

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FOR ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

REVIEWED/APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: September 2025

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: September 2026

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Out of Hours/Holidays The Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Leads are always available/contactable when pupils are on site and they are on call during term time after school hours. In holiday periods staff will be informed, via email, of which Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead is 'on duty' if the need arises. Governors will also be informed.	

Please note: Any reference to staff within the policy includes supply staff, volunteers, visiting tutors (Peripatetic) and casual workers (Exam Invigilators and Cover Teachers not through an agency).

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SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (INCLUDING EYFS)

1. Statement of Intent

St Mary's School fully recognises its responsibility and commitment to act in the best interest of the child for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. All pupils regardless of age, special needs or disability, racial/cultural heritage, religious belief or sexual orientation have the right to be protected from all types of harm and abuse. This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy forms a fundamental part of our approach to providing excellent pastoral care to all pupils. This policy has been prepared in accordance with the DfE and local guidance published by the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB):

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) (KCSIE)
KCSIE also refers to the non-statutory advice for Practitioners: What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (March 2015)
- KCSIE refers also to When to call the police, statutory guidance from the National Police Chief's Council
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Dec 23 updated Feb 24)
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales (March 24) (Prevent).
- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines – the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2025)
- Essex Effective Support
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB, 2024)

We also have regard to [Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership](#) if the pupil lives in Suffolk.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. 'Children' includes everyone under the age of 18. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. At St Mary's, in order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should ensure that their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the **best interests** of the child. All staff and volunteers at St. Mary's are required to read and understand Part 1 and Part 5 of KCSIE (2025) and Annex B and in addition any subsequent updates.

Staff members working with children should maintain an attitude of '**it could happen here**' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the **best** interests of the child, taking the child's wishes and feelings into account when determining what action and services to provide to support the child.

2. Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in [Working Together \(Dec 23, updated Feb 24\)](#) on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Police and Health) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#) (ESCB).

In Essex, the statutory partners are Essex County Council, Essex Police and five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the county.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (*Section 157 for Independent schools*) places a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the school.

In Essex, all professionals must work in accordance with the [SET Procedures \(ESCB, 2022\)](#)

3. Roles and Responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within schools, the Local Authority and other agencies who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names of those in our school with these specific responsibilities (the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding leads) are shown on the cover sheet of this document. However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play.

The governing body

The governing body has overall responsibility for safeguarding in our school. It ensures that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective and comply with the law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.

The governor for safeguarding arrangements is named on the front cover of this document. This governor takes strategic responsibility at governing body level for safeguarding arrangements in our school taking a 'whole-school approach to this. The governing body ensures there is a named designated safeguarding lead and at least one deputy safeguarding lead in place (also named on the front cover).

The governing body ensures the school engages with statutory safeguarding partners and contributes to multi-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. It ensures that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The governing body ensures that all adults in our school (including governors) who work with children undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction and that it is then regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The governing body ensures our pupils are taught about safeguarding (including online safety) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. We teach our children how to keep themselves safe and we work in accordance with statutory guidance to help children recognise and respond to risk and to prevent them from coming to harm. We comply with government regulations which make the subjects of Relationships

Education (for primary age pupils) and Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary age pupils) and Health Education mandatory. These elements are incorporated within the school Personal, Social, Health, Education programme (PSHE).

The governing body has specific duties around online safety and ensures we have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place to keep our child safe online.

The governing body and school leadership team are responsible for ensuring the school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. It adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and has recruitment and selection procedures in place (see the school's 'Safer Recruitment' policy for further information). It ensures that volunteers are appropriately supervised in school.

The Principal

The Teachers' Standards 2012 state that teachers should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. The Principal adheres to the Headteacher Standards 2020 and works in accordance with all statutory requirements for safeguarding and is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the governing body are followed by all staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in school has ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Their role includes managing child protection referrals, working with other agencies, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained and raising awareness of all safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. They ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of these procedures and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for other staff (on child protection matters) and ensure that timely referrals to Essex Children's Social Care (Children and Families Hub) are made in accordance with current SET procedures. They work with the local authority and the ESCB as required and ensure that information is shared appropriately.

The DSL is supported within the safeguarding team by deputy designated safeguarding leads who are trained to the same level. If for any reason the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable, the deputy designated leads are able to act in their absence.

Staff

All Staff in our school have a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment in which our children can learn.

St Mary's recognises that, because of the day-to-day contact with children, school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school will therefore:

- Create a culture of vigilance where the welfare of our pupils is promoted and where timely and appropriate safeguarding action is taken
- Establish and maintain an environment in which children feel safe, secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to enabling children to learn
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if

worried or are in difficulty

- Be sensitive that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected and they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. (This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and therefore they should continue to speak to the DSL/DDSL if concerned about a child.)
- Encourage all staff to exercise professional curiosity and know that spotting what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection
- Ensure pupils receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating
- Encourage staff to act immediately if they have a concern about a child
- Give children time if they wish to talk to a member of staff, be sensitive and supportive to their needs, listening carefully, reflecting back, using the child's own language
- Include opportunities in the curriculum, specifically through Relationships Education (Lower School) and Relationships and Sex Education (Senior School), computing and IT for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse and to know who they should turn to for help
- Include in the curriculum material which will help pupils develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life, particularly with regard to childcare and parenting skills
- Protect children from harm and to ensure that they are taught in a way that is consistent with the law and our values and to promote respect for all others
- Facilitate understanding of wider issues within the context of learning about the values on which our society is founded and our system of democratic government
- Provide a curriculum which actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Promote tolerance of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations
- Make parents/carers aware of the school policies and practice for safeguarding and ensure that, wherever possible, every effort will be made to establish open and honest effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from partner agencies
- Regularly remind staff (training and policy) that if staff have a safeguarding concern or allegation about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers or contractors) that does not meet the harm threshold, then this should be shared in accordance with the school or college low-level concerns policy.

'Safeguarding' is broader than 'child protection'. As well as protecting pupils from harm, 'safeguarding' widens the responsibility to preventing harm and promoting the welfare of children. It is recognised that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils includes:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that 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

4. Assessing Need and Early Help

Where a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, action will be taken to protect that child by making a referral to children's social care (and if appropriate the police) immediately. Action will also be taken to promote the welfare of a child who may benefit from early help, even if they are not suffering harm or at immediate risk. Therefore, **all** staff must be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help. The school recognises the importance of children receiving the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating, the importance of acting on and referring the early signs of abuse and neglect, keeping clear records, listening to the views of the child, reassessing concerns when situations do not improve, sharing information quickly and challenging inaction. In the first instance staff should discuss early help requirements with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff may also be required to support other agencies and professionals in their early help assessment.

Staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has an identified 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
- has experience multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- has a parent or carer in custody, 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 Female Genital Mutilation or Forced marriage
- is a privately fostered child

Children in Need and Child Protection Plans

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children act 1989.

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. They may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The local authority should share the fact a child has a social worker, and the designated safeguarding lead should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both the local authority and school to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquires under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Such enquiries enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and must be initiated where there are concerns about maltreatment. This includes all forms of abuse and neglect, female genital mutilation, or other so-called 'honour'- based abuse, forced marriage and extra-familial harms like radicalisation and sexual exploitation.

5. Referrals

Any staff member or visitor to the school must refer any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy designated safeguarding lead using the school safeguarding reporting system MyConcern. Any staff or trusted adults who do not have an account must contact the DSL (team) in person regarding their concern, see appendix 7. Where there is risk of immediate harm, the DSL or a member of the DSL team will refer by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via the Essex Effective Support portal. Staff must report their concerns to the DSL/DDSL using the school MyConcern reporting procedure. The school may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern, if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and/or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents/carers.

6. Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse, neglect and exploitation. All staff are aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. If staff are unsure, they should always speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

All school staff know that abuse, neglect, exploitation and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple

harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, and radicalisation.

Technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse will take place concurrently via online channels and in daily life. Children can also abuse their peers online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content.

Indicators of abuse and neglect

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) describes abuse in the following way:

Abuse: 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. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including what they see, hear or experience its effects. 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.

Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or 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: 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 in so far 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 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 a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

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

Please note: there is a legal requirement that anyone in regulated activity relating to children in England, must report if they know a child is being sexually abused.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Signs of abuse:

Interpreting behaviour is not an exact science. However, being alert to the behaviour of children and adults can provide extremely important information, which in context may alert one to children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos can be signs that children are at risk. Additional factors that might alert us to the possibility that a child is at risk can also be seen below. All staff are aware of the signs and symptoms. However, indicators alone rarely confirm that a child is being abused. This will require further discussion and assessment. The factors below are not designed to be exhaustive, but to provide an aide-memoire that should enable staff and the Designated Safeguarding Lead to make informed decisions.

Possible signs and symptoms of physical abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Chronic running away

Possible signs of emotional abuse:

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb sucking)
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Scavenging for food and clothes

Possible signs of sexual abuse:

- Hints about secrets they cannot tell
- Ask if you will keep a secret if they tell you something
- Begin lying, stealing, blatantly cheating in the hope of being caught
- Have unexplained sources of money
- Start wetting themselves
- Stop enjoying previously liked activities
- Be reluctant to undress for gym
- Exhibit sudden inexplicable changes in behaviour, such as becoming aggressive or withdrawn, have outbursts of anger or irritability
- Become fearful of or refuse to see certain adults for no apparent reason
- Act in a sexual way inappropriate to their age, be inappropriately seductive
- Draw sexually explicit pictures depicting scenes of abuse
- Have chronic ailments, such as stomach pains or headaches
- Become severely depressed, even attempt suicide
- Have a poor self-image, self-mutilate, show self-hatred
- Continually run away
- Regress to younger behaviour, such as thumb-sucking, surrounding themselves with previously discarded toys
- Show discomfort when walking
- Saying that they are no good, dirty, rotten
- Be wary, watchful, withdrawn, isolated or excessively worried
- Repeat obscene words or phrases which may have been said during the abuse
- Attempt to sexually abuse another child
- Talk or write about sexual matters
- Find excuse not to go home
- Use drugs or drink to excess
- Have unexplained pregnancies
- Experience memory loss
- Become anorexic or bulimic
- Not allowed to go out on dates or have friends round
- Assume the role of parents in the house to such an extent that they do all the cooking, cleaning, childminding and are taking care of everyone's needs other than their own

- Have soreness/bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat
- Have a recurring nightmare/be afraid of the dark
- Be unable to concentrate, seem to be in world of their own
- Have a “friend who has a problem” and then tell you about the abuse of this friend
- Sexually abuse a child, sibling or friend
- Exhibit a sudden change in school/work habits, become truant

Possible signs of neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)
- No social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Scavenging for food and clothes

All staff are aware of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos, can be signs that children are at risk.

Specific Safeguarding Areas

7. Serious violence

All staff are aware of the risk factors and indications which may signal that children are at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal network or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

8. Child-on-child abuse

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as child-on-child abuse and can take many forms.

Our school may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children at risk of, or who have suffered harm. Nevertheless, whilst at school, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant, or they may instead be withdrawn, or display abusive behaviours towards other children. Our school recognises that some children may abuse their peers and that this may happen in school, or outside of it. Any incidents of child-on-child abuse will be managed in

the same way as any other child protection concern and will follow the same procedures. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as appropriate.

It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports. This can include (but is not limited to) abuse within intimate partner relationships; bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying); abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers; 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 and or videos 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; upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals (challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group.)

Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. At St Mary's School, we do not tolerate any harmful behaviour and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. We use assemblies and lessons to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what makes them feel uncomfortable and will encourage them to tell a trusted adult if concerned. The school will ensure that pupils understand that abuse is abuse and will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor that they are creating a problem by doing so.

9. Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. It can also occur online.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable.

It is essential that **all** victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim

ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBTQ children are at greater risk.

Whilst not intending to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include;

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone 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 nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, 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 (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

Staff should

- challenge inappropriate behaviours such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Staff should not dismiss or tolerate such behaviours as they may risk normalising them
- make clear that sexual violence and harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, and it should never be 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

The initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. Further information can be found when making a report in Appendix 3.

Any reports made in school to staff should be addressed immediately in conjunction with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

10. Bullying/Cyberbullying

To allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under safeguarding children procedures. All incidences of bullying, including cyberbullying, will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying policy. All incidents must be properly recorded on MyConcern.

If a cyberbullying incident is reported to a member of staff they must:

- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone
- Make sure the child knows not to retaliate or return the message
- Help the child to keep relevant evidence for any investigation (e.g. by not deleting messages they've received, and by taking screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online cyberbullying instances).

The school will take steps to identify the bully, including looking at the school systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police if necessary. The police will need to be involved to enable the service provider to look into the data of another user.

11. Online Safety (further guidance can be found in the school's ICT Online Safety Policy)

All members of staff are aware of the risks to children online and we seek to help children keep themselves safe online in a range of ways. Staff are trained in and receive regular updates in online safety and recognising reporting concerns through MyConcern.

Online safety will be a running and interrelated theme when devising and implementing policies and procedures. This will include considering how online safety is reflected in all relevant policies and whilst planning the curriculum, any teacher training, the role of the DSL and any parental engagement.

The Whole School's ICT Online Safety policy recognises that Internet safety is a whole school responsibility, involving staff, pupils and parents with appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place.

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. The school adopts a whole school approach to online safety to protect and educate pupils and staff in their use of technology, and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns as appropriate.

Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place. However, they are careful not to 'over block' as this will lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regard to online teaching and safeguarding. To support school to meet this duty, the school has regard to the DfE published [filtering and monitoring](#) standards. The school uses E2BN for filtering purposes and Securly for monitoring.

We recognise that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but we recognise it also presents challenges and risks. Any pupil can be vulnerable online, and their vulnerability can fluctuate depending on their age, developmental stage and personal circumstances.

We want to equip our pupils with the knowledge needed to make the best use of the internet and technology in a safe, considered and respectful way, so they are able to reap the benefits of the online world.

The four main areas of online risk could be categorised as:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example, pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, or radicalisation or extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories
- Contact: being exposed to harmful online interaction with other users, for example, peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images, and online bullying); and
- Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams. If staff feel that either they or pupils are at risk this should be reported to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

These issues are addressed within the curriculum, in the PSHE and ICT programme and in assemblies. Parents will also be invited to attend talks on e-safety. The latest resources which can be used are:

- Education for a connected world framework
- The UK Safer Internet Centre (www.saferinternet.org.uk)
- CEOP's Thinkuknow website (www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

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

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Whilst the age of the child may be a contributing factor for an imbalance of power, there are a range of other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, learning difficulties, communication ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Some of the following can be indicators of both child criminal and sexual exploitation where children:

- Appear with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions;
- Associate with other children involved in exploitation;
- Suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Misuse drugs and alcohol;

- Go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- Regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Children who have been exploited will need additional support to help maintain them in education.

CSE 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.

Some additional specific indicators that may be present in CSE are children who:

- have older boyfriends or girlfriends; and
- suffer from sexually transmitted infections, display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development or become pregnant.

13. County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'.

This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK – no specific distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims.

Children can be recruited into county lines in a number of locations including schools. Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home
- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing

We need to be mindful that County Lines and exploitation is ever evolving and that more girls are being groomed from affluent backgrounds.

14. Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs.

Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the NRM is available in the Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance. Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

15. Cybercrime

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen offline but are enabled at scale and at speed online) or 'cyber-dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer). Cyber-dependent crimes include:

- unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a school's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded
- denial of service (Dos or DDos) attacks or 'booting'. These are attempts to make a computer, network or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources; and
- making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above

Children with particular skill in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime.

If there are concerns about a child in this area, the DSL (or a deputy), should consider referring into the Cyber Choices programme. This is a nationwide police programme supported by the Home Office and led by the National Crime Agency, working with regional and local policing. It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests.

Note that Cyber Choices does not currently cover 'cyber-enabled' crime such as fraud, purchasing of illegal drugs online and child sexual abuse and exploitation, nor other areas of concern such as online bullying or general online safety.

Additional advice can be found at [Cyber Choices](#), ['NSPCC – When to call the Police'](#) and [National Cyber Security Centre – NCSC.GOV.UK](#)

16. Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or

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

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or who have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual;
- financial; or
- emotional

We work with other key partners and will share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue for a child or family or be placing a child at risk of harm.

Additional advice on identifying children who are affected by domestic abuse and how they can be helped is available at:

[NSPCC](#)- UK domestic-abuse Signs Symptoms Effects

[Refuge what is domestic violence/effects of domestic violence on children](#)

[Safelives](#): young people and domestic abuse.

[Domestic abuse](#): specialist sources of support - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (includes information for adult victims, young people facing abuse in their own relationships and parents experiencing child to parent violence/abuse)

[Home](#) : Operation Encompass (includes information for schools on the impact of domestic abuse on children)

Operation Encompass

[Operation Encompass](#) operates in all police forces across England. It helps police and schools work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. The system ensures that when police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult (usually the DSL) in school before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This ensures that the school has up to date relevant information about the child's circumstances and can enable immediate support to be put in place, according to the child's needs. Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, the police and/or schools should make a referral to children's social care if they are concerned about a child's welfare. More information about the scheme and how schools can become involved is available in the Operation Encompass website. Any information in relation to this will be held on the pupils' child protection file, along with other safeguarding information.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Refuge runs the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, which can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which a safe time from the team for a call can be booked.

17. 'Honour Based' Abuse (-including FGM and Forced Marriage)

So called 'honour based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involved a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. If any staff are in doubt, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

If a member of staff is concerned about a child that might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy). They will activate local safeguarding procedures using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care.

18. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Some cultural communities perceive that this is a cultural norm, or that it is appropriate for religious reasons. We are aware that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity will always be shown when approaching the subject. We will always challenge such abusive cultural norms as the welfare of the child is always paramount. We recognise that FGM is not endorsed as a religious practice. It is illegal in the UK to subject any child to FGM or to take a child abroad to undergo FGM. We follow our local safeguarding board procedures since any such child is at risk of significant harm through physical and emotional abuse. It may also be considered as sexual abuse. We are alert to indicators such as a known community who practice FGM, talk of a long holiday, excused swimming and PE on return for no apparent reason, the child may confide about a special ceremony, mother may have been known to have undergone FGM, sister may have been known to have undergone the same procedure. Any disclosure will be notified to our designated lead without delay so that the appropriate referrals can be made and protective measures put into place through the intervention of the police and children's social care services, following our local safeguarding board procedures and national protocols.

As of October 2015, the serious Crime Act (Home Office, 2015) introduced a duty on teachers (and other professionals) to notify the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl

under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils, but the same definition of what is meant by 'to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out' is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Teachers must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should also still consider and discuss any such case with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and involve children's social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in reaction to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is aged 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures.

19. Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning difficulties, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into a marriage, they must report it to the designated safeguarding lead.

In addition, since February 2023 it has been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose it is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

Further advice can be sought from the Forced Marriage Unit 020 7008 0151.

20. Radicalisation and Extremism (prevention of)

Children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation into terrorism. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk is part of the schools safeguarding approach.

As of July 2015, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG,2015) placed a new duty on schools and other education providers. Under section 26 of the Act, schools are required in the exercise to their function, to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This duty is known as the Prevent duty. Staff complete online Prevent training as part of their induction programme and then update it every 3 years.

It requires schools to:

- teach a broad and balance curriculum which promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and must promote community cohesion
- be safe spaces in which children/young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and the extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology, and learn how to challenge these ideas
- be mindful of their existing duties to forbid political indoctrination and secure a balanced presentation of political issues

CHANNEL is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referral are assessed and may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are at risk of being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the school may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual will be required to provide their consent before any support delivered through the programme is provided.

We will consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of the child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting those who are currently receiving support through the Channel programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

St Mary's School operates in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate. Where we have concerns about extremism or radicalisation, we will seek advice from appropriate agencies and, if necessary, refer to Social Care and/or the Channel Panel.

21. Children Missing (Persistently Absent) from Education

At St Mary's we will have regard to the statutory guidance as stated in the DfE publication 'Children Missing in Education: September 2016'.

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. We recognise that good attendance begins with our school being somewhere our children want to be, and also that some children find it harder to attend school for a range of reasons. We will always try to understand underlying reasons for absence and will work collaboratively with other partners to support children to attend school and to ensure that they receive the right help at the right time.

A child being absent from an education setting, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation – particularly county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risk of a child going missing in the future. Staff should treat prolonged or repeated absence or particular patterns of absence, with no satisfactory explanation, as a potential safeguarding issue and take action accordingly. For further procedures please refer to

Appendix 6.

Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where this does not happen, we will attempt contact with parents (parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, to enable us to communicate with someone if we need to). Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency ([Education Access Team](#), Social Care or Police). Our school must inform the local authority of any pupil who has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the local authority (where the pupil is resident) when a pupil's name is going to be deleted from the admissions register on certain grounds e.g.

- Home education
- Family has apparently moved away and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered
- Pupil has been certified as medically unfit to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age
- Child is in custody for more than 4 months due to a final court order and the school does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of the end of that period or,
- Pupil has been permanently excluded

The Local Authority will also be informed if the school has not been informed of the new school when a pupil leaves.

To ensure that parents can be contacted at all times, the school will hold two or more contact details per pupil.

22. Looked After Children

St. Mary's has regard for the statutory guidance of Promoting the Education of Looked After and Previously Looked After Children (Feb 2018)

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. At St Mary's it is our duty to keep looked after children safe. Staff will be informed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead any information they need in relation to a child's looked after status (whether they are looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and also have information about the child's care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her. The Designated Safeguarding Lead holds the details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child.

A previously looked after child potentially remains vulnerable and all staff need to ensure that these children are kept safe. When dealing with looked after children and previously looked after children, it is important that all agencies work together and prompt action is taken when necessary to safeguard these children, who are a particularly vulnerable group.

23. Children with special educational needs and disabilities

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. As a school we recognise that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This 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 than other children
- Children with SEN and disabilities can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying – without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in school or the consequences of doing so

24. Supporting Children

Children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness through the curriculum specifically through PSHEE and Computing and IT, as well as promoting respectful relationships, challenging bullying and humiliating behaviour
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will ensure that pupils know that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Children's Social Care Services, Emotional well-being and mental health service (EWMHS), Education Welfare Service and Educational Psychology Service and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children
- The use of Early Help Services, through the Children and Families Hub, when appropriate; Notifying Children's Social Care Services immediately there is a significant concern
- Providing continuing support to a pupil about whom there have been concerns who leaves the school by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded under confidential cover to the pupil's new school

25. Children who are lesbian, gay, bi or gender questioning etc (LGBQ)

Children who are LGBQ can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBQ (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBQ.

Staff will endeavour to support these children and will provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns.

LGBQ inclusion forms part of the Statutory Relationships Education and Relationship and Sex

26. Promoting positive mental health and resilience in school

Staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance and progress at school. Where we have concerns, this may impact on mental health, we will seek advice and work with other agencies as appropriate to support a child and ensure they receive the help they need.

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community, and we recognise that schools play a key part in this. Our school aims to develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of all pupils and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors which increase someone's vulnerability and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency. The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counterbalance and promote further growth of resilience.

Only appropriately trained professional should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff, however, are well placed to observe children day to day and identify those whose behaviour suggest that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents to support the well-being of our pupils. Parents should share any concerns about the well-being of their child with school, so appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

Mental Health First Aiders in school

Senior School

Natalie Crewe (Senior Mental Health Lead)

Kate Kiernan

Marina Mitchell

Rebecca Doe

Lucille Long

Lower School

Denise Adamson

Emma Stanhope

27. Interagency working

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any child protection conference called for children on the school roll or previously known to them. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions at the conference.

If a child is subject to a Child Protection or a Child in Need plan, the designated safeguarding lead will ensure the child is monitored regarding their school attendance, emotional well-being, academic progress, welfare and presentation. If the school is part of the core group, the designated safeguarding lead will ensure the school is represented, provides appropriate information and contributes to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the Child Protection plan and / or the child's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of significant harm. In this case the designated safeguarding lead will inform the child's key worker immediately and then record that they have done so and the actions agreed.

28. Training including Staff Induction

When staff and volunteers join St Mary's they will be informed of the safeguarding children arrangements in place. This policy will be referred to and they will be told who the Designated Safeguarding Lead in each part of the school is, and who acts in their absence.

All staff, new including temporary staff and volunteers, will receive induction in Safeguarding Children. The induction programme will include:

- The school's child protection policy, including the procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse
- Online safety (to include an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring)
- The pupil behaviour policy
- The pupil anti-bullying policy
- The staff Code of Conduct, IT acceptable use policy as well as the whistleblowing procedure
- The safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
- The role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies)
- A copy of Part 1 and Part 5 of KCSIE and Annex B and D for all school leaders and staff (those who work directly and indirectly with children)

All staff will be kept informed regarding any changes to KCSIE as necessary via email, e-bulletins or at staff meetings. This will include online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles, and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring. This is to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

All staff will receive training in child protection and safe working practice, in line with advice

from the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB). The Designated Safeguarding Leads will receive updated Child Protection Training, Level 3, at least every two years this covers inter-agency working, participation in child protection case conferences, supporting children in need, identifying children at risk of radicalisation, record keeping and promoting a culture of listening to children.

All staff take part in Prevent awareness training in order to equip them to identify pupils at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas. This will also help staff to protect pupils from the risk of Radicalisation as referred to in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and Prevent Duty.

29. Staff Code of Conduct

All teaching and support staff including volunteers and supply staff must adhere to the School's Code of Conduct which can be found in section 1 of the Staff Handbook. A copy can be made available to parents/carers upon request.

Please note that it is an offence for a person aged 18 or over, such as a teacher to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 (or is enrolled at the school) where that person in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if, in the case of those over 16, the relationship is consensual.

30. Record Keeping and Information sharing

The school uses the MyConcern system for recording any safeguarding/child protection concerns. Staff are therefore required to access the system when required and ensure that any tasks are followed up. It is important to note that all staff are responsible for the safeguarding of pupils and therefore if a member of staff has a concern it must be recorded accordingly. All staff must be vigilant and stay curious to ensure that pupils get the right support when needed.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, are recorded in writing in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

This is essential to ensure pupils receive the right help at the right time.

Records should include;

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern;
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved;
- A note of an action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse from a child or noticing signs or symptoms of possible abuse, should make notes as soon as possible (within the hour, if possible) writing down exactly what was said, using the child's own words as far as possible.

Child protection records are kept securely using the platform MyConcern and are transferred in a safe and timely manner. In line with statutory guidance, when a pupil transfers to another school/educational setting (including college), child protection records will be marked 'confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to us if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school and then destroy any

copies held in our school. Where a pupil joins our school, we will request child protection records from the previous school, within 5 days of the pupil joining us.

All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school or educational setting.

When a child moves school, in addition to handing over the child protection file securely, Designated Safeguarding Leads will also share information to the new educational establishment to ensure there is support in place when the child arrives and ensure key staff, such as the SENCO are aware of any additional needs.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will maintain and regularly audit the school's child protection records and ensure that a detailed chronology of events is noted.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human right concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about information sharing cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

We recognise that all matters relating to Child Protection are confidential.

The Principal or Designated Safeguarding Lead will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets.

31. Communication with Parents

We recognise that good communication with parents is crucial in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively.

We will always undertake appropriate discussion with parents prior to involvement of another agency unless there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm. We will ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibilities placed on the school and staff to safeguard children and their duty to co-operate with other agencies in this respect.

32. Supporting Staff and Supervision of Staff

We recognise that staff working in the school who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and

upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the relevant Designated Lead and to seek further support such as counselling or regular supervision, as appropriate. We will enable supervision for the Designated Safeguarding Lead through network meetings, direct consultation with the Senior Advisor or advanced social work practitioners in order to promote best practice and challenge unsatisfactory or poor practice.

In order to reduce the risk of allegations being made against staff and ensure that staff are competent, confident and safe to work with children, they will be made aware of safer working practice guidance and will be given opportunities in training to develop their understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour.

33. Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff

The school has a written recruitment policy statement and procedures linking explicitly to this policy. The statement is included in all job advertisements, publicity material, recruitment websites, and candidate information packs. Please refer to the separate Recruitment, Selection and Disclosures Policy and Procedure which can be found in the staff handbook, section 1. Please note that as part of the shortlisting process, online searches are carried out as part of the school's due diligence. This may help identify any incidents or issues that have happened, and are publicly available online as these may need to be explored with the applicant at interview,

34. Allegations against Staff

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct. The school works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET procedures (ESCB, 2025) in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity).

There are two levels of allegation/concern

- Allegations that may meet the harms threshold
- Allegations/concerns that do not meet the harms threshold – referred to as 'low level concerns'

Meeting Threshold of harm allegations

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Principal (or the Vice Principal in their absence).

As is also documented in the Staff Code of Conduct there may be times where staff may need to self-report concerns about themselves as well as concerns about others. These may include aspects of their private lives.

If an allegation is made against the Principal, this must be reported to the Chair of Governors (or Safeguarding Governor in their absence) without informing the Principal. The Chair of Governors (or Safeguarding Governor in their absence) **must** inform the duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the Children's Workforce Allegations Management Team on 03330 139797 without the Principal's knowledge. All unnecessary delays to the process should be eradicated. LADO will be contacted within one working day of all allegations that come to the school's attention or that are made directly to the police.

If a member of staff is reported to a designated person other than the Principal, the Principal must at all times be kept informed.

The school will not undertake any investigation.

In all cases of an allegation being made against a member of staff (including the DSL), supply staff or a volunteer, the school will immediately contact the LADO (03330 139797) within one working day to discuss the allegation, consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action including any involvement of the Police. Discussions will be recorded in writing, and communication with both the individual and the parents of the child/children agreed. Due weight to the views of the LADO and the Policy will be taken when making decision about suspension. This is in accordance with the SET procedures (ESCB, 2025).

Supply staff employed by an employment agency will be fully involved in any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or children's social services.

In borderline cases informal discussions with the LADO may take place without naming the school or individual.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be informed of any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used for regulated activity and the DBS referral criteria are met, that is, they have caused harm or posed a risk of harm to a child.

Ceasing to use a person's services includes: dismissal, non-renewal of a fixed term contract, no longer engaging/refusing to engage a supply teacher provided by an employment agency, terminating the placement of a student teacher or other trainee, no longer using staff employed by contractors, no longer using volunteers, resignation or voluntary withdrawal from supply teaching, contract working, a course of initial teacher training, or volunteering. Reports will include as much evidence about the circumstances of the case as possible. "Compromise Agreements or Settlement Agreements" cannot apply in this connection, or where the individual refuses to co-operate with an investigation.

The Teaching and Regulation Agency (TRA) will be contacted where a teacher has been dismissed (or would have been dismissed had he/she not resigned).

Where a dismissal does not reach the threshold for DBS referral separate consideration will be given to a TRA referral. Further guidance can be found in Teacher misconduct: the prohibition of teachers (October 2015)

St Mary's School will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity. In the event of an allegation made against a member of staff, the school is aware of its legal obligations to do its utmost to protect the anonymity of the member of staff during the investigation stage. This legislation is to protect staff in the event that an allegation is found to be unfounded or malicious.

35. Low Level Concerns

Safeguarding concerns which do not meet the harm threshold are referred to as a low-level concern. KCSiE 2025 highlights the following for all staff in Part 1, Para 71.

"If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers or contractors) that does not meet the harm threshold, then this should be shared in accordance with the school or college low-level concerns policy. Further details can be found in Part four of this guidance." (KCSiE 2025)

At St Mary's we want to create a culture in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately. If implemented correctly, this should create an open and transparent culture; allow the school to identify concerning, problematic and inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the school are clear about the professional boundaries as set out within the staff code of conduct, and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the school. Low-level concerns may also indicate that a member of staff is in need of support. This can include their mental health and wellbeing.

Any low-level concerns should be shared with the Principal or Head of Senior or Lower School. If it is referred to the DSL in the first instance, the Principal or Head of Senior or Lower School should be informed as soon as possible.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold could include; being over friendly with pupils, having favourites or engaging with a pupil on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area, behind a closed door, inappropriate shouting at a child or ridiculing a child. The list is not exhaustive. Please refer to KCSiE part 4.

Staff are encouraged to consent to be named when sharing low-level concerns, as this will help to create a culture of openness and transparency. If the staff member who raises the low-level concern does not wish to be named, the school will respect that person's wishes as far as possible. However, there may be circumstances where the staff member will need to be named (for example, where the raised concern may need to be escalated or is part of a pattern of other concerns raised or where a disclosure is required by a court or local authority, or under a fair disciplinary process) and, for this reason, the school will not promise anonymity to member of staff who share low-level concerns.

Occasionally a member of staff may find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others. Equally, a member of staff may, for whatever reason, have behaved in a manner which, on reflection, they consider falls below

the standard set out in the Staff Code of Conduct. Self-reporting in these circumstances can be positive for a number of reasons, and staff are encouraged to self-report. An example of this could be when driving a school minibus and going through a red-light putting children at risk or changing gear and a hand slipping onto the child's lap awkwardly.

Low-level concerns do need to be recorded (see appendix 4) and submitted to the Principal or Head of Senior/Lower School. A series of actions will then take place which could include (in no particular order); speak to the person who raised the concern, speak to any witnesses, no further action required, seek advice from the LADO. All internal and external conversations will be documented, and decisions of any outcomes will be recorded so that patterns can be monitored and acted upon. For further information please refer to Appendix 5 where a detailed flow chart of actions is documented.

36. Whistleblowing

All members of staff and the wider school community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the school leadership team. We have 'whistleblowing' procedures in place, and these are available in the school Whistleblowing Policy (section 1 of staff handbook). However, for any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, or where they feel their concerns have not been addressed, they may contact the [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/whistleblowing/) on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm Monday to Friday) or by email at: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline on: 0808 800 5000 (24 hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

37. Complaint or Concerns expressed by Pupils, Parents, Staff or Volunteers

We recognise that listening to children is an important and essential part of safeguarding them against abuse and neglect. To this end any expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child will be listened to and acted upon in order to safeguard his/her welfare.

We will also seek to ensure that the child or adult that makes the complaint is informed not only about the action the school will take but also be given an indication of the length of time that will be required to resolve the complaint. The school will endeavour to keep the child or adult regularly informed as to the progress of his/her complaint. The school's Complaints Policy is readily available.

38. Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is illegal in all circumstances. It should never be used or threatened as a punishment. Corporal punishment is defined as any intentional application of force for the purpose of punishment, which would constitute battery. This does not preclude the use of force in certain situations, where force is not being used as a disciplinary sanction but to prevent personal injury or damage to property.

This statement applies to all 'members of staff' both on and off the school site including those acting in loco parentis, such as unpaid, volunteer supervisors.

39. Positive Physical Intervention (See Use of Force in Behaviour Policy)

The school's statement on positive handling acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury or damage to property, or themselves.

The school understands that physical intervention of a nature that causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under safeguarding or disciplinary procedures.

A record of all incidents will be maintained by the Heads of the Lower and Senior Schools.

The school recognises that touch is appropriate in the context of working with children and all staff are given 'safe working practice guidance' to ensure that they are clear about their professional boundaries.

40. Abuse of Trust

We recognise that as adults working in the school we are in a relationship of trust with the pupils in our care and acknowledge that it could be a criminal offence to abuse that trust.

We acknowledge that the principle of equality embedded in the legislation of the Sexual Offenders Act 2003 applies irrespective of sexual orientation.

We recognise that the legislation is intended to protect young people in education who are over the age of consent but under 18 years of age.

41. Health and Safety

The school's Health and Safety policy reflects the consideration we give to the safeguarding of our children both within the school environment and when undertaking school trips and visits.

42. Photography and use of images

The welfare and protection of children is paramount, and consideration should always be given to whether the use of photography will place children at risk. Images may be used to harm children, for example as a preliminary to 'grooming' or by displaying them inappropriately on the internet, particularly social networking sites.

The safe and appropriate taking, using and storage of images is outlined in the school's Taking, Storing and Using Images Policy and the Acceptable Use Agreement.

Staff should be very clear that personal devices should not be used to take images or videos of pupils.

43. Safe Environment

The school undertakes appropriate risk assessments and checks in respect of all equipment and of the building and grounds in line with local and national guidance and regulations concerning health and safety.

The school has adequate security arrangements in place in respect of the use of its grounds and buildings by visitors both in and out of school hours.

44. Early Years and later years (under-8's) childcare – Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (Sept 2018) Staff

Staff within these years will be subject to safeguarding checks including a requirement to confirm that they are not disqualified from providing childcare under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009 and if required, complete a signed Staff Suitability Declaration form stating that they are not disqualified from providing childcare under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009.

We will remind staff regularly of their duty to disclose relevant information with reference to the above act.

45. Mobile Technology (also refer to ICT e-safety policy)

Staff working within the EYFS must not use mobile phones whilst they are working with the children except in the case of an emergency.

When taking photographs of the children within the EYFS, only school cameras or iPads may be used.

46. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

47. Contacts

Internal:

Nicola Griffiths (Principal)	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Kate Kiernan (Assistant Head Safeguarding & Pupil Wellbeing)	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Natalie Crewe (Assistant Head Pastoral & Pupil Development)	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Victoria Wilson	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Emma Stanhope (Vice Principal)	Designated Safeguarding Lead EYFS
Denise Adamson (Assistant Head of Lower School Pastoral)	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Kate Abbott	Governor responsible for Safeguarding
TBC	Deputy Governor responsible for Safeguarding
Anthony Bell	Chair of Governors
(Contact details via clerk@stmaryscolchester.org.uk)	

Essex

External:

Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Safeguarding Board
Colchester Local Office
Children and Families Hub (Essex Social Care)
Essex House

200 The Crescent
Colchester Business Park
Colchester CO4 9YQ

(Opening hours 8.45 – 17.30 Mon-Thurs. 8.45 – 16.30 Fri)	0345 603 7627
Out of Hours	0345 606 1212
Essex Duty LADO - Childs Workforce Allegation Team	0333 013 9797
Children and Families Hub	0345 603 7627
Emotional well-being and mental health service (EWMHS)	0300 300 1600 (office hours)
Out of office hours/weekend	0300 555 1201

Seeking Advice from **Suffolk**

If concerned about the safety or well-being of a vulnerable child or adult at risk of abuse please contact:

MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Professional Consultation line 0134 606 1499

Child Protection

LADO	0300 123 2044
Customer First Freephone	0808 800 4005
Emergency Duty Service	0808 800 4005
Suffolk Police Main Switchboard	01473 613500

NSPCC – Childline 0800 1111/Help for adults concerned about a child 0808 800 5000

NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline 0800 028 0285 email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre 0870 000 3344

counter.extremism@education.gov.uk 020 7340 7264

Anti-terrorist hotline 0800 789 321

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead. ANNEX C: KCSiE

KCSiE requires staff to have knowledge of the Role of The Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take **lead responsibility** for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place).

The ultimate lead responsibility for child protection remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead; this lead responsibility should **not** be delegated.

Deputy designated safeguarding leads

Any deputies are trained to be the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead and the role is explicit in their job description. Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, remains with the designated safeguarding lead.

Availability

During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) should always be available (during school hours) for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools, working the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to define what 'available' means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone or Skype or other such mediums is acceptable.

It is a matter for individual schools and the Designated Safeguarding Lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

Manage referrals

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to refer cases:

- of suspected abuse and neglect to the local authority children's social care as required and support staff who make referrals to local authority children's social care
- to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required and support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme
- where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required; and
- where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. NPCC – when to call the police should help understand when to consider calling the police and what to expect when working with the police.

Working with others

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners
- Liaise with the Principal to inform her of issues especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations; This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult. Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - PACE Code C 2019.

- As required, liaise with the 'case manager' (as per part four) and the local designated officer(s) (LADO) for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member)
- Liaise with staff (especially teachers, pastoral support staff, IT technicians and SENCOs and Senior Mental Health Leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding and welfare (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children's needs are considered holistically
- Liaise with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the Mental Health Support Team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health
- Promote supportive engagement with parents/ and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances
- Work with the Principal and relevant strategic leads, taking responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement and achievement at school. This includes:
 - Ensuring that the school knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; and
 - Supporting teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.

Information sharing and managing the child protection file

The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date.

Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child.

Records should include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

They should ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or content within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice as set out in Part one and Part two of this guidance.

Where children leave the school (including for in-year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Receiving schools and colleges should

ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEND in colleges, are aware as required.

Lack of information about their circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. In addition to the child protection file, the designated safeguarding lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue to support victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Raising Awareness

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff
- Ensure the school's child protection policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly; and work with governing bodies regarding this
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest policies on local safeguarding arrangements; and
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children, including children with a social worker, are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school leadership staff.

Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any deputies) should undertake Prevent awareness training.

Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and responds to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care, so they:

- Understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements
- Have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so

- Understand the importance of the role the designated safeguarding lead has in providing information and support to children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes
- Are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers
- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and with the three safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners
- Understand and support the school with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from risk of radicalisation
- Are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school
- Can recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and Radicalisation and are confident they have the capability so support SEND children to stay safe online
- Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses; and
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school may put in place to protect them

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other Designated Safeguarding Leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, but at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

Providing support to staff

Training should support the designated safeguarding lead in developing expertise, so they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This includes specifically to:

- Ensure that staff are supported during the referrals processes; and
- Support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.

Understanding the views of children

It is important that children feel heard and understood. Therefore, designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:

- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school may put in place to protect them; and

- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Holding and sharing information

The critical importance of recording, holding, using and sharing information effectively is set out in Parts one, two and five of KCSIE, Sept 2024, and therefore the designated safeguarding lead should be equipped to:

- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school, and with other schools and colleges on transfer including in-year and between primary and secondary education, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners
- Understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR); and

Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as LA children's social care or the Prevent program etc.

Managing a Disclosure

All victims should be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. A victim should never be made to feel ashamed for making a report. It is important that staff (trusted adult) explains to the child that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them. This should be shared with the child in a way that avoids alarming or distressing them ie age appropriate.

Teachers and other staff in schools are in a unique position to observe children's behaviour over time and often develop close and trusting relationships with pupils. If a child discloses directly to a member of staff, the following advice to staff will be followed:

- Listen carefully to what is said. Allow the pace of the conversation to be dictated by the pupil
- Ask only open questions such as:
 "Could you please tell me what happened?"
 "Please explain what you mean when you say...?"
 "Can you describe the person? Or can you describe the place?"
- Accept what the pupil says and do not ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, eg "Did your dad hit you?"
- Do not force the child to repeat what he/she said in front of another person
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Do not begin an investigation – Do not ask the child to record what happened in writing or take a photograph of any injuries. Note carefully any visible signs of injury or neglect and record on MyConcern
- Reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing, that it is not their fault, and explain that you will need to tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead and why
- Report immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead and complete on MyConcern as soon after the disclosure as possible and in any case within 24 hours, using the child's words as far as possible. Use body maps to record any observed injuries. Note staff must only view parts of a child's body which are normally visible
- Where a child discloses safeguarding allegations against another pupil in the same setting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should refer to the local procedure on the ECSB website and seek advice before commencing its own investigation or contacting parents

Managing reports of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

All victims should be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. A victim should never be made to feel ashamed for making a report. It is important that staff (trusted adult) explains to the child that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them. This should be shared with the child in a way that avoids alarming or distressing them ie age appropriate.

What is sexual violence and sexual harassment?

Sexual violence

It is important that staff at St. Mary's are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way and that it can happen both inside and outside of school. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences and the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (Schools should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence of s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an Activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Further information about consent can be found here: [Rape Crisis England & Wales – Sexual consent](#).

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- The age of consent is 16;
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

Sexual harassment

When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual "jokes" or taunting
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.¹ It may include consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. As set out in [UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#) (which provides detailed advice for schools and colleges) taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence
- sharing of unwanted explicit content;
- upskirting (is a criminal offence)
- sexualised online bullying;
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats;

Upskirting

The Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. 'Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and/or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any sex can be a victim.

The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment

The initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the school responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward. Schools not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying of some behaviours

can actually lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

If staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they should follow the referral process as set out from in Part 1 of KCSiE. As is always the case, if staff are in any doubt as to what to do they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy).

A child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be **anyone** on the school staff. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child.

- If possible, manage the report with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the designated safeguarding lead or deputy)
- Do not promise confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (e.g. with Designated Safeguarding Lead or children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to
- Listen carefully to the child, being non-judgemental, being clear about the boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc
- Consider the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the disclosure and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made and recorded as soon as possible on MyConcern
- Only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. Schools should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation
- Where the report includes an online element, being aware of searching screening and confiscation advice and UKCCIS sexting advice. The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child.
- Inform the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), as soon as possible, if the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is not involved in the initial report.

Risk Assessment

Following a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other victims
- The alleged perpetrator
- All the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer

The risk assessments will be recorded (written or electronic) and will be kept under review. At all times, school will actively consider the risks posed to all their pupils and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe.

The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will ensure that they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required.

Please note: The wishes of the victim of how they wish to proceed will be considered. Victims will be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support they will be offered.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will then lead on the actions which need to be considered

- How the victim wishes to proceed. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will be balanced with the school's duty and responsibilities to protect other children.
- The nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed
- The ages of the children involved
- The developmental stages of the children involved
- Any power imbalance between the children. For example, is/are the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature, confident and well-known social standing? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- If the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature)
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between children
- Importance of understanding intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school staff, and
- Other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

In all cases of concern over a child, all staff should act in the best interests of the child. Immediate consideration will be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).

Toolkits

- [Childnet](#) - STAR SEND Toolkit equips, enables and empowers educators with the knowledge they need to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- [Childnet](#) - Just a joke? provides lesson plans, activities, a quiz and teaching guide designed to explore problematic online sexual behaviour with 9-12 year olds.
- [Childnet](#) - Step Up, Speak Up a practical campaign toolkit that addresses the issue of online sexual harassment amongst young people aged 13-17 years old.
- [Preventing Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#) toolkit by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, the toolkit contains links to useful information, resources and support, including practical tips to prevent HSB.
- [NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework](#) An evidence-informed framework for children and young people displaying HSB. [Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals](#) - Schools levers for addressing HSB in schools.

Low-Level Concerns Form

Please use this form to share any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the School's Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and
- does not meet the allegation threshold, or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

You should provide a concise record – including brief context in which the low-level concern arose, and details which are chronological, and as precise and accurate as possible – of any such concern and relevant incident(s) (and please use a separate sheet if necessary).

The record should be signed, timed and dated.

Details of concern

Name of staff member:	Department & role:
Signed:	Time & date:

Received by:

At (time):

On (date):

Action taken (specify):

Signed:

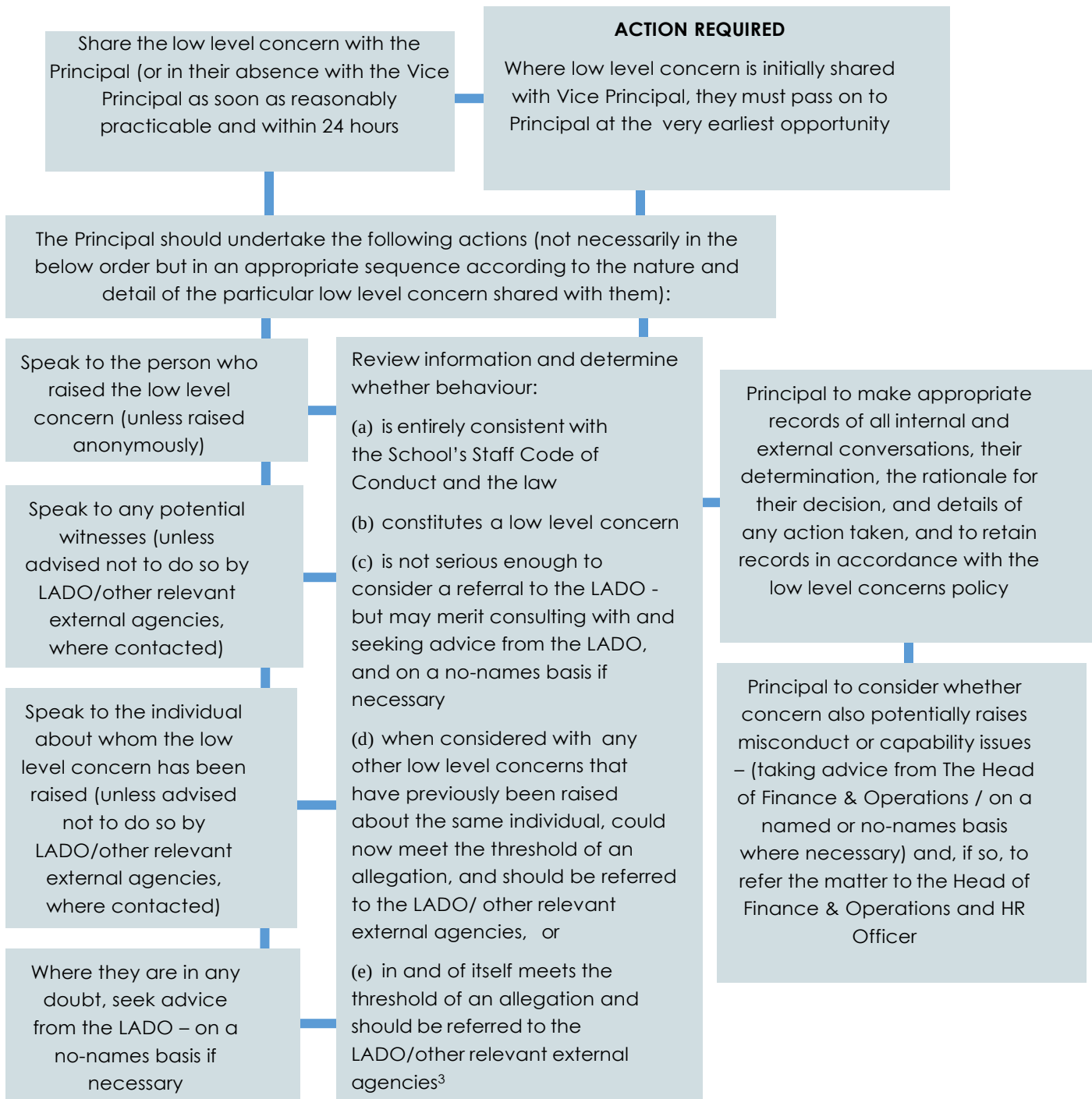
Time & date:

This record will be held securely in accordance with the School's Low-Level Concerns Policy. Please note that low-level concerns will be treated in confidence as far as possible, but the School may in certain circumstances be subject to legal reporting requirements or other legal obligations to share information with appropriate persons, including legal claims and formal investigations.

Sharing Low Level Concerns – Action Required By Staff, Principal, Vice Principal

If a member of staff has an allegation that may meet the harm threshold – they should follow the procedure in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

If a member of staff has what they **believe** to be a concern that does not meet the harm threshold – i.e. LLC – they should take the below action





Appendix 6: Missing Child Procedure

Arrangements for children who go missing during the school day

Definition of Missing

The definition of missing use in Essex is 'anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and is or her well-being confirmed.'

(College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance)

1.Introduction

A child going missing could be a 'one off' incident that, following investigation, does not need further work. However, multiple episodes of children who go missing can be an indicator of wider concerns (for example: exploitation, difficult home lives or poor mental health).

This guidance sets out the procedure to follow when a child goes missing from school

Missing children are among the most vulnerable in our community. Sometimes children go missing from educational settings, when this occurs, it is important that action is taken quickly to address this, and in line with local procedures.

This document should be read in conjunction with the educational setting's Child Protection Policy, and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock child Protection Procedures (SET procedures).

At St Mary's School a child going 'missing' will be treated like any other child protection concern and action will be taken accordingly, e.g. by contacting parents/carers, the Children and Families Hub consultation line, and in an emergency, the priority line or the police. It may also be appropriate for school to use the Early Help Procedures (including holding a Team Around the Family meeting) to address the issues and prevent escalation. Advice will always be sought by the school and concerns escalated if there is no improvement.

Education setting staff may be asked to attend strategy meetings for a missing child and should prioritise attendance at these meetings. Where children missing frequently are open to Children's Social Care, a Missing Prevention Plan may be in place. Where this is the case, school may be set actions as part of the Missing Preventions Plan and school would be provided with a copy if consent from the family has been provided.

2. When a child goes missing

When it is suspected that a child is missing from school it must be addressed immediately. Active steps to locate the child will be taken, e.g. searching the school premises and surrounding areas, contacting the child via phone, text and social media (age dependant), and contacting their parents/carers. If none of these actions locate the child, then they must

be reported missing to the Police by dialling 101, or 999 if there is a belief that the child is immediately suffering significant harm. It is important that the police are informed of any checks already completed as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks set by the police to locate the child.

Staff at school must inform the child's parents/carers that the child has been reported missing. Where there is a Social Worker allocated to the child, they should also be informed.

After a child has been reported missing, any further information should be communicated to the police by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number that the police would have provided following the initial report. Further information must be passed to the police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the child until informed of their return.

3. When the child is found

If the child is found by a member of school staff, or if the child returns to the premises of their own accord, the police must be notified immediately by dialling 101 or 999 if the matter is an emergency. It is important that this action is prioritised, as the child will remain classified as a missing person until seen by the police.

4. Essex Police

On receiving a report of a missing child. Essex Police will classify the child as missing and will respond on the level of risk involved.

Essex police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police. On these occasions the parents/carers can assist by reporting to officers their observations on the child's return, eg did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance, etc. The setting may also be able to contribute to this process and should provide the police with any relevant information or observations.

Each child that returns from missing will be offered a 'missing chat' (an independent return from missing interview) by a person not involved in their care. This will be facilitated by the Local Authority with responsibility for the child. Missing chats are offered to all children from Essex who go missing.

Useful contacts:

Shane Thomson, ECC Missing Co-ordinator: shane.thomson@essex.gov.uk

Lucy Stovell, ECC Missing Chats: lucy.stovell@essex.gov.uk



Appendix 7 : MyConcern Mitigations

Rationale and procedures for reporting where MyConcern is not used

Job Role	Rationale for not reporting via My Concern	Reporting procedure
Midday assistants (Lower School)	Midday assistants in the lower school report to either of the DDLS on site immediately after any incident.	Report directly to the DSL/DDSL. Contact number for the DSL/DDSL can be found on the front of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
Peripatetics	Peripatetic's do not have school email addresses to access the system, and it is usual practice for them to report directly to the safeguarding team.	Report directly to the DSL/DDSL. Contact number for the DSL/DDSL can be found on the front of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
Kindergarten staff	It is usual for all concerns to be raised with the Kindergarten manager due to the age of the children. In her absence the Deputy manager will report using MyConcern.	Report any concerns to Kindergarten manager or deputy manager who will report via MyConcern