors are supported to fulfil their role.

5.4 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers are informed of our systems which support safeguarding, including this policy, as part of their induction

Communicating this policy to parents when their child joins the school and via the school website

Ensuring that all staff undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and update this regularly

Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate (see appendix 3)

To make sure that online safety training is included in staff safeguarding and child protection training

6. Confidentiality

Confidentiality and Information Sharing Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. A key factor identified in many serious case reviews (SCRs) has been a failure by practitioners to record information, to share it to understand its significance and then take appropriate action. Everyone who comes into contact with children and carers/families has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. All matters relating to Safeguarding are confidential and every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality. However staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share concerns and information with the Designated Lead for Safeguarding

(DSL) and other professionals investigating a concern. All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child or young person that they can keep secrets or promise confidentiality to staff or parents where a child or young person's safety is at risk. All staff have an overriding duty to report to the Designated Lead for Safeguarding any incident in which they judge the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person to have been at risk.

In summary:

- Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding
- Information must be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis, but you do not need consent to share information if a child is suffering, or at risk of, serious harm
- Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about an allegation, as this may not be in the child's best interests
- The DSL or Head Teacher will only disclose personal information about a student to other members of staff on a need to know basis only
- All staff have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies to safeguard children · Via the DSL we will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to the Safeguarding Partnership with their parents/carers, unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, we will consult with the Multi-Agency Referral Unit.

7. Recognising abuse and taking action

Staff, volunteers and governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue.

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

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

Make a referral to children's social care and/or the police **immediately** if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger. **Anyone can make a referral**, but the DSL should be notified as soon as possible.

- Consider whether the child is at immediate risk of harm: are they safe to go home?
- If a child is at risk of immediate harm, call the Integrated Front Door on 03000 411 111 (outside office hours - 03000 419 191) or the Police on 999
- Access the Kent Safeguarding Support Level Guidance document and procedures: www.kscmp.org.uk
- Refer to other agencies as appropriate, for example, Internal or community services, early help open access, LADO, Police, or make a Request for Support via Integrated Children's Services: 03000 411 111
- If unsure, consult with Area Education Safeguarding Advisor (**03301 65 13 40 West Kent**) or Local Authority Social Worker at the Front Door: www.kscmp.org.uk

7.2 If a child makes a disclosure to you

Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents of, or suspicion of, abuse.

Be alert to the fact that, when a child discloses information about abuse to a member of staff, it may be done obliquely, rather than directly, and may be limited in detail.

The child making the disclosure should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting **any** form of abuse.

Children and young people often tell other young people, rather than staff or other adults, about abuse and these young people may then pass this information to staff.

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and the staff member may be the adult with whom the child feels safe to talk.

When the child discloses in confidence, the member of staff will need to display tact and sensitivity in responding.

The member of staff will need to reassure the child, and retain his/her trust, whilst explaining the need to inform other professionals.

1. Allow the Child to talk – ask only open questions such as “Can you tell me more about…” or summarise and reflect what the child has said. You are not questioning the child, you could compromise evidence by asking for details. Do not press for detail, do not put forward your own ideas or use words that the Child has not used themselves. Do not compromise possible evidence by direct questioning or asking any leading questions such as why, where, when, who.
2. Stay calm and reassuring.
3. Do not make promises that cannot be kept regarding confidentiality – tell the Child that you will have to tell someone else who will be able to help.
4. Believe the Child but do not apportion any blame to the perpetrator (it may be someone the Child loves or is close to).
5. Reassure the Child that they were not to blame and that they were right to talk to you.
6. Ask the Child if they have told anybody else.
7. Keep an open mind.
8. Record the conversation and facts verbatim in writing immediately afterward on a concern form (writing notes during the conversation may put undue pressure on the Child). Sign and date the report (it may be required as evidence).
9. Report to the designated safeguarding lead, deputy or school DSL team who will contact the Social Services Department as necessary as well as the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi Agency Partnership if they are on site/present.

In any discussion with the child:

DO

- Be accessible and receptive
- Listen carefully
- Take it seriously
- Reassure the child that she is right to tell
- Negotiate getting help
- Find help quickly
- Make careful records of all that was said, using the child’s own words, as soon as is practicable following the disclosure. Date, time and sign the record. This record may be used in subsequent legal proceedings.

DO NOT

- Jump to conclusions
- Directly question the child
- Try to get the child to disclose all of the details
- Speculate or accuse anybody
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Ask leading questions that could give your own idea of what may have happened. Do not prompt words to use (e.g., “Did he do X to you?”). Instead ask, “What do you want to tell me?” or, “Is there anything else you want to say?”

- Give a guarantee that whatever has been said will be kept confidential. If you are told about abuse you have a responsibility to report it (see below). If asked, explain that, if you are going to be told something very important that involves the young woman's safety and it needs to be sorted out, you will need to tell the people who can do this, but that you will only tell people who have to know.
- Discuss with the DSL whether any steps need to be taken to protect the person who has told you about the abuse. (This may need to be discussed with the person who told you).

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

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

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Possible indicators that a pupil has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in appendix 4.

Any staff member who discovers (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to disclose, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate.

Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for staff members mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Any member of staff who suspects a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

In response to the Mandatory Reporting Duty which came into force on 31st October 2015, the following requirements;

- Where a professional, who is subject to the mandatory reporting duty, has either been told by a girl that she has had FGM or has observed a physical sign appearing to show that a girl has had FGM s/he should personally report the matter to the police by calling 101.
- In all other cases, professionals should follow normal safeguarding processes. This is in line with guidance produced by NHS England and the Metropolitan Police Service.

For further information please refer to the recently published Home Office statutory guidance

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

Figure 1 on page 11 illustrates the procedure to follow if you have any concerns about a child's welfare.

Where possible, speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local authority children's social

care. You can also seek advice at any time from the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000. Share details of any actions you take with the DSL as soon as practically possible.

Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' below). Share any action taken with the DSL as soon as possible. Children at Little Acorns School already have assigned Social Workers and so they will be contacted.

Early Help Assessment

If Early Help Assessment is appropriate, the DSL will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an Early Help Assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the school will consider a referral to local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

Referral

If it is appropriate to refer the case to local authority children's social care or the police, the DSL will make the referral or support you to do so.

If you make a referral directly (see section 7.1), you must tell the DSL as soon as possible.

The local authority will make a decision within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up with the local authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

7.5 If you have concerns about extremism

If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the management team and/or seek advice from local authority children's social care. Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' above). Inform the DSL or deputy as soon as practically possible after the referral.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include [Channel](#), the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

The Department for Education also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which school staff and governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk. Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

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

Think someone is in immediate danger

Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group

See or hear something that may be terrorist-related

7.6 If you have a mental health concern

Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

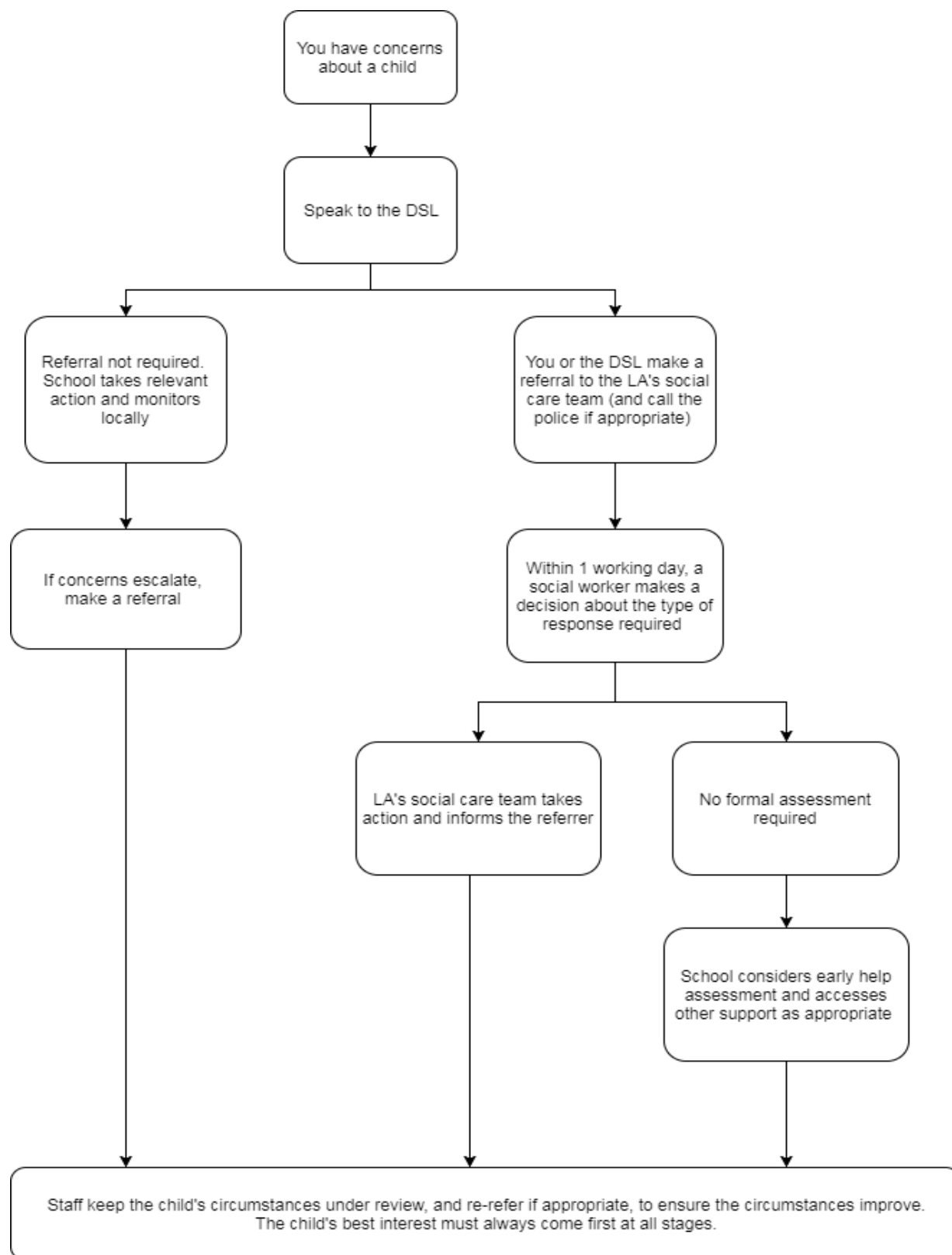
If you have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, take immediate action by following the steps in section 7.4.

If you have a mental health concern that is **not** also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL to agree on a course of action.

In the case of children under CAHMS they may be contacted to help with support.

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

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



7.7 Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher or volunteer

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) posing a risk of harm to children, speak to the headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the headteacher, speak to the chair of governors.

The headteacher/chair of governors will then follow the procedures set out in appendix 3, if appropriate.

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) posing a risk of harm to children, speak to the headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the headteacher, speak to the proprietor.

The headteacher/proprietor will then follow the procedures set out in appendix 3, if appropriate.

7.8 Allegations of abuse made against other pupils

Children can abuse other children, it is not always adults. This is generally referred to as child on child abuse and can take many forms. It may also be referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'. Some children/young people physically, sexually and/or emotionally abuse other children. This also includes, but is not exhaustive to, causing someone to engage in sexual activity without their consent eg forcing them to strip, touch themselves sexually or to engage in sexual activity with a third party. Risk assessments are undertaken, in relation to all young people referred to Little Acorns, in order to ensure, as far as possible, that children are not placed if they present a risk to others. The possibility cannot be ruled out altogether, however, and staff members need to be alert to this by treating very seriously any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. We also recognise that past experiences prior to the children starting at Little Acorns may make the children higher risk to this. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". It is important that all staff recognise that there can be abuse within intimate relationships between pupils too.

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

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy and inline with the Therapeutic Care Homes policies, but this child protection and safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- Could put pupils in the school at risk
- Is violent
- Involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- Involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including sexting)

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

- You must record the allegation and tell the DSL, but do not investigate it
- The DSL will contact the local authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence
- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed
- The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

- The social workers of all children involved will be notified.

We will minimise the risk of Child-on-child abuse by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour, including requesting or sending sexual images
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensuring staff are trained to understand that a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
- Making it clear that there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. We recognise that dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

7.9 Sexting

What is ‘sexting’? In the latest advice for schools and colleges (UKCCIS, 2016), sexting is defined as the production and/or sharing of sexual photos and videos of and by young people who are under the age of 18. It includes nude or nearly nude images and/or sexual acts. It is also referred to as ‘youth produced sexual imagery’. ‘Sexting’ does not include the sharing of sexual photos and videos of under-18 year olds with or by adults. This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police. What to do if an incident involving ‘sexting’ comes to your attention. Report it to your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately.

- Never view, download or share the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this is illegal.
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it.
- Do not ask the young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL.
- Do not share information about the incident to other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL. If a ‘sexting’ incident comes to your attention, report it to your DSL. Your school’s safeguarding policies should outline codes of practice to be followed.

Initial review meeting

Following a report of an incident, the DSL will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff. This meeting will consider the initial evidence and aim to determine:

Whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)

If a referral needs to be made to the police and/or children’s social care

If it is necessary to view the imagery in order to safeguard the young person (in most cases, imagery should not be viewed)

What further information is required to decide on the best response

Whether the imagery has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)

Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images from devices or online services

Any relevant facts about the pupils involved which would influence risk assessment

If there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual

Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents should be involved)

The DSL will make an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care if:

The incident involves an adult

There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example owing to special educational needs)

What the DSL knows about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent

The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13

The DSL has reason to believe a pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery (for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming)

If none of the above apply then the DSL, in consultation with the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate, may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care.

Further review by the DSL

If at the initial review stage a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or children's social care, the DSL will conduct a further review.

They will hold interviews with the pupils involved (if appropriate) to establish the facts and assess the risks.

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a pupil has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

Informing parents

The DSL will inform parents at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

Referring to the police

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the police, this will be done through Alison Neal, Joanna Curley or Kirsty Tucker.

Recording incidents

All sexting incidents and the decisions made in responding to them will be recorded. The record-keeping arrangements set out in section 14 of this policy also apply to recording incidents of sexting.

Curriculum coverage

Pupils are taught about the issues surrounding sexting as part of our PSHE education and computing programmes. Teaching covers the following in relation to sexting:

What it is

How it is most likely to be encountered

The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive

Issues of legality

The risk of damage to people's feelings and reputation

Pupils also learn the strategies and skills needed to manage:

Specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images

The receipt of such images

This policy on sexting is also shared with pupils so they are aware of the processes the school will follow in the event of an incident.

8. Online safety and the use of mobile technology

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, our school aims to:

- Have robust processes (including filtering and monitoring systems) in place to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers and governors
- Protect and educate the whole school community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology (which we refer to as 'mobile phones')
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole school community
- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

The 4 key categories of risk

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

Content – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation and extremism

Contact – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes

Conduct – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and

Commerce – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams

To meet our aims and address the risks above, we will:

Educate pupils about online safety as part of our curriculum. For example:

- The safe use of social media, the internet and technology
- Keeping personal information private
- How to recognise unacceptable behaviour online
- How to report any incidents of cyber-bullying, ensuring pupils are encouraged to do so, including where they're a witness rather than a victim

Train staff, as part of their induction, on safe internet use and online safeguarding issues including cyber-bullying, the risks of online radicalisation, and the expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring. All staff members will receive refresher training as required and at least once each academic year

Educate parents/carers about online safety via our website, communications sent directly to them and during parents' evenings. We will also share clear procedures with them so they know how to raise concerns about online safety

Make sure staff are aware of any restrictions placed on them with regards to the use of their mobile phone and cameras, for example that:

- Staff are allowed to bring their personal phones to school for their own use, but will limit such use to non-contact time when pupils are not present
- Staff will not take pictures or recordings of pupils on their personal phones or cameras
- Make all pupils, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and governors aware that they are expected to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of the internet in school, use of the school's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- Explain the sanctions we will use if a pupil is in breach of our policies on the acceptable use of the internet and mobile phones
- Make sure all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware that staff have the power to search pupils' phones, as set out in the [DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation](#)
- Carry out an annual review of our approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks faced by our school community
- Provide regular safeguarding and children protection updates including online safety to all staff, at least annually, in order to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard effectively
- Review the child protection and safeguarding policy, including online safety, annually and ensure the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly

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

8.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

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

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

Little Acorns School will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully pupils in line with this policy and our Anti-bullying and behaviour Policies.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools whilst they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the school.

9. Notifying parents

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents. The DSL will normally do this in the event of a suspicion or disclosure. In the absence of the children's parents, particularly the children who live in the Little Acorns Therapeutic Care Home, the allocated Social Worker will be informed along with the House DSL / Management.

Other staff will only talk to parents/social workers about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents/social workers of all the children involved.

10. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities

We recognise that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group, including:

Assumptions, what indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration

Pupils being more prone to peer group isolation than other pupils

The potential for pupils with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs

Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers

11. Pupils with a social worker

Some pupils at Little Acorns School have an allocated Social Worker and all are looked after in Little Acorns Therapeutic Care Home. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

The DSL will always consider the fact all children have social workers to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks

The provision of pastoral and/or academic support

Children's social workers will be notified of any new safeguarding concerns and any new disclosures the children may make about the trauma they suffered before coming to Little Acorns.

As with all children at Little Acorns School, whether it be peer-on-peer, allegations against staff, disclosures about things happening at home all children will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe; they must never be made to feel they are causing problems by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment.

12. Looked-after and previously looked-after children

A proportion of children at Little Acorns are looked-after therefore it is important that:

- staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked-after children and previously looked-after children safe. In particular, we will ensure that:
- Appropriate staff have relevant information about children's looked after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, and care arrangements
- The DSL has details of children's social workers and relevant virtual school heads

13. Complaints and concerns about school safeguarding policies

13.1 Complaints against staff

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff (see appendix 3).

Allegations regarding person(s) working in or on behalf of school

Where an allegation is made against any person working in or on behalf of the school that he or she has:

- a. Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- b. Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or
- c. Has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

We will apply the same principles as in the rest of this document and we will always follow the Kent Safeguarding Children Board procedures evidenced in the Kent guidelines available online. Detailed records will be made to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these. All records will be retained by the Headteachers.

Whilst we acknowledge such allegations, (as all others), may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge they may be founded. It is, therefore, essential that all allegations are investigated properly and in line with agreed procedures.

Initial Action

The person who has received an allegation or witnessed an event will immediately complete a concern using the CPOMS Safeguarding programme.

In the event that an allegation is made against the DSL the matter will be reported to the deputy, the House DSL Charlotte Bateman or the Responsible Individual Simon Bayliss.

The DSL will take steps, where necessary, to secure the immediate safety of children and any urgent medical needs

The member of staff will not be approached at this stage unless it is necessary to address the immediate safety of children

The DSL may need to clarify any information regarding the allegation, however no person will be interviewed at this stage

The DSL will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer in order to determine if it is appropriate for the allegation to be dealt with by school or if there needs to be a referral to social care and/or the police for investigation

Consideration will be given throughout to the support and information needs of pupils, parents and staff

The DSL will inform the Proprietors of any allegation.

If staff have a safeguarding concern/allegation about another staff member (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) that doesn't meet the harm threshold, then they should share it in accordance with the schools low-level concerns policy

13.3 Whistle-blowing

See separate Whistle-Blowing policy.

14. Record-keeping

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded using CPOMS Safeguarding program. If the internet is not working, or you are not able to access this for any reason Green Concerns can be found on the Safeguarding Board in the staff room, both need to be alerted to Joanna Curley and Alison Neal.

Non-confidential records will be easily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them. Alison Neal holds the key to the locked Safeguarding filing cabinet which is in the main office (locked room) for historical concerns (pre Jan 2021) and she holds administration for the CPOMS online records.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school, if they have been transferred to a new school these will be transferred within 5 days of the child starting their new school.

If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded promptly and securely, and separately from the main pupil file. In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

Green paper 'Concern Foms' can be found in the staff room on the Safeguarding Board, however these are only to be used when the internet is not working. They will then be transferred onto the CPOMS programme and the green forms shredded and disposed off safely. These will be retained until the child moves onto their next educational setting, whereby these will be securely and safely forwarded to the child's new educational provision. AN offers training to all staff members to ensure these are completed correctly. Where appropriate and necessary these may be forwarded via secure email to the child's social worker.

It is also important to keep records to keep a chronology of each child but also to help if/when the DSL needs to respond to concerns or complaints about how a safeguarding case was handled.

In addition:

Appendix 2 sets out our policy on record-keeping specifically with respect to recruitment and pre-employment checks

Appendix 3 sets out our policy on record-keeping with respect to allegations of abuse made against staff

15. Training

15.1 All staff

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including on whistle-blowing procedures, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse or neglect. All staff members receive electronic

copies of the policies and these are updated as and when the policies are updated. This training will be regularly updated via staff meetings/ inset days/ formal training events and will be in line with advice from the 3 safeguarding partners.

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas. All staff members at Little Acorns School will complete a e-learning course as part of their induction.

Staff will also complete online training for online safety, FGM, CSE and other necessary safeguarding issues as they arise either nationally or locally.

Online Safety training for all staff should include online safety, including an understanding of the expectations, roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring

Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, through emails, e-bulletins and staff meetings) as required, but at least annually.

Volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

15.2 The DSL

The DSL will undertake child protection and safeguarding training at least every 2 years. They will also complete the Advanced DSL training.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training/Online Safety Training

15.3 Governors

As the chair of governors may be required to act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher, they receive training in managing allegations for this purpose.

The board will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction, which is regularly updated, to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge. This is so they can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support your school to deliver a robust whole school approach to safeguarding.

15.4 Recruitment – interview panels

Little Acorns School adopts a culture of safe recruitment in our best attempt to deter, reject or identify people who may abuse children. The school pays full regard to current DfE guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' September 2016 and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022). We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the school who is likely to be perceived by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult including e.g. volunteers and staff employed by contractors. Safer recruitment practice includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional references, checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. These checks include any repeated concerns or allegations that have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious in a reference. It also includes undertaking interviews and, where appropriate, undertaking List 99 and Criminal Records Bureau checks.

In line with statutory changes, underpinned by regulations, the following will apply:

- a DBS Enhanced Disclosure is obtained for all new appointments to our school's workforce through staffing personnel and payroll including (but not exclusive to) ID checks, prohibition from teaching check and a section 128 check where applicable.
- this school is committed to keep an up to date single central record detailing a range of checks carried out on our staff and details of safeguarding training completed

- all new appointments to our school workforce who have lived outside the UK will be subject to additional checks as appropriate
- our school ensures that supply staff have undergone the necessary checks and will be made aware of this policy
- the school will carry out online searches on shortlisted candidates to help identify any issues that are publicly available online.
- identity checks must be carried out on all appointments to our school workforce before the appointment is made, in partnership with the LA
- additionally teaching staff appointed will need extra checks to ensure they are not prohibited from teaching.

Appendix 2 details further our Safer Recruitment Policy

16. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by Alison Neal (DSL/Head Teacher) At every review, it will be approved by the full governing board.

17. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

Behaviour

Staff behaviour

Complaints

Health and safety

Attendance

Online safety

Equality

First aid

Curriculum

Privacy notices

Whistle blowing policy

RSE Policy

Low Level Concern Policy

Appendix 1: recognition of and types of abuse

As in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, a child is anyone who has not yet reached his/her 18th birthday. Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another; Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development; Health includes physical and mental health; Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

Abuse and Neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them, or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Recognition of possible abuse:

It is extremely difficult to determine if abuse has occurred. Teachers and Care Staff within the Home and School at Little Acorns should look carefully at the behaviour of the Children and be alert for significant changes. All staff should be aware that Children may exhibit any of the following without abuse having occurred:

- Disclosure.
- Non-accidental injury, bruising or marks.
- Explanation inconsistent with injury.
- Several different explanations for an injury.
- Reluctance to give information about an injury.
- A sudden change in behaviour – aggression, extroversion, depression, withdrawn.
- Attention seeking.
- Hyperactivity.
- Poor attention.
- Appear frightened of specific people.
- Abnormal attachment between the Child and specific person(s).
- Indiscriminate attachment.
- Hyper alertness.
- Reduced response.
- Frozen watchfulness.
- Nightmares.
- Anxiety / Irritability.
- Abdominal pain / Headaches.
- Poor Self Esteem.
- Poor peer relationships.
- Act in an inappropriate way for their age.
- Over sexualised play, talk or drawings.
- Excessive or inappropriate masturbation.
- Self-harm / Eating disorder.
- Reluctance to get changed or wash / bathe.

(Recognition–Risk Indicators)

Please see the Kent Child Protection Procedures for further information and guidance.

There are a number of ways in which staff may become aware that a child is either being abused or is at risk of being abused:

- Observation: Through direct observation of symptoms and signs of abuse and neglect, and also changes in behaviour.
- Allegations: As a consequence of allegations or a report being made by a child or another person.
- Disclosure: Either directly from a child or by someone who says they are harming a child.

It is not the responsibility of Little Acorns staff to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. It is their responsibility to be alert to possible signs and symptoms of abuse and to report any concerns about the welfare of a child, whether arising from abuse or from poor/unsafe care practices within the home.

In considering the behaviour, attitudes and practices of their colleagues, the guiding principle for all staff must be to discuss immediately with the manager or one of the directors anything that causes them to feel uncomfortable.

Working Together 2018 places an emphasis on early identification and intervention of vulnerable children. It is the responsibility of Little Acorns employees to be aware of potential risk factors and safeguarding concerns and to report and mediate accordingly.

The sustained abuse or neglect of children and young people, physically, emotionally or sexually can have a major and long-term effect on all aspects of the child/young person's health, development and well-being. Any suspected or potential abusive incident has to be viewed in context to assess the extent of harm to each young person and explore the appropriate intervention. Often, it is the interaction between a number of factors which serves to increase the likelihood or level of actual significant harm

Types of Abuse

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

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

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

- provide adequate food and clothing, shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caretakers)

- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- Failure to provide the correct medical treatment.

The following lists are neither definitive nor exhaustive. The information has to be used in context with a range of other information related to a child's circumstances. Signs of possible abuse:

Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries or delay in reporting them
- Excessive physical punishment
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Aggression towards others
- Running away

When considering the possibility of non-accidental injuries, remember that injuries may have occurred for other reasons e.g. genuine accidents or medical disorders.

Physical Neglect

Constant hunger
Poor personal hygiene
Constant tiredness

Poor state of clothing

Frequent lateness, or unexplained non-attendance at school

Untreated medical problems

Low self-esteem

Poor peer relationships

Stealing

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of substance abuse

Emotional Abuse

Low self-esteem

Continual self-deprecation

Sudden speech disorder

Significant decline in concentration

Socio-emotional immaturity

“Neurotic” behaviour (e.g. rocking, head banging)

Self mutilation

Compulsive stealing

Extremes of passivity or aggression

Running away

Indiscriminate friendliness

Sexual Abuse

Not all children are able to tell, or are believed by parents. Changes in behaviour may be a signal that something has happened. It is important to remember that there may well be no physical or behavioural signs. The following indicators may show that a child is troubled, but not through sexual abuse. The child may have some of these signs or none at all. It is a combination, frequency and duration of signs that can alert you to a problem.

Behavioural:

Lack of trust in adults, or over familiarity with adults

Fear of a particular individual

Social isolation – withdrawal or introversion

Sleep disturbance (nightmares, irrational fears, bed wetting, fear of sleeping alone, needing a nightlight)

Running away

Reluctance or refusal to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for activities

Low self-esteem

Drug, alcohol or solvent abuse

Display of sexual knowledge beyond their years

Unusual interest in the genitals of adults, children or animals

Expressing affection in an inappropriate way

Fear of bathrooms, showers, closed doors

Abnormal, sexualised drawing

Fear of medical examinations

Developmental regression

Poor peer relations

Over-sexualised behaviour/sexual promiscuity

Stealing

Psychosomatic factors e.g. recurrent abdominal pains or headache

Physical:

Sleeplessness, fear of the dark, nightmares

Bruises, scratches, bite marks to the thighs or genital area

Itch, soreness, discharge, unexplained bleeding from the rectum, vagina or penis

Pain on passing urine or recurrent urinary infection

Stained underwear

Unusual genital odour

Anxiety, depression

Eating disorder e.g. anorexia or bulimia

Discomfort/difficulty in walking/sitting

Venereal disease

Soiling or wetting in children who have been trained

Self mutilation/suicide attempts

Appendix 2: safer recruitment and DBS checks – policy and procedures

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Advertising

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

Our school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children

That safeguarding checks will be undertaken

The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children

Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

Application forms

Our application forms will:

Include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)

Include a copy of, or link to, our child protection and safeguarding policy and our policy on the employment of ex-offenders

Shortlisting

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

Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them

Explore all potential concerns

Shortlisted candidates will be informed that the school may carry out online checks as part of the due diligence process

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:

- If they have a criminal history
- Whether they are included on the barred list

- Whether they are prohibited from teaching
- Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
- Any relevant overseas information

Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true

Seeking references and checking employment history

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

When seeking references we will:

Not accept open references

Liaise directly with referees and verify any information contained within references with the referees

Ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and completed by a senior person. Where the referee is school based, we will ask for the reference to be confirmed by the headteacher/principal as accurate in respect to disciplinary investigations

Obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed

Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children

Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate

Resolve any concerns before any appointment is confirmed

Interview and selection

When interviewing candidates, we will:

Probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, and ask candidates to explain this

Explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate's suitability to work with children

Record all information considered and decisions made

Pre-appointment vetting checks

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals' personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

New staff

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

- Verify their identity
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken
- Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
- Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- Verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards
- Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate
- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher

Carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK. These could include, where available:

- For all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records checks for overseas applicants](#)
- For teaching positions: obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach
- Check that candidates taking up a management position* are not subject to a prohibition from management (section 128) direction made by the secretary of state

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

We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

Regulated activity means a person who will be:

Responsible, on a regular basis in a school or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or

Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or

Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not

Existing staff

In certain circumstances we will carry out all the relevant checks on existing staff as if the individual was a new member of staff. These circumstances are when:

There are concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children; or

An individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or

There has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more

We will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

We believe the individual has engaged in [relevant conduct](#); or

We believe the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#); or

We believe the 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e. they may harm a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm); and

The individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left

Agency and third-party staff

We will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Contractors

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

An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity

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

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.

We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.

Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances.

We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

For self-employed contractors such as music teachers or sports coaches, we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

Volunteers

We will:

Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity

Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity

Carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment

Ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought

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.

All proprietors, trustees, local governors and members will also have the following checks:

A section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#)).

Identity

Right to work in the UK

Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK

Appendix 3: allegations of abuse made against staff

This section of this policy applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher or volunteer, has:

Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or

Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or

Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, or

Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

It applies regardless of whether the alleged abuse took place in the school. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching and historical allegations of abuse will be referred to the police.

We will deal with any allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

Suspension of the accused until the case is resolved

Suspension will not be the default position, and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned

Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children

Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children

Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents have been consulted

Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations

Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation

Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive

False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation

Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)

Unfounded: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

Procedure for dealing with allegations

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the headteacher (or chair of governors [in independent schools: proprietor] where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation) – the ‘case manager’ – will take the following steps:

Immediately discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or children’s social care services. (The case manager may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve

the police *before* consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the case manager will notify the designated officer as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)

Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or children’s social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or children’s social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies

Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or children’s social care services, as appropriate

If immediate suspension is considered necessary, agree and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details

If it is decided that no further action is to be taken in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation

If it is decided that further action is needed, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or children’s social care services as appropriate

Provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and considering what other support is appropriate.

Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with children’s social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice

Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case and the outcome, where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process (in confidence)

Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child

If the school is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the governing board will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school’s disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

Timescales

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious will be resolved within 1 week
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, we will institute appropriate action within 3 working days
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, we will hold this within 15 working days

Specific actions

Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution

The case manager will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or children's social care services.

Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the case manager and the school's personnel adviser will discuss with the designated officer whether to make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required. If they think that the individual has engaged in conduct that has harmed (or is likely to harm) a child, or if they think the person otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child, they must make a referral to the DBS.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the case manager and personnel adviser will discuss with the designated officer whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

Individuals returning to work after suspension

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The case manager will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the school.

Unsubstantiated or malicious allegations

If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the headteacher, or other appropriate person in the case of an allegation against the headteacher, will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the pupil(s) who made it, or whether the police should be asked to consider whether action against those who made the allegation might be appropriate, even if they are not a pupil.

Confidentiality

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The case manager will take advice from the local authority's designated officer, police and children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

Record-keeping

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case. Such records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- Notes of any action taken and decisions reached (and justification for these, as stated above)

If an allegation or concern is not found to have been malicious, the school will retain the records of the case on the individual's confidential personnel file, and provide a copy to the individual.

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

The records of any allegation that is found to be malicious will be deleted from the individual's personnel file.

References

When providing employer references, we will not refer to any allegation that has been proven to be false, unsubstantiated or malicious, or any history of allegations where all such allegations have been proven to be false, unsubstantiated or malicious.

Learning lessons

After any cases where the allegations are *substantiated*, we will review the circumstances of the case with the local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual

Appendix 4: specific safeguarding issues

● **Bullying** Most cases of bullying will be dealt with effectively via our anti-bullying policy set out in a separate document. There may, however, be circumstances when a referral will be required, in accordance with the procedure detailed below. For example, when bullying involves criminal behaviour, or when initial steps to combat it effectively have been unsuccessful.

Knowingly allowing, or condoning, bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures as this could constitute a 'failure to act to prevent harm'.

Bullying can take different forms. It could include:

- physical bullying: hitting, slapping or pushing someone
- verbal bullying: name calling, gossiping or threatening someone
- non-verbal abuse: hand signs or text messages
- emotional abuse: threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion: ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- bullying someone because they have a disability

Children who are absent from education

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

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

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

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority

if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. For example, young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions

Associating with other young people involved in exploitation

Suffering from changes in emotional wellbeing

Misusing drugs and alcohol

Going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late

Regularly missing school or education

Not taking part in education

If a member of staff suspects CCE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. It may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

CSE can include both physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity. It can also happen online. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam.

CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge, for example through others copying videos or images.

In addition to the CCE indicators above, indicators of CSE can include a child:

Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend

Suffering from sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant

If a member of staff suspects CSE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Serious Violence

There are a variety of indicators which may signal 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 wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation. All staff should be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance.

Domestic abuse

Children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse and/or violence at home where it occurs between family members. Domestic Abuse can include ill treatment that is not physical, as well as witnessing ill treatment of others.

Extra- familial harms can include sexual harassment and domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships (teenage).

Most the children a Little Acorns School have witnessed or been victim of Domestic Violence and all staff need to be sensitive to this. They also need to carry the 'it could happen here' approach when the children return home to the Therapeutic Care Home that is part of the Little Acorns Therapeutic Community.

Children who are exposed to and witness domestic abuse are also victims. Domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. Children can also be perpetrators of domestic abuse in their own relationships.

The DSL will provide support according to the child's needs and update records about their circumstances.

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

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

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

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

FGM

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting', but has many other names.

Other names for FGM

You might have heard female genital mutilation (FGM) be called a different name. Some common names for FGM include:

- female circumcision
- cutting
- sunna
- gudniin
- halalays
- tahur
- megrez
- khitan.

You might have heard some FGM terms that you're not familiar with, including:

- **'Cutter'**

A 'cutter' is somebody who carries out FGM. They might use things like knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades to carry out the procedure.

- **'Cutting season'**

This refers to the summer months – often July, August and September – when many girls are on break from school. This is often the period when girls have time to undergo FGM. Girls might be flown abroad during this time, so it's important to be aware of this risk.

FGM is a form of child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence in the UK. We know:

- there are no medical reasons to carry out FGM
- it's often performed by someone with no medical training, using instruments such as knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades
- children are rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained
- it's used to control female sexuality and can cause long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:

- when a baby is new-born
- during childhood or as a teenager

- just before marriage
- during pregnancy

Circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM happening are:

- Child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- Family taking a long trip abroad
- Child's family being from one of the 'at risk' communities for FGM (Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdistan, Indonesia and Pakistan)
- Knowledge that the child's sibling has undergone FGM
- Child talks about going abroad to be 'cut' or to prepare for marriage

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- Prolonged absence from school and other activities
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between the legs
- Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinal tract infection

Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM]:

In response to the Mandatory Reporting Duty which came into force on 31st October 2015, the following requirements;

- Where a professional, who is subject to the mandatory reporting duty, has either been told by a girl that she has had FGM or has observed a physical sign appearing to show that a girl has had FGM s/he should personally report the matter to the police by calling 101.
- In all other cases, professionals should follow normal safeguarding processes. This is in line with guidance produced by NHS England and the Metropolitan Police Service.

For further information please refer to the recently published Home Office statutory guidance '[Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation](#)' and note 'Annex A – FGM mandatory reporting process map'.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into marriage is a crime. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. It is illegal to cause a child under the age of 18 to marry, even if violence, threats or coercion are not used

Staff will receive training around forced marriage and the presenting symptoms. We are aware of the 'one chance' rule, i.e. we may only have one chance to speak to the potential victim and only one chance to save them.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into marriage, they will speak to the pupil about their concerns in a secure and private place. They will then report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- Speak to the pupil about the concerns in a secure and private place
- Activate the local safeguarding procedures and refer the case to the local authority's designated officer
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or fm@fco.gov.uk
- Refer the pupil to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor, learning mentor, or school counsellor, as appropriate

Preventing radicalisation

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces

Terrorism is an action that:

- Endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people;
- Causes serious damage to property; or
- Seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system

The use or threat of terrorism must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Schools have a duty to prevent children from being drawn into terrorism. The DSL will undertake Prevent awareness training and make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to identify children at risk.

We will assess the risk of children in our school being drawn into terrorism. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the potential risk in our local area, in collaboration with our local safeguarding partners and local police force.

We will ensure that suitable internet filtering is in place, and equip our pupils to stay safe online at school and at home.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period.

Staff will be alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

The government website [Educate Against Hate](#) and charity [NSPCC](#) say that signs that a pupil is being radicalised can include:

- Refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from themselves
- Becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- Changes in friendship groups and appearance

- Rejecting activities they used to enjoy
- Converting to a new religion
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- An unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- Expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions
- Accessing extremist material online, including on Facebook or Twitter
- Possessing extremist literature
- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining, or seeking to join, extremist organisations

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem, or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour – staff should have confidence in their instincts and seek advice if something feels wrong.

If staff are concerned about a pupil, they will follow our procedures set out in section 7.5 of this policy, including discussing their concerns with the DSL.

Staff should **always** take action if they are worried.

- **Contextual safeguarding** Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college and/or can occur between children outside the school or college. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should be considering the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. Known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children's social care assessments should consider such factors so it is important that schools and colleges provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process.

- **Grooming** Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.

Children and young people who are groomed can be [sexually abused](#), [exploited](#) or [trafficked](#).

Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative.

Types of grooming

Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both – by a stranger or someone they know. This could be a family member, a friend or someone who has targeted them – like a teacher, faith group leader or sports coach. When a child is groomed [online](#), groomers may hide who they are by sending photos or videos of other people. Sometimes this'll

be of someone younger than them to gain the trust of a "peer". They might target one child online or contact lots of children very quickly and wait for them to respond.

The relationship a groomer builds can take different forms. This could be:

- a romantic relationship
- as a mentor
- an authority figure
- a dominant and persistent figure.

A groomer can use the same sites, games and apps as young people, spending time learning about a young person's interests and use this to build a relationship with them. Children can be groomed online through:

- social media networks
- text messages and messaging apps, like Whatsapp
- email
- text, voice and video chats in forums, games and apps.

Whether online or in person, groomers can use tactics like:

- pretending to be younger
- giving advice or showing understanding
- buying gifts
- giving attention
- taking them on trips, outings or holidays.

Groomers might also try and isolate children from their friends and family, making them feel dependent on them and giving the groomer power and control over them. They might use blackmail to make a child feel guilt and shame or introduce the idea of 'secrets' to control, frighten and intimidate.

It's important to remember that children and young people may not understand they've been groomed. They may have complicated feelings, like loyalty, admiration, love, as well as fear, distress and confusion.

Child abduction and community safety incidents

Child abduction is when children are taken from their parents or carers without permission. It can be committed by parents or other family members, by people known but not related to the child (like neighbours, friends and acquaintances), and by strangers

- Community safety incidents are things like unknown adults loitering near school or trying to talk to children
- Always follow our pick-up procedures to make sure children only go home with their designated adult(s). For our children in taxi's we are to ensure that it is the regular driver, if due to unforeseen circumstances a different driver arrives we are to ensure ID is seen for the driver and the chaperone.

- **If you see anything suspicious or that doesn't feel right, report it immediately**

Modern slavery

- This includes human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour
- The exploitation can take many forms, for example sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced criminality and the removal of organs
- There's a national referral mechanism for modern slavery – speak to your DSL if you need to know more about this

Cybercrime:

- This is defined as criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet
- This includes activities such as hacking, 'denial of service' attacks (where a website is made unavailable), and creating and using malware such as viruses
- Children who are particularly skilled in computing and technology may be drawn into cybercrime – either deliberately or inadvertently

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Child-on-Child Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary through to secondary stage and into colleges. It can occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. When dealing with concerns regarding HSB it is vital to consider the age and stage of the children, these are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature.

- At Little Acorns School there is a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and that failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour and in the worst case scenario, a culture that normalises abuse
- All staff are mindful that children in our SEND setting are 3 times more likely to be a victim to this and that just because there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening.
- staff will challenge physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. This behaviour will not be 'normalised'.
- Staff to be mindful that many 'perpetrators' have suffered their own abuse and/or trauma and so should also be offered suitable support.
- Staff shouldn't promise confidentiality as it might be in the victim's best interest to seek advice and guidance
- If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment, there's no definitive answer. This is because even if a victim doesn't consent to sharing information, staff may still lawfully share it if there's another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies
- The DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children
- The DSL should consider that:
 - Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)

- The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care, and
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains

Regarding anonymity, schools should:

- Be aware of the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system
- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report and any support for the children involved
- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities
- Reassure all victims/perpetrators that the law is there to protect and support, not to criminalise children.

Discipline and the alleged perpetrator(s)

- The DSL should take the lead role
- You can take disciplinary action whilst other investigations are ongoing e.g. by the police
- The fact another body is investigating/has investigated an incident doesn't (in itself) prevent you from coming to your own conclusion about what happened and impose a penalty accordingly. This is a matter for you and you should consider it on a case-by-case basis
- You should consider whether:
 - Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution - liaise with the police and/or LA children's social care to determine this
 - There are circumstances that make it unreasonable/irrational for you to reach your own view about what happened
- You can, and should, take disciplinary action and still provide support at the same time if necessary

Working with parents and carers

- You will (in most cases) engage with both the victim's and alleged perpetrator's parents or carers when there's been a report of sexual violence
- The exception is if there's reason to believe informing a parent or carer will put the child at additional risk
- You should think carefully about what information you provide about the other child involved, and when. Make sure you work with relevant agencies to ensure your approach to information sharing is consistent
- It's good practice to:
 - Meet the victim's parent or carers with the victim to discuss what's being put in place to safeguard and support them, and how the report will progress
 - Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g. moving them out of classes with the victim. You should explain the reason behind any decision
- The DSL and Head Teacher at Little Acorns would attend these meetings - decide what other agencies should attend on a case-by-case basis. For our LAC Social Workers would be invited.

Safeguarding other children

- You should consider supporting children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape and assault by penetration
- You should do all you can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not being bullied or harassed
- Social media is likely to play a role in the fall out from any incident/alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and friends from either side
- You should consider school transport as part of your risk assessment as a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s)
- It's important to keep your policies, processes and curriculum constantly under review to protect all children
- Reports of sexual violence and/or harassment may:
 - Point to environmental/systematic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum
 - Reflect wider issues in the local area

If there are delays in the criminal process, it will be important for the DSL to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) whilst protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s) – this is to make sure the school's actions don't jeopardise the police investigation. If you have any questions about the investigation, you should contact the police.

When supporting the victim, Little Acorns School will:

- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update relevant policies with lessons learnt
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and where you identify a pattern, decide on a course of action
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether extra teaching time and/or staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again

Children who have experienced sexual violence can display a wide range of responses, so schools should remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting those signs and show sensitivity to their needs.

Checking the identity and suitability of visitors

All visitors will be required to verify their identity to the satisfaction of staff and to leave their belongings, including their mobile phone(s), in a safe place during their visit.

If the visitor is unknown to the setting, we will check their credentials and reason for visiting before allowing them to enter the setting. Visitors should be ready to produce identification.

Visitors are expected to sign the visitors' book and wear a visitor's badge. Visitors onsite will be handed a Little Acorns Safeguarding leaflet on arrival once they have signed in at the office.

Visitors to the school who are visiting for a professional purpose, such as educational psychologists and school improvement officers, will be asked to show photo ID and:

- Will be asked to show their DBS certificate, which will be checked alongside their photo ID; or
- The organisation sending the professional, such as the LA or educational psychology service, will provide prior written confirmation that an enhanced DBS check with barred list information has been carried out

All other visitors, including visiting speakers, will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times. We will not invite into the school any speaker who is known to disseminate extremist views, and will carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any individual or organisation using school facilities is not seeking to disseminate extremist views or radicalise pupils or staff.

