



# **Bellingham Partnership of Schools**

## **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

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## **Policy statement and principles**

Bellingham Partnership of Schools fully recognises its responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

This policy is one of a series in the school's safeguarding portfolio which includes:

- Staff code of conduct
- Restrictive intervention
- Positive behaviour
- Intimate care
- Anti Bullying
- Whistleblowing
- SEND
- Recruitment and selection
- Managing allegations
- Staff discipline, grievance and disciplinary
- Relationships and Sex education policy
- ICT
- Complaints procedure
- Remote learning

Early years settings, schools and further education and skills providers should be safe environments where children, learners and vulnerable adults can learn and develop. To ensure the school setting meets these requirements children's and learners' welfare is promoted and where timely and appropriate safeguarding action is taken for children or learners who need early help or who may be suffering, or likely to suffer, harm. By achieving this the school/setting is ensuring they met the requirements set out by Ofsted who will 'evaluate how well providers fulfil their statutory and other responsibilities and how well staff exercise their professional judgement in keeping children and learners safe.' School policy and practice is also established to meet the requirements set out by our safeguarding partners Northumberland Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP). This policy will be placed on the schools' website.

Our core safeguarding principles are:

- the school's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance
- to maintain an attitude of "it could happen here"
- safer children make more successful learners
- this policy will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review

## **Child protection statement**

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children/young people are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection. At Bellingham Partnership of schools pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online, through various teaching and learning opportunities and the school is fully committed to this as part of the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers, visitors and governors and are consistent with those of the local safeguarding partnership

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers, visitors and governors and are consistent with those of the local safeguarding partnership Northumberland Children's and Adult's Safeguarding Partnership(NCASP).

## **Policy principles**

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children and young people, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- Pupils and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support

## **Policy aims**

- To demonstrate the school's commitment with regard to safeguarding and child protection to pupils, parents and other partners
- To contribute to the school's safeguarding portfolio
- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice

## **Definitions**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child Protection is a term used to describe the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer from significant harm

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

Child includes everyone under the age of 18

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

### **Safeguarding legislation and guidance**

The statutory guidance, **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024**, is issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Education (Non-Maintained Special Schools) (England) Regulations 2011. Schools and colleges must have regard to this guidance when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Unless otherwise stated, 'school' in this guidance means all schools, whether maintained, non-maintained or independent, including academies and free schools, alternative provision academies and pupil referral units

The **Teacher Standards 2012** state that teachers, including head teachers should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties.

The statutory guidance, **Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023**, covers the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services (including schools and colleges) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It also provides the framework for safeguarding to monitor the effectiveness of local services, including safeguarding arrangements in schools. As stated in this guidance schools are relevant agencies in the new safeguarding arrangements established by the three key safeguarding partners (the LA, the CCG and the police)

The Governing Body of the school will ensure that all staff have read the appropriate sections of this guidance (Part 1 and Annex B) and will ensure the necessary mechanisms are in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities.

**What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 - Advice for practitioners** is non statutory advice which helps practitioners (everyone who works with children) to identify abuse and neglect and take appropriate and copies are available in the Bellingham Partnership Drive: Safeguarding.

Due to their day-to-day contact with pupils, school staff are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and the outward signs of abuse. Children may also turn to a trusted adult in school when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that **all school staff** are alert to the signs of abuse and understand the procedures for reporting their concerns. The school will always act on identified concerns.

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Leads) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The named designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is Diane Grey and Amy Newman

Contact details: [Diane.Grey@bellinghampartnership.uk](mailto:Diane.Grey@bellinghampartnership.uk) 01434 220235

The second named Designated safeguarding lead is Lyndsey Robinson (BMS) and Amy Mundy (BPS)

Contact details: [Lyndsey.Robinson@bellinghampartnership.uk](mailto:Lyndsey.Robinson@bellinghampartnership.uk) 01434 220235  
[Amy.Mundy@bellinghampartnership.uk](mailto:Amy.Mundy@bellinghampartnership.uk) 01434 220230

The nominated child protection governor is Antony Kirkbride

Contact details: [Anthony.Kirkbride@bellinghampartnership.uk](mailto:Anthony.Kirkbride@bellinghampartnership.uk)

### **The Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

- has the status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources and supporting and directing other staff
- is appropriately trained, receiving annual updates and refresher training provided by the Local Authority, on behalf of the safeguarding partners every two years. In Northumberland the expectation is that the DSL attends a half day refresher, facilitated by the LA every two years and on the alternate year they attend safeguarding training relevant to their school and local context, supporting their professional development and delivered by suitably qualified providers
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the school community
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings

- is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers
- has a working knowledge of Northumberland Children and Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) procedures  
<https://www.proceduresonline.com/northumberlandcs/index.html>
- makes staff aware of NCASP training courses (all available through Learning Together <http://ncc.learningpool.com/>) and the latest policies and procedures on safeguarding
- understands locally agreed processes for providing early help and intervention  
<https://www.familyhubsnorthumberland.co.uk/early-help>
- keeps detailed written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely, but
- separate from the pupil's general file
- refers cases of suspected abuse to children's social care or police as appropriate
- notifies children's social care if a child with a child protection plan has unexplained absences
- ensures that when a pupil leaves the school, their child protection file is sent securely to the new school (separately from the main pupil file and ensuring secure transit) and confirmation of receipt is obtained. The pupil's social worker should also be informed of the change in school
- attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences
- coordinates the school's contribution to child protection plans
- ensures that all appropriate staff members have a working knowledge and understanding of their role in case conferences, core groups and other multi agency planning meetings, to ensure that they attend and are able to effectively contribute when required to do so
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including the NCASP
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the child protection policy
- ensures that the child protection policy and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated annually, working with governors and trustees
- liaises with the nominated governor and headteacher (where the role is not carried out by the headteacher) as appropriate
- ensures a record of staff attendance at child protection and safeguarding training is maintained
- ensures staff are kept up to date with key priorities within the LA, including learning from serious practice reviews
- makes the child protection & safeguarding policy available publicly, on the school's website
- ensures parents are aware of the school's role in safeguarding and that referrals about suspected abuse and neglect may be made
- has the lead role for Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour in the school and ensures the school meets all requirements set out in the LA procedures

- reports concerns that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, following the Prevent referral process and refer cases by e-mail to OneCall. If the matter is urgent then Police must be contacted by dialling 999. In cases where further advice from the Police is sought dial 101. The Department for Education has also set up a dedicated telephone helpline for staff and governors to raise concerns around Prevent (020 7340 7264)
- work with others to ensure that the school's filtering and monitoring systems are functional and effective
- meet all other responsibilities as set out for DSLs in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.
- whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the Designated safeguarding lead and cannot be delegated

**The deputy designated person(s):**

Is/are appropriately trained and, in the absence of the designated person, carries out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of pupils. In the event of the long-term absence of the designated person, the deputy will assume all of the functions above.

**If the DSL (or deputy) are not available, staff should contact a member of the leadership team to seek advice. Advice can also be sought from colleagues in One Call, the Local Authority's single point of access on 01670 536400**



## **The Governing Body:**

Ensures that the school:

- appoints a DSL for child protection who is a member of the senior leadership team and who has undertaken training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic child protection training
- ensures that the DSL role is explicit in the role holder's job description
- has a child protection policy and procedures
- has a staff code of conduct, which is reviewed annually and made available publicly on the school's website or by other means
- has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff including allegations made against the head teacher and allegations against other children
- follows safer recruitment procedures that include statutory checks on staff suitability to work with children and disqualification by association regulations
- develops a training strategy that ensures all staff, including the head teacher, receive information about the school's safeguarding arrangements, staff behaviour policy or code of conduct and the role of the DSL on induction, and appropriate child protection training, which is updated at least annually and will receive regular updates. The DSL receives face to face refresher training at two-yearly intervals and accesses an annual update in line with the Local Safeguarding Board requirements
- ensures that all staff, including temporary staff and volunteers are provided with the school's child protection policy and staff behaviour policy
- ensures that the school contributes to early help arrangements and inter agency working and plans
- provides a coordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified
- considers how pupils may be taught about safeguarding, including online as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

The Governing Body nominates a member (normally the chair) to be responsible for liaising with the local authority designated officer and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the headteacher.

It is the responsibility of the governing body to ensure that the school's safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations procedures take into account the procedures and practice of the local authority, NCASP and national guidance.

An annual audit (s175) will be submitted annually, to the local authority, including an action plan. Any weaknesses will be rectified without delay.

### **The head teacher:**

- ensures that the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff
- allocates sufficient time, training, support and resources, including cover arrangements, when necessary, to enable the DSL and deputy to carry out their roles effectively, including the assessment of pupils and attendance at strategy discussions and other necessary meetings
- ensures that all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistle blowing procedures
- ensures that pupils are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn about safeguarding, including keeping themselves safe online
- school leaders and governors ensure that the child's wishes are taken into account when determining action to be taken or services to be provided
- contacts the LADO immediately an allegation is made against a member of staff, seeking advice and then works with the LADO to follow the advice received
- ensures that anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk to a child is referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

### **Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct**

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards pupils we need to agree standards of good practice which form a code of conduct for all staff. Good practice includes:

- treating all pupils with respect
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving pupils in decisions that affect them
- encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among pupils
- being an active listener
- being alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- reading and understanding the school's safeguarding and child protection policy, staff behaviour policy and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, behaviour, physical contact, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, extremism, e-safety and information-sharing
- asking the pupil's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between pupils and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some pupils lead to an increased risk of abuse
- applying the use of reasonable force only as a last resort and in compliance with school and NCASP procedures

- referring all concerns about a pupil's safety and welfare to the DSL, or, if necessary directly to police or children's social care
- following the school's rules with regard to relationships with pupils and communication with pupils, including on social media.

### **Abuse of position of trust**

All school staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards pupils is unacceptable and that their conduct towards pupils must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the school staff and a pupil under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that pupil is over the age of consent.

The school's Staff Code of Conduct sets out our expectations of staff and is available to all staff members.

### **Children who may be particularly vulnerable**

Some children may have an increased risk of abuse. It is important to understand that this increase in risk is due more to societal attitudes and assumptions or child protection procedures that fail to acknowledge children's diverse circumstances, rather than the individual child's personality, impairment or circumstances. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and a reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur.

To ensure that all of our pupils receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to children who are:

- displaying early signs of abuse and/or neglect
- looked after or returned home after a period of care
- disabled or have special educational needs
- young carers
- affected by parental substance misuse, domestic violence or parental mental health needs or misusing substances themselves
- asylum seekers
- living away from home or in temporary accommodation
- vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying
- live transient lifestyles
- living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
- vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
- at risk of sexual exploitation

- do not have English as a first language
- at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM)
- at risk of forced marriage
- at risk of being drawn into extremism or being radicalised
- showing signs of being drawn in to antisocial or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation (inc County Lines)
- children who are absent from education
- privately fostered

It is also worth noting that The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 came into force in February 2023 means that 16 and 17 year olds will no longer be allowed to marry or enter a civil partnership, even if they have parental consent. Any concerns that students may be getting married should be referred to the DSL.

Children can be at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, and radicalisation. **This is sometimes referred to as contextual safeguarding**

### **Helping children to keep themselves safe**

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted adult helps prevention. We will therefore raise awareness of child protection issues and equip children with the skills to keep them safe, this will include activities to improve their resilience. Children are taught to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it. The school will therefore:

- establish and maintain an environment and positive ethos where children feel secure, supported and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to, can learn, develop and feel valued.
- ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- include in the curriculum, activities and opportunities for PSHE which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse, develop resilience and that they know to whom to turn for help.
- children are taught to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it. Bellingham Partnership of Schools is a listening school and all children and young people are encouraged to speak to a member of staff when they are worried about any issues. Support for those involved in a child protection issue.

## **Supporting parents/carers**

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved. We will support pupils, their families, and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- responding sympathetically to any request from pupils or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- Storing records securely
- offering details of helplines, counselling or other avenues of external support
- where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a pupil, ensure that lines of communication are maintained
- following the procedures laid down in our child protection, whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures
- cooperating fully with relevant statutory agencies
- providing access to supervision for those staff dealing with child protection issues

## **Complaints procedure**

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a pupil or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a pupil that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Complaints are managed by senior staff, the headteacher and governors. An explanation of the complaints procedure is available on the school websites or from the school office. Complaints from staff are dealt with under the school's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures. Complaints which escalate into a child protection concern will automatically be managed under the school's child protection procedures.

## **Whistle blowing if you have concerns about a colleague**

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a pupil are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. The school's whistleblowing code available on the staff noticeboard, enables staff to raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues should be reported to the head teacher. Complaints about the head teacher/principal should be reported to the chair of governors

Staff may also report their concerns directly to children's social care or the police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure immediate actions.

## **Allegations or concerns about an adult working in the school whether as a teacher, supply teacher, other staff, volunteers or contractors**

At Bellingham Partnership Schools we recognise the possibility that adults working in the school may harm children, including governors, volunteers, supply teachers and agency staff. Any concerns about the conduct of other adults in the school should be taken to the headteacher without delay; any concerns about the headteacher should go to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted by email or phone call. Concerns may come from various sources, for example, a suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

The headteacher has to decide whether the concern is an allegation or low level concern.

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events do happen. A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some professionals do pose a serious risk to pupils, and we must act on every allegation.

Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Suspension is not the default option and alternatives to suspension will always be considered. In some cases, staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that children are protected. In the event of suspension, the school will provide support and a named contact for the member of staff.

The full procedures for dealing with allegations against staff can be found in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024)* and in the school's Managing Allegations Policy and Procedures.

Staff, parents and governors are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a teacher who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including content placed on social media sites.

Allegations concerning staff who no longer work at the school, or historical allegations will be reported to the police

## **Staff training**

It is important that all staff receive training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and to know what to do if they have a concern.

New staff and governors will receive a mandatory briefing during their induction, which includes the school's child protection and safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, staff behaviour policy, reporting and recording arrangements, and details for the DSL. All staff, including the head teacher (unless the head teacher is the DSL) and governors will receive training that is regularly updated. The NCASP recommends staff receive annual updates and a detailed programme (either online or face to face) at least every three years.

The DSL (and deputies) will receive annual safeguarding training, with subjects to reflect local and national priorities and including a refresher session on their roles and responsibilities every two years.

All staff sign to confirm they have received a copy of the child protection and safeguarding policy and staff behaviour policy/code of conduct and have read Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 1 and Annex B)

## **Governor Training**

Members of the Governing Body of the school take part in mandatory safeguarding training to ensure that they can 'assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools and colleges are effective.' This training is regularly updated.

## **Safer recruitment**

Our school endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ safe staff by following the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) and the school's Staff Recruitment procedures (available from the Headteacher). At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.

The school obtains written confirmation from supply agencies or third party organisations that agency staff or other individuals who may work in the school have been appropriately checked. Trainee teachers will be checked either by the school or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained. The school maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken.

## **Regulated Activity**

Schools are 'specified places' which means that the majority of staff and volunteers will be engaged in regulated activity. A fuller explanation of regulated activity can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) Annex E

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers, including governors will undergo checks commensurate with their work in the school and contact with pupils. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately checked be left unsupervised or be allowed to engage in regulated activity.

## **Supervised volunteers**

Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are not in regulated activity will undergo the safe recruitment checks appropriate to their role, in accordance with the school's risk assessment process and statutory guidance.

## **Contractors**

The school checks the identity of all contractors working on site and requests DBS checks and barred list checks where required by statutory guidance. Contractors who have not undergone checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity.

## **Site security**

Visitors to the school, including contractors, are asked to sign in and are given a badge, which confirms they have permission to be on site. Parents who are simply delivering or collecting their children do not need to sign in. All visitors are expected to observe the school's safeguarding and health and safety regulations to ensure children in school are kept safe. The head teacher will exercise professional judgement in determining whether any visitors should be escorted or supervised while on site.

## **Extended school, out of school providers and off-site arrangements**

All extended and off-site activities are subject to a risk assessment to satisfy health and safety and safeguarding requirements. When we host out-of-school providers on the premises it should be noted that whilst the provider is responsible for their own safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, the school may refer any concerns they have about the provider to the local authority. The school uses the DfE Keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice as best practice guidance.

When our pupils attend off-site activities, including day and residential visits and work related activities, we will check that effective child protection arrangements are in place.



## Photography and images

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent and legitimate reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or distributing images, so we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

To protect pupils we will:

- seek parental consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- use only the pupil's first name with an image
- ensure pupils are appropriately dressed
- encourage pupils to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

## E-Safety

Our pupils increasingly use electronic equipment on a daily basis to access the internet and share content and images via social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, MSN, Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram.

Unfortunately, some adults and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to grooming and enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. Pupils may also be distressed or harmed by accessing inappropriate websites that promote unhealthy lifestyles, extremist behaviour and criminal activity.

The school's **e-safety policy**, available on the school website, explains how we try to keep pupils safe in school and protect and educate pupils in the safe use of technology.

The school provides advice to staff regarding their personal online activity and has strict rules regarding online contact and electronic communication with pupils. Staff found to be in breach of these rules may be subject to disciplinary action or child protection investigation.

## Appendix 1

### Child protection procedures

#### Recognising abuse

To ensure that our pupils are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people. 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.

The four types of abuse are physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Details of these can be found in Appendix

**Detailed below are a number of specific categories where there is evidence of increased vulnerability, and all school staff understand the need to be particularly vigilant, taking advice from the DSL if they believe they identify a child who may need extra support or be referred to an external agency. The links will take the DSL to the relevant pages of the regional North and South of Tyne Safeguarding Children partnership manual or relevant DfE documents**

#### Children Who Are Absent from Education

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding. Missing school can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about others safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children. We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at school. This means we need to have at least two up to date contact numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if the numbers

change.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers

### **Looked After Children and Previously Looked After children**

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. The school ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep looked after children safe. Appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after legal status and care arrangements, including the level of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child. The designated teacher for looked after children and the DSL have details of the child's social worker and the name and contact details of the local authority's virtual head teacher

### **Children with sexually harmful behaviour (please also refer to Appendix I)**

Children may be harmed by other children or young people. Staff will be aware of the harm caused by bullying and will use the school's **anti-bullying procedures** where necessary. However, there will be occasions when a pupil's behaviour warrants a response under child protection rather than anti-bullying procedures.

The management of children and young people with sexually harmful behaviour is complex and the school will work with other relevant agencies to maintain the safety of the whole school community. Young people who display such behaviour may be victims of abuse themselves and the child protection procedures will be followed for both victim and perpetrator. Staff who become concerned about a pupil's sexual behaviour, including any known online sexual behaviour, should speak to the DSL as soon as possible

## **Sexual exploitation of children**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

The school includes the risks of sexual exploitation in the RHSE curriculum. A common feature of sexual exploitation is that the child often doesn't recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and doesn't see themselves as a victim. The child may initially resent what they perceive as interference by staff, but staff must act on their concerns, as they would for any other type of abuse.

All staff are made aware of the indicators of sexual exploitation and all concerns are reported immediately to the DSL.

## **Criminal Exploitation of Children**

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity and includes drug networks or gangs grooming and exploiting children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. See Appendix A for further details.

## **Female Genital Mutilation**

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. Any person found guilty of an offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 is liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment or a fine, or both.

## **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is a marriage in which a female (and sometimes a male) does not consent to the marriage but is coerced into it. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. It may also involve physical or sexual violence and abuse.

Since June 2014 forcing someone to marry has become a criminal offence in England and Wales under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

## **Radicalisation and Extremism**

The government defines extremism as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Some children are at risk of being radicalised: adopting beliefs and engaging in activities which are harmful, criminal or dangerous. Nationally, Islamic extremism is the most widely publicised form however schools should also remain alert to the risk of radicalisation into white supremacy and extreme right wing factions

School staff receive training to help to identify signs of extremism. Opportunities are provided in the curriculum to enable pupils to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture and the school follows the DfE advice Promoting fundamental British Values as part of SMCS (spiritual, moral, social and cultural education) in Schools (2014).

## **Private fostering arrangements**

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16, or aged under 18 if the child is disabled. Children looked after by the local authority or who are placed in a residential school, children's home or hospital are not considered to be privately fostered.

Private fostering occurs in all cultures, including British culture and children may be privately fostered at any age.

By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify children's services as soon as possible.

When a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil may be in a private fostering arrangement they will raise this with the DSL and the school should notify the local authority of the circumstances.

## **Child on Child Abuse**

Staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves as child on child abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to: bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, sexual violence, gender based violence, initiation- type violence and rituals and sending nude images. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or part of growing up. Different gender issues can be prevalent when dealing with child on child abuse and this must always be considered when cases are reviewed. This school maintains a zero tolerance approach to any forms of sexual violence or sexual harassment. At our school we believe that all children have the right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm from adults and other children. We recognise that some students will negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the school's behaviour policy.

Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by others in the school which are of a safeguarding nature. This could include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation and also include girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence. In cases of 'sexting' we will adhere to the guidance given to schools and colleges by the DfE - Sharing Nudes and Semi Nudes: how to respond to a incident, published December 2020

## **Domestic Violence**

Our school is fully engaged in Operation Encompass and we recognise the importance of all staff having a basic understanding in relation to domestic violence and the impact it can have on children. The school notifies all parents that we are partners with the LA and police in relation to Operation Encompass and new staff receive a briefing as part of their induction.

Staff understand that violence perpetrated by a child on their parent (Child to Parent Violence and Abuse CPVA) is also a form of domestic violence and as such will seek advice from the DSL when they are made aware of such incidents

## **Mental Health**

All staff at Bellingham Partnership of Schools 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.

School staff are not expected, or trained, to diagnose mental health conditions or issues, but may notice behaviours that may be of concern.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy. School staff are not expected, or trained, to diagnose mental health conditions or issues, but may notice behaviours that may be of concern.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy. A cause for concern form must be filled in or an entry submitted on CPOMS assigning the DSL

## **Contextual Safeguarding**

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college and/or can occur between children outside the school or college. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should be considering the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should

consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children's social care assessments should consider such factors so it is important that schools and colleges provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse. See Appendix A for additional information regarding contextual safeguarding

### **Impact of abuse**

The impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

### **Taking action**

**Any child, in any family, in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of "it could happen here".**

Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, if necessary call 999
- report your concern as soon as possible to the DSL, definitely by the end of the day
- do not start your own investigation
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
- complete a written record
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

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

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a pupil may be at risk but have no 'real' evidence. The pupil's behaviour may have changed, or their patterns of attendance may have altered. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the pupil the opportunity to talk. The signs they have noticed may be due to a variety of factors, for example, a parent has moved out, a pet has died, a grandparent is very ill, or an accident has occurred. It is fine for staff to ask the pupil if they are OK or if they can help in any way.

Staff should use the initial concern category on CPOMS to record these early concerns. If the pupil does begin to reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below. Following an initial conversation with the pupil, if the member of staff remains concerned, they should discuss their concerns with the DSL. Concerns which do not meet the threshold for child protection intervention will be managed through the Early Help process

### **If a pupil discloses to you**

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual; their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell; they may have lost all trust in adults; or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a pupil talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member will need to let the pupil know that they must pass the information on** – staff are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which they tell the pupil this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the pupil may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the pupil may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the pupils staff will:

- allow them to speak freely
- remain calm and not overreact – the pupil may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the pupil
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the pupil’s mother think about all this
- at an appropriate time tell the pupil that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on and explain to whom and why
- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as ‘I do wish you had told me about this when it started’ or ‘I can’t believe what I’m hearing’ may be the staff member’s way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong
- tell the pupil what will happen next. The pupil may agree to go to see the designated senior person. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.

### **Confidentiality and sharing information**

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the pupil and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence. Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL, head teacher or chair of governors (depending on who is the subject of the concern). That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a ‘need-to-know’ basis.



However, following a number of cases where senior leaders in school had failed to act upon concerns raised by staff, *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)* emphasises that **any** member of staff can contact children's social care if they are concerned about a child.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **The child's wishes.**

Where there is a safeguarding concern, governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, all systems and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

### **Reporting directly to child protection agencies**

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

- the situation is an emergency and the DSL, their deputy, the head teacher and the chair of governors are all unavailable
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the pupil's safety
- for any other reason they make a judgement that direct referral is in the best interests of the child.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Staffing**

**Our designated safeguarding lead who has responsibility for Child Protection issues are;**

Diane Grey	Interim Headteacher	Last trained	December 2024
Lyndsey Robinson - Maths Lead at BMS		Last trained	September 2022
Amy Mundy	Year 3&4 teacher	Last trained	January 2024

#### **Lead governor for Safeguarding**

Anthony Kirkbride, Chair of Governors	Last trained	September 2021
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**Our E-Safety Coordinator is:**

#### **Safer Recruitment and Selection online training**

One member of the selection panel for staff appointments must have completed either on-line or face-to-face safer recruitment training

#### **Currently the following people are trained**

Diane Grey	Interim Headteacher	Last trained	January 2021
Antony Kirkbride	Chair of Governors	Last trained	
Ian Grey	Vice Chair of Governors	Last trained	January 2019

## **Appendix 3**

### **Categories of Abuse**

#### **Physical abuse**

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

#### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

#### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

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

## **Indicators of abuse**

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

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

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

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss school, arrive late or leave the school for part of the day
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- become disinterested in their school work
- be constantly tired or preoccupied

- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'

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

Additional examples of abuse are outlined below, with details provided in Appendix B of KCSiE 2024.

## Appendix 4

### Local contacts

Advice Area	Contact
For advice on making a referral or to make a referral for Children's Social Care or Early Help	<p><b>OneCall: 01670 536400</b></p> <p>Please note you may call to raise/discuss your initial concerns; however they must then be submitted in writing.</p> <p><b>If you are submitting a referral, please use the link below</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Forms">Forms (northumberland.gov.uk)</a></p>
For further discussion about an open case or advice on the operation of child protection/safeguarding procedures of a specific case	<p>If known, contact the allocated social worker or early help worker or</p> <p>OneCall 01670 53640</p>
For generic advice on the operation of child protection/safeguarding procedures	<p>Justine Clephane - 07879 874168</p> <p>Vicky Kinneavy - 07966 325300</p> <p>Carol Leckie - <a href="tel:07584313178">07584313178</a></p>
Allegations against people working with children	<p>01670 623979 OR 01670 624888</p> <p>Email address - <a href="mailto:LADO@northumberland.gov.uk">LADO@northumberland.gov.uk</a> The Northumberland LADO is Louise Prudhoe, but please use the generic contact information to ensure you get a response</p>
Queries in relation to the model policy for schools or related guidance	<p>Carol Leckie - <a href="tel:07584313178">07584313178</a></p>
HR advice for schools	<p><a href="mailto:SchoolsHR@northumberland.gov.uk">SchoolsHR@northumberland.gov.uk</a></p>
MAPPA – Risk management of individuals who may pose a risk to children	<p>Neil O'Toole, Senior Manager Children's Services</p> <p><a href="mailto:Neil.O'Toole@northumberland.gov.uk">Neil.O'Toole@northumberland.gov.uk</a></p>

MARAC - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference	Sarah Wintringham, Principal Education Welfare Officer <a href="mailto:sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk">sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk</a> OR Emma Wilson, Lead Education Officer <a href="mailto:Emma.Wilson@northumberland.gov.uk">Emma.Wilson@northumberland.gov.uk</a>
Attendance, children not in school and elective home education	Sarah Wintringham <a href="mailto:sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk">sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk</a>
Looked After Children	Tara Prescott, Deputy Virtual School Head Teacher <a href="mailto:Tara.Prescott@northumberland.gov.uk">Tara.Prescott@northumberland.gov.uk</a>
Early Help	Emma Walker, Early Help Team Manager <a href="mailto:Emma.Walker@northumberland.gov.uk">Emma.Walker@northumberland.gov.uk</a>
CPVA	Emma Walker, Early Help Team Manager <a href="mailto:Emma.Walker@northumberland.gov.uk">Emma.Walker@northumberland.gov.uk</a>
Monitoring/Quality Assurance re operation of schools safeguarding arrangements	Jane Walker 07752782649 Carol Leckie <a href="tel:07584313178">07584313178</a>