

# **Blossom Lower School and Upper House**



## **Safeguarding Children & Child Protection**

**EYFS, Adapted Curriculum, Primary, Secondary, Post 16**

**Motspur Park | Euston | Wimbledon**

**Last updated: May 2022 by Fiona Roberts (DSL)**

**Date of next review: September 2022**

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## **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 2021](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children July 2018 \(updated Dec 2020\)](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015](#)
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2021](#)
- [The Prevent duty 2015 \(Revised 2021\)](#)

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

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Procedures for Blossom House Foundation Stage

## **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. As part of their annual suitability form, all staff have signed to say they have read [part 1 of Keeping children safe in education \(2021\)](#) guidance for schools and colleges.

## **Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)**

As a special school, we recognise the fact that children with special educational needs or disabilities (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 SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

To address these additional challenges, Blossom House School provides Early Help as soon as early concerns are identified. We are also aware of the Local Authority requirement to provide services for Children in Need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare, under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

## **Safeguarding and Child Protection Training Requirements**

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

- Read the following declaration policies before starting 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
- Read Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education (2021)
- Complete an induction session (including Prevent and online safety) with the DSL within their first week of employment
- Keep up to date with guidance, policies and procedures- delivered in staff meetings, by email etc.

**All existing staff will be required to:**

- Read Part 1 of Keeping children safe in education (2021)
- Complete annual refresher training
- Keep up to date with guidance, policies and procedures- delivered in staff meetings, by email etc.

**The Principal, DSL, and Deputy DSLs will be required to:**

- Complete advanced safeguarding training for DSLs every 2 years
- 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.

	<p><b>DSL: Fiona Roberts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults across all three school sites (Motspur Park, Euston &amp; Wimbledon)</li> <li>• Acts as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff</li> <li>• Refers cases of suspected abuse to children’s social care</li> <li>• Refers cases of radicalisation to the Channel programme</li> <li>• Refers cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police</li> <li>• Refers cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)</li> <li>• Promotes supportive engagement with parents/carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for Prevent</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Principal: Joey Burgess</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As proprietor ensures proper oversight of safeguarding</li> <li>• Manages allegations against staff</li> <li>• Liaises with the LADO if an allegation is made against a member of staff</li> <li>• Meets regularly with DSL to discuss cases, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 or police investigations</li> <li>• Takes on Lead DSL role in DSL’s absence</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deputy DSLs:</b></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-end;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Lynn Powick</b> Early Years</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Viviana Patterson</b> Motspur Park</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Katy Laing</b> Euston</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>Laura Douglas</b> Wimbledon</p> </div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as initial contact for low level concerns and liaises with DSL where concerns meet the threshold for safeguarding intervention</li> <li>• Oversees protocols for specified phase/site, which may include facilitating LA audits</li> <li>• May deputise as DSL within specified phase/site</li> <li>• Reports any actions taken to the DSL as soon as possible</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Safeguarding Lead Member on the Advisory Body: Jill Bainton</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures school’s safeguarding protocols are robust</li> <li>• Carries out annual safeguarding audit to check compliance</li> <li>• May be contacted for independent safeguarding advice or for any minor concerns around the Proprietor or Senior Management Team</li> </ul>

## **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 clinical commissioning groups), 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 peer on peer 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 2021](#)

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 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 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 it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online. If CSE or CCE is suspected, staff must report to the DSL immediately.

## **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** (see Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy)

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, and can impact on mental health, behaviour and education. If a child's behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one, staff should report immediately to the child's Specialist Advisor for further support from the multi-disciplinary team. If there are also concerns around a child's safety, staff should report to the DSL. Blossom House School has commissioned two Clinical Specialists through Merton CAMHS in Schools, who are available once a week to offer additional support for pupils who may have mental health difficulties.

## **Peer on Peer Abuse** (*please refer to page 15 of this policy, for how to respond to such incidents*)

Where children abuse other children, this is referred to as peer on peer 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;
- 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.*

## **Serious Violence and County Lines**

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](#).

## **Domestic Abuse**

[The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(Part 1\)](#) defines domestic abuse as any of the following behaviours, either as a pattern of behaviour, or as a single incident, between two people over the age of 16, who are personally connected to each other (married, civil partners, have agreed to marry/become civil partners, have been in an intimate relationship with each other, have shared parental responsibility for the same child, or are relatives):

- (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.

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. The definition of Domestic Abuse applies to children if they see or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse; and they are related to the abusive person. The National Domestic Abuse helpline is available 24 hours a day: [0808 2000 247](tel:08082000247).

## **Safeguarding Response to Children Missing Education (CME) please see 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 [DfE Elective Home Education](#) for further information).

### **Assessment of Risk Outside the Home**

All staff are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of the school environment. The DSL, alongside all staff, will consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families.

### **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 taught about diverse national, religious and ethnic identities and beliefs, and the need for mutual respect and understanding to prevent extremist views. PSHE, RSE and Life Skills lessons enable children to develop their understanding, awareness, and resilience to potential safeguarding issues, including online safety, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images/videos, and peer on peer abuse.

### **Keeping Pupils Safe Online** *(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](http://www.childnet.com). Our IT filter systems prevent access to adult 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 material;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users;
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; and
- **commerce:** risks such as gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, or financial scams

For more information on keeping children safe online please see [Annex D of Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

## **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 in the **best interests of the child**. If staff members are unsure they should **always** 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 a child that you will not 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?"*
- Record what has been observed & said as soon as possible via the SchoolPod secure reporting system (see **Appendix 2** on how to report concerns). The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker 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 a member of the Senior Management Team or 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.

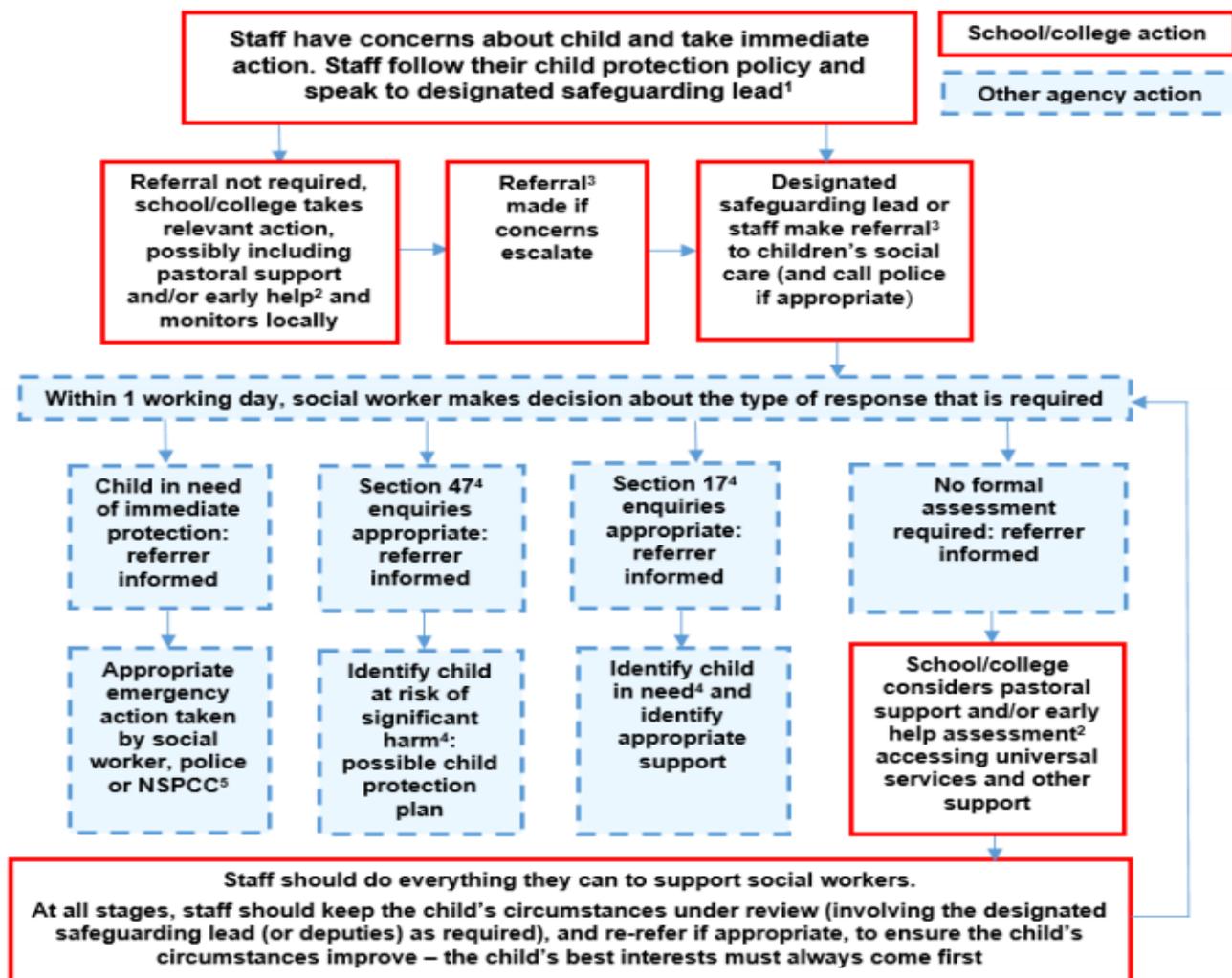
## **What Happens after a Concern is Reported?**

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. Children are encouraged to talk about anything that is worrying them, knowing that their concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly. Additional communication, therapeutic and pastoral support is in place for children to safely express their views and give feedback. 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. In order to fulfil our safeguarding duties, we will always act in the best interests of the child.

### **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 Data Protection Act 2018.***

### **Record Keeping**

All concerns, details 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 SchoolPod system, or in the child’s Child Protection file on a restricted drive (if electronic) or in a locked cabinet (if a paper copy).

Where children leave Blossom House, the DSL will ensure their Child Protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, ensuring secure transit, and obtaining confirmation of receipt. The DSL may share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. When Blossom House receives a Child Protection file, this is marked as confidential, and for the attention of the DSL.

### **Supporting Children Known to Children’s Social Care**

Where children are subject to a Child Protection or a Child in Need Plan, the school is responsible for liaising with Children’s Social Care and other 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 the 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.

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. **Vikki Langford** 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.

### **Early Help**

All staff working at Blossom House 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 one or more of the following may be in particular need of Early Help 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 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 initially discuss their concerns with the child's Specialist Advisor. Where there are safety concerns, where low level concerns persist, or where cases are more complex, these must be reported to the DSL. The DSL may then carry out an Inter-agency assessment, and/or discuss with local 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.**

**Peer on Peer Abuse (Including Child on Child Sexual Violence and Harassment)** (please refer to page 8 of this policy for further information on the definition of peer on peer abuse)

Please also refer to:

- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(2021\)](#);
- [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people \(2020\)](#)
- [Part five of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2021\)](#)

The school recognises the possibility that children are capable of abusing their peers. Even if there no reported cases, peer on peer abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. **Blossom House School has a zero-tolerance approach to peer on peer 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. Whilst it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, all peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

We aim to reduce the risk of peer on peer 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 peer on peer abuse is suspected, or where an allegation has been made, **the DSL should be informed immediately**. If a potential criminal offence has taken place, the Police will also be contacted. 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 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. **Where child on child sexual violence or harassment is suspected, or where an allegation has been made, please follow the flow chart in Appendix 3 and refer to [Part five of Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2021\)](#).**

As part of the DfE’s response to sexual abuse in education, including the [Ofsted review into sexual abuse in schools](#), Blossom House School recognises the importance of the victim’s voice and reporting. There are systems in place for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. Any children affected by peer on peer 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 adults and professionals who need further support and guidance: [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).

## **Allegations or Concerns Raised Against Staff (including Supply Teachers, Agency Staff, Volunteers and Contractors)**

At Blossom House School we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may harm 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 020 8545 3179; [lado@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 \(2021\)](#).

### **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](mailto:providers@merton.gov.uk) (marked confidential and urgent).

**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.

**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](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). More information can also be found on the [NSPCC website](#).

**Signed:**

Joanna Burgess, Principal



02.09.21

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

### **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

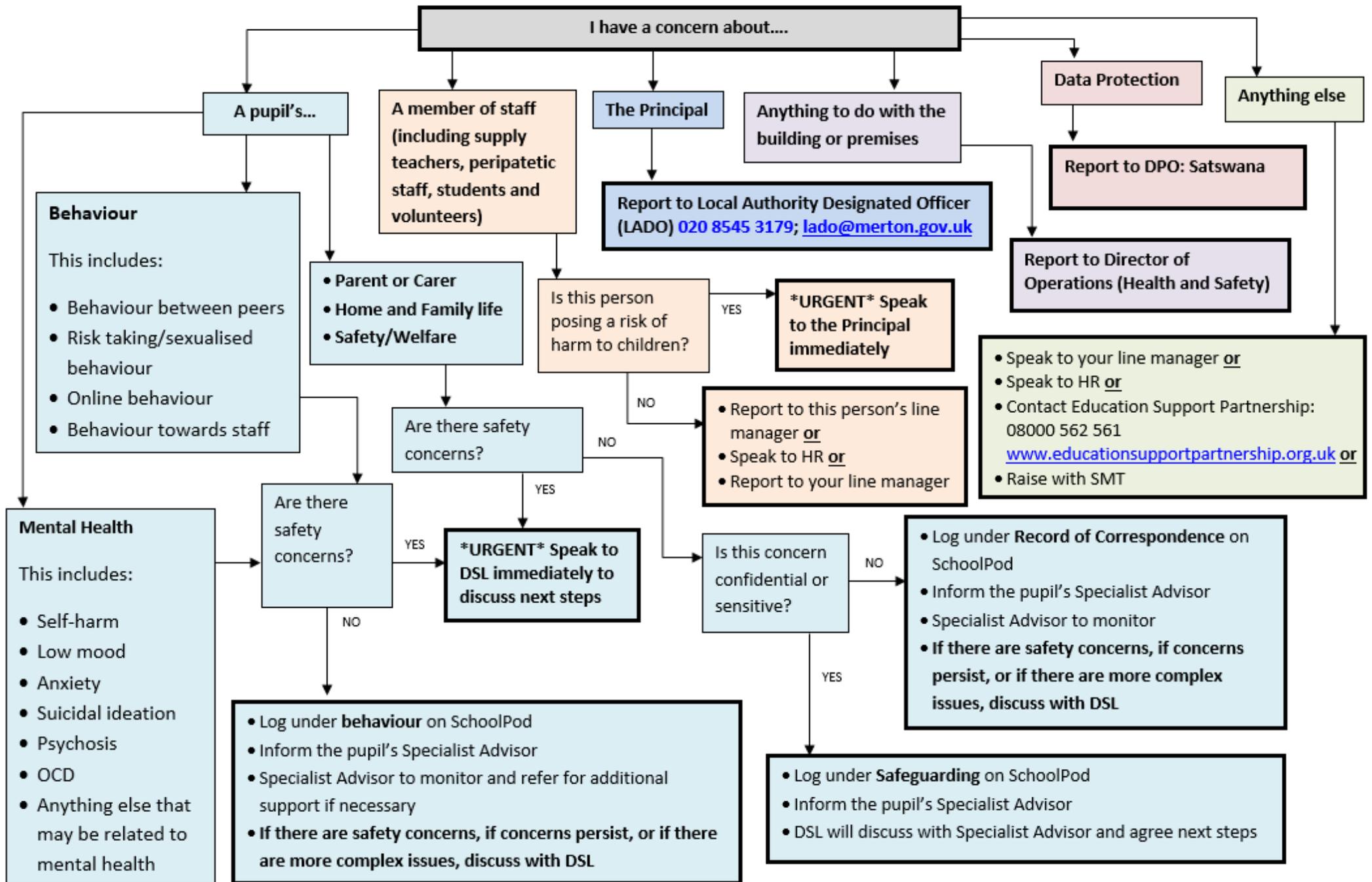
### **Indicators of Sexual Abuse**

- 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

# Reporting Concerns



# Appendix 3: Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

## Safeguarding Handbook for Schools

### PART FOUR: RESPONSE TO REPORTS

Summary of responses

**Definitions**

**Sexual Violence**  
 Rape  
 Assault by penetration  
 Sexual assault

**Sexual Harassment**  
 Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual remarks, sexual taunts, physical behaviour or online sexual harassment

**Record-keeping**

Remember, to record all concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions.

**REPORT RECEIVED**  
 (from the victim or third-party)  
 [Onsite, offsite or online]

**Victim reassured**

- taken seriously and kept safe
- confidentiality not promised
- listen to victim, non-judgementally
- record the disclosure (facts as reported)
- two staff present (one being the DSL, or reported to DSL as soon as possible)
- victim sensitively informed about referral to other agencies
- if victim does not give consent to share, staff may still lawfully share in order to protect child from harm and to promote the welfare of children (see 'Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment' paragraph 43)
- parents of victim informed

**Anonymity**

Note that in cases of sexual violence there is legal protection of the victim's identity. Remember that this also includes sharing on social media and discussion amongst pupils in the school.

**Considerations**  
 (Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment and Harmful Sexual Behaviours)

Immediately: Consider how to support the victim and the alleged perpetrator

- wishes of the victim
- nature of the alleged incident
- ages of the children
- development stage of the child
- any power imbalance
- one-off, or part of a pattern of behaviour
- any ongoing risks
- other related issues and wider context

**MANAGE INTERNALLY**

One-off incidents which the school believes that the child(ren) are not in need of early help or statutory intervention, which would be appropriate to deal with internally under the school's behaviour policy or anti-bullying policy.

**EARLY HELP**

Non-violent Harmful Sexual Behaviours (see Harmful Sexual Behaviours Framework (NSPCC) and the Brook Traffic Light Tool)

**REFER TO SOCIAL CARE**

All incidents where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm or is in immediate danger.

Social Care staff will decide next steps. Be ready to escalate if necessary.

**REFER TO POLICE**

All incidents of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault.

Discuss next steps with police, for example, disclosing information to other staff, informing alleged perpetrator and their parents.

**RISK ASSESSMENT**  
 Case-by-case basis

**RISK ASSESSMENT**  
 Immediately

Do not wait for outcome of referral before protecting victim.

Emphasis on victim being able to continue normal routines.

Alleged perpetrator removed from any classes with victim (also consider shared spaces and journey to/from school) [Not a judgement of guilt]

**SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR**  
 (see separate page)

**SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT VICTIM AND (ALLEGED) PERPETRATOR**  
 (see separate page)

**DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN**  
 (see school's Behaviour Policy/Anti-bullying Policy)

**DISCIPLINARY MEASURES TAKEN**  
 (may be undertaken based on balance of probabilities, unless prejudicial or unreasonable)

Ensure actions do not jeopardise the investigation  
 School to work closely with police and/or other agencies

**CRIMINAL PROCESS ENDS**

- ▶ **Conviction or Caution:** follow behaviour policy, consider Permanent Exclusion. If pupil remains in school, make clear expectations; keep victim and perpetrator apart. Consider victim's wishes.
- ▶ **Not Guilty:** Support victim and alleged perpetrator
- ▶ **No Further Action:** Support victim and alleged perpetrator

Source: Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE, 2018)

SVSH Flow Chart for Schools 2018 v.1.1

### Safeguarding and supporting victims and alleged perpetrators

Victim	Alleged Perpetrator	Other children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needs and wishes of victim are paramount</li> <li>• not made to feel they are the problem</li> <li>• consider proportionality of response</li> <li>• aim for victim to carry out normal routine</li> <li>• recognise that they may struggle in class and may need time out (if they wish)</li> <li>• be aware that they may not disclose the whole picture immediately</li> <li>• prepare for support over a long period and consider who is involved (internal and external)</li> <li>• if victim moves school, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) informs the new school of the need for continued support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• possible tension between discipline and support (these are not mutually exclusive)</li> <li>• consider age/ developmental stage/any SEND</li> <li>• proportionate response</li> <li>• consider unmet needs (for example, harmful sexual behaviours (HBV) in younger children may be a sign or abuse or trauma)</li> <li>• if (alleged) perpetrator moves school, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) informs the new school of the issues and transfers the child protection file</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• witnesses may need support (especially in cases of sexual violence)</li> <li>• avoid allowing pupils to 'take sides'</li> <li>• minimise potential for bullying or victimisation in school and on school transport</li> <li>• be aware of any social media use and inappropriate or even illegal posts (especially in cases of criminal investigation where anonymity is legally guaranteed)</li> <li>• develop safeguarding culture</li> <li>• constantly review reporting procedures and responses</li> <li>• consider potential for systematic and environmental weaknesses</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 4: 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](mailto: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](mailto:msm@catch-22.org.uk)

### **Radicalisation and Extremism**

Telephone helpline 020 7340 7264 Email [counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk)

(Please note that the helpline is not intended for use in emergency situations, such as a child being at immediate risk of harm or a security incident, in which case the normal emergency procedures should be followed)

### **Ofsted**

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231 Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov) Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

### **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

PO Box 181, Darlington, DL1 9FA Email: [customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@dbs.gsi.gov.uk)

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

**NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:** 0808 800 5000

**Childline:** Tel: 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)