

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

REVIEWED/APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: September 2026

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: September 2027

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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, trainee teachers, 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 2026) (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 (updated 2026)
- 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, 2026)
- Essex Effective Support
- [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' \(ESCB, 2026\)](#)

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 One and Part Five of KCSIE 2026. Those members of staff who work directly with children are also required to read Annex A.

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. Staff may make a direct referral to Children's Social Care if they believe a child is at risk of harm and should always inform the DSL where possible.

2. Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2026\)](#) 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.

Throughout this policy, the term '**data protection laws**' refers collectively to the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), **and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025**.

In Essex, all professionals must work in accordance with the SET Procedures (ESCB, 2026)

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.

Governors receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and regular updates thereafter so they can fulfil their strategic safeguarding responsibilities.

The governor responsible for safeguarding is named on the front cover of this document. They hold strategic responsibility for safeguarding arrangements at governing body level and promote a whole-school approach to safeguarding. The governing body ensures that a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and at least one deputy designated safeguarding lead are appointed and in post; these individuals are 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 ensures the school promotes an inclusive, anti-discriminatory culture as part of its safeguarding responsibilities. This includes challenging racism, faith-targeted abuse, misogyny, misandry and all forms of discrimination. Staff are expected to recognise that prejudice-based harm constitutes safeguarding harm in its own right and to respond accordingly.

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 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 maintains oversight of safeguarding records, filtering and monitoring concerns, attendance-related safeguarding concerns and multi-agency working.

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.

Availability and cover arrangements

During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school hours) for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

DSL cover arrangements

When the DSL is unavailable due to illness, leave or other circumstances, Deputy DSLs are available to ensure safeguarding concerns are received, monitored and acted upon without delay. An on-call rota operates during term time after school hours and holiday periods.

Reporting safeguarding concerns:

- **Staff** report concerns via MyConcern
- **Parents/carers** can report concerns via the safeguarding inbox on St Mary's App or by contacting the school office.

If neither the DSL nor a DDSL is available and there is an immediate risk of harm, staff should contact Children's Social Care or Police directly and inform the DSL at the earliest opportunity.

Staff

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

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.

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).
- **Promote an inclusive, anti-discriminatory culture** that challenges racism, faith-based prejudice, misogyny, misandry and all forms of discrimination as part of the school's safeguarding approach.
- 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 (through training and policy updates) to report all safeguarding concerns and allegations about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers or contractors), using either the LADO referral process (for concerns meeting the harm threshold) or the school's low-level concerns policy (for concerns below this threshold).

‘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, Early Help

The school recognises that there are two levels of early help:

- **Universal services and community-based early help** - support available to all families in the community
- **Targeted early help ('Family Help')** - more intensive, coordinated support for families with multiple or complex needs

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 (family help). The school recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that children may require different levels of support at different times.

Community-based Early Help provides support for children and families as soon as concerns emerge, helping to prevent difficulties from escalating. This may involve support from school staff or universal services working with families to address emerging needs and improve outcomes.

Where a child or family requires more coordinated or intensive support, a referral may be made for **targeted Early Help (Family Help)**. This involves a multi-agency approach, bringing together relevant professionals to assess need, develop a plan of support and coordinate interventions to improve the child's welfare and reduce identified risks.

All staff should be alert to the early signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation, emotional wellbeing concerns, attendance difficulties, or other vulnerabilities that may indicate a child would benefit from Early Help. In the first instance, staff should discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL. Staff may also be required to contribute to assessments, attend meetings, and work alongside other agencies as part of an Early Help or Family Help plan.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, **significant harm**, the welfare and safety of the child will be the school's immediate priority. The DSL (or deputy) will make a referral to Children's Social Care without delay and, where appropriate, contact the police. Any member of staff may make a referral directly if they believe a child is at immediate risk of harm and should inform the DSL as soon as possible thereafter.

The school recognises the importance of children receiving the right help at the right time. Staff will act on concerns promptly, maintain accurate and contemporaneous

records, listen to and take account of the views and wishes of the child, share information appropriately, reassess concerns where circumstances do not improve, and challenge inaction where this is not in the best interests of the child.

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

- is unborn
- is bereaved
- 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 experiencing persistent absence or severe absence
- 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 6. 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.

If staff feel that appropriate action has not been taken following a safeguarding concern, they must speak with the DSL, Principal or another senior leader and may make a direct referral themselves where necessary.

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, exploitation and modern slavery 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, modern slavery 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 – including physical, sexual, emotional abuse and stalking), criminal exploitation (including financial 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/misandrist messages, the non-consensual making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence), 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

All staff should be aware of indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and modern slavery. Children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of school, at home, and online.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. 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 where 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. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

Prejudice-based harm and faith-targeted abuse

All staff must recognise that racism, faith-based prejudice, misogyny, misandry and other forms of discrimination constitute harm in their own right and require a safeguarding response. **Racism and faith-targeted abuse can significantly affect a child's welfare, wellbeing and sense of safety.** These behaviours may manifest through verbal abuse, exclusion, physical violence, or online harassment. Staff should not dismiss or downplay discriminatory behaviour and must report all concerns through the school's safeguarding procedures.

The Four Categories of Abuse

Physical abuse may involve:

- Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning or suffocating
- Causing physical harm when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment causing severe adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet another person's needs
- Verbal abuse such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views or deliberately silencing them
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person
- Serious bullying (including cyberbullying) causing children to feel frightened or in danger

- Exploitation or corruption of children

Sexual abuse involves forcing, causing or inciting a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This may include:

- Physical contact: assault by penetration (rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts (masturbation, kissing, rubbing, touching outside clothing)
- Non-contact activities: involving children in looking at or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse
- Online abuse: sexual abuse can take place online and technology can facilitate offline abuse.

Children are more likely to know their abuser than not. A child under the age of 13 can never legally consent to any sexual activity.

Note: Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adult males or females, and by other children

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of health or development. This may include:

- During pregnancy: maternal substance abuse
- After birth: failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter; failing to protect from physical and emotional harm or danger; inadequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

7. Serious Violence

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

All staff are aware of the risk factors and indicators that may suggest a child is at risk of, or involved in, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or associations with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in educational performance, signs of self-harm or deterioration in emotional wellbeing, or signs of assault and unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts, money, or new possessions may also indicate that a child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks, gangs, or other forms of criminal exploitation.

Staff should report any concerns about a child carrying or using a weapon, or expressing an intention to do so, to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL

immediately. The DSL will assess the risk to the individual pupil and to others within the school, taking account of any wider safeguarding information or concerns. Appropriate action will then be taken, which may include the implementation of a safety and support plan, referrals to external agencies, and measures to reduce risk and de-escalate peer conflict where appropriate.

8. Child-on-Child Abuse (including harassment and violence)

Our school may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children at risk of, or who have suffered harm. The school recognises that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding concern for both the child who has experienced harm and the child alleged to have caused harm. Both may require assessment, support and intervention. 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.

Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

Sexual abuse exists on a continuum, starting from harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), through to sexual harassment, and escalating to sexual violence. All instances should be responded to with the same safeguarding principles and considered within a child protection context.

It is crucial to understand that:

- Harmful sexual behaviour can escalate if not addressed early
- What may appear as low-level inappropriate behaviour can be an early indicator of more serious concerns
- Early intervention is essential to prevent escalation
- All behaviours on this continuum require a safeguarding response, though the nature of that response will vary depending on the circumstances

8a. Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse can include (but is not limited to):

- **Discriminatory behaviour, including racism, faith-targeted abuse, misogyny, misandry and other forms of prejudice-based harm.**
- **Bullying** (including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying)
- **Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers** – sometimes known as teenager relationship abuse
- **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 making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes)**
- **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 (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- **Initiation/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)

Our Response to All Forms of Child-on-Child Abuse

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.

Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny, an unsafe environment for children and in

worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

8b. Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Harmful sexual behaviour refers to sexual behaviours expressed by children that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or be abusive towards another child or adult.

Staff need to be aware of the importance of understanding the continuum of sexual behaviours, from those that are within the range of normal sexual development, through to those that are concerning, problematic, or abusive.

Indicators of HSB may include:

- Sexualised language or behaviour that is inappropriate for the child's age or developmental stage
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge for age
- Sexually explicit drawings or writing
- Attempting to expose others to sexual content
- Inappropriate touching of self or others
- Coercing or manipulating other children into sexual activity

Our response to HSB:

- We will respond to all instances of HSB with a safeguarding approach
- We will consider the context, including the child's age, developmental stage, and any additional vulnerabilities
- We will work with parents/carers and external agencies to provide appropriate support and intervention
- We will ensure that both the child displaying HSB and any children affected receive appropriate support
- We recognise that children displaying HSB may themselves have experienced abuse or trauma

Staff should refer to NSPCC resources on typical stages of sexual development to help them identify when behaviour falls outside of normal developmental expectations.

9. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children

Understanding Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

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

9a. Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003:

- **Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if they intentionally penetrate the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with their 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 they intentionally penetrate the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of their 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 if they intentionally touch another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (A single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent can constitute sexual assault)
- **Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent:** This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party

Understanding Consent

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if they agree by choice to that penetration and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent to sexual activity may be given

to one sort of sexual activity but not another. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.

Important:

- 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
- Submission is not the same as consent – a child may submit to sexual activity because they feel they have no choice, but this does not mean they have consented

9b. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline, both inside and outside of school. It 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.

Examples include:

- Sexual comments, telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance
- Sexual "jokes" or taunting
- Physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes
- Online sexual harassment, including making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes)
- Sharing of unwanted explicit content
- Upskirting (taking a picture under a person's clothing without permission - this is a criminal offence)
- Sexualised online bullying
- Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media

Our Response to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

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.

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.

The school will make clear that sexual violence and harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up. We 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.

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

For detailed procedures on managing disclosures and reports

10. Bullying/Cyberbullying

Staff must not allow or condone bullying. All incidents of bullying are safeguarding concerns and must be dealt with appropriately. 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).

Note: Staff must never view, copy, print, share or store any images involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes). If evidence includes such images, the device should be confiscated and handed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without viewing the content.

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

(This section should be read in conjunction with 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 and 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 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.

Making or Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes (including AI-generated images)

For the purposes of this policy, the term '**making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes**' refers to the creation, sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images by young people under the age of 18. The term '**images**' includes all visual content, such as photographs, videos and livestreams.

Images may be taken by the child themselves (sometimes referred to as 'self-generated imagery'), taken or created by another person, or digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence, including what are sometimes described as 'deepfakes' or 'deep nudes'.

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes require a safeguarding response, whether they are consensual or non-consensual. This includes images that have been created or altered using AI technology.

Consensual image sharing, especially between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive – but children still need to know it is illegal – whilst non-consensual sharing is illegal and abusive.

Safeguarding Concerns and Reporting via Mobile Devices

Certain types of online conduct via mobile phones, smart devices and tablets, such as malicious communications, bullying or harassment may be classified as criminal conduct/illegal activity. The school takes such conduct very seriously and will take the appropriate safeguarding actions, which may include contacting the police.

Where a pupil wishes to report online safety concerns or safeguarding issues that have occurred via mobile phones or online platforms, they will be permitted to access their device (under staff supervision) to provide evidence or information. **However, staff must not view or forward illegal images of a child. If a pupil reports that their device contains images of child sexual abuse (including nudes or semi-nudes of children, including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes), the device should be confiscated immediately and handed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without staff viewing the content.**

Staff should never:

- View, copy, print, share or store any images involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes).
- Ask a child to show them such images.
- Forward or share such images.

If a disclosure involves illegal images, staff should:

- Confiscate the device immediately without viewing the content.
- Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Complete a safeguarding report on MyConcern.
- Preserve the device securely for potential police investigation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the school's child protection procedures and guidance from UKCIS (UK Council for Internet Safety) on 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'.

Pupils should understand that they can report concerns to staff and will be supported to do so. They will not be in trouble for reporting concerns, even if the content on their device violates school rules, as their safety is the priority.

Filtering and Monitoring

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. The school is careful not to 'over block', as this would lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regard to online teaching and safeguarding. To support the 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.

Annual Review of Filtering and Monitoring Systems

The school will review the effectiveness of its filtering and monitoring systems **at least once every academic year**. These reviews will be carried out by the **Vice Principal** with support from the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** and **IT support staff**.

The annual review will consider:

- Whether the filtering and monitoring systems are operating effectively
- Whether there have been any instances of inappropriate content not being filtered
- Whether there have been any instances of appropriate content being over-blocked
- Feedback from staff and pupils about the effectiveness of the systems
- Emerging risks related to generative AI and whether current systems adequately address these risks
- Any changes needed to improve the systems
- Compliance with the DfE filtering and monitoring standards

Records of these reviews will be maintained and stored securely. A summary of the review findings will be reported to the governing body annually.

The school will also review its filtering and monitoring systems whenever there is a significant incident or concern, or when there are changes to the school's IT infrastructure or online safety risks.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for:

- Reporting any concerns about inappropriate online content or behaviour immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Following the school's acceptable use policies

- Being vigilant about pupils' online activity and reporting any concerns

IT staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining and updating the filtering and monitoring systems
- Providing technical support for the annual review
- Reporting any technical issues or breaches to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- Overseeing the school's approach to online safety
- Ensuring that filtering and monitoring concerns are addressed promptly
- Supporting the annual review process
- Ensuring that staff are trained in online safety

Online Risks

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 are:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example, pornography, racism, misogyny/misandry, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation or extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories
- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or AI applications that simulate this; 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 including those generated using AI and online bullying.
- **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)

Mobile Phone Policy

St Mary's operates a **mobile phone-free environment** during the school day. All pupils are prohibited from using mobile phones and other smart technology throughout the school day, including during lessons, movement between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes. Mobile phones and devices capable of connecting to a mobile network must not be seen or heard at any time during the school day.

Devices Covered by This Policy Include:

- Mobile phones (including smartphones)
- Smartwatches and fitness trackers with messaging, notification, or communication capabilities
- Tablets with mobile phone network connectivity (when not being used as part of an approved educational activity)
- Any other device with the ability to send/receive notifications or messages via mobile phone networks, or the ability to record audio and/or video

Storage and Access

Pupils may bring mobile phones to school for safety purposes when travelling to and from school. However, upon arrival at school, all mobile phones and smart devices must be switched off and handed in to form tutors. Pupils must not access these devices at any point during the school day unless explicitly authorised by a member of staff for a specific educational or welfare purpose.

Lower School pupils must not bring mobile phones or smart devices into school.

Parental Contact During the School Day

Parents who need to contact their child during the school day should contact the school office. Staff will relay messages and facilitate contact as appropriate.

Exceptions and Reasonable Adjustments

The school recognises its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage to disabled pupils. In exceptional

circumstances, individual pupils may be permitted to access their mobile phone or smart device during the school day where:

- **Medical needs:** The device is necessary to manage a medical condition (e.g. continuous glucose monitoring for diabetes, epilepsy alerts)
- **Disability-related needs:** The device provides essential support related to a pupil's disability
- **Individual circumstances:** Other exceptional circumstances exist (e.g. young carers, specific family situations requiring immediate contact)

Process for exceptions: Parents/carers must make a written request to the Principal/Vice Principal, explaining the specific need. The request will be assessed on its individual merits. Where approved, a clear agreement will be established outlining the specific purpose, when and where the device may be accessed, any supervision or monitoring arrangements, and review arrangements.

Any misuse of devices by pupils with approved exceptions will be addressed through the school's behaviour policy and may result in the exception being reviewed or withdrawn.

Consequences for Mobile Phone/Smart Devices Misuse

If a pupil is found to be using a mobile phone or smart device, or if a device is heard ringing or vibrating in a pupil's bag or locker, it will be confiscated by the member of staff in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. The confiscated phone will be taken to the school office for secure storage. Full details of the consequences and procedures are set out in the school's behaviour policy.

Staff Use of Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

Staff working within the EYFS must ensure that personal mobile phones and other personal devices are not used in the presence of children and are stored safely in accordance with school procedures. Personal devices should only be accessed during authorised breaks and in areas where children are not present, except in an emergency.

When taking photographs or recording images of children, only school-authorised devices, such as school cameras or iPads, may be used. Images must be stored and managed in accordance with the school's data protection and safeguarding procedures.

All staff are expected to use personal mobile phones and devices responsibly and professionally. Personal devices must not be used whilst teaching, supervising pupils, or undertaking duties where children are present, except in an emergency. Staff may access personal devices during authorised breaks in staff-only areas and should follow the guidance set out in the Staff Code of Conduct regarding their appropriate use.

Generative AI

The school recognises the emerging risks and opportunities associated with generative AI. Staff should be aware that:

- Generative AI can be used to create harmful content, including deepfake images
- Pupils may use AI tools inappropriately or without understanding the risks
- AI-generated content may be difficult to identify

The school will provide guidance and training to staff and pupils on the safe and appropriate use of generative AI, and will consider these risks as part of the annual review of filtering and monitoring systems.

This will include:

- Understanding how AI can be used to create harmful content, including deepfake images
- Recognising AI-generated content
- The ethical and safeguarding implications of AI use
- How to report concerns about AI-generated harmful content

These risks will be addressed within the curriculum through RSHE and computing lessons, and will be considered as part of the annual review of filtering and monitoring systems.

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

What are CSE and 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. This may be 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.

Both CSE and CCE may involve financial exploitation of the child. Staff should also be aware that children may be at risk of modern slavery and financial exploitation, which are distinct but related forms of exploitation. CSE and CCE can affect children of any gender and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Staff should also be aware that children may be at risk of **modern slavery**, which is a distinct but related form of exploitation.

Understanding vulnerability

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.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Recognising children as victims

Children involved in criminal exploitation must be recognised and treated as victims, even if they commit crimes themselves. This is particularly important for older children, whose vulnerability may not be immediately recognised by adults.

Even where criminal activity appears consensual, children may still have been criminally exploited through coercion, manipulation or taking advantage of their vulnerability.

Common forms of CCE

Staff should be aware that common forms of CCE include:

- Drug trafficking (including through county lines)
- Working in cannabis factories
- Shoplifting or pickpocketing
- Vehicle crime
- Threatening or committing serious violence

Who is at risk

Any child can be at risk of exploitation, but certain factors can increase vulnerability, including special educational needs or disabilities, mental health difficulties, experience of abuse or trauma, family difficulties, disrupted education, being in care, and social isolation. Girls are at risk of CCE, although their experiences may differ from those of boys. Children may experience multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously, which can compound their risk.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

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.

Children may not recognise exploitation

Children affected by CSE may not realise they are being exploited. For example, they may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship with their abuser.

CSE may also occur without the child's knowledge, for example through the sharing of their images on social media.

Indicators of CSE and CCE

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
- Regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education

Additional indicators specific to CSE

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

- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Suffer from sexually transmitted infections, display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development or become pregnant

Our response

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

- Provide early, evidence-based support for children identified as being at risk of exploitation.
- Work with other agencies and professionals to ensure exploited children receive appropriate support.
- Treat all children involved in exploitation as victims who need safeguarding, regardless of any criminal activity they may have engaged in.
- Follow our safeguarding procedures and refer concerns to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) immediately.

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.

Indicators of modern slavery

Staff should be aware that children can be victims of modern slavery. Indicators may include:

- Appearing with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions
- Signs of physical abuse or neglect
- Withdrawn or appearing frightened
- Reluctance to seek help or interact with authorities

- Not in possession of their own identity documents
- Having limited freedom of movement
- Being unfamiliar with their local neighbourhood
- Having no access to their earnings
- Being subjected to financial exploitation, including being forced to work to pay off debts, having money or possessions taken from them, or being controlled through financial means

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The National Referral Mechanism is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of exploitation and modern slavery. When a child is referred into the NRM in England and Wales, they may also have access to an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG). ICTGs provide advocacy for children and help to promote and support their recovery.

School response

If staff have concerns that a child may be a victim of modern slavery, they should report this immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and make appropriate referrals to children's social care and/or the police.

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](#).

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

These activities constitute offences under the Computer Misuse Act 1990. The impact of cybercrime extends well beyond immediate financial losses and can include reputational damage, emotional harm, and wider safeguarding concerns.

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 is an information-sharing scheme between the police and relevant education settings operating in all police forces across England and Wales. **In November 2025, a new statutory duty was placed on the police to notify a child's education setting, and where relevant, local authorities, if they have reasonable grounds to believe a child may be a victim of domestic abuse.**

This includes all children connected to a household where police have attended a domestic abuse incident:

- Children who are physically present at the incident
- Children not physically present during the incident
- Children who might reside in another household temporarily or permanently

Operation Encompass reports that over 2,000 notifications are made to settings every day.

Purpose

Educational settings are often the only consistent support available to some children, especially for those who live in isolated or rural communities. The aim of the duty is to support education settings to provide timely, informed support to children affected by

domestic abuse, to ensure the school has up to date information about the child's circumstances and enable immediate support to be put in place according to the child's needs.

Important note: Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures or referrals and applies solely to domestic abuse incidents. Where appropriate, the police and/or schools should make a referral to local authority children's social care if they are concerned about a child's welfare.

Forces and educational settings should have an open communication process to determine where a safeguarding referral should be made in accordance with local thresholds. If an officer makes a referral alongside issuing an Operation Encompass notification, they should tell the child's education setting.

How it works at St Mary's

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) is the Key Adult for Operation Encompass notifications and will:

- Receive notifications from Essex Police when they attend a domestic abuse incident involving a child from our school
- Ensure appropriate support is put in place for the child
- Maintain confidentiality and store information securely in accordance with data protection laws
- Record information on the pupil's child protection file

The notification will include appropriate information about the incident to enable the school to provide informed support, while maintaining necessary confidentiality.

Support available

The Operation Encompass charity provides an advice and helpline service for all staff members from education settings who may be concerned about children who have experienced domestic abuse. The helpline is available from 8:00 to 13:00, Monday to Friday on 0204 513 9990 (charged at local rate).

More information about the scheme can be found at [Home: Operation Encompass](#).

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

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 receive regular updates as part of their ongoing safeguarding training.

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.

If any further or new information comes to light while a Channel referral is being assessed, this must be passed to the police.

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 5.

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.

21a. Safe and Well Checks (Home Visits)

Where a child has not attended school and we have been unable to make contact with parents/carers, the school may conduct a home visit to establish the child's whereabouts and safety.

All home visits will be:

- Conducted by two members of staff following a risk assessment
- Recorded on MyConcern with outcomes and next steps documented
- Followed by appropriate action, including referral to children's social care or police where safeguarding concerns are identified

If no one is home, staff will leave a card requesting urgent contact with the school and will consider referral to external agencies if safeguarding concerns exist.

21b. Children in Temporary Accommodation

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act places a new duty on local housing authorities in England to notify educational institutions, health visiting services and general medical practices when a child is placed in temporary accommodation. This notification will be made when consent has been given from the parent, those with parental responsibility or care of the child, or the child themselves in cases of 16–17-year-olds living independently from their parents.

Purpose of the notification

The notification will enable school staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children at the earliest opportunity and support them to improve their outcomes. Children in temporary accommodation may face additional challenges and vulnerabilities, and early awareness allows the school to put appropriate support in place.

School response

When St Mary's School receives a notification that a pupil has been placed in temporary accommodation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Record the information on the pupil's safeguarding file
- Consider what additional support the child may need

- Work with the family to understand their circumstances
- Liaise with relevant agencies as appropriate
- Monitor the child's attendance, wellbeing and academic progress

Important note

Whilst any discussion with the local housing authority should be progressed as appropriate, this notification does not, and should not, replace existing safeguarding and welfare duties nor a referral into local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Specific statutory guidance for local authorities on the temporary accommodation duty will be provided in due course.

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

23a. Children with Medical Conditions

St Mary's School recognises that children with medical conditions may face additional safeguarding challenges and vulnerabilities. Staff should be alert to the specific needs of children with medical conditions and understand how these may impact their wellbeing, behaviour, and ability to keep themselves safe.

The school will ensure appropriate support is in place for children with medical conditions, in line with statutory guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical needs and allergy safety guidance.

Where a child has a medical condition that may affect their safeguarding needs, this will be considered as part of any risk assessment and support planning."

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, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

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. Young Carers

St Mary's School recognises that young carers may face additional safeguarding challenges and vulnerabilities. Caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on a child's attendance, attainment, behaviour, and wellbeing.

Staff should be alert to the needs of young carers and understand the potential indicators that a child may have caring responsibilities, including:

- Frequent absences or lateness
- Tiredness or difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety about being away from home
- Taking on responsibilities beyond their years
- Limited time for social activities or homework

Early identification of young carers is essential to ensure they receive appropriate support. Where staff identify that a child may be a young carer, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will consider what support the child and family may need, including potential referral to early help services or young carers' support services."

26. 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 Education and Health Education curriculum.

26a. Gender Questioning and Social Transition

St Mary's School recognises that some children may question their gender identity during their time at school. We will approach any such matters with sensitivity, care and a child-centred approach, always prioritising the child's welfare and working in partnership with parents and carers.

The school will not initiate any action regarding social transition.

The school acknowledges that questions about gender identity are complex and that there is currently limited evidence about the long-term outcomes of social transition in childhood. We will therefore take a very careful approach to any requests relating to social transition, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the child and with full involvement of parents and carers.

As a school with primary-aged pupils (Kindergarten and Lower School), St Mary's will exercise particular caution when considering any requests relating to social transition for children in these year groups. The guidance states that support for full social transition in primary-aged children should be agreed **very rarely** and only after careful consideration of all relevant factors, including the child's age, understanding, and family circumstances.

Working in partnership with parents and carers

The school will not initiate or adopt any changes relating to a child's social transition without involving the child's parents or carers, except in exceptionally rare circumstances where this would put the child at significant risk of harm. In such exceptional cases, the school will seek advice from the Children and Families Hub and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult with appropriate agencies before taking any action.

Where a child requests support related to gender questioning or social transition, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- Listen to the child's wishes and feelings in a supportive and non-judgemental manner.
- Involve the child's parents or carers at the earliest opportunity.
- Work collaboratively with parents or carers to understand the child's needs and determine the most appropriate support.
- Consider whether a multi-agency approach is needed, involving appropriate professionals such as the school nurse, educational psychologist, or specialist services.
- Ensure that any decisions are made in the best interests of the child, taking into account their age, maturity, and understanding.

Recording biological sex

For safeguarding purposes, the school will continue to record a child's biological sex accurately in all relevant records, including:

- The school's management information system
- Medical records
- Safeguarding records
- Any records shared with external agencies

This is necessary to ensure that the school can fulfil its safeguarding duties and respond appropriately in emergency situations.

Single-sex facilities and activities

The school must not allow pupils into toilets, changing rooms, or showers designated for the opposite biological sex. **There are no exceptions to this requirement**, including where the school is responding to a request to support social transition for a child who is questioning their gender.

If a pupil who is questioning their gender does not want to use the facilities designated for their biological sex, the school will provide appropriate alternative arrangements that do not compromise the provision of single-sex facilities or the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of the child or any other children. Alternative arrangements may include:

- Use of accessible/disabled toilet facilities
- Adjusted changing arrangements for PE
- Consideration of timing to reduce anxiety

Physical Education and Sport:

As an all-girls school, PE lessons and competitive sport are delivered in single-sex groups based on biological sex. The school recognises that some sports may need to be played in single-sex groups from a certain age to ensure children's safety and fairness. Where safety and fairness require single-sex participation, **there are no exceptions**, including where the school is responding to a request to support social transition for a child who is questioning their gender.

Where the school participates in mixed-sex sporting activities or competitions (for example, in the Kindergarten or in external events), decisions about participation will be made in accordance with the rules of the relevant sporting bodies and with consideration of fairness and safety for all pupils. The school will work with parents and carers to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place.

Supporting children who are questioning their gender identity

The school will provide appropriate pastoral support to any child who is questioning their gender identity. This may include:

- Providing a safe space for the child to talk about their feelings
- Signposting to appropriate external support services for the child and their family
- Working with parents and carers to ensure consistent support at home and at school
- Monitoring the child's wellbeing and academic progress
- Addressing any bullying or negative behaviour from peers

Staff training and guidance

All staff will receive appropriate training to help them understand:

- How to respond sensitively and appropriately when a child raises questions about gender identity
- The importance of involving parents and carers
- The school's procedures for managing such situations
- The need to maintain confidentiality while ensuring appropriate information sharing for safeguarding purposes

Staff will be reminded that they should not make any commitments to a child about social transition or changes to how the child is addressed or treated in school without first involving the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the child's parents or carers.

Policy on social transition

The school will consider whether to develop a more detailed policy on social transition that explains the specific steps the school will take when a child requests support. Any such policy will be developed in consultation with parents, carers, staff, governors, and appropriate external agencies, and will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains appropriate and in line with current guidance.

Where the school does not have a separate policy on social transition, decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the principles set out in this section.

The school will keep a record of any alternative arrangements made, ensure they are communicated appropriately to relevant staff, and review them regularly to ensure they remain appropriate and in the best interests of the child.

27. 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.

Examples of mental health problems that may develop into safeguarding concerns include:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation and risk of suicide
- Eating disorders
- Substance misuse
- Anxiety and depression

Warning signs that staff should be alert to:

- Significant changes in behaviour
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical signs of self-harm
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Decline in academic performance
- Changes in eating habits
- Expressing feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness

Please note: not every child who exhibits the above behaviours is suicidal or has a mental health concern. However, staff are well placed to offer support and vital early intervention.

Where staff have concerns about a child's mental health, they should report these to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will consider whether the concern may indicate that the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation, and whether a referral to children's social care and/or other agencies is appropriate, in addition to any mental health support.

If staff feel that a child is in immediate danger:

- Call 999 if the child is in immediate danger
- Take the child to A&E if they require urgent medical attention
- Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately

The school will ensure that any mental health interventions offered are safe, effective and appropriate for the child's needs. Where the school has access to a Mental Health Support Team (MHST), staff should make use of this support.

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.

28. 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.

29. 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 staff will be informed of who the school DSL is and the DDSL's at each section of the school. All staff, new including temporary staff and volunteers, will receive induction in Safeguarding Children. The induction programme will include:

- The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy , including the procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse, including whistleblowing procedure
- 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
- 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)
- All staff and volunteers at St Mary's are required to read and understand Part One and Part five of KCSIE 2026. Staff who work directly with children also need to read Annex A. School leaders and governors should also read **Annex B** (the role of the designated safeguarding lead) and **Annex C** (summary of changes from KCSIE 2025).

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. Staff training will include awareness of both misogyny and misandry as safeguarding concerns that can affect children online and offline 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. All governors receive safeguarding updates at least annually.

30. 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 is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if, in the case of those over 16, the relationship is consensual.

Alignment with Behaviour Policy:

This safeguarding policy works in conjunction with the school's behaviour policy, which sets out:

- Detailed procedures for managing pupil behaviour, including consequences and sanctions
- The mobile phone policy and procedures for confiscation
- Procedures for the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions
- Recording and reporting requirements for behaviour incidents
- The approach to exclusions (internal and external)

All staff should be familiar with both policies and understand how they work together to keep children safe and promote positive behaviour.

31. 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.

When transferring child protection files, the exporting school (St Mary's) should include a summary setting out the current safeguarding concerns, relevant context, and any ongoing support needs. Staff will take particular care to distinguish between current safeguarding concerns and historic information to ensure past issues are presented with appropriate context.

It is the responsibility of the DSL of the new school to consider which information in a child protection file should be shared with relevant staff and when it is appropriate to do so.

Where information indicates a risk to others, for example where a pupil has previously carried, threatened with or used a knife or weapon, the receiving school is responsible for assessing the risk and putting in place a support plan for when the child arrives.

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 laws place 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.

32. 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.

33. 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.

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.

34. Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff

The school has a written recruitment policy statement and procedures linking explicitly to this policy. The school ensures that those involved in the recruitment and selection of staff have received appropriate safer recruitment training. Wherever possible, at least one member of the interview panel will have completed accredited safer recruitment training. 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.

Pre-employment checks

The school will undertake all appropriate pre-employment checks to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. This includes:

- Verifying identity
- Scrutinising application forms and employment histories, identifying any gaps in employment, inconsistencies or anomalies, and exploring these satisfactorily with the candidate before appointment
- Obtaining an enhanced DBS certificate (including barred list information where the person will be engaging in regulated activity)
- Verifying the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- Verifying the person's right to work in the UK
- Verifying professional qualifications, as appropriate
- Undertaking additional checks for candidates who have lived or worked overseas, including obtaining criminal record information from the relevant country or countries where available, and a letter of professional standing where appropriate.
- Checking that a person taking up a management position is not subject to a section 128 direction

- Obtaining references directly from referees, scrutinising them carefully and resolving any concerns, discrepancies, anomalies or vague statements before confirming an appointment.
- Where relevant to the role, checks relating to childcare disqualification will also be undertaken in accordance with the Childcare Act 2006 and associated regulations.

Online searches

As part of the shortlisting process, online searches are carried out on shortlisted candidates as part of the school's due diligence. This may help identify incidents or issues that have happened and are publicly available online which may need to be explored further with the applicant at interview. Any information identified through an online search will be risk assessed and considered objectively in accordance with relevant employment and data protection legislation.

Volunteers and regulated activity

The school carefully considers which roles constitute 'regulated activity' requiring enhanced DBS checks with barred list information.

Following changes introduced by the Crime and Policing Act 2026, the definition of regulated activity has been amended and the 'supervision exemption' has been removed.

A person is now in regulated activity if they:

- Teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children **frequently** (meaning more than three days in a 30-day period, or overnight)
- Provide personal care to children
- Work in a limited range of establishments ('specified places') with the opportunity for contact with children
- Engage in intimate or personal care, or overnight activity, even if this happens only once

Implications for St Mary's School:

The school will:

- Review all volunteer roles to determine whether they now constitute regulated activity under the updated definition
- Obtain enhanced DBS checks with barred list information for all volunteers who engage in regulated activity

- Ensure that any volunteers who do not require an enhanced DBS check are appropriately supervised at all times
- Maintain a Single Central Record that accurately reflects the checks undertaken for all staff and volunteers

Supervision of volunteers

Where volunteers are not engaging in regulated activity and therefore do not require an enhanced DBS check, the school will ensure that they are appropriately supervised.

Supervision will be:

- By a person who is in regulated activity
- Regular and ongoing
- Reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of children

The school will undertake a written risk assessment to determine the appropriate level of supervision required.

EYFS-specific requirements for volunteers

Where the school operates provision covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (Kindergarten), volunteers must not be permitted to begin working within EYFS settings until the school has received the volunteer's enhanced DBS certificate including barred list information. There are no exceptions to this requirement for EYFS settings

Agency and third-party staff

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

Contractors

The school will ensure that any contractor, or employee of a contractor, who is to work at the school has been subject to the appropriate level of DBS check. Contractors engaging in regulated activity will require an enhanced DBS check (including barred list information). For all other contractors who are likely to be perceived by children as a safe and trustworthy adult, the school will decide on the appropriate level of supervision and whether to obtain an enhanced DBS check (not including barred list information).

Under no circumstances will a contractor in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity.

Single Central Record

The school maintains a Single Central Record of all staff, supply staff, volunteers, governors, contractors and others who work in the school, in accordance with statutory requirements. The Single Central Record is reviewed and audited regularly by senior leaders and reported to governors to ensure ongoing compliance with safer recruitment requirements and statutory guidance.

35. 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) including trainee teachers.

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 (including trainee teachers) to a designated person other than the Principal, the Principal must be informed. The Principal will then consider whether an onward referral to LADO is required.

The school will not undertake any investigation.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff (including the DSL), trainee teachers, supply staff or a volunteer that meets the harm threshold, 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 will be taken when making decisions about suspension. This is in accordance with the SET procedures (ESCB, 2026).

Agencies should be fully involved and co-operate with any enquiries from the LADO, police and/or local authority children's social care. The school or college will usually take the lead on handling allegations to ensure that all appropriate action is taken. This is because agencies do not have direct access to children or other school or college staff and are therefore unable to gather the facts when an allegation is made or hold all the relevant information required by the LADO as part of the referral process. Supply teachers, whilst not employed by the school or college, are under the supervision, direction and control of the governing body or proprietor when working in the school or college. They should be advised to contact their trade union representative if they have one, or a colleague for support. The allegations management meeting, which is often arranged by the LADO, should address issues such as information sharing, to ensure that any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency or agencies are considered by the school or college during the investigation. 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.

36. Low Level Concerns (Professional Conduct Reflection)

Safeguarding concerns which do not meet the harm threshold are referred to as low-level concerns. If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation about another member of staff (including supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers or contractors) that does not meet the harm threshold, then this should be shared in accordance with the school or college's low-level concerns policy.

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 Vice Principal. If it is referred to the DSL in the first instance, the Principal or Vice Principal should be informed as soon as possible.

A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of

conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold could include: being over friendly with pupils, having favourites, taking photographs of children on their mobile phone contrary to school policy, engaging with a pupil on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area, behind a closed door, inappropriate shouting at a child or humiliating 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 3 Professional Conduct Reflection Form (Low-Level Concern) – Fill out form) and submitted to the Principal or Vice Principal. 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 4 where a detailed flow chart of actions is documented

37. 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/keeping-children-safe/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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. Positive Physical Intervention and Use of Reasonable Force (read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy)

St Mary's is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive and respectful environment for all pupils and staff. The School aims to minimise the need for restrictive interventions through positive behaviour management, early intervention and de-escalation.

The school's behaviour policy sets out the full framework for the use of reasonable force and restrictive interventions. This includes:

- When and how reasonable force may be used
- Prohibited practices
- The use of seclusion as a non-disciplinary safety measure

- Recording and reporting requirements
- Support for pupils and staff following incidents

Key principles:

Restrictive interventions will only be used:

- As a last resort
- Where they are lawful, reasonable and proportionate
- For the shortest possible time
- To reduce risk of harm to pupils, staff or others
- Never as a punishment

Definition of reasonable force: Reasonable force means using no more force than is necessary, for the least amount of time, in the circumstances. Physical intervention may be used by staff to prevent a pupil from:

- Committing a criminal offence
- Injuring themselves or others
- Causing damage to property (including their own)
- Engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and discipline at the School

Staff acting in accordance with the school's behaviour policy and the law are protected from liability in relation to the use of reasonable force.

Prohibited Practices:

The School explicitly prohibits any form of restraint or physical intervention that:

- Restricts a pupil's airway, breathing or circulation
- Applies pressure to the neck, throat, chest or abdomen
- Covers the mouth or nose
- Places a pupil at increased risk through ground restraint

Recording and parental notification:

Any form of reasonable force, seclusion or restraint must be recorded as soon as practicable after the event and no later than the same day. Parents will be notified in writing no later than the same day. The recording form is included in Appendix 1 of the behaviour policy.

Further details: Full guidance on the use of reasonable force, including when it may be used, de-escalation techniques, prohibited practices, and recording requirements, is set out in the school's behaviour policy. All staff should be familiar with this guidance.

41. 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 principal 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.

42. 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.

43. 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.

Staff must be aware that the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes of children (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes) is illegal and constitutes child sexual abuse material. Staff must never view, copy, print, share or store such images. Any report or suspicion of such images must be immediately referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will follow appropriate safeguarding procedures, which may include reporting to the police.

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

47. Contacts

Internal:

Michelle Garnham	Assistant Principal Safeguarding, Pastoral & Pupil Wellbeing	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Emma Stanhope	Vice Principal	Designated Safeguarding Lead EYFS Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Natalie Crewe	Assistant Principal SEND and Inclusion	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Denise Adamson	Assistant Principal (Pastoral) Lower School	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Victoria Wilson	Year 7 Phase Lead	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Sian Chambers	Year 8 and Year 9 Phase Lead	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Rebecca Doe	Year 10 and Year 11 Phase lead	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Natalie Sullivan	SEND support Assistant	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Kate Abbott	Governor responsible for Safeguarding
	Deputy Governor responsible for Safeguarding

Anthony Bell	Chair of Governors (Contact details via clerk@stmaryscolchester.org.uk)
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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
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)	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 Child Protection	0134 606 1499
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

Appendix 1: Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Based on Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

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 should be trained to 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.

It is up to the school to decide whether to have one or more deputy DSLs.

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.

The school should have robust cover arrangements for when the DSL is unavailable (e.g. due to illness, leave, or other circumstances). This may include a confidential shared mailbox to make sure safeguarding concerns are received, monitored and acted on without delay.

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. **If any further or new information comes to light while a referral is being assessed, this must be passed to the police.**
- 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. When transferring files, the exporting school should include a summary setting out the current safeguarding concerns, relevant context, and any ongoing support needs. The DSL should take particular care to distinguish between current safeguarding concerns and historic information to ensure past issues are presented with appropriate context.

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.

It is the responsibility of the DSL of the new school to consider which information in a child protection file should be shared with relevant staff and when it is appropriate to do so.

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. Where information indicates a risk to others, for example where a pupil has previously carried, threatened with or used a knife or weapon, the receiving school is responsible for assessing the risk and putting in place a support plan 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 respond 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 **Family 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 to 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, 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, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) **and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025**; 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 programme etc.

Appendix 2:

Managing Disclosures and Reports of Child-on-Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Based on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

General Principles for All Disclosures

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 explain 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 (i.e. age appropriate).

How to Respond to a Disclosure

Teachers, trainee 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 must be followed:

DO:

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

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)

DO NOT:

Ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse (e.g. "Did your dad hit you?")

Force the child to repeat what they said in front of another person

Promise confidentiality

Begin an investigation

Ask the child to record what happened in writing or take a photograph of any injuries

View, copy, print, share or store any images involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes) - report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Specific Types of Disclosure

Mental Health Concerns

If a disclosure relates to mental health concerns, staff should:

Be alert to warning signs including significant changes in behaviour, difficulty sleeping, and physical signs of self-harm

Report concerns about self-harm, suicidal ideation or risk of suicide immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999 or take them to A&E

Weapon-Related Concerns

If a child discloses they are carrying or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so), report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will follow the school's procedures and consider whether to involve police

Gender Identity Concerns

If a child discloses concerns about their gender identity, listen carefully and report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The school must involve parents/carers unless there are exceptional circumstances where doing so would pose a greater risk to the child

Staff should not adopt any changes relating to social transition without a decision involving parents/carers and the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Child-on-Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Understanding the Continuum

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) exists on a continuum and may escalate into sexual harassment or sexual violence. All instances should be responded to with the same safeguarding principles and considered within a child protection context.

Key Definitions

Sexual Violence includes offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003:

- **Rape:** A person (A) commits an offence of rape if they intentionally penetrate the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with their 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 they intentionally penetrate the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of their 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 if they intentionally touch another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (A single act of kissing someone without consent or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent can constitute sexual assault)
- **Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent:** 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. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.

Important:

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 means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline, both inside and outside of school. It 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.

Examples include:

Sexual comments, telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance

Sexual "jokes" or taunting

Physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes.

Online sexual harassment, including making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes (including images digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence such as deepfakes) .

Sharing of unwanted explicit content.

Upskirting (taking a picture under a person's clothing without permission - this is a criminal offence).

Sexualised online bullying.

Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media

Responding to Reports of Child-on-Child Sexual Violence or Sexual Harassment

If possible, manage the report with two members of staff present (preferably one of them being the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy)

Key steps:

Do not promise confidentiality - explain what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to

Listen carefully, being non-judgemental and not asking leading questions. Only prompt with open questions where necessary (where, when, what, etc.)

Make a written record as soon as possible on MyConcern, recording only the facts as the child presents them (not personal opinions).

Be aware that notes could become part of a statutory assessment or criminal investigation.

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) as soon as possible if not already involved.

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

Risk Assessment

Following a report of sexual violence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. This will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other victims
- The alleged perpetrator
- All other children at the school
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer

The risk assessment will be recorded and kept under review.

Useful Resources

Childnet - STAR SEND Toolkit - supports young people with special educational needs and disabilities

Childnet - Just a joke? - explores problematic online sexual behaviour with 9-12 year olds

Childnet - Step Up, Speak Up - addresses online sexual harassment amongst 13-17 year olds

Lucy Faithfull Foundation - Preventing Harmful Sexual Behaviour toolkit

NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework

Appendix 3

[Professional Conduct Reflection Form \(Low-Level Concern\) – Fill out 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.

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.

Professional Conduct Reflection Form

Details of concern

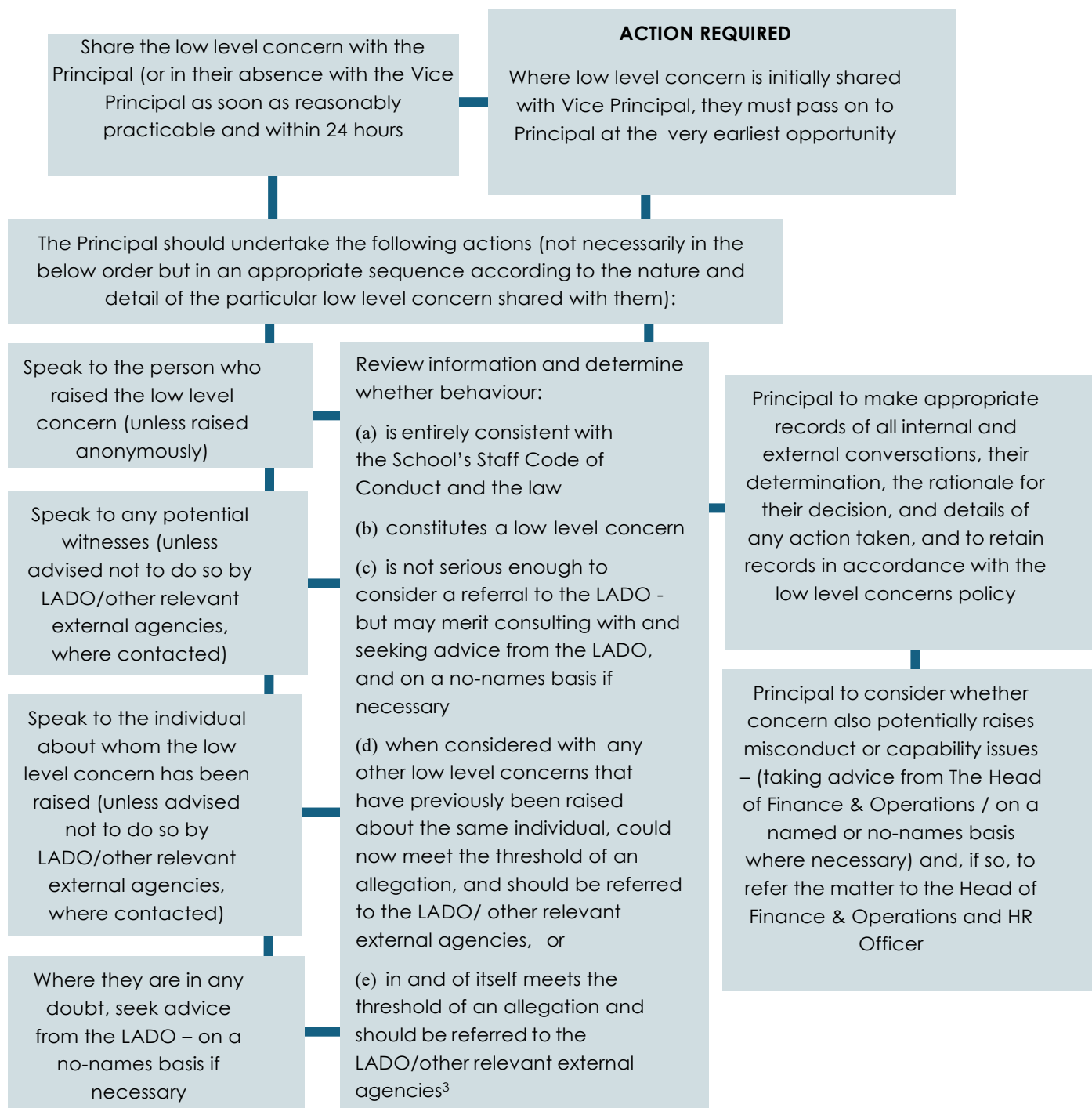
Name of staff member:		Department & role:	
Signed:		Time & date:	
Received by:		At (time):	
		On (date):	
Action taken (specify):			
Signed:		Time & date:	

Appendix 4

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 5: Missing Child Procedure

Arrangements for children who go missing during the school day

Effective from: September 2026 To be read in conjunction with: Child Protection Policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, and Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures (SET procedures)

Definition of Missing

The definition of missing used in Essex is: **'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and his or her well-being confirmed.'** (College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance)

1. Introduction

This procedure applies to children who go missing during the school day – between morning registration and official home time.

A child going missing from school during the school day 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 safeguarding concerns** (for example: exploitation, difficult home circumstances or poor mental health).

Missing children are among the most vulnerable in our community. When a child goes missing from school during the school day, action must be taken quickly and in line with local procedures.

At St Mary's School, a child going 'missing' during the school day will be **treated as a safeguarding concern** in line with KCSIE 2026. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will lead the response, supported by senior leadership and other agencies as required.

School staff may be asked to attend strategy meetings for a missing child and **should prioritise attendance**. Where children who go missing frequently are open to Children's Social Care, a Missing Prevention Plan may be in place, and school will actively contribute to reviews and implement assigned actions.

2. When a Child Goes Missing During the School Day

When it is suspected that a child is missing from school during the school day, **act immediately**:

Kindergarten and Lower School Procedure

If a member of staff cannot account for a pupil's whereabouts, the following procedure will be activated immediately:

Immediate Search

- The Principal, Vice Principal, Kindergarten Manager and DSL will be informed immediately.
- All available staff will be alerted.
- Staff will undertake an immediate and thorough search of:
 - Classrooms
 - Toilets
 - Outdoor learning areas
 - Shared spaces
 - Any areas the child is known to frequent
- A search of the immediate surrounding area will also take place where appropriate.
- Appropriate staffing levels will remain in place to supervise, support and reassure other pupils.

Contact Parents

- Parents/carers will be contacted to establish whether the child has been collected or made contact with home.

Escalation

If the pupil cannot be located:

- The Principal, Vice Principal, Kindergarten Manager or DSL will contact the police immediately.
- Staff will continue searching whilst awaiting police guidance.
- A second coordinated search of the site and surrounding areas will be conducted.

Contacting the Police

When contacting the police:

- Dial **999** if the child is believed to be at immediate risk of significant harm.
- Dial **101** in all other circumstances.

Provide:

- Child's full name

- Physical description
- Clothing worn
- Medical conditions
- Known vulnerabilities
- Time and place last seen
- Actions already taken
- Any safeguarding concerns or risk factors

Officers will continue their response until informed that the child has been located.

Police Attendance

The Principal, Vice Principal, Kindergarten Manager or DSL will:

- Meet the police officers.
- Meet and support parents/carers.
- Share all relevant information, including:
 - Time last seen
 - Location last seen
 - Description and clothing
 - Medical needs or vulnerabilities
 - Any safeguarding concerns
- Follow police instructions and local authority procedures.

If the Child Is Found

When a child is located:

- Notify the police immediately.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Inform the DSL.
- Confirm the child's immediate safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure appropriate supervision.

The child will remain classified as missing until police procedures have been concluded where applicable.

Senior School Procedure

Wristband Check

The PA to the Principal will:

- Confirm when the pupil was last seen.
- Check the electronic door/wristband records.
- Establish which door was last used and the corresponding time.

Building Search

The following locations should be searched immediately:

- Pupil's classroom
- Turrets toilets and locker area
- Ground floor Turrets seating area
- Art Block toilets and disabled toilet
- Art Block mini suite opposite the Art Room
- Conservatory
- Science toilets
- English toilets
- Library
- Peripatetic music rooms
- Radio room

Additional classrooms, outdoor areas and communal spaces should also be checked where appropriate.

CCTV Review

The Estates Manager will:

- Review CCTV footage.
- Determine whether the pupil has left the site.
- Report findings to the Senior Leadership Team immediately.

At the same time, a second member of staff should repeat building searches while CCTV checks are being undertaken.

Contact and Escalation

Where age and circumstance permit:

- Attempts should be made to contact the pupil via:
 - Mobile telephone

- Text message
- Other communication methods where appropriate

Parents/carers should be contacted to establish whether the pupil has made contact or returned home.

If the pupil remains unaccounted for:

- SLT or WLT will contact the police immediately and follow police guidance.
- Parents/carers will be informed that the pupil has been reported missing.
- The DSL will be informed immediately.

Contacting the Police

When contacting the police:

- Dial **999** if the child is believed to be at immediate risk of significant harm.
- Dial **101** in all other circumstances.

Provide:

- Child's full name
- Physical description
- Clothing worn
- Medical conditions
- Known vulnerabilities
- Time and place last seen
- Actions already taken
- Any safeguarding concerns or risk factors

Officers will continue their response until informed that the child has been located.

Police Attendance

The Principal, Vice Principal or WLT representative will:

- Meet police officers.
- Meet and support parents/carers.
- Share all relevant information.
- Follow police and local authority procedures until the matter is resolved

If the Child Is Found

When a child is located:

- Notify the police immediately.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Inform the DSL.
- Confirm the child's immediate safety and wellbeing.
- Ensure appropriate supervision.

The child will remain classified as missing until police procedures have been concluded where applicable.

3. Police Response and Return Interviews

Police Vulnerability Interview

Essex Police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and returned. School should provide police with any relevant information or observations about the child's demeanour, behaviour or disclosures.

Independent Return Interview ('Missing Chat')

Each child will be offered a 'missing chat' by a person not involved in their care, facilitated by the Local Authority.

School will:

- Request a copy of any information that can be shared (with consent)
- Use this to inform risk assessment and support plan
- Adjust safeguarding approach based on concerns identified

4. Risk Assessment and Follow-Up

Following a missing incident, **the DSL will complete a risk and needs assessment** in line with KCSIE 2026, recognising that:

- A single incident may not require further work beyond immediate safeguarding responses
- **Multiple episodes can indicate wider safeguarding concerns** (exploitation, difficult home circumstances, poor mental health)

The assessment will identify safeguarding concerns, determine support needs, and consider contextual safeguarding factors including:

- Child exploitation (sexual or criminal)
- Serious violence and county lines

- Mental health concerns and difficult home circumstances
- Bullying, peer-related issues, or curriculum difficulties
- Any patterns or triggers

For children who go missing repeatedly, the risk assessment will be **reviewed and updated regularly**.

5. Recording and Monitoring

All missing incidents must be recorded on our safeguarding system including:

- Date, time discovered missing, and time last seen
- Actions taken to locate the child
- Time found/returned and police incident number
- Risk assessment and support plan

The DSL will **review all incidents at least once per term** to identify patterns, distinguish isolated incidents from patterns indicating wider concerns, and evaluate procedure effectiveness.

6. Information Sharing

Parents/carers will normally be informed immediately, **unless this would place the child at greater risk**. In exceptional circumstances, the DSL will consult with children's social care and/or police before contacting parents.

Staff must understand that data protection regulations (UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, Data (Use and Access) Act 2025) do not prevent information sharing for keeping children safe.

7. Prevention

St Mary's School will prevent children going missing during the school day by:

- Creating a safe, supportive environment and building trusted relationships
- Identifying vulnerable pupils early and providing targeted pastoral support
- Ensuring accurate registration procedures and monitoring attendance closely
- Working with families and external agencies
- Addressing underlying issues through Early Help
- Ensuring accessible, engaging curriculum and addressing bullying promptly

8. Review

This procedure will be reviewed **at least annually** or sooner if there are changes to local procedures, statutory guidance (including KCSIE), or learning from incidents.

This procedure has been developed in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 and reflects our statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children at St Mary's School during the school day.

Appendix 6 : MyConcern Mitigations

Rationale and procedures for reporting where MyConcern is not used

Job Role	Rationale for not reporting via My Concern	Reporting procedure
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