# Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

DRAFT

## September 2026

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| **Approved by:** | **Date:** |
| **Last reviewed on:** | September 2026 |
| **Next review due by:** | September 2027 |

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**Glossary**

For this document the following terminology should be considered:

Safeguarding is the overarching term for everything done to support children and young people, keep them safe, and promote their welfare. It encompasses the full spectrum of measures to prevent harm, promote wellbeing, and ensure children are able to achieve their best outcomes.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE) defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge;
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether within or outside the home, including online;
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

**Child protection**, as defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)', refers to the activity undertaken to protect individual children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes timely assessment, intervention, and referral to statutory services where necessary.

Safeguarding extends beyond child protection and includes:

- promoting children's health and wellbeing, including mental health;
- preventing harm from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or radicalisation;
- ensuring online safety and protection from digital risks;
- early identification and support for children with additional needs (early help);
- addressing risks in the wider environment (contextual safeguarding); and
- listening to children's voices and involving them in decisions affecting their welfare.

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

**DSL** refers to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the School.

**Child** includes everyone under the age of 18.

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

**Extra familial Harm -** Extra-familial harm refers to abuse or exploitation occurring outside the family environment.

**Contextual safeguarding** refers to the approach used to understand and respond to the wider relationships, environments and circumstances in which such harm occurs.

**Family Help** refers to support provided to children and families as soon as problems emerge. It

includes targeted early help and, where appropriate, statutory support provided to children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

**Introduction**

At The Bridge School we are committed to safeguarding children and young people, and we expect everyone who works in our School to share this commitment. Adults in our School take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage children and young people to talk to us about anything that worries them.

We will act in accordance with the child's best interests, wishes and feelings, while meeting our safeguarding responsibilities and considering the safety and welfare of other children.

All staff working in or on behalf of The Bridge School, including those who do not work directly with children, are expected to read and understand at least Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. The School will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to support staff to understand and discharge their safeguarding responsibilities.

This policy forms part of the School's wider safeguarding framework and should be read alongside:

- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Online Safety Policy;
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Department for Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Home Office (2023) 'Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales
- the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, where applicable; and
- the local safeguarding partners' multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, threshold documents and referral procedures.
- Behaviour and Restrictive Intervention Policy.

This policy has regard to the following principal legislation:

- Children Act 1989;
- Children Act 2004;
- Children and Social Work Act 2017;
- Education Act 2002;
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation;
- Data (Use and Access) Act 2025;
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026; and
- Crime and Policing Act 2026.
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018

**School Context**

At The Bridge School, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of our pupils are paramount. We are committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment in which all children can learn and thrive. We recognise that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and that all staff play a vital role in identifying concerns, providing support and taking appropriate action to protect children from harm.

Our school ethos is built upon 3 core principles: *Ready, Respectful and Safe* which promotes positive relationships, mutual respect, inclusion and high expectations. We seek to create a culture where pupils feel valued, listened to and supported, and where they are encouraged to speak openly about any worries or concerns. We are committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of age, ability, background, culture, religion, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, are protected from harm and have equal opportunities to succeed.

The Bridge School recognises its statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*. Safeguarding is embedded throughout our policies, procedures, curriculum and daily practice. We work in partnership with parents, carers, governors, external agencies and the local authority to ensure that children receive the right help at the right time.

This policy applies to all members of the school community, including teaching and support staff, supply staff, volunteers, contractors, governors and visitors. All adults working within the school are expected to share our commitment to safeguarding and to maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" when considering the welfare of children.

**Consultation and Review**

This policy has been developed and reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), senior leaders and governors to ensure it reflects current legislation, guidance and local safeguarding arrangements.

In accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, staff are provided with opportunities to contribute to and shape safeguarding arrangements and this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Consultation may take place through staff meetings, safeguarding updates, training sessions, surveys and policy review discussions. Feedback from staff is used to inform safeguarding practices and ensure that procedures remain effective, proportionate and responsive to the needs of our pupils.

The governing body reviews this policy annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to safeguarding legislation, statutory guidance or local safeguarding procedures. All staff are required to read and understand this policy and adhere to its procedures at all times.

**Key Staff and Contacts**

| Key Contacts | Name | Contact Details |
|---|---|---|
| Head teacher/Principal | Mr Aarron Stafford | Aarron.stafford@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Designated Safeguarding Lead | Mrs Renata Squire | Renata.squire@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) | Mr Graham Dodd<br>Mrs Amanda Williamson<br>Mr Adam Mitchell<br>Mr Jonathan Brown | Graham.dodd@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Amanda.williamson@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Adam.mitchell@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Jonathan.brown@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Additional members of the Safeguarding Team | Miss Aimee Boland<br>Mrs Rachel White<br>Mrs Helen Brownbill<br>Miss Josie Urmston<br>Mrs Jade Higgins | Aimee.boland@tehbridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Rachel.white@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Helen.brownbill@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Josie.urmston@thebridge.halton.sch.uk<br>Jade.higgins@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Designated Safeguarding Governor | Mr Ben Holmes | Ben.holmes@halton.gov.uk |
| Chair of Governor | Mr Sally Jones | Chair.governor@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Designated Teacher for Looked After and Post Looked After Children | Mrs Amanda Williamson | Amanda.williamson@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Designated Senior Mental Health Lead | Mrs Renata Squire | Renata.squire@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Schools safeguarding email inbox. | Monitored by designated staff. | Safeguarding@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Schools SEND email inbox. | Monitored by designated staff. | SEND@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |
| Halton Borough Council's Headteacher of the Virtual School | Joanne Dunning | Joanne.dunning@halton.gov.uk |
| Halton Borough Council's Safeguarding Children in Education Officer | James Jordan | james.jordan@halton.gov.uk |
| Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership's Integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART) | **0303 333 4302** | Integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART) - Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership<br>Tel: **0303 333 4302** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Emergency Duty Team – Children's Social Care | 0345 050 0148 | |
| Local Authority Designated Officer | Andrew Chisnall | LADO@halton.gov.uk and/or safeguarding.adminteam@halton.gov.uk |
| Police (to report a crime and immediate risk of harm or abuse to child). | | 101 or 999 (only in emergency) |
| NSPCC help/whistleblowing line | line is available 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday | 0800 028 0285- email: help@nspcc.org.uk |

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is a senior member of the School's leadership team and has the status, authority, time, training and resources necessary to carry out the role effectively.

During term time, the DSL, or an appropriately trained Deputy DSL, will always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. Appropriate cover arrangements will be in place during periods of absence and for activities taking place outside normal School hours or during School holidays.

**The DSL will:**

- take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety;
- act as the principal source of safeguarding advice, support and expertise within the School;
- ensure staff understand and follow the School's safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures;
- work closely with safeguarding partners, children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies;
- make, or support staff to make, referrals to appropriate agencies and monitor the progress and outcomes of these referrals;
- maintain accurate, confidential and secure safeguarding records and ensure information is shared appropriately and transferred securely when pupils move schools;
- coordinate the School's involvement in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including child protection conferences, strategy meetings and statutory assessments;
- work with School leaders to promote the welfare, attendance, safety and educational outcomes of all pupils, particularly those who have or have had a social worker;

- liaise with pastoral, SEND, attendance, mental health and other relevant staff to ensure children's needs are considered holistically;
- promote a culture where children are listened to, their wishes and feelings are considered, and safeguarding concerns are acted upon appropriately;
- undertake appropriate safeguarding training, including Prevent training, and keep knowledge and skills updated in line with national and local requirements; and
- ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed regularly, implemented effectively and made available to parents and carers.

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)**

Deputy DSLs are trained to the same standard as the DSL and receive regular safeguarding updates.

Deputy DSLs will:

- support the DSL in carrying out safeguarding and child protection responsibilities;
- provide safeguarding advice and support to staff;
- have access to safeguarding records and systems necessary to fulfil their role; and
- undertake the functions of the DSL when the DSL is unavailable.

Where the DSL is absent for an extended period, an appropriately trained Deputy DSL will undertake the day-to-day responsibilities of the role in accordance with the School's safeguarding arrangements.

Whilst specific safeguarding tasks may be delegated to Deputy DSLs, the DSL retains overall lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.

The responsibilities of the DSL and Deputy DSL(s) are reflected within the relevant job descriptions.

**Headteacher/Principal**

The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding and child protection arrangements are fully embedded within the School's culture, policies and practice.

The Headteacher/Principal will:

- ensure that the School's safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are understood, implemented and regularly reviewed by all staff;
- ensure that all staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, read at least Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and understand their safeguarding responsibilities;
- provide the DSL and Deputy DSL(s) with sufficient time, training, funding, resources and support to carry out their duties effectively, including appropriate cover arrangements during periods of absence;

- promote a strong safeguarding culture in which concerns about children or adults are identified, reported, recorded and acted upon promptly;
- ensure that staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice in accordance with the School's whistleblowing procedures;
- ensure that children receive a curriculum which supports safeguarding, promotes wellbeing and helps them to keep themselves safe, including online;
- ensure that effective filtering and monitoring arrangements are in place and reviewed regularly in line with statutory guidance;
- ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place for alternative provision, educational visits, extended services and other activities provided by or on behalf of the School;
- ensure that allegations, low-level concerns and safeguarding concerns relating to adults working in or on behalf of the School are managed in accordance with statutory guidance, local procedures and the School's policies;
- ensure that statutory referrals are made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) and other agencies where required;
- promote the educational outcomes and wellbeing of vulnerable pupils, including children who are looked after, previously looked after, children with a social worker, children in kinship care arrangements and those requiring Family Help or other early intervention services;
- ensure that the School works effectively with Halton Children's Social Care, Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership, the Police, Health Services and other relevant agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- ensure that safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are updated in response to changes in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements and emerging risks; and
- provide the Governing Body with appropriate safeguarding information and assurance to enable effective monitoring and oversight of the School's safeguarding arrangements.

**The Governing Body (change as appropriate)**

The Governing Body will ensure it meets the expectations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including

- identifing a named individual to take responsibility for oversight of the School’s safeguarding arrangements. This Governor will maintain regular contact with the DSL and will ensure that the Governing Board receives regular reports about safeguarding activity at the School.
- ensure that the School’s safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations procedures take into account the procedures and practice of the Local Authority, local safeguarding partnership and national guidance.

**Safeguarding Training**

The School recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, including those who do not work directly with children, will receive safeguarding and child protection training appropriate to their role.

As part of their induction, staff will be provided with, and required to read, relevant safeguarding information, including at least Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 202 , the School's Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Behaviour Policy and any other safeguarding policies relevant to their role.

All staff will receive safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, at induction and regular updates thereafter. Safeguarding training will be refreshed at least annually and will reflect local safeguarding arrangements, emerging risks, lessons learned from safeguarding practice reviews and changes to statutory guidance.

Staff should exercise professional curiosity and respectfully explore concerns where a child's presentation, behaviour or circumstances do not appear consistent with the information available.

Training and updates will ensure that staff:

- understand their safeguarding responsibilities and how to report concerns;
- recognise the signs and indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and other safeguarding risks;
- know how to respond appropriately to disclosures and concerns;
- understand local processes for Early Help, Family Help and statutory intervention;
- understand their responsibilities in relation to child-on-child abuse, allegations about adults, whistleblowing and professional curiosity;
- understand safeguarding risks associated with attendance, children missing education and vulnerable groups of children;
- understand the safeguarding implications of technology and online activity, including filtering and monitoring arrangements; and
- are aware that safeguarding concerns can overlap and that children may experience multiple forms of abuse or harm.

The School will ensure that staff understand that some children may face additional barriers to recognising, disclosing or reporting abuse and may be at greater risk of harm, including children with special educational needs and disabilities, children with medical conditions, looked-after and previously looked-after children, children with a social worker, young carers and children experiencing attendance difficulties or other vulnerabilities.

Staff will be required to confirm that they have received and understood safeguarding training and relevant safeguarding policies. Additional guidance, supervision or training will be provided where necessary.

Volunteers will receive safeguarding induction and training appropriate to their role and level of contact with children.

The DSL and Deputy DSL(s) will undertake role-specific safeguarding training, including Prevent training, at least every two years. They will also update their knowledge and skills regularly, and at least annually, to keep abreast of local and national developments, emerging safeguarding issues and changes in statutory guidance.

Governors and trustees will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, at induction and regular intervals thereafter. This will enable them to provide effective strategic leadership, challenge and oversight of the School's safeguarding arrangements.

**Safer Recruitment**

Our School complies with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the arrangements of the local safeguarding partners. We operate safer recruitment procedures to help deter, reject or identify people who may pose a risk of harm to children.

The School will carry out all required pre-appointment checks and will verify, as appropriate, an applicant's identity, right to work in the UK, qualifications, employment history, references, mental and physical fitness, criminal record information and suitability to work with children.

- At least one member of each recruitment panel will have completed safer recruitment training.
- The School obtains written confirmation from supply agencies or third-party organisations that agency staff or other individuals who may work in the School have been appropriately checked.
- Trainee teachers will be checked either by the School or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained.
- Where responsibility for completing checks rests with a training provider, the School will obtain written confirmation that the required checks have been completed before the trainee begins work with children.
- The School maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken.
- The School will not knowingly allow a barred person to engage in regulated activity with children.
- Where a trainee teacher is fee-funded, the training provider will be responsible for undertaking the required checks. The School will obtain written confirmation that the checks have been completed and that the trainee has been judged suitable to work with children.

The Headteacher/Principal will ensure that relevant staff are made aware of the requirements relating to disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 and the Childcare (Disqualification) and

Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2018, including their obligation to disclose relevant information.

**Volunteers**

All volunteer roles will be assessed before the individual begins work.
The School will determine whether the role amounts to regulated activity and what checks are required.

From 1st September 2026, a volunteer who teaches, trains, instructs or supervises children frequently, on more than three days in any 30-day period, or overnight, will be regarded as engaging in regulated activity, even where they are supervised. In these circumstances, the School will obtain an enhanced DBS check with children's barred-list information before, or as soon as practicable after, the volunteer begins the role.

A volunteer will not undertake regulated activity until their children's barred-list status has been confirmed.

The School will review the roles of existing volunteers to identify any individual who becomes engaged in regulated activity because of the changes introduced from 1 September 2026. Where this applies, the School will check the individual's children's barred-list status and obtain the appropriate DBS check.

Where a volunteer meets the frequency requirement through volunteering across more than one school or setting, the School will work with the other settings to determine which organisation will obtain the enhanced DBS check with children's barred-list information.

The School will maintain a written record of the risk assessment undertaken for volunteers who are not engaged in regulated activity and the rationale for the checks considered appropriate.

The assessment will take account of:

- the nature of the work with children;
- the level and frequency of contact with children;
- what is known about the volunteer, including information provided by staff, parents, referees or other volunteers;
- whether the individual undertakes other paid or voluntary work where a referee can comment on their suitability; and

- whether an enhanced DBS check without barred-list information, or another level of check, is appropriate.

Under no circumstances will a volunteer on whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or permitted to undertake regulated activity.

Where the statutory criteria are met, the School will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service in relation to a volunteer who is removed from regulated activity, or who ceases volunteering before they can be removed.

**Third-Party staff (Contractors)**

The School will ensure that contractors and other third-party staff working on the premises have undergone the appropriate checks for the work they will undertake.

Where a contractor will engage in regulated activity, an enhanced DBS check with children's barred-list information will be required.

Where a contractor will not engage in regulated activity but will have the opportunity for regular contact with children, an enhanced DBS check without barred-list information may be required.

Where a contractor has not undergone the appropriate checks, they will not be permitted to work unsupervised or undertake regulated activity while children are present.

The School will:

- obtain written confirmation from the contractor's employer that the appropriate checks have been completed;
- check the identity of contractors and third-party staff when they arrive at the School ; and
- ensure that the individual presenting for work is the same person on whom the checks were completed.

Where a self-employed contractor is engaged, the School will obtain the appropriate check directly or verify that the individual holds a suitable and eligible check at the required level.

Where the School directs a pupil to attend alternative provision, it will obtain written assurance that adults working with pupils have undergone the appropriate Safer Recruitment checks. This

assurance does not remove the School 's responsibility to undertake its own safeguarding due diligence and keep the placement under review.

**Site security and visitors**

Visitors to the School, including contractors, will be required to sign in and will be issued with an identification badge confirming that they have permission to be on the premises.

Parents and carers who are only delivering or collecting their children will not normally be required to sign in.

All visitors are expected to comply with the School 's safeguarding, conduct and health and safety requirements.

For visitors attending in a professional capacity, the School will check their identity and obtain assurance that the appropriate checks have been completed by their employer, where relevant. The School will not normally ask to see the DBS certificate itself where satisfactory written assurance has been provided.

The School will not request DBS or barred-list checks for visitors such as children's relatives attending sports days, performances or similar events where those checks are not legally permitted or necessary.

The Headteacher/Principal will exercise professional judgement when deciding whether a visitor should be escorted or supervised while on the premises, taking account of the nature and purpose of the visit, the visitor's level of contact with children and any checks that have been completed.

**The Single Central Record**

A Single Central Record (SCR) is kept of checks that are undertaken on all adults who regularly work at or visit the School.

The SCR is stored securely, using an online platform – onlinescr.co.uk, and only accessed by the School Business Manager- Bev Macquire.

**Letters of Assurance** will be obtained from agencies and other employers that provide staff to work in School to confirm that appropriate checks have been undertaken to comply with KCSiE 26. Individual identity checks will be undertaken on these staff to ensure they are employees of the named agency/employer.

A transfer of control agreement will be used where other agencies/organisations use school premises and are not operating under school's safeguarding policies and procedures, in line with the updated guidance within Keeping Safe in Education 2024 Paragraphs 165 and 166.

**Allegations and Safeguarding Concerns About Adults Working in or on Behalf of the School**

This section applies to all adults working in or on behalf of the School, including staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, governors and contractors.

All safeguarding concerns about adults, regardless of how minor they may appear, must be reported without delay and managed in accordance with this policy and the School's Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations About Adults Policy.

Concerns will be managed under one of the following categories:

- concerns or allegations that may meet the harm threshold; or
- low-level concerns that do not meet the harm threshold.

Where concerns relate to supply teachers, trainee teachers, contractors or other individuals provided by a third-party organisation, the School and the relevant employer, agency or training provider will work together to manage the concern appropriately. The School will lead on safeguarding matters and the third-party organisation will normally lead any employment or disciplinary processes.

The School will not cease to use an individual's services as an alternative to properly considering, investigating and managing a safeguarding concern or allegation.

**Concerns that May Meet the Harm Threshold**

A concern or allegation may meet the harm threshold where an adult has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- behaved, inside or outside the workplace, in a way that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children.

This includes behaviour that may present a transferable risk to children.

Any concern that may meet the harm threshold must be reported immediately to the Headteacher/Principal.

| Name | Role | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **Mr Aarron Stafford** | Headteacher | Aarron.stafford@thebridge.sch.uk |

The Headteacher/Principal (or other appropriate case manager) will undertake only those enquiries necessary to establish the basic facts and will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) before commencing any internal investigation.

Where the concern relates to the Headteacher/Principal, it must be reported immediately to the Chair of Governors.

| Name | Role | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **Mrs Sally Jones** | Chair of Governors | Chair.governor@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |

Where staff are unsure whether a concern meets the harm threshold, or believe a concern has not been managed appropriately, advice may be sought directly from the LADO.

Concerns relating to the Chair of Governors or other senior leadership positions will be managed in accordance with the School's allegations procedures and, where appropriate, referred directly to the LADO.

**Low-Level Concerns**

The School promotes a culture of openness and transparency where concerns about adults are shared and addressed promptly.

A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, that an adult working in or on behalf of the School may have:

- acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including conduct outside work; and
- not met the harm threshold.

Examples may include:

- being over-familiar with pupils;
- showing favouritism;
- using inappropriate language;
- failing to maintain professional boundaries; or
- any other behaviour which causes a sense of concern or unease.

Low-level concerns may arise from information provided by pupils, parents, staff or other adults, from observations of behaviour, recruitment or safeguarding checks, or through self-reporting.

Low-level concerns must be reported without delay to:

| Name | Role | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **Mr Aarron Stafford** | Headteacher | Aarron.stafford@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |

In their absence:

| Name | Role | Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **Mr Adam Mitchell** | Deputy Headteacher/ | Adam.mitchell@thebridge.halton.sch.uk |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | SLT | |

Where a low-level concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported directly to the Headteacher/Principal.

Where a low-level concern relates to the Headteacher/Principal, it must be reported to the Chair of Governors (or Chief Executive Officer in the case of an academy trust).

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing and retained securely. Records will include the concern, the context in which it arose, the action taken and the rationale for decisions made.

Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed periodically to identify any concerning patterns of behaviour. Where patterns emerge, the School will consider whether further action is required, including consultation with the LADO, disciplinary procedures, additional training or other appropriate interventions.

**Whistleblowing**

All staff at The Bridge School are aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues. The school's Whistleblowing Policy is there to support and aid them in these circumstances. The whistleblowing policy is shared with all staff, volunteers and governors at induction, and available to all at the following locations: Teams>teachershare>2026/27>Policies, via The Bridge School Website or you can request a paper copy of any Policy from the main school office.

Whistleblowing regarding the Headteacher should be made to the Chair of the Governing Body, whose contact details should be readily available to staff.

Should the situation arise where a member of staff feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, advice can be sought via the NSPCC helpline or through OFSTED's Whistleblowing helpline. The contact details are: -

NSPCC Telephone number - 0800 028 0285. Email – help@nspcc.org.uk

OFSTED Whistleblowing helpline Telephone number - 0300 1233155

Email – **whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk**

**Extended School and off-site arrangements**

All extended and off-site activities will be subject to appropriate health, safety and safeguarding risk assessments.

Where activities are provided and managed by the School , this child protection policy and the School 's safeguarding procedures will apply.

Where another organisation delivers services or activities on the School 's premises, we will satisfy ourselves that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place, including suitable child protection policies, safer recruitment procedures and clear arrangements for sharing concerns. These requirements will be included within any transfer of control agreement, and failure to comply may result in the arrangement being terminated. The School will have regard to DfE guidance Out-of-school settings: safeguarding guidance for providers.

Where a pupil attends off-site or alternative provision, the School will remain responsible for safeguarding and will undertake its own due diligence, including where the provider appears on a local authority approved list.

We will:

- record the provider's address and details of any subcontracted provision or satellite sites;
- obtain assurance that appropriate safeguarding and safer recruitment checks have been completed;
- require the provider to notify the School of any changes that may affect a pupil's safety, including relevant staffing changes;
- maintain effective communication with the provider; and
- review the placement at least half-termly, or immediately where a safeguarding concern arises.

Whenever pupils take part in day trips, residential visits, work experience or other off-site activities, robust safeguarding arrangements will be in place.

**Sport, toilets, changing facilities and showers**

The School will manage participation in sport and the use of toilets, changing rooms and showers in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Equality Act 2010, the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012

The School will provide separate toilet facilities for boys and girls where required by law. Pupils will not use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex. Where a pupil does not wish to use the

facilities designated for their biological sex, the School will consider whether a suitable self-contained individual facility can be provided without compromising the safety, privacy, comfort or dignity of that pupil or any other child.

Pupils aged 11 or over at the start of the school year will not be required or permitted to undress in front of pupils of the opposite biological sex and will not use changing or shower facilities designated for the opposite sex. Where necessary, the School will consider an alternative fully enclosed facility or use of the facilities at a different time.

Any individual arrangements will be clearly recorded, communicated to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis and reviewed regularly.

**Residential visits and sleeping arrangements**

All residential visits, exchanges, sports tours, camps and other overnight activities will be subject to a documented safeguarding and educational-visits risk assessment.

Children will not share overnight accommodation with children of the opposite biological sex. This applies to shared bedrooms, dormitories, tents and other communal sleeping arrangements.

Where a child does not wish to share accommodation with children of the same biological sex, the School will consider whether suitable separate accommodation can reasonably be provided. Any alternative arrangement must preserve the safety, privacy, comfort and dignity of the child and all other children.

Sleeping arrangements will be agreed and documented before departure and will not be changed informally by individual staff during the visit. Any safeguarding concern arising during a residential activity will be reported to the visit leader and DSL without delay.

**Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions**

There may be exceptional circumstances where staff need to use reasonable force or another restrictive intervention to prevent harm to a pupil or others, serious damage to property, criminal behaviour, or serious disruption. Any intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and used for the shortest time required.

The School does not operate a blanket "no contact" policy. Appropriate physical contact may be necessary for educational, pastoral, welfare, safeguarding or care purposes. Staff will exercise professional judgement and act in the best interests of the child.

The School seeks to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through positive relationships, de-escalation strategies, effective behaviour support and, where appropriate, individual risk-reduction plans developed with parents and carers.

When considering any intervention, staff will have regard to the pupil's welfare, dignity and individual needs, including any SEND, mental health needs, trauma history, medical conditions or reasonable adjustments required under equality legislation.

Reasonable force must never be used as a punishment. Staff must not use techniques that restrict breathing, impede circulation or otherwise place a child at risk of harm.

Incidents involving reasonable force or restrictive intervention will be recorded, reported and reviewed in accordance with statutory requirements and the School's Behaviour and Restrictive Intervention Policy.

**Teaching our pupils about safeguarding**

At The Bridge School, safeguarding is embedded throughout the curriculum and wider school culture. Pupils are taught how to recognise risks, stay safe, build healthy relationships and seek help when needed. This is delivered through planned learning opportunities, assemblies, form time, enrichment activities and everyday interactions with staff.

The curriculum includes age and stage appropriate teaching on:

- Online safety, including safe and responsible use of technology, social media, gaming platforms, privacy settings, cyberbullying, online grooming, misinformation and reporting concerns.
- Healthy and respectful relationships, including consent, boundaries, respect, equality and appropriate behaviour towards others.
- Child-on-child abuse, including bullying, prejudice-based behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful behaviours and the importance of reporting concerns.
- Personal safety, including recognising unsafe situations, exploitation, criminal exploitation, coercion, abuse and neglect.
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing, including managing emotions, building resilience and accessing support.
- Character and culture education, promoting respect, kindness, inclusion, British Values, diversity, tolerance and positive citizenship.

Pupils are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried about themselves or another person. They are taught how to report concerns both within school and through external sources of support where appropriate. Teaching is designed to help pupils recognise when they may be at risk,

understand their rights, make informed choices and develop the confidence and skills needed to keep themselves and others safe.

**Looked After (and Previously Looked After) children LAC and PLAC**

The DSL will work with the Headteacher/Principal, the designated teacher and relevant strategic leads to promote the educational outcomes of children who have, or have had, a social worker.

The DSL will understand the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues affecting these children and consider the impact that these experiences may have on their attendance, engagement, behaviour, progress and achievement.

This will include:

- maintaining an up-to-date overview of children who have, or have had, a social worker, including their attendance, progress and attainment;
- promoting a culture of high expectations and aspirations for these children;
- supporting teaching and pastoral staff to provide appropriate academic support, pastoral intervention and reasonable adjustments;
- recognising that the impact of abuse, neglect or other adverse experiences may continue after statutory social care involvement has ended; and
- working with children's social care, the Virtual School Head and other relevant professionals, where appropriate, to improve attendance, engagement and educational outcomes.

Where appropriate the School will liaise with the Virtual School Head.

**Pupil Voice**

The School will seek and take account of children's wishes and feelings when considering safeguarding concerns and decisions affecting their safety and welfare. Children will be provided with appropriate opportunities to express their views and will be supported to understand what action may be taken in response to concerns they raise.

**Extra-familial harms (aka. Contextual Safeguarding)**

Extra-familial harm refers to abuse or exploitation that occurs outside a child's family environment. Contextual safeguarding is the approach used to understand and respond to the wider relationships, environments and circumstances in which such harm may occur.

Leaders will assess the risks and issues within the School and the wider community when considering the safety and wellbeing of pupils. These risks may include:

- child sexual exploitation and sexual harassment;
- abuse within children's intimate relationships, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse and stalking;
- child criminal exploitation, including county lines and financial exploitation;
- serious youth violence, gang involvement and threats involving weapons;
- radicalisation; and
- online abuse, exploitation and harmful digital content.

The School will also identify and respond to risks that are specific to its local context, including particular locations, peer groups, times of day, transport routes and online environments. These risks will inform safeguarding practice, staff training, the curriculum and partnership work with parents, the police, children's social care and other relevant agencies.

**Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) – Code C**

Where police wish to speak with or interview a child in circumstances engaging PACE Code C, the School will have regard to the child's entitlement to an appropriate adult and will liaise with the police regarding appropriate arrangements.

The DSL(or deputy) will communicate any vulnerabilities known by the school to any police officer who wishes to speak to a pupil about an offence they may suspect.

If having been informed of the vulnerabilities, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) does not feel that the officer is acting in accordance with PACE, such as seeking guidance from specially trained officers, they should ask to speak with a supervisor or contact 101 to escalate their concerns

Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - PACE Code C 2019.

**PART B – Specific Areas of Safeguarding**

**Child Protection Procedures**

**Children and Young People who may be particularly vulnerable**

Some children may be at greater risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation, or may face additional barriers to recognising or reporting harm. Factors may include prejudice and discrimination, isolation, dependency on adults, communication difficulties and assumptions that indicators of abuse relate to a child's disability or additional needs.

To ensure that all pupils receive appropriate protection and support, we will give particular consideration to children who:

- are disabled, have special educational needs or certain medical conditions;
- are young carers;
- are pregnant or are parents themselves;
- are affected by parental substance misuse, domestic abuse, parental mental health needs or parental offending;
- are asylum seekers or refugees;
- are living away from home, in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness;
- live transient lifestyles or in chaotic and unsupportive home circumstances;
- are looked after, previously looked after or have a social worker;
- are vulnerable to bullying, prejudice, discrimination or social isolation;
- have communication needs or do not have English as their first language;
- are dependent on adults for personal or intimate care;
- may have difficulty recognising that behaviour towards them is abusive;
- have experienced repeated removal from the classroom, multiple suspensions or a part-time timetable, or are at risk of permanent exclusion;
- display early signs of abusive, violent or harmful behaviour;
- are at risk of child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, trafficking or modern slavery;
- are at risk of female genital mutilation, forced marriage, or other honour or faith-based abuse;

- are involved in the court system or have a family member in prison;
- are at risk of serious violence, gang involvement or county lines; or
- are at risk of being radicalised into terrorism.

This list provides examples and is not exhaustive. The School will consider each child's individual circumstances and ensure that safeguarding information and support are provided in accessible formats and, where appropriate, community languages.

**Children who are questioning their gender and requests for support with social transition**

The School will provide a respectful and supportive environment for children who are questioning their gender. Bullying, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, and any related safeguarding or wellbeing concerns will be addressed promptly.

The School will not initiate social transition. Individual members of staff must not independently make changes relating to social transition, including changes to names, pronouns, uniform, facilities, sport or other arrangements.

Where a child or their parent or carer requests support involving social transition, the matter will be referred to the Headteacher/Principal and the DSL. The request will be considered through a careful, documented and case-by-case process.

Parents or carers will be involved as a matter of priority and their views will be given proper consideration. In the rare circumstances where there is reason to believe that involving parents or carers may place the child at increased risk, the DSL will determine what safeguarding action is necessary before parents are contacted or any decision is made.

Decisions will take account of:

- the welfare and best interests of the child and other children;
- the child's age, development, wishes and individual circumstances;
- any wider mental health, medical, neurodevelopmental or safeguarding needs;
- relevant clinical or other professional advice;
- the impact of agreeing or declining the request;
- the School 's safeguarding responsibilities; and
- its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

Primary-age requests will be approached with particular caution. Staff will not provide clinical advice or undertake functions that require clinical expertise.

The School will explain that support with social transition will not include access to toilets, changing rooms, showers or residential accommodation designated for the opposite biological sex, or participation in sport designated for the opposite sex where single-sex participation is necessary for safety.

The child's biological sex will be recorded accurately. Where required for statutory, legal or operational purposes, the child's biological sex will be recorded accurately. The School will distinguish between information required for official records and any preferred name or other arrangements used in day-to-day school life.

**Recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation**

To ensure that pupils are protected from harm, staff must understand the behaviours and indicators associated with abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Staff should recognise that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone they are being abused, neglected or exploited and may communicate concerns through their behaviour, presentation or attendance.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse may occur within or outside the home, within an institution or community, and online.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation are rarely isolated issues and may overlap. Children may be harmed by adults or by other children. Children may also cause harm to parents, carers or other family members, sometimes referred to as child-to-parent or caregiver abuse.

KCSIE identifies four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. These are set out in Appendix 1, together with relevant indicators of harm.

**Children who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Children who display harmful sexual behaviour may themselves have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma or exploitation. Safeguarding procedures will therefore consider the needs and welfare of both the child who has experienced harm and the child displaying the behaviour.

Harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum, ranging from developmentally expected behaviour through inappropriate and problematic behaviour to abusive and violent behaviour. The child's age, developmental stage, understanding, vulnerability, any difference in age or power and the context of the behaviour will be considered.

Staff who are concerned about a pupil's sexual behaviour, including behaviour occurring online, must speak to the DSL without delay.

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes require a safeguarding response, whether apparently consensual or non-consensual. This includes photographs, videos, livestreams, digitally altered images and content generated using artificial intelligence, including deepfakes or "deep nudes". The School will follow current UKCIS guidance when responding to such incidents.

Part Five of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 provides detailed guidance on harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and sexual violence.

**Children absent from education**

Knowing where children are during School hours is an important aspect of safeguarding. Repeated or prolonged absence from education may be an indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation, including child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, modern slavery, serious violence, forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

The School will monitor attendance carefully and respond promptly to unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence. Particular consideration will also be given to children who:

- are repeatedly absent during parts of the School day;
- have experienced repeated classroom removal or multiple suspensions;
- are placed on a part-time timetable;
- are at risk of permanent exclusion; or
- fail to take up an allocated school place.

The School will:

- ensure that staff understand their responsibilities for responding to absence from education;
- maintain clear procedures for following up unexplained absence and escalating safeguarding concerns;
- make reasonable enquiries to establish a child's whereabouts and safety;
- work with parents, the local authority, children's social care, the police and other agencies where appropriate;
- notify the local authority where required under the relevant attendance and admission-register regulations; and
- follow the School 's attendance and children-missing-education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established.

Leaders will ensure attendance information is routinely considered alongside safeguarding information to identify emerging concerns and vulnerability.

When a pupil leaves the School, we will take reasonable steps to identify their destination, record the name of the receiving school and expected start date, and transfer safeguarding information securely in accordance with this policy.

Staff must remain alert to patterns of absence or changes in attendance that may indicate a wider safeguarding concern. Where the relevant threshold is met, concerns will be referred to children's social care or the police.

Parents and carers are expected to provide the School with at least two current emergency contact numbers and to notify the School promptly of any changes.

**Child-on-Child Abuse**

The Bridge School recognises that children can abuse other children and that this can occur inside or outside the School, within intimate relationships and online. Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the child who has experienced harm and the child alleged to have caused harm.

All staff will be aware that child-on-child abuse may be occurring even where no reports have been made. Staff must report concerns through the School ’s normal safeguarding procedures and must not dismiss harmful behaviour as “banter”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”.

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

- bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying;
- abuse within intimate personal relationships between children;

- physical abuse, including hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, serious physical assault and threats involving weapons;
- sexual violence, including rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, including sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online harassment;
- misogynistic or misandrist abuse and harassment;
- causing another person to engage in sexual activity without consent;
- making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including digitally altered or AI-generated images, deepfakes and "deep nudes";
- upskirting; and
- initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals.

Child-on-child abuse is preventable. The Bridge School will seek to identify concerning behaviour at an early stage and provide timely and appropriate support to reduce the risk of harm or escalation.

Where the School receives a report of child-on-child abuse, it will follow the principles set out in Part Five of KCSIE 2026 and the procedures contained within this policy.

All concerns will be shared with the DSL without delay. The DSL will:

- consider the immediate safety and welfare of the child who may have experienced harm, the child alleged to have caused harm, any other children involved and the wider pupil body;
- decide what limited and open questions are necessary to clarify the concern, taking care not to undertake an investigation or compromise any police or social care enquiries;
- seek advice from children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies where appropriate;
- complete or update a proportionate risk assessment and safety and support plan;
- consider the wishes and feelings of the children involved;
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to both the child who has experienced harm and the child alleged to have caused harm; and
- record the concern, decisions, actions and outcomes on CPOMS.

Parents and carers will normally be informed and involved unless doing so may increase the risk to a child or another person, compromise an investigation or otherwise be contrary to the child's welfare.

Mediation, restorative work or direct contact between the children will not be used where this could place pressure on, blame or retraumatise a child. Any such intervention will only be considered following an assessment of risk, suitability and the wishes and welfare of the child who has experienced harm.

Where appropriate, consequences may be considered in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy. Safeguarding support will not be withdrawn solely because disciplinary action is taken.

Where a report is found to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider whether the child who made the report, or any other child involved, requires support or may have

experienced harm from another source. A referral to children's social care or another agency will be considered where appropriate.

Safety and support arrangements will be reviewed for as long as risks or support needs remain. The decision to close the safeguarding concern will be made by the DSL based on the available evidence, level of risk and effectiveness of the support in place. Closure will not depend on both children agreeing that the matter has been resolved.

**Whole School approach**

The School will maintain a whole-School approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse by:

- providing an age-appropriate preventative curriculum covering healthy relationships, consent, respectful behaviour, online safety and how to seek help;
- ensuring that staff receive appropriate training to recognise, report and respond to concerns;
- providing children with clear, accessible and trusted routes for reporting concerns;
- challenging inappropriate, abusive, misogynistic and misandrist behaviour;
- completing prompt and proportionate risk assessments and safety and support plans;
- monitoring patterns, trends, locations and times where concerns are more likely to arise;
- sharing relevant safeguarding information and emerging local trends with safeguarding partners, where appropriate; and
- using incidents and pupil voice to review the curriculum, behaviour systems, staff training and the School 's physical and online environments.

**Responding to concerns and reports**

All concerns and reports must be shared with the DSL without delay and recorded in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures.

The DSL will determine what immediate action is required and whether advice should first be sought from children's social care or the police. Staff should use only limited and open questions necessary to clarify what has been reported. They must not undertake an investigation or routinely seek written statements from the children involved where this may interfere with a statutory investigation.

The School will give immediate safeguarding consideration to:

- the child who may have experienced harm;
- the child alleged to have displayed the harmful behaviour;
- any other children directly involved; and
- any risk to the wider pupil body.

A proportionate risk assessment and safety and support plan will be developed where appropriate. This may include changes to supervision, timetables, movement around the site, seating, transport or other arrangements required to keep children safe.

Parents and carers will normally be informed and involved unless doing so may place a child or another person at increased risk, compromise an investigation or otherwise be contrary to the child's welfare.

Appropriate support will be provided to the child who has experienced harm and to the child alleged to have displayed the harmful behaviour. Children who display harmful behaviour may themselves have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or trauma and may require safeguarding intervention.

Mediation, restorative work or direct contact between the children will not be used where it may place pressure on, blame or retraumatise a child. Any such work will only be considered following a careful assessment of risk, suitability and the wishes and welfare of the child who has experienced harm.

Safety and support arrangements will be reviewed for as long as safeguarding risks or support needs remain. The decision to close a safeguarding concern will be made professionally by the DSL, based on the available evidence, the level of risk and the effectiveness of the support in place. Closure will not depend on both children agreeing that the matter has been resolved.

**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

The School recognises the national focus on preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). We understand that attitudes contributing to violence, harassment, misogyny and gender-based abuse can begin during childhood. Through our curriculum, culture, policies and safeguarding practice we will actively promote respect, equality and healthy relationships

**Children and the Court System**

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them, or for crimes they have witnessed. The families of children may also be subject to child arrangements processes through the family court system.

We recognise that both circumstances may be stressful for children and appropriate support will be provided in line with local and national guidance.

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity. This may be in exchange for something the child needs or wants, for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator, or through violence or the threat of violence.

Children may be drawn into exploitation through apparent friendship or affection, gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, accommodation or the promise of status or belonging. Exploitation may occur over time or as a one-off incident and may take place without the child's immediate knowledge, including through the creation or sharing of images online.

Children cannot consent to their own exploitation. A child may not recognise that they are being exploited, may believe they are in a genuine relationship, or may be criminalised for actions undertaken under coercion.

Exploitation may be committed or facilitated by an individual, organised network or gang. It may also involve trafficking or constitute modern slavery and may require consideration of a referral through the National Referral Mechanism.

We include the risks of child sexual exploitation within the PSHE and RSE curriculum.

All staff are made aware of the indicators of child sexual exploitation and must report any concerns immediately to the DSL.

**Honour and Faith-Based Abuse (HBA)**

'Honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. All forms of HBV are abuse.

A forced marriage is a marriage in which a female (and sometimes a male) does not consent to the marriage but is coerced into it. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. It may also involve physical or sexual violence and abuse. In England and Wales, the practice is a criminal offence under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, which is common in several cultures, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Children may be married at a very young age, and well below the age of consent in England. Staff will receive training and should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns raised by a pupil about being taken abroad and not being allowed to return to England.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. The practice can cause intense pain and distress and long-term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth.

FGM is carried out on girls of any age, from young babies to older teenagers and adult women, so School staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators. Many such procedures are carried out abroad and staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns expressed by a female pupil about going on a long holiday during the summer vacation period.

Teachers are subject to a mandatory reporting duty to the police where, in the course of their professional duties, they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. The duty applies to teachers personally and cannot be delegated, although the DSL should provide support and assistance.

**Radicalisation and Extremism**

As part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, schools have a duty to 'prevent people being drawn into terrorism'. This has become known as the 'Prevent Duty'.

Where staff are concerned that children and young people are developing extremist views or show signs of becoming radicalised, they should discuss this with the DSL

Safeguarding information connected with a Channel or Prevent concern will be shared with the police and other appropriate partners.

The DSL has received training about the Prevent Duty and tackling extremism and is able to support staff with any concerns they may have.

We use the curriculum to ensure that children and young people understand how people with extreme views share these with others, especially using the internet.

Staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the DSL(or deputy) making a Prevent referral.

We are committed to ensuring that our pupils are offered a broad and balanced curriculum that aims to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Teaching the School core values alongside the fundamental British Values supports quality teaching and learning, whilst making a positive contribution to the development of a fair, just and civil society.

Early indicators of radicalisation or extremism may include:

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

- verbalising anti-Western or anti-British views
- advocating violence towards others

School staff receive training to help to identify signs of extremism.

Opportunities are provided through the curriculum to enable pupils to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture and leaders follow the DfE advice *Promoting fundamental British Values as part of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural education) in Schools* (2014).

**Private Fostering Arrangements**

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative care for a child for 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16 or aged under 18 if the child is disabled. By law, a parent, private foster carer, or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify children's services as soon as possible.

Where a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil may be in a private fostering arrangement, they will raise this with the DSL and the School will notify the Local Authority of the circumstances.

**Work Experience**

We have detailed procedures to safeguard pupils undertaking work experience and will ensure that placement providers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to protect children from harm.

Where an adult provides teaching, training, instruction, care or supervision to a pupil frequently, for more than three days in any 30-day period, or overnight, this will be treated as regulated activity, even where the adult is supervised. The placement provider must ensure that no person who is barred from working with children undertakes such activity.

All checks and safeguarding arrangements will be considered in accordance with Part Three of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, including the specific checking restrictions that apply where pupils aged 16 or 17 undertake work experience.

**Children staying with host families**

Leaders may make arrangements for pupils to stay with a host family during a foreign exchange trip or sports tour. Some overseas pupils may reside with host families during term time and we will work with the Local Authority to check that such arrangements are safe and suitable. In such circumstances, we follow the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) to ensure that hosting arrangements are as safe as possible.

**Children with family members in prison**

Children who have family members that are sent to prison are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. We recognise that these children may need support. Support will be provided in line with guidance from the National Information Centre on Children of Offenders and local agencies

**Criminal Exploitation of Children and County Lines**

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity. This may be in exchange for something the child needs or wants, for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator, or through violence or the threat of violence.

CCE may be committed or facilitated by an individual, organised criminal network or gang. Children may be forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, pickpocketing, committing vehicle crime or threatening or committing serious violence.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile telephone lines or another form of “deal line”. This activity may take place locally or across the UK. Children and vulnerable adults may be exploited to move, store or sell drugs and money.

Gangs may establish a base within the home of a vulnerable person through force or coercion. This is commonly referred to as “cuckooing”. Children may also be recruited and exploited online through social media and other digital platforms.

Children may become trapped through threats of violence, intimidation, manufactured drug debts or threats against their families. They may be coerced into carrying weapons or may begin carrying a weapon because they believe it will protect them from harm.

A child cannot consent to being exploited, abused or trafficked. Criminal exploitation may have occurred even where the activity appears voluntary or the child identifies as belonging to the group involved. Children who are criminally exploited must be recognised and treated as victims, including where they have committed offences as a result of coercion.

CCE may involve trafficking and constitute modern slavery. Where a potential victim is identified, the School will follow its child protection procedures and consider a referral through the National Referral Mechanism, alongside any referral to children's social care or the police.

Staff will remain alert to indicators of CCE and county lines and must report any concerns immediately to the DSL.

**Serious Violence**

Serious violence is a safeguarding concern and may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict, bullying, gang involvement or criminal exploitation.

Staff will remain alert to indicators that a child may be at risk of, or involved in, serious violence.

These may include:

- increased or unexplained absence from education;
- changes in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups;
- a significant decline in educational performance;
- signs of assault, unexplained injuries or self-harm;
- significant changes in behaviour or wellbeing;
- unexplained gifts, money or new possessions;
- involvement in peer conflict, gangs or criminal networks; or
- carrying a weapon, threatening to use a weapon or expressing an intention to do so.

The risk of serious violence may be increased for children who have experienced disrupted education, including repeated suspensions, permanent exclusion or time in alternative provision, or who have a history of offending. Staff will also remain alert to periods when children may be at increased risk, including immediately before or after the School day.

Any concern that a child is carrying, using or threatening to use a weapon, or intends to do so, must be reported immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL.

The DSL will assess the risk to the child and others, taking account of all available safeguarding and contextual information.

Depending on the level of risk, the School will:

- put in place an appropriate safety and support plan;
- take action to de-escalate peer conflict;
- consider the safety of other pupils and staff;
- share relevant information with children's social care, the police and other agencies; and
- provide or seek early, evidence-based support, including access to trusted adults, mentoring, therapeutic support or other targeted interventions.

Where a child is in immediate danger, or a weapon is present, staff will contact the police without delay.

**Domestic Abuse**

The School participates in Operation Encompass and will respond appropriately to notifications received from Cheshire Constabulary concerning children who may have experienced or been affected by domestic abuse.

The DSL or nominated member of staff will receive and record notifications securely and will consider whether the child requires proportionate pastoral, safeguarding or other support.

Where appropriate, the school will liaise with children's social care, the police and other relevant agencies.

**Homelessness**

Being homeless, at risk of homelessness or living in temporary accommodation can present a significant risk to a child's welfare, attendance, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

In most cases, staff will consider homelessness in the context of children living with their families. However, some 16- and 17-year-olds may be living independently, including following exclusion from the family home, and may require a different level of assessment and support.

The DSL will support and signpost pupils and families to appropriate housing, welfare and local support services. Where homelessness or temporary accommodation gives rise to concerns that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm, the School will make a referral to children's social care.

The School will respond appropriately to any temporary-accommodation notifications received from the local authority and will consider the impact on the child's safeguarding, attendance and support needs.

**Young Carers**

Young carers may experience additional pressures as a result of providing care or support to a family member. These responsibilities may affect their attendance, punctuality, attainment, behaviour, emotional wellbeing and ability to participate fully in School life.

The School will ensure that young carers are identified as early as possible and that staff understand that caring responsibilities may be a contributing factor when considering attendance, behaviour, attainment or emotional wellbeing.

Where a young carer is identified, the School will:

- consider appropriate pastoral support and reasonable adjustments;
- work with the child and their family to understand their needs;
- monitor the impact of caring responsibilities on attendance, progress and wellbeing; and
- make referrals to relevant local young carer services or other agencies where additional support is required.

**Filtering and Monitoring**

Filtering and monitoring systems are essential to safeguarding children at The Bridge School. We will take all reasonable steps to minimise pupils' exposure to harmful and inappropriate content through the School 's IT systems and internet-connected devices.

The School uses the following filtering and monitoring system:

[INSERT SYSTEM NAME]

Clear roles and responsibilities are assigned for the management and oversight of filtering and monitoring. The responsible member of the Senior Leadership Team is supported by the DSL and the School 's IT staff or provider.

The School 's eSafety/Online Safety Lead is: Mr Rob Davies – Assistant Head.

- The effectiveness of the School 's filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed at least once every academic year. Checks will cover all relevant internet-connected devices and locations, and a record of the review, findings and any actions taken will be retained.

- The School will ensure that its systems block access to harmful and inappropriate content, including content associated with abuse, exploitation, violence, extremism, pornography, self-harm and AI-generated sexual imagery, while avoiding unreasonable restrictions on teaching and learning.

- Monitoring arrangements will reflect the School 's safeguarding risks and enable concerns to be identified and acted upon promptly. Staff will understand their responsibilities for reporting concerns, and any safeguarding information identified through monitoring will be referred to the DSL and managed in accordance with this policy.

**Children and online harm**

When children use the School 's network to access the internet, they are protected through appropriate filtering and monitoring systems. However, pupils may also access online content through personal devices, mobile data and applications that are not controlled by the School.

Online and offline safeguarding risks are often connected. These may include harmful content or contact, child-on-child abuse, exploitation, cybercrime, misogynistic or harmful online influences, generative artificial intelligence, deepfakes and the creation or sharing of AI-generated sexual imagery.

Where pupils use School devices or systems, appropriate supervision will be provided and the effectiveness of filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed regularly.

All staff who interact with children, including online, must remain alert to signs that a child may be at risk. Concerns must be reported to the DSL and managed in accordance with this policy, including referral to children's social care or the police where appropriate.

**Online Safety away from the School**

Online teaching and communication with pupils will follow the same safeguarding principles and professional standards that apply to face-to-face contact. Staff must comply with the Staff Code of Conduct, Online Safety Policy and any approved remote-learning procedures.

The Bridge School will ensure that online learning tools and systems are approved, secure and used in accordance with data protection and privacy requirements.

Staff will:

- use only platforms and accounts approved by the School;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries and language;
- ensure that online sessions are conducted in a suitable and professional manner;
- follow School procedures for one-to-one communication and online lessons;
- record relevant details of sessions where required; and
- report any safeguarding concern arising during online contact without delay.

Detailed arrangements for remote teaching, the use of webcams, recording sessions and one-to-one contact are set out in the School 's Online Safety, Remote Learning and Staff Code of Conduct policies.

All staff who interact with children online must continue to look out for signs that a child may be at risk. Any concern will be managed in accordance with this child protection policy and referred to children's social care or the police where appropriate.

**Online safety – the four Cs**

The School recognises that online safeguarding risks can be categorised into four broad areas:

**Content** – exposure to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material, including pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation/fake news and conspiracy theories.

**Contact** – harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications, including grooming and exploitation.

**Conduct** – online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, including bullying and the making, sending or sharing of explicit images, including AI-generated images.

**Commerce** – risks including online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and financial scams.

**Mobile Phones and Generative Artificial Intelligence**

The School will operate as a mobile phone-free environment by default in accordance with the DfE's statutory guidance. Detailed arrangements, including exceptions, are set out in the School's Mobile Phone Policy.

Safeguarding concerns involving mobile phones, personal devices, mobile data, messaging applications, image sharing, online harassment or access to harmful content will be reported to the DSL and managed under this policy.

Only generative artificial intelligence systems approved by the School may be used for School purposes. Their use will be subject to appropriate safeguarding, data-protection, confidentiality, ethical and intellectual-property controls.

Staff and pupils must not enter confidential or identifiable information about a child into a generative AI system unless its use has been expressly authorised and the School is satisfied that appropriate data-protection safeguards are in place.

Harmful interactions with generative AI applications, AI-generated explicit imagery, deepfakes, manipulation, bullying or any other AI-related safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL without delay.

**Children with Medical conditions**

A concern relating to the management of a child's medical condition will not automatically be treated as a safeguarding concern. However, staff must report the matter to the DSL where the circumstances may indicate abuse, neglect or exploitation.

This may include, for example, where a child is repeatedly sent to the School without essential medication or medical equipment, where necessary treatment or appointments are persistently withheld, or where there are concerns that symptoms are being fabricated or deliberately induced.

This includes concerns relating to the management of allergies or other medical conditions where the circumstances may indicate neglect, abuse or exploitation.

The DSL will consider the child's individual circumstances, seek appropriate advice and determine whether support, a referral to children's social care or other safeguarding action is required.

**Taking action**

Any child, in any family, in any school or college could become a victim of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff should always maintain an attitude of **"it could happen here"** and act in the best interests of the child at all times

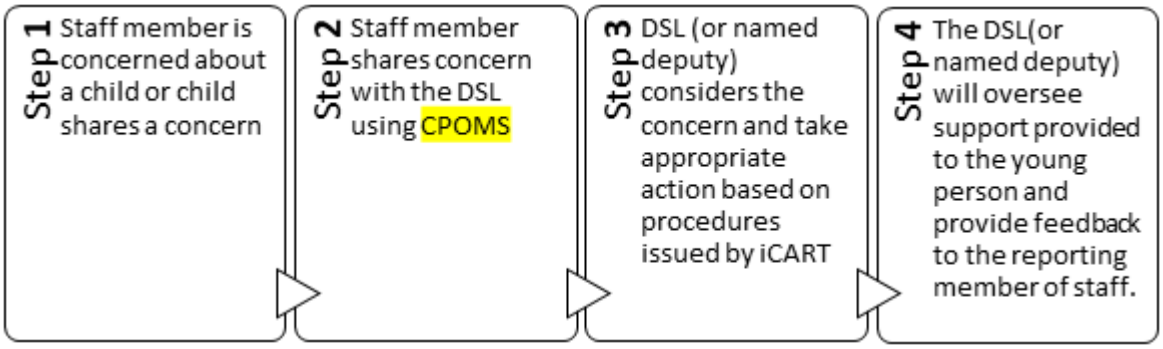
Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, if necessary, call 999;
- Report your concern to the DSL as soon as possible and always before the end of the working day.
- Do not investigate the concern yourself or attempt to determine whether the allegation is true.
- Share information only with those who need to know in order to safeguard the child.– do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family;
- Record the concern promptly and accurately on CPOMS and ensure it is brought to the attention of the DSL.
- Seek support from the DSL, safeguarding team or your line manager if you are affected by the information shared.

Any verbal conversations around safeguarding should be recorded in writing and shared with the DSL.

Staff should be familiar with *'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'* which provides practical advice on recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns.

Whilst a full flowchart for responding to concerns or disclosures can be found in **Appendix 2.** The summary process below should be used as a quick reference guide.




If the DSL is unavailable, staff should contact a Deputy DSL, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, and/or seek advice from Children's Social Care. Staff should never delay taking action because the DSL is unavailable.

Staff can always seek advice and guidance from Children's Social Care if they are unable to contact the DSL, a Deputy DSL or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

**If you are concerned about a pupil's welfare**

There may be occasions when staff have concerns about a pupil's welfare, even when the pupil has not directly shared information about being harmed.

For example, a pupil's behaviour may change, they may appear anxious or distressed, their work or creative activities may reflect concerning themes, or staff may observe physical, emotional or behavioural indicators that raise concern.

In these circumstances, staff should create opportunities for the pupil to talk, where appropriate, and ask open and supportive questions such as:

"*Are you okay?*"

*"Is there anything you would like to talk about?"*

*"How can I help?"*

Staff should record these concerns on CPOMS as soon as possible.

If, during a conversation, a pupil shares information that suggests they may be experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding concern, staff should follow the guidance below and inform the DSL without delay.

CPOMS is the School's key system for recording and managing safeguarding concerns. All safeguarding concerns, however small they may appear, should be recorded appropriately. Remember it will automatically alert the DSL that a concern form has been raised.

**If a pupil Shares Information that causes concern**

It can take considerable courage for a child to tell someone about abuse, neglect or other experiences that are causing them harm.

A child may feel frightened, ashamed, confused or worried about what will happen if they speak to an adult. They may have been threatened, may fear getting someone into trouble, or may not recognise that what is happening to them is abusive.

If a pupil talks to a member of staff about concerns relating to their safety or wellbeing, the member of staff should listen carefully and respond in a calm, supportive and non-judgemental manner.

At an appropriate point in the conversation, staff should explain that they cannot keep the information confidential and that, in order to help keep the child safe, the information must be shared with the DSL. The timing of this explanation will be a matter of professional judgement

During the conversation, staff should:

- allow the child to speak freely;
- listen carefully and give the child their full attention;
- remain calm and avoid showing shock, anger or disbelief;
- provide reassurance through supportive responses such as:

"*I'm glad you told me.*"

*"You have done the right thing by speaking to me."*

*"This is not your fault."*

*"I am going to try to help you."*

- be comfortable with periods of silence and allow the child time to think and speak;
- use open questions only when clarification is needed, such as:

*"Can you tell me more about that?"*

*"Can you explain what you mean?"*

- avoid asking investigative or leading questions;
- explain what will happen next and who the information will be shared with;
- avoid making promises that cannot be kept, including promises of confidentiality;
- avoid offering physical comfort unless this is appropriate, necessary and consistent with the child's wishes and needs;
- avoid making comments that could imply blame or criticism;
- report the information to the DSL immediately, even if the child says they intend to tell someone else;
- record the conversation on CPOMS as soon as possible, using the child's own words wherever possible;
- seek support if they are affected by the information shared.

Additional recording reminder:-

When recording information, staff should:

- distinguish clearly between what the child said, what was observed, and the professional opinion of the member of staff;
- record the information as soon as reasonably possible;
- avoid speculation or assumptions;
- use the child's own words.

**Notifying parents**

Staff will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a pupil with their parents. This must be handled sensitively, and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.

Our focus is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil. Whilst parents will normally be involved in support planning where safe and appropriate, advice will be sought from external partners before contact where this may increase risk, compromise an enquiry or place another person at risk.

**Referral to Children's Social Care**

The DSL will make a referral to children's social care if it is believed that a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The pupil (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

In the above circumstance, contact should be made with the Integrated Contact and Referral Team **(iCART) on 0303 333 4302** on and/or the police (in an emergency on 999 or on 101) Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Service Tel. 0345 050 0148.

Any member of staff may make a direct referral to children's social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a child.

Staff should follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with children's social care, police or the NSPCC if:

- the situation is an emergency and the DSL, their deputy, the Headteacher/Principal are all unavailable
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the pupil's safety.

**Escalating concerns**

Staff need to be aware of those times when concerns may look as though they are not progressing to an outcome or some form of action. This may be indicated by:

- difficulty in getting hold of a DSL;
- staff not being satisfied with the decision of the DSL or headteacher/principal;
- staff aware that a colleague has not passed on a concern;
- external agencies not accepting a referral from a School when it is felt one is needed;
- staff not aware of what has happened to their concern because of a lack of feedback.

Staff must not close down a concern because they feel "stuck" or "they can't do any more". It is important to escalate concerns to DSLs, headteacher/principals.

If there are concerns about the work of an external agency staff the will follow the escalation steps outlined in the Prof Challenge & Escalation - Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership

The important principle is not to allow a concern to be “closed down” without it having received the necessary attention, assessment and resolution.

**Confidentiality and Sharing Information**

All staff will understand that child protection information requires a high level of confidentiality. This protects the privacy of the child and others involved and helps to ensure that the inappropriate disclosure of information does not compromise safeguarding action or an investigation.

Staff should ordinarily share safeguarding concerns with the DSL or a Deputy DSL, who will determine what information needs to be shared and with whom. Information will be shared only with those who need it to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

However, any member of staff may contact children’s social care, the police or another appropriate agency directly where they believe this is necessary to protect a child. Staff must not assume that another professional or agency has shared information or taken action. Where there is a safeguarding concern, staff should share relevant information promptly with the DSL or, where necessary, directly with the appropriate agency.

Where information is shared or withheld, the rationale for the decision should be recorded.

Child protection information will be stored, processed and shared in accordance with data protection laws, including:

- the Data Protection Act 2018;
- the UK General Data Protection Regulation; and
- the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

Information sharing will be:

- lawful, necessary and proportionate;
- relevant to the current safeguarding risk;
- limited to what the recipient genuinely needs to know;
- adequate and clearly presented within its proper context;
- accurate and up to date;
- shared in a timely manner; and
- transferred and stored securely.

Data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purpose of keeping children safe. Concerns about data protection or confidentiality must not be allowed to prevent appropriate safeguarding action.

Where appropriate and safe, the DSL will explain to the child and/or parents or carers what information will be shared and may seek their consent. Consent is not always required before sharing safeguarding information.

Information may be shared without consent where there is a lawful basis to do so, including where:

- it is not possible or reasonable to obtain consent;
- seeking consent may place a child or another person at increased risk;
- seeking consent may compromise an investigation; or
- sharing the information is necessary to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child.

All information-sharing decisions will be recorded, including:

- what information was shared or withheld;
- with whom it was shared;
- the reason for the decision;
- the lawful basis relied upon, where relevant; and
- the outcome or action agreed.

This includes recording the rationale where a referral to another agency was considered but not made.

Child protection records will be held securely within CPOMS and separately from the main pupil file. Access will be restricted to those who require the information to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

Where a pupil transfers to another school or college, safeguarding records will be transferred securely and separately from the main pupil file. Relevant information may also be shared in advance where this is necessary to enable the receiving setting to assess risk and put appropriate safety and support arrangements in place.

**Universal and community-based Early Help and Family Help**

Providing help and support as soon as problems emerge is an important part of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

Universal services and community-based Early Help provide support at an early stage, before statutory intervention is required. Support may be delivered through education, health services, family hubs, youth services, housing services and voluntary or community organisations.

The DSL and Deputy DSL(s) will understand the local Early Help arrangements, threshold document and referral pathways and will ensure that staff know how to identify children and families who may benefit from additional support.

Where appropriate, the School will work with the child, their parents or carers and relevant agencies to:

- identify the child's needs and any emerging safeguarding concerns;
- consider the child's wishes and feelings;
- agree the support required and the outcomes to be achieved;
- coordinate services through an identified lead practitioner where appropriate; and
- regularly review whether the support is improving the child's circumstances.

Some children and families may require more targeted support than that available through universal or community-based Early Help. Family Help includes:

- targeted early help coordinated by the local authority and its partners; and

- statutory support and services for children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Targeted early help is a voluntary arrangement and will ordinarily require the consent and participation of the child and their family. An appropriately qualified practitioner may lead the assessment and coordinate the Family Help plan. Where local arrangements permit, the same practitioner may continue to work with the family where the child is subsequently assessed as a child in need under section 17.

Where a child or family does not consent to targeted early help, or does not engage with the support offered, the DSL will consider whether the child's needs are likely to increase or whether there is a safeguarding risk that requires referral to local authority children's social care.

Family Help and Early Help cases will be kept under regular review. Where the child's circumstances do not improve, the support is not meeting their needs or concerns increase, the DSL will consider whether the matter should be escalated or referred for statutory assessment.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, a referral will be made immediately to local authority children's social care under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and, where appropriate, to the police.

The School will also understand and follow the local criteria and procedures relating to:

- section 20 of the Children Act 1989, concerning the local authority's duty to accommodate a child;
- section 31 of the Children Act 1989, concerning care and supervision orders;
- disabled children;
- children managed within the youth secure estate; and
- children affected by abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking or modern slavery.

The School will support children's social care and other agencies with assessments and multi-agency plans. All concerns, discussions, decisions and the reasons for those decisions will be clearly recorded.

**Children's Mental Health**

All staff will be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Mental health difficulties may also develop into a safeguarding concern, including where a child is experiencing self-harm, an eating disorder, suicidal ideation or a risk of suicide.

Only appropriately trained professionals should diagnose mental health conditions. However, staff are well placed to observe children day to day and identify changes in behaviour, presentation or emotional wellbeing that may indicate a child requires additional support.

Possible indicators may include:

- significant changes in behaviour, mood or educational engagement;
- becoming withdrawn, fearful, aggressive or unusually distressed;
- changes in friendships, sleep, eating or personal care;
- a loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed;
- signs of self-harm, self-neglect or disordered eating; or
- statements or behaviour indicating suicidal thoughts or intent.

Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exploitation or other traumatic experiences may experience a lasting impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance, relationships and educational outcomes.

Where a child is in immediate danger or there is an immediate risk of serious harm, staff will contact the emergency services by calling 999 or arrange urgent attendance at an emergency department. Urgent mental health support that is not an emergency may be sought through NHS 111 and the mental health option, alongside local crisis services.

The School will work with the child, their parents or carers where appropriate, the Senior Mental Health Lead, Mental Health Support Team and other relevant professionals and agencies. Support and interventions provided by the School will be safe, evidence-based, appropriate to the child's age, developmental stage and level of need, and kept under regular review.

Staff will have regard to relevant government guidance, including Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools, and will work with local partners to identify children who
may benefit from additional support and ensure that appropriate help is put in place.

**Appendix 1 – Four categories of abuse**

**Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces, illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

**Emotional abuse**

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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

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

**Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Neglect**

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, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Indicators of abuse**

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty.

For these reasons, it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead.

It is the responsibility of staff to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused, neglected or exploited may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful

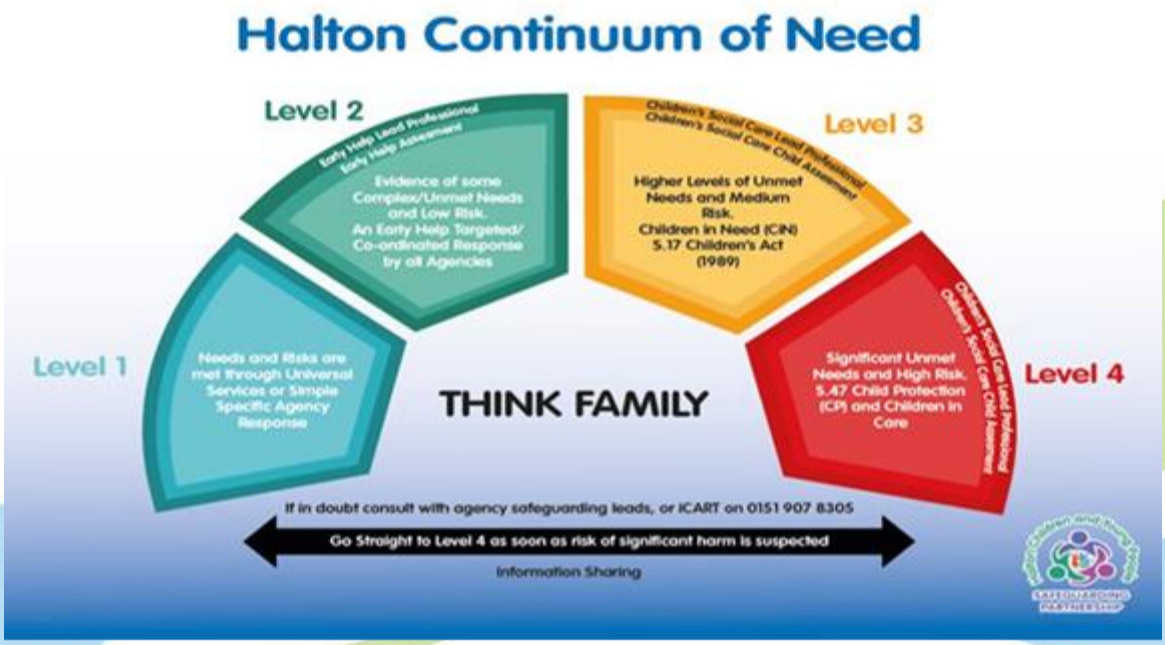
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss school, arrive late or leave the school for part of the day
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- become disinterested in their work
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'.

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

**Appendix 2**

**Concern flowchart & Halton Continuum of Need**




**Level 1- Universal** **Level 2-Children with emerging needs.**

**Level 3- Children with multiple and or complex needs (family help)**

**Level 4-Children in need of protection**