

Blossom Lower School and Upper House



Safeguarding Children & Child Protection

EYFS, Adapted Curriculum, Primary, Secondary, Post 16

Motspur Park | Euston | Wimbledon

Last updated: September 2023 by Fiona Roberts (DSL)

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CONTENTS

About This Policy	3
Commitment Statement	3
Blossom House Culture of Vigilance	3
Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.....	4
Safeguarding and Child Protection Training Requirements.....	4
The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	5
Multi-Agency Working and the Three Safeguarding Partners.....	6
Child Protection and the Four Categories of Abuse (<i>including sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect</i>)	6
Safeguarding Issues.....	7
Extra-Familial Harms	10
Teaching Pupils about Safeguarding	10
Online Safety.....	10
Reporting Child Protection and Safeguarding Concerns.....	11
What Happens after a Concern is Reported?.....	11
Pupil Voice.....	12
Information Sharing and 'Special Category Personal Data'.....	13
Record Keeping.....	13
Supporting Children at Greater Risk of Harm.....	13
Early Help.....	14
Child on Child Abuse including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment.....	15
Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations made about Staff.....	16
EYFS Reporting.....	18
Referring to DBS and TRA.....	18
Reducing Risks.....	18
Whistleblowing.....	19
APPENDICIES	
Appendix 1: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse.....	20
Appendix 2: Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment.....	22
Appendix 3: Contact Details.....	23

About this Policy

This policy is updated at least annually, and reflects the latest government guidance and legislation. Blossom House School follows procedures in line with Merton's Safeguarding Children's Partnership (MSCP). This policy has been written with reference to the following:

- [Keeping children safe in education 2023](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children July 2018 \(updated Dec 2020\)](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015](#)
- [The Prevent duty 2015 \(Revised 2021\)](#)

In order to cover all safeguarding requirements, the following policies should also be read:

- Staff Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies
- Online Safety Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Safeguarding Procedures for Blossom House Foundation Stage (if required)
- Remote Working and Provision Policy (if required)

Commitment Statement

"Blossom House School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, students and volunteers to share this commitment."

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

'Children' includes everyone under the age of 18 (*for 18+ please see our Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy*)

Blossom House Culture of Vigilance

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. Blossom House School actively promotes a culture of vigilance; everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play in identifying concerns, encouraging children to talk about anything that is worrying them, providing help, and taking action to prevent concerns from escalating. We facilitate a whole school, child-centred approach to safeguarding, where staff consider, at all times, the best interests of the child.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

As a special school, we understand that children with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- Being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- The potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- Cognitive understanding- being able to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so.

To address these additional challenges, any reports of abuse require close liaison with the DSL and Specialist Advisor, and additional therapeutic and pastoral support for the pupils(s) involved.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Training Requirements

All new staff (including peripatetic staff, students, volunteers) will be required to:

- Read the following policies before starting work at Blossom House School:
 - Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy (including the school's safeguarding response to children who go missing from education and the role of the DSL)
 - Staff Code of Conduct & Whistleblowing Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Online Safety Policy
- Read Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education (2023)
- Complete safeguarding induction training (including Prevent and online safety) with the DSL within their first week of employment or complete safeguarding training through their agency

All existing staff will be required to:

- Read Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education (2023)
- Complete annual refresher training
- Keep up to date with guidance, policies and procedures- delivered in staff meetings, by email etc.

The Principal, DSL/Deputies, and Lead Member on the Advisory Body will be required to:

- Complete safeguarding training every 2 years (including Prevent, Online safety, filtering and monitoring, and Harmful Sexual Behaviour)
- Keep up to date with the latest guidance, policies and procedures

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Blossom House School has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who is also a member of the senior management team. The DSL has **lead responsibility** for safeguarding and child protection (including online), and provides support to staff to carry out their safeguarding duties.



Fiona Roberts, Lead DSL for all school sites

- Lead responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults across all school sites, including online safety, filtering and monitoring, and Prevent
- Acts as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff
- Refers cases of suspected abuse to children's social care
- Refers cases of radicalisation to the Channel programme
- Refers cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police
- Refers cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Promotes supportive engagement with parents/carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances



Joey Burgess, Principal

- As proprietor ensures full oversight of safeguarding
- Manages allegations against staff
- Liaises with the LADO if an allegation is made against a member of staff
- Meets regularly with DSL to discuss cases, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 or police investigations
- Takes on Lead DSL role in DSL's absence

Deputy DSLs for specified sites/phases

- Oversees safeguarding protocols for specified phase/school site, which may include drawing up risk assessments and facilitating LA audits and inspections
- Acts as initial contact for safeguarding concerns within specified phase/school site and liaises with DSL where concerns meet the threshold for safeguarding intervention
- May deputise as DSL within specified phase/site
- May be required to deputise in the rare event of the absence of the Lead DSL and Principal
- Reports any actions taken to the DSL as soon as possible



Lynn Powick
Early Years



Clem Turner-Powell
Motspur Park



Viviana Patterson
Post 16



Cinders Leathes
Chestnut Farm



**Katy Laing
Euston**



**Tom Richards
Euston**



**Laura Douglas
Wimbledon**



Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body: Jill Bainton

- Ensures the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures are robust
- Carries out annual safeguarding audit to check compliance
- May be contacted for independent safeguarding advice or for any minor concerns around the Proprietor or Senior Management Team

Multi-Agency Working and the Three Safeguarding Partners

The DSL (and deputies) understand the importance of multi-agency working, in line with the statutory guidance set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#). Where safeguarding incidents occur, Blossom House will liaise with the three safeguarding partners (children’s services, police chief constables, and integrated care systems), and other agencies, to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Blossom House School works with Merton Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (MSCP) to follow local arrangements. The DSL is also aware of the NPCC guidance: [when to call the police](#).

Child Protection and the Four Categories of Abuse

Child protection is the process of protecting individual children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. There are four categories of child 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.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and 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 involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (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. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is also known as child on child abuse.

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, for example, 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.

Abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another. Staff should always be vigilant and raise any concerns with the DSL. **Please see Appendix 1 for signs and symptoms of abuse.**

Safeguarding Issues see [Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#)

There are many safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours such as drug or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, and the sharing of nudes or semi-nudes images/videos can be signs that a child is at risk. Other safeguarding issues include:

Child on Child Abuse *(please refer to page 15 for how to respond to such incidents)*

Where children abuse other children, this is referred to as child on child abuse, and it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. This is most likely to include, but is not limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers (teenage relationship abuse);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes images/videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

It is important to note that any of the above may involve an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages abuse or violence.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in a sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and can be facilitated and/or take place online. If CSE or CCE is suspected, staff must report to the DSL immediately.

Domestic Abuse

[The Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) defines domestic abuse as any of the following behaviours, either as a pattern of behaviour, or as a single incident:

- (a) physical or sexual abuse;
- (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
- (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
- (d) economic abuse (adverse effect of the victim to acquire, use or maintain money or other property; or obtain goods or services); and
- (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Children can be victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer abuse in their own intimate relationships. The National Domestic Abuse helpline is available 24 hours a day: [0808 2000 247](tel:08082000247).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Whilst all staff should report any concerns about FGM to the DSL, there is a specific **legal duty on teachers**. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession discovers that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police.

Mental Health

We recognise 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. Where children have suffered traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood and adolescence, affecting mental health, behaviour and education. If a child's behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing, or developing, a mental health problem, staff should speak to the pupil's Specialist Advisor. Any safety concerns should be reported to the DSL.

Serious Violence

Indicators which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime, may include: increased absence from school, a change in friendships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs. County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line" (see CCE above). Any concerns around serious violence or county lines should be discussed with the DSL. Advice for schools is provided in the Home Office's [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement](#) and [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance](#).

Extra-Familial Harms

All staff are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school, and/or can occur inside or outside of the school environment, inside or outside of the home and online. The DSL, alongside all staff, will consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms may include harassment and exploitation, teenage relationship abuse, criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, and radicalisation.

Teaching Pupils about Safeguarding

Blossom House School is a secular, non-political institution. The school's Holistic Curriculum promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and within this, Fundamental British Values (FBV). Pupils are prepared that life in modern Britain has zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia/biphobia/transphobia, and sexual violence/harassment. Pupils are taught about diverse national, religious and ethnic identities and beliefs, and the need for mutual respect and understanding to prevent extremist views. PSHE and RSE lessons enable children to develop their understanding, awareness, and resilience to potential safeguarding issues, including healthy and respectful relationships, boundaries and consent, stereotyping, prejudice and equality, body confidence and self-esteem, abusive relationships including coercive and controlling behaviour, the laws relating to sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called 'honour'-based violence such as forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable. Tailored education, behaviour and pastoral support is offered to pupils who require extra support due to their SEN.

Online Safety *(please refer to our Online Safety Policy)*

Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues, and Blossom House School facilitates a whole school approach to keeping children safe online. Pupils are taught about online safety through various teaching, learning and therapy opportunities, which includes helping them to be clear about what is expected of them online as well as offline. Pupils, parents and staff are taught how to recognise online safety risks, and how to get help and escalate concerns where necessary, and we provide annual training sessions delivered by Childnet online safety charity www.childnet.com. Our IT filtering and monitoring systems prevent access to inappropriate material, and will raise an alert should anyone attempt to access any inappropriate sites. Our online safety approaches aim to cover the four areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users;
- **conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; and
- **commerce:** risks such as gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, or financial scams

Reporting Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns

Staff members who are in contact with children all day, are in a position to detect possible abuse. Our *Culture of Vigilance* ensures that staff maintain an attitude of ‘**it could happen here**’ and that they do not assume a colleague will take action or report a concern instead. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act immediately and always in the **best** interests of the child. If staff members are unsure they should speak to the DSL.

If you are concerned that a child is being (or has been) abused, exploited or neglected; if you notice any unusual injuries or marks; or if you are concerned about any of the specific safeguarding issues, you should:

- **Talk to the child about what happened.** Listen carefully to what the child is saying, treat it seriously, and value what they say. If you can, write brief notes.
- **Never promise not to tell anyone.** Let the child know that you have a responsibility to make sure they are safe. Give reassurance that only those who need to know will be told.
- **Do not ask leading questions.** These might give your own idea of what might have happened. Ask open questions such as “*What happened?*”; “*Is there anything else?*”
- **Offer reassurance.** It is important to reassure the child that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A child should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor should they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- **Record what has been observed as soon as possible via the school’s MIS System.** The notes should not reflect any personal opinions as they could become part of a statutory assessment by children’s social care and/or part of a criminal investigation.
- **If the child is considered to be at risk of harm, notify the DSL immediately.** An urgent referral may need to be made to children’s social care and/or the police.
- The DSL or Deputy DSL will always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. In the unlikely event they are not available, staff can speak to social care directly. Any actions taken must be reported to the DSL as soon as possible.
- In circumstances where a child requires urgent medical attention, the referral process should not delay the administration of First Aid or emergency medical assistance.

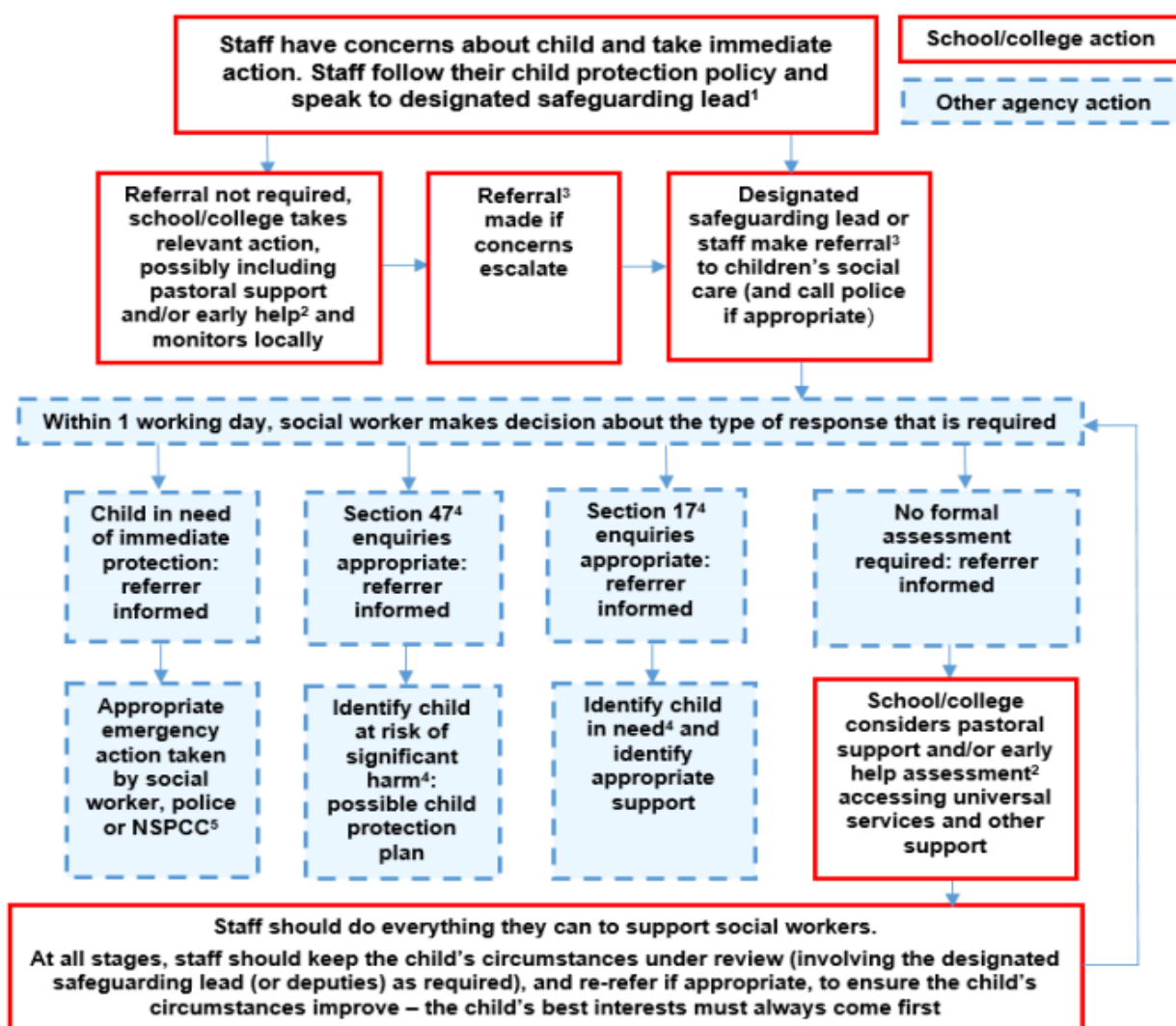
What Happens after a Concern is Reported?

Following notification of a safeguarding concern, the following options will include:

- Managing support for the child internally, drawing on the professional network and pastoral support available within Blossom House;
- An Early Help assessment;
- A referral for statutory services, for example as the child might be in need, is in need or suffering or likely to suffer harm.

All staff, including the DSL must be prepared to challenge inaction if felt necessary.

The following diagram shows the referral process, including statutory assessments under the Children Act (1989):



Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer harm, a referral to children's social care (and if appropriate the police) must be made immediately. In the first instance, the DSL will contact Merton's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or Local Authority equivalent (which can be found using this [online tool](#)). Parents' agreement will be sought first, unless this is likely to place the child at further risk, through delay or the parent's actions or reactions. The school will provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process, so that any assessments consider all available evidence and enable a contextual approach to addressing such harm.

Pupil Voice

Blossom House recognises the importance of pupil voice, and the importance of building trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication. Where pupils have concerns, they are encouraged to talk about anything that is worrying them, knowing that their concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly. Staff are aware that some pupils may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected,

and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having professional curiosity, and additional therapeutic and pastoral support should be offered for children to safely express their views (this includes for any children who are LGBT). Where there is a safeguarding concern, we try our best to ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

Information Sharing and 'Special Category Personal Data' (see *Information Sharing Policy*)

Information sharing between practitioners and local agencies, is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect. We understand the importance of sharing information as early as possible, when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care. We decide whether to share personal information on a case-by-case basis, applying the **Seven Golden Rules** for information sharing.

Any confidential, sensitive and personal information relating to safeguarding or child protection is treated as **special category personal data**. Consent should be sought from pupils and parents when sharing information, unless it is not possible to gain consent, or if to gain consent would put a child at risk of harm. The Data Protection Act 2018 contains '*safeguarding of children and individuals at risk*' as a processing condition. This allows the sharing of information if it is to keep a child or individual safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being. Further information can be found in the [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#)

Duties to safeguard and protect children from risk of harm override those outlined in the GDPR or DPA.

Record Keeping

All concerns, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, and a note of any actions taken, decisions reached, and the outcome, are recorded in writing (usually electronically). If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the DSL. Information is stored on a restricted area of our school's MIS system, or in the child's Child Protection file on a restricted drive (if electronic) or in a locked cabinet (if a paper copy).

When pupils leave Blossom House, the DSL will ensure their Child Protection file is transferred to the new school or college within 5 days, ensuring secure transit, and obtaining a receipt. The DSL may share information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. The DSL also requests Child Protection files/information for any new pupils joining the school.

Supporting Children at Greater Risk of Harm

Whilst all children should be protected, there are some groups of children who are potentially at greater risk of harm than others.

Children with a Social Worker

Where children have an allocated social worker, the DSL will liaise with any relevant agencies to ensure the welfare of these children are monitored. The DSL and key staff working with these children may be asked to contribute to a plan, or to be part of statutory meetings and conferences. Where children need a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding e.g. responding to non-attendance, or providing additional pastoral support within the school.

Looked After Children

Where children are Looked After, or previously Looked After, the DSL will ensure that appropriate staff have all the relevant information they need in relation to the child's legal status, care arrangements, and contact arrangements with their birth parents. The DSL will have details of the social worker and the name of the virtual head in the authority that looks after the child. **Tom Richards** is the Designated Teacher responsible for promoting the educational achievement of children who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders. All Looked After children must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), which is developed by the Local Authority and reviewed in collaboration with the school.

Children Missing from Education (CME) *(please refer to our Attendance Policy)*

Children going missing, particularly repeatedly, may be a sign of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. Early intervention is necessary to identify any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Blossom House has strict attendance procedures, which include: holding more than one emergency contact on file, home visits where contact cannot be made, referral to Education Welfare or CME teams, or referral to the police/social care. Please see [Children Missing Education](#) for more information.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, Blossom House School will work together with the LA and other key professionals, to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers. Ideally, this would be before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child. This is particularly important where a child has SEND, is vulnerable, and/or has a social worker (see [Elective Home Education](#) for further information).

Early Help

All staff understand how to identify children who may benefit from Early Help. Early Help means **providing support as soon as a problem emerges in a child's life**. Any child may benefit from Early Help, but children experiencing any of the following may be in particular need of support:

- Is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
- Has special educational needs

- Has a mental health need
- Is a young carer
- Is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal or exploitation
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Has a family member in prison, or is affected by parental offending
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as FGM or Forced Marriage
- Is a privately fostered child
- Is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

Staff who identify a child as needing Early Help should discuss their concerns with the DSL and notify the Specialist Advisor. The DSL may carry out an inter-agency assessment, and/or discuss with children's social care services. Either the DSL, Specialist Advisor, or an external agency will act as Lead Professional, coordinating Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings. All staff working with that child may be required to contribute to the assessment and review processes.

Early Help is kept under constant review. If the child's situation does not seem to be improving, or if concerns escalate, a referral to children's social care may be needed.

Child on Child Abuse including Sexual Violence and Harassment *(please refer to page 7 of this policy for further information on the definition of child on child abuse)*

Please also refer to:

- [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people \(2020\)](#)
- [Part five of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2023\)](#)

The school recognises the possibility that children are capable of abusing other children. Even if there no reported cases, child on child abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. **Blossom House School has a zero-tolerance approach to child on child abuse, and it should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys"** as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children. Any physical behaviours that may be criminal in nature, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up

skirts, must be challenged. Whilst it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, all child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. We recognise that children with SEN are also three times more likely to be abused than their peers.

We aim to reduce the risk of child on child abuse by teaching pupils about positive, healthy and respectful relationships (both on and offline) in RSE and PHSE sessions, along with an awareness around 'being safe' and how to recognise and report abuse. Where child on child abuse is suspected, or where an allegation has been made, **the DSL must be informed immediately and procedures will be followed in Appendix 2**. If a potential criminal offence has taken place, the Police will also be contacted and an appropriate adult will be identified (see [PACE Code C 2019](#)). If the allegation is not accepted by Children's Social Care or the Police, the school is responsible for managing the situation internally. On occasion, some pupils will present a safeguarding risk to other children, including siblings or other pupils. The school is responsible for creating individualised risk assessments to ensure that the other pupils are safeguarded; and that these pupils are also kept safe from malicious allegations.

Blossom House School recognises the importance of the victim's voice and reporting. Children are supported to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. Any children affected by child on child abuse will be offered a high level of pastoral support from a team of trusted adults, and any reports made will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately. A child will never be given the impression they are creating a problem, or be made to feel ashamed for making a report. The NSPCC has a dedicated helpline to support children and young people who have experienced abuse at school, and for professionals who need further support and guidance: [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) / help@nspcc.org.uk.

Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations made about Staff (including Supply Teachers, Agency Staff, Volunteers and Contractors)

At Blossom House School we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may **pose a risk of harm** to children, including supply teachers and agency staff. Concerns and/or allegations may come from various sources, for example, a suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

Any concerns or allegations must be **reported to the Principal immediately** [*as the Principal is also the sole proprietor of Blossom House Independent School, any allegation or concerns made about the Principal should be reported directly to the Merton Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), **John Shelley** 020 8545 3179/ [lodo@merton.gov.uk](mailto:lado@merton.gov.uk)*].

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

Allegations that may meet the harms threshold

Allegations that indicate a person would pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in close contact with children include those who have:

- 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 or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates that they may not be suitable to work with children (including outside the school setting)

If a child has been harmed, is at immediate risk of harm, or if the situation is an emergency, children's social care and/or the police may need to be contacted immediately. Where an allegation relates to a member of supply staff provided by an agency, the agency should be fully involved.

Before contacting the LADO, the Principal will conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help them determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation, being careful not to jeopardise any future police investigation. The LADO's role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, children's social care, the school, or a combination of these.

For more information on this process, please see [Part four of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2023\)](#).

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold (low level concerns)

Concerns may be graded low level if the concern does not meet the criteria for an allegation; and the person has acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work. Example behaviours include, but are not limited to:

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

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

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

Reports about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

All low-level concerns are recorded in writing, including:

- name of individual sharing their concerns (unless they wish to remain anonymous)
- details of the concern
- context in which the concern arose
- action taken

Records are kept confidential in a restricted office, and are reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and managed accordingly. If a concerning pattern of behaviour is identified which meets the criteria for an allegation, then the matter should be referred to the LADO. The records' review might identify that there are wider cultural issues within the school or college that enabled the behaviour to occur. This might mean that policies or processes could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

The school has a Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body, who may be contacted for any minor concerns around the DSL, Proprietor or Senior Management Team. Please contact via the Office.

EYFS Reporting *(Please see Safeguarding Procedures for Blossom House Foundation Stage)*

Where an allegation has been made against a member of staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Blossom House School must also notify Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere). These notifications must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made. The Merton Early Years Team must also be informed on [0208 545 3800](tel:02085453800) and/or an email to providers@merton.gov.uk (marked confidential and urgent).

Whistleblowing (please refer to the Staff Code of Conduct & Whistleblowing Policy)

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school safeguarding procedures; and these will be taken extremely seriously by the Senior Management Team. If for any reason, staff feel unable to raise within the school, they can call the NSPCC advice line anonymously on [0800 028 0285](tel:08000280285) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk. More information can also be found on the [NSPCC website](#).

Referring to DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) and TRA (Teaching Regulation Agency)

Blossom House School is aware of their obligation to refer any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) to DBS if:

- They are dismissed because they have harmed someone;
- They are dismissed/removed from working in regulated activity because they might have harmed someone;
- They were going to be dismissed for either of these reasons, but they resigned first.

Allegations of serious misconduct against a teacher may be referred to the [TRA](#).

Reducing Risks

The DSL is responsible for logging and monitoring safeguarding concerns. Commonly reported concerns are discussed with the Senior Management Team, and extra support is put in place to reduce any potential risks. A full safeguarding report is produced annually, which includes a detailed action plan. The findings of the report feed into the school development plan, with the overall aim to improve the safeguarding culture within the school. An annual Safeguarding Review is carried out by the Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body.

Signed:

Joanna Burgess, Principal



01.09.22

Appendix 1: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

This is intended as a guide. Please remember that the presence of one or more factors does not necessarily give proof that child abuse has occurred. No list of abuse or neglect indicators can include all signs, and staff are advised to use their best judgement.

<u>Indicators of Physical Abuse</u>	<u>Indicators of Emotional Abuse</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplained injuries, bruising or burns/scalds• Recurring injuries• Untreated injuries• Admission of punishment which appears excessive• Bald patches• Head/abdominal injuries• Soft tissue injury is very much a cause for concern.• Bruise marks in or around the mouth• Black eyes, especially if both eyes are black and there are no marks to forehead or nose• Grasp marks• Finger marks• Bruising of the ears• Linear bruising (particularly buttocks or back)• Bruising of differing age• injuries to genital areas*• Bite marks• Unexplained burns, cigarette burns, rope burns (<i>these are rarely accidental</i>)• General physical disability <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Behavioural indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavioural extremes (withdrawal, aggression, regression, depression)• Inappropriate or excessive fear of parent or caretaker• Antisocial behaviour such as substance abuse, running away, truancy, fear of going home.• Unbelievable or inconsistent explanation for injuries• Refusal to discuss injuries• Withdrawal from physical contact• Sudden poor performance in school• Self destructive tendencies• Aggression towards others• Over compliance• Resistance to PE (undressing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical, mental and emotional development lags• Low self-esteem• Sudden speech disorders• Fear of new situations• Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations• Eating disorders, including obesity or anorexia• Nervous disorders (rashes, hives, facial tics, stomach aches)• Self-harm• Fear of parents being contacted• Running away• Compulsive stealing, scavenging• Difficulty in forming relationships• Soiling and wetting• Unresponsiveness in the child• Change in behavioural pattern• 'Frozen' look• Attention seeking• Sudden poor performance in school <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Behavioural indicators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Habit disorders (biting, rocking, head-banging)• Behaviours such as rocking, hair twisting etc• Cruel behaviour, seeming to get pleasure from hurting children, adults or animals• Age inappropriate behaviours (bedwetting, wetting, soiling)• Behavioural extremes, such as overly compliant-demanding; withdrawn-aggressive; listless-excitabile.• Acceptance of excessive punishment• Over-reaction to mistakes• Continual self deprecation

Indicators of Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Constant tiredness
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance
- No social relationships
- Poor personal hygiene
- Low self –esteem
- Poor state of clothing
- Unsuitable clothing; missing key articles of clothing (underwear, socks)
- Repeated infections etc.
- Untreated injury or illness
- Lack of immunisations
- Indications of prolonged Exposure to elements (excessive sunburn, insect bites, colds)
- Unkempt appearance
- Height and weight significantly below age level

Behavioural indicators

- Sudden poor performance in school
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging
- Destructive tendencies
- Neurotic behaviour
- Running away
- Unusual school attendance

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

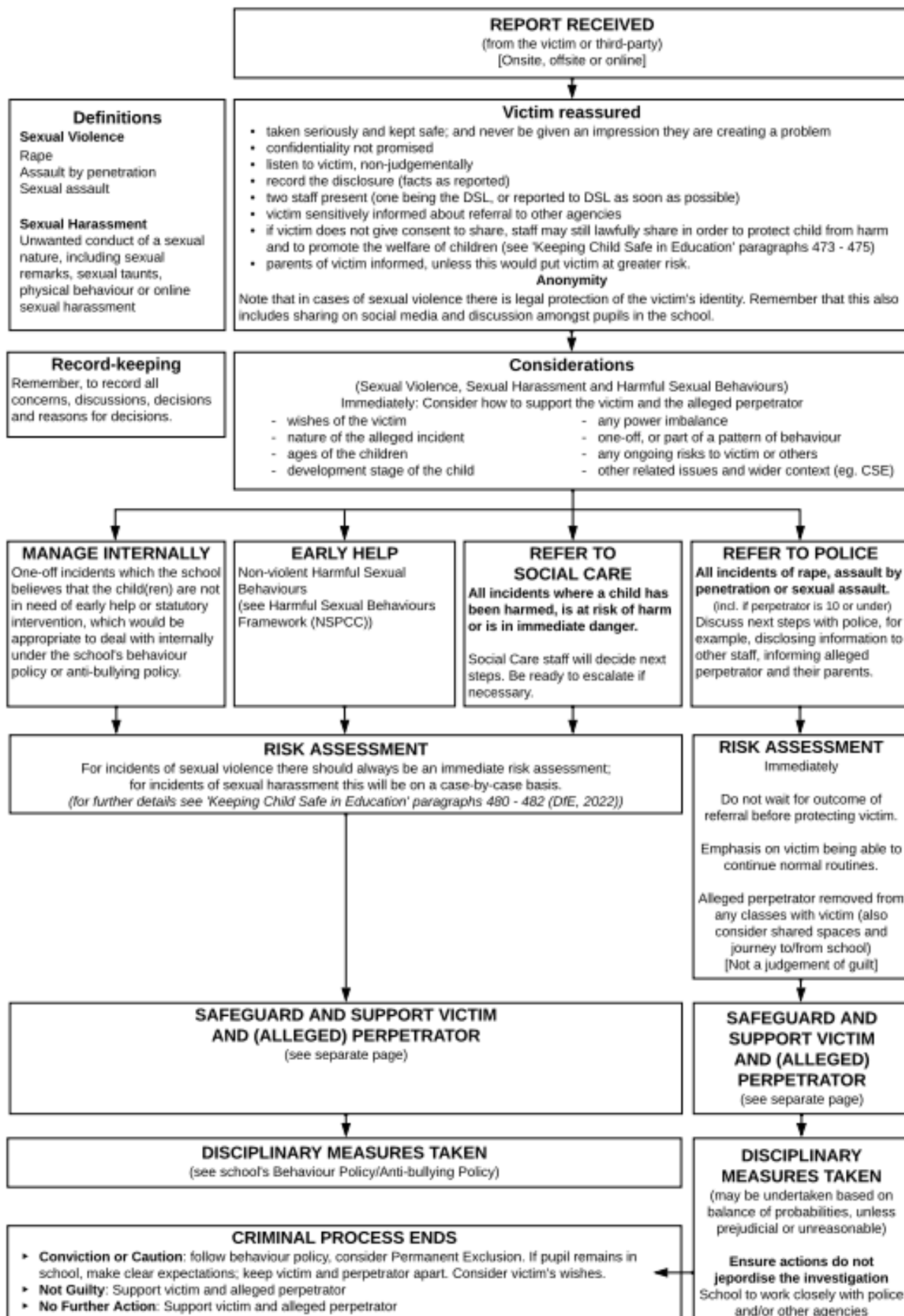
- Torn stained or bloody underclothes
- Frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast or urinary infections
- Somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals.
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Bruises or bleeding from external genitalia, vaginal or anal region.
- Self-mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Emotionally distant
- Self destructive tendencies
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Soiling and wetting
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Attention seeking

Behavioural indicators

- Disclosure of sexual abuse
- Regressive behaviours (thumb sucking, bed wetting, fear of the dark)
- Promiscuity or seductive behaviours
- Sexually explicit behaviour
- disturbed sleep patterns (recurrent nightmares)
- unusual and age *inappropriate* interest in sexual matters
- Avoidance of undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes
- Sudden decline in school performance, truancy
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Low self-esteem
- Self-harm
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Neurotic behaviour
- Sexually inappropriate play for age of child
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home
- Emotionally distant
- Self destructive tendencies
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Soiling and wetting
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Attention seeking
- Sudden poor performance in school

Appendix 2: Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

***PART FIVE: CHILD-ON-CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT**



Source:

*Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2022 (DfE, 2022)

Appendix 3: Contact List

Children's Social Care Finder

<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>

Merton's MSCP (For other LAs please use the finder above)

<https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/>

Merton's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH):

Monday-Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm: 020 8545 4226/4227. Out of Hours: 020 8770 5000

Merton LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer):

LADO: 020 8545 3179 lado@merton.gov.uk

Police Non-emergency: 101, Emergency: 999

Catch 22 Merton Substance Abuse Service

Advice and consultation: 020 3701 8641 msm@catch-22.org.uk

Radicalisation and Extremism

Telephone helpline 020 7340 7264 Email counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk

(Please note that the helpline is not intended for use in emergency situations)

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

PO Box 181, Darlington, DL1 9FA Email: customerservices@db.s.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone for referrals: 01325 953 795; Telephone for customer services: 0870 909 08

Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA)

Ground Floor, South, Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

Email misconduct.teacher@education.gov.uk Telephone 020 7593 5393

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Childline: Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk