



**Four Hills**  
Education Trust

Where Every Step is Shaped with **CARE**

# CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING

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This policy sets out the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures for Four Hills Education Trust.

Sections [5, 6, 7, 10 and/or any others] and appendix 4 set out the specific arrangements for Albrighton Primary School & Nursery, Meadows Primary School & Nursery, Millbrook Primary School & Nursery, William Reynolds Primary School & Nursery.

## Important contacts

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## 1. Aims

The school aims to ensure that:

- Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare
- All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities with respect to safeguarding
- Staff are properly trained in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues

## 2. Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2025\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#), and the [Academy trust governance guide](#). We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

- Part 3 of the schedule to [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school
- [Children Act 1989](#) (and [2004 amendment](#)), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children
- Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#), which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18
- [Statutory guidance on FGM](#), which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM
- The [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#), which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children
- Schedule 4 of the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#), which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

- [Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty](#), which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism
- The [Human Rights Act 1998](#), which explains that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to individuals under the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR)
- The [Equality Act 2010](#), which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people regarding particular protected characteristics (including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race). This means our governors and headteacher should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils with regard to these characteristics. The Act allows our school to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils (where we can show it's proportionate). This includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. For example, it could include taking positive action to support girls where there's evidence that they're being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or harassment
- [The Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#), which explains that we must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The PSED helps us to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil outcomes. Some pupils may be more at risk of harm from issues such as: sexual violence; homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying; or racial discrimination
- The [Childcare \(Disqualification\) and Childcare \(Early Years Provision Free of Charge\) \(Extended Entitlement\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) (referred to in this policy as the '2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations') and [Childcare Act 2006](#), which set out who is disqualified from working with children
- This policy also meets requirements relating to safeguarding and welfare in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)
- This policy also complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### 3. Definitions

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** means:

- 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 grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

**Child protection** is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

**Abuse** is a form of maltreatment of a child, and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 1 explains the different types of abuse.

**Neglect** is a form of abuse and 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. Appendix 1 defines neglect in more detail.

**Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes** (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) is where children share nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams. This also includes pseudo-images which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video.

**Children** includes everyone under the age of 18.

The following 3 **safeguarding partners** are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education (and defined in the Children Act 2004, as amended by chapter 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017). They will make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs:

- The local authority (LA)
- Integrated care boards (previously known as clinical commissioning groups) for an area within the LA
- The chief officer of police for a police area in the LA area

**Victim** is a widely understood and recognised term, but we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim, or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will be prepared to use any term that the child involved feels most comfortable with.

**Alleged perpetrator(s)** and **perpetrator(s)** are widely used and recognised terms. However, we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what's appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by-case basis.

## 4. Equality statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or health conditions (see section 10)
- Are young carers
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language

- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- Are asylum seekers
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs
- Are looked after or previously looked after (see section 12)
- Are missing from education for prolonged periods and/or frequently
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, local governors and trustees across our trust and is consistent with the procedures of the 3 safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

The trust and school play a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-trust approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by the school's:

- Behaviour policy
- Pastoral support system
- Planned programme of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:
  - Healthy and respectful relationships
  - Boundaries and consent
  - Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
  - Body confidence and self-esteem
  - How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
  - The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and FGM and how to access support
  - What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

### 5.1 All staff

All staff will:

- Read and understand part 1 and annex B of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), and review this guidance at least annually
- Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents/carers aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g. sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- Provide a safe space for pupils who are LGBTQ+ to speak out and share their concerns

All staff will be aware of:

- Our systems which support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy/deputies] the behaviour policy, online safety policy and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education/who are absent from education
- The early help assessment process and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment
- The process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play
- What to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals
- The signs of different types of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including domestic and sexual abuse (including controlling and coercive behaviour as well as parental conflict that is frequent, intense, and unresolved), as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)
- New and emerging threats, including online harm, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and the role of technology and social media in presenting harm
- The importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- The fact that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their home, at school and online
- The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children
- That a child and their family may be experiencing multiple needs at the same time
- What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

Section 15 and appendix 4 of this policy outline in more detail how staff are supported to do this.



## 5.2 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) across the Trust

Each academy within Four Hills Education Trust must appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is a member of the senior leadership team. The DSL holds lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding within their academy, including online safety and oversight of filtering and monitoring systems used on school devices and networks.

During term time, the DSL must be available during school hours to support staff with safeguarding concerns. Each academy must also provide clear guidance on how the DSL can be contacted outside of school hours, where necessary (e.g. via email or emergency contact number).

In the absence of the DSL, a Deputy DSL must be designated to act as cover. If both the DSL and Deputy DSL are unavailable, the academy must identify a senior leader who will assume safeguarding responsibilities during out-of-hours or out-of-term activities.

The Trust expects all DSLs to be given sufficient time, funding, training, resources, and support to fulfil their role effectively. This includes the ability to:

- Provide advice and support to staff on child welfare and protection matters
- Participate in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, or support other staff to do so
- Contribute to the assessment of children
- Refer suspected cases to the appropriate body (e.g. local authority children's social care, Channel programme, DBS, police), and support staff who make referrals directly
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of harmful sexual behaviour
- Understand and oversee the academy's filtering and monitoring systems
- Where applicable, act as the Prevent lead, ensuring staff receive appropriate Prevent training and induction
- Where applicable, act as a lead practitioner for the local authority, if designated

DSLs must also:

- Keep the Headteacher informed of safeguarding issues (if the DSL is not the Headteacher)
- Liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns
- Engage with police and children's social care colleagues to inform the academy's response to sexual violence and harassment
- Be confident in identifying and accessing local specialist support for all children involved in safeguarding incidents, including victims and alleged perpetrators



- Be aware that children must be supported by an appropriate adult during police investigations or searches

The full responsibilities of the DSL and any Deputy DSLs must be clearly outlined in their job descriptions and reviewed annually by the academy and the Trust Safeguarding Lead.

### 5.3 The board of trustees

The board will:

- Facilitate a whole-trust approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development
- Evaluate and approve this policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the headteachers to account for its implementation
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and our school's local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- Appoint a link governor to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the full governing board. This is always a different person from the DSL
- Ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with advice from the safeguarding partners
- Ensure that the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, and review their effectiveness. This includes:
  - Making sure that the leadership team and staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training
  - Reviewing the [DfE's filtering and monitoring standards](#), and discussing with IT staff and service providers what needs to be done to support the school in meeting these standards
- Make sure:
  - The DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support
  - Online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-trust approach to safeguarding and related policies
  - The DSL has lead authority for safeguarding, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place
  - The trust has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors). Appendix 3 of this policy covers this procedure
  - That this policy reflects that children with SEND, or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to any abuse or neglect being recognised
- Where another body is providing services or activities (regardless of whether or not the children who attend these services/activities are children on the school roll):

- Seek assurance that the other body has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies/procedures in place, and inspect them if needed
- Make sure there are arrangements for the body to liaise with the school about safeguarding arrangements, where appropriate
- Make sure that safeguarding requirements are a condition of using the school premises, and that any agreement to use the premises would be terminated if the other body fails to comply

The chair of the board of trustees will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher where appropriate (see appendix 3). All trustees local governors will read Keeping Children Safe in Education in its entirety. Section 15 has information on how trustees and local governors are supported to fulfil their role.

## **5.4 Local governing bodies**

Governors on local governing bodies will review the school-specific elements of the policy after the trust level policy has been reviewed and approved.

They will also hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of the policy. We will appoint a member of each local governing body to act as the governor responsible for safeguarding, to liaise with the school DSL on local safeguarding issues and report to the safeguarding trustee.

## **5.5 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:
  - Are informed of our systems which support safeguarding, including this policy, as part of their induction
  - Understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect
- Communicating this policy to parents/carers when their child joins the school and via the school website
- Ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent
- Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate (see appendix 3)
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL on this
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable
- Making sure each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assigned a key person
- Overseeing the safe use of technology, and devices like mobile phones and cameras in the setting

## **5.6 Virtual school heads**

Virtual school heads (VSHs) have a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment and progress of pupils with a social worker.

They also have a non-statutory responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children in kinship care (children who live with a relative or close family friend).

VSHs should also identify and engage with key professionals, e.g. DSLs, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), social workers, mental health leads and others.

## 6. Confidentiality

Four Hills Education Trust recognises that effective safeguarding depends on a clear and consistent approach to confidentiality and information sharing. All academies within the Trust must adhere to the principles outlined in this section, which are grounded in statutory guidance and data protection legislation.

The Trust's approach to confidentiality is governed centrally, and all schools must implement these standards in their local safeguarding practice. Where local safeguarding partnerships (e.g. Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership) have specific protocols, schools may supplement this section with local detail, provided it remains consistent with Trust-wide expectations.

### Trust-Wide Principles

- **Timely and proportionate information sharing** is essential to safeguarding children.
- **Fears about sharing information must never prevent action** to protect a child's welfare or safety.
- The **Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018** and **UK GDPR** do not prevent the sharing of information for safeguarding purposes.
- Where staff need to share **special category personal data**, the DPA 2018 includes "safeguarding of children and individuals at risk" as a lawful basis for processing without consent, if:
  - It is not possible to gain consent
  - It cannot reasonably be expected that consent is obtained
  - Seeking consent would place a child at risk

Staff must never promise a child that they will keep a disclosure confidential. Instead, they must explain that the information may need to be shared to keep the child safe.

### Responding to Requests for Confidentiality

If a victim of sexual violence or sexual harassment asks that the information not be shared:

- There is no definitive rule. The DSL must balance the victim's wishes with their duty to protect the victim and others.
- The DSL should consider:

- Whether informing parents/carers is appropriate (unless doing so would increase risk)
- Whether the child is at risk of harm, in immediate danger, or has been harmed — in which case a referral to children's social care must be made
- Whether the incident constitutes a crime (e.g. rape, assault by penetration, sexual assault), which must be referred to the police — even if the alleged perpetrator is under the age of criminal responsibility

### **Anonymity and Support**

All staff must:

- Be aware of the importance of **anonymity, witness support, and the criminal process** when an allegation of sexual violence or harassment is progressing through the justice system
- Take all reasonable steps to protect the **anonymity of children involved**, including limiting the number of staff aware of the report
- Consider the impact of **social media** in spreading rumours or exposing identities, and act swiftly to mitigate harm

### **Information Sharing Guidance**

Staff must follow the government's **seven golden rules for information sharing**, as outlined in the *Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners*. These rules support decision-making and ensure lawful, proportionate sharing.

If staff are ever in doubt about whether to share information — including personal or sensitive data — they must consult the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or **Deputy DSL** immediately.

Confidentiality is further addressed in:

- **Section 14** – Record Keeping
- **Appendix 3** – Allegations Against Staff

The Trust's **Data Protection Policy** and **Information Sharing Protocol** provide additional guidance and must be read alongside this safeguarding policy.

## **7. Recognising abuse and taking action**

All staff are expected to be able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and shall be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- › Has a disability
- › Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education health and care plan)
- › Is a young carer
- › Is bereaved
- › Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime

- › Is frequently missing/goes missing from education, care or home
- › Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- › Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- › Is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online
- › 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
- › Is suffering from mental ill health
- › Has returned home to their family from care
- › Is at risk of so-called 'honour'-based abuse such as female genital mutilation or forced marriage
- › Is a privately fostered child
- › Has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending
- › Is missing education, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- › Has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

Staff, volunteers, trustees and local governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue.

Please note – in this and subsequent sections, you should take any references to the DSL to mean 'the DSL (or deputy DSL)'.

### **7.1 If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger**

All academies within Four Hills Education Trust must act immediately if there is reason to believe that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm or is in immediate danger.

A referral must be made to local authority children's social care and/or the police without delay. This duty applies to all staff – anyone can make a referral. Staff must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL as soon as possible if they make a referral directly.

Each academy must follow the referral procedures set out by their local safeguarding partnership, which may vary depending on the local authority in which the school is based. These procedures must be clearly documented in the academy's local safeguarding policy and understood by all staff.

To support staff and members of the public, the following national referral portal can be used to report concerns to the appropriate local council: [!\[\]\(830769b31eeeaca920791081939ff8ba\_img.jpg\) Report child abuse to your local council](#)

The Trust expects each academy to ensure that:

- Local referral protocols are up to date and accessible
- DSLs and staff are trained in how to make a referral
- Referral pathways are clearly displayed and communicated within the school
- Any variation in local procedures is reflected in the school's safeguarding documentation

## **7.2 If a child makes a disclosure to you**

If a child discloses a safeguarding issue to you, you should:

- Listen to and believe them. Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions
- Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset
- Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner
- Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret
- Write up your conversation as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it
- Sign and date the write-up and pass it on to the DSL. Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to local authority children's social care and/or the police directly (see 7.1), and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so. Aside from these people, do not disclose the information to anyone else unless told to do so by a relevant authority involved in the safeguarding process

Bear in mind that some children may:

- Not feel ready, or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected
- Not recognise their experiences as harmful
- Feel embarrassed, humiliated or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation and/or language barriers

None of this should stop you from having a 'professional curiosity' and speaking to the DSL if you have concerns about a child.

## **7.3 If you discover that FGM has taken place or a pupil is at risk of FGM**

Keeping Children Safe in Education explains that FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs".

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'. Possible indicators that a pupil has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in appendix 4 of this policy.

**Any teacher** who either:

- Is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or



- Observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

Must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve local authority children's social care as appropriate.

**Any other member of staff** who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for teachers mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is at risk of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

**Any member of staff** who suspects a pupil is at risk of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out should speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

This Trust-wide policy outlines the statutory responsibilities for all staff, but each academy must ensure its local safeguarding procedures are followed in full, in line with the expectations of their local authority.

#### **7.4 If you have concerns about a child (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger)**

Figure 1 below, before section 7.7, illustrates the procedure to follow if you have any concerns about a child's welfare.

Where possible, speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local authority children's social care. You can also seek advice at any time from the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000. Share details of any actions you take with the DSL as soon as practically possible.

Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' below). Share any action taken with the DSL as soon as possible.

#### **Early help assessment**

If an early assessment help is appropriate, the DSL will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

We will discuss and agree, with statutory safeguarding partners, levels for the different types of assessment, as part of local arrangements.

The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the school will consider a referral to local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.



This Trust-wide policy outlines the statutory responsibilities for all staff, but each academy must ensure its local safeguarding procedures are followed in full, in line with the expectations of their local authority.

### **Referral**

If it is appropriate to refer the case to local authority children's social care or the police, the DSL will make the referral or support you to do so.

If you make a referral directly (see section 7.1), you must tell the DSL as soon as possible. The local authority should make a decision within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up with the local authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

This Trust-wide policy outlines the statutory responsibilities for all staff, but each academy must ensure its local safeguarding procedures are followed in full, in line with the expectations of their local authority.

## **7.5 If you have concerns about extremism**

If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or seek advice from local authority children's social care. Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' above). Inform the DSL or deputy as soon as practically possible after the referral.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include the police or [Channel](#), the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

The DfE also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which school staff and local governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email [counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk). Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- Think someone is in immediate danger
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group

- See or hear something that may be terrorist-related

## **7.6 If you have a concern about mental health**

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. Four Hills Education Trust recognises the strong link between mental health and safeguarding, and expects all staff across its academies to be alert to behavioural signs that may suggest a child is experiencing a mental health problem or is at risk of developing one.

Staff must take immediate action if a mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern, following the steps outlined in **Section 7.4** of this policy. If the concern is not directly linked to safeguarding, staff should still speak to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** to agree an appropriate course of action.

### **Identification and Escalation Procedures**

Each academy within the Trust must have clear procedures for:

- Identifying pupils who may be experiencing mental health difficulties
- Logging concerns using the Trust-approved safeguarding system
- Escalating concerns to the DSL, SENCO, or pastoral lead as appropriate
- Referring pupils to internal or external support services (e.g. school counsellor, CAMHS, educational psychologist)
- Monitoring and reviewing pupil wellbeing through pastoral systems and safeguarding meetings
- Engaging with families and carers to support early intervention

Staff must be trained to recognise early warning signs, which may include:

- Changes in behaviour, mood, or attendance
- Withdrawal from peers or activities
- Expressions of hopelessness, anxiety, or distress
- Risk-taking behaviour or self-harm
- Sudden decline in academic performance

Each academy must ensure that mental health concerns are recorded and reviewed regularly, and that pupils receive appropriate support in line with their individual needs.

### **Trust Oversight and Accountability**

- The Trust Safeguarding Lead will monitor mental health-related safeguarding trends across all academies
- DSLs will report on mental health concerns as part of termly safeguarding reports to the Trust Board
- The Trust will provide training and resources to support staff in identifying and responding to mental health issues
- Each academy must ensure that mental health provision is embedded in its curriculum, pastoral care, and safeguarding strategy

### **DfE Guidance**

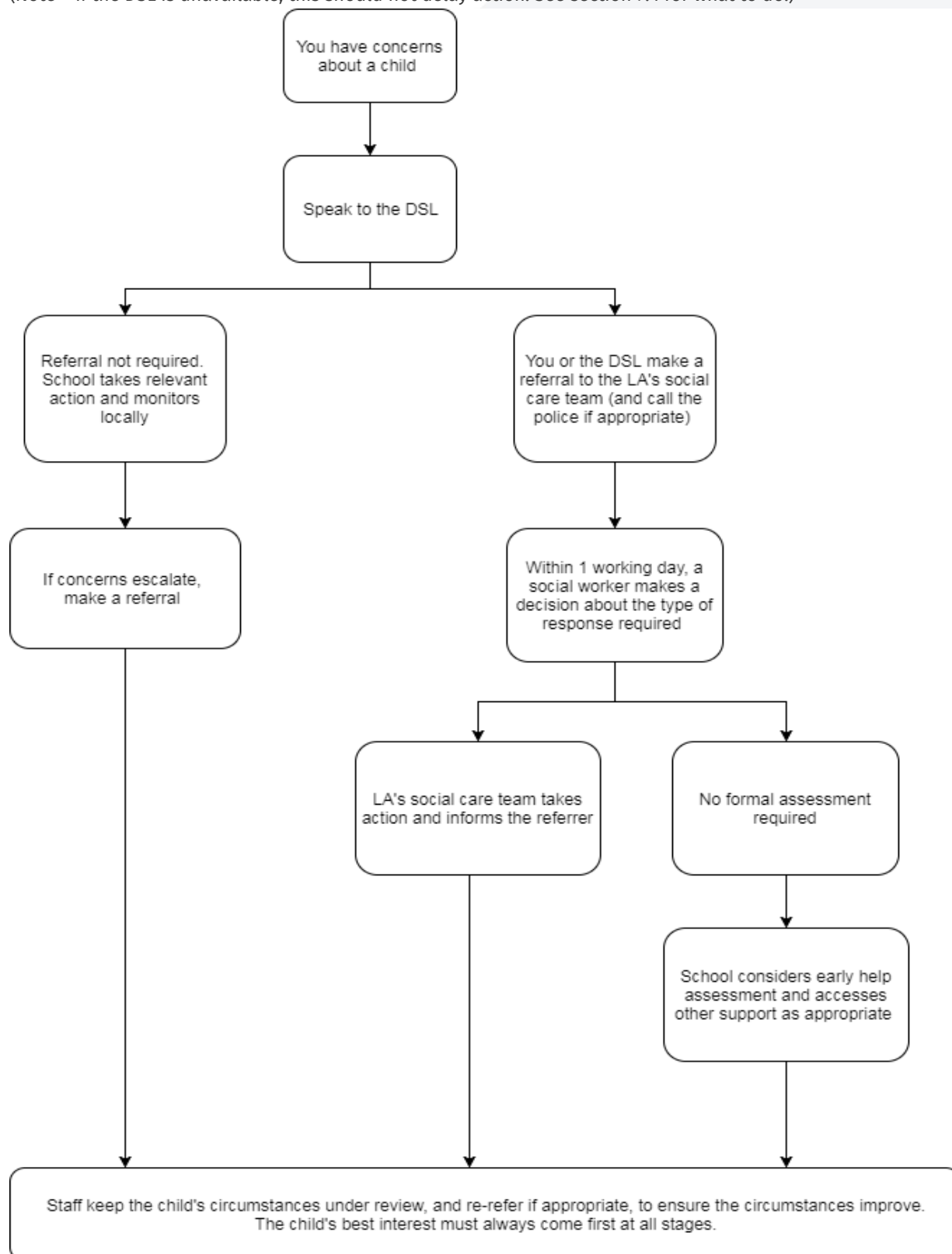
This section is informed by the Department for Education's guidance: *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff* (DfE, 2018)

This guidance outlines how schools can:

- Promote positive mental health
- Identify pupils with emerging needs
- Provide targeted support
- Work with external agencies
- Embed mental health into whole-school approaches

**Figure 1: procedure if you have concerns about a child's welfare (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger)**

(Note – if the DSL is unavailable, this should not delay action. See section 7.4 for what to do.)



## 7.7 Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) posing a risk of harm to children, speak to the headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the headteacher, speak to the chair of trustees.

The [headteacher chair of trustees will then follow the procedures set out in appendix 3, if appropriate.

Where you believe there is a conflict of interest in reporting a concern or allegation about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) to the headteacher, report it directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO).

If you receive an allegation relating to an incident where an individual or organisation was using the school premises for running an activity for children, follow our school safeguarding policies and procedures, informing the LADO, as you would with any safeguarding allegation.

Where appropriate, the school will inform Ofsted of the allegation and actions taken, within the necessary timescale (see appendix 3 for more detail).

## **7.8 Allegations of abuse made against other pupils**

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for pupils. All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school’s behaviour policy, but this child protection and safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- Could put pupils in the school at risk
- Is violent
- Involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- Involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes)

See appendix 4 for more information about child-on-child abuse.

### **Procedures for dealing with allegations of child-on-child abuse**

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- You must record the allegation and tell the DSL, but do not investigate it
- The DSL will contact the local authority children’s social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence

- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed. This will include considering school transport as a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s)
- The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

If the incident is a criminal offence and there are delays in the criminal process, the DSL will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator. We will ask the police if we have any questions about the investigation.

Each academy within Four Hills Education Trust is required to develop and maintain detailed procedures for recording, investigating, and responding to allegations of child-on-child abuse. These procedures must align with the principles outlined in this Trust-wide safeguarding policy and reflect the specific operational context of the school.

Local safeguarding policies must include:

- Clear protocols for logging and escalating allegations
- Defined roles and responsibilities for staff involved in managing cases
- Support plans for victims, alleged perpetrators, and any other affected pupils
- Consideration of vulnerable environments such as school transport, shared spaces, and online platforms
- Referral pathways to external agencies including children's social care, CAMHS, and the police
- Measures to ensure pupil voice, confidentiality, and ongoing monitoring

While the Trust sets the strategic framework and minimum expectations, each school must ensure its procedures are robust, accessible, and regularly reviewed in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Local Governing Board.

### **Creating a supportive environment in school and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse**

We recognise the importance of taking proactive action to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, and of creating a supportive environment where victims feel confident in reporting incidents.

To achieve this, we will:

- Challenge any form of derogatory or sexualised language or inappropriate behaviour between peers, including requesting or sending sexual images
- Be vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing-type violence with respect to boys
- Ensure our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensure pupils are able to easily and confidently report abuse using our reporting systems (as described in section 7.10 below)
- Ensure staff reassure victims that they are being taken seriously

- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners
- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape or assault by penetration. We will do all we can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed
- Consider intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment
- Ensure staff are trained to understand:
  - How to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
  - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse in school, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”
  - That if they have any concerns about a child’s welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
    - Children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to
    - A friend may make a report
    - A member of staff may overhear a conversation
    - A child’s behaviour might indicate that something is wrong
  - That certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
  - That a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
  - The important role they have to play in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it
  - That they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns
  - That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and friends from either side

The DSL will take the lead role in any disciplining of the alleged perpetrator(s), where needed. We will provide support at the same time as taking any disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action can be taken while other investigations are going on, e.g. by the police. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident doesn’t (in itself) prevent our school from coming to its own conclusion about what happened and imposing a penalty accordingly. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis, taking into account whether:

- Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the police and/or LA children’s social care to determine this



- There are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

## **7.9 Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes ('sexting')**

### **Your responsibilities when responding to an incident**

If you are made aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images/videos, including pseudo-images, which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video (also known as 'sexting' or 'youth produced sexual imagery'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must **not**:

- View, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a pupil to share or download it (if you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL)
- Delete the imagery or ask the pupil to delete it
- Ask the pupil(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery (this is the DSL's responsibility)
- Share information about the incident with other members of staff, the pupil(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers
- Say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved

You should explain that you need to report the incident, and reassure the pupil(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

### **Initial review meeting**

Following a report of an incident, the DSL will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff – this may include the staff member who reported the incident and the safeguarding or leadership team that deals with safeguarding concerns. This meeting will consider the initial evidence and aim to determine:

- Whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)
- If a referral needs to be made to the police and/or local authority children's social care
- If it is necessary to view the image(s) in order to safeguard the young person (in most cases, images or videos should not be viewed)
- What further information is required to decide on the best response
- Whether the image(s) has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)
- Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images or videos from devices or online services
- Any relevant facts about the pupils involved which would influence risk assessment
- If there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents/carers should be involved)

The DSL will make an immediate referral to police and/or local authority children's social care if:

- The incident involves an adult. Where an adult poses as a child to groom or exploit a child or young person, the incident may first present as a child-on-child incident. See appendix 4 for more information on assessing adult-involved incidents
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to their SEN)
- What the DSL knows about the images or videos suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the images or videos is under 13
- The DSL has reason to believe a pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming)

If none of the above apply then the DSL, in consultation with the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate, may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. The decision will be made and recorded in line with the procedures set out in this policy.

### **Further review by the DSL**

If at the initial review stage a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or local authority children's social care, the DSL will conduct a further review to establish the facts and assess the risks.

They will hold interviews with the pupils involved (if appropriate).

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a pupil has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to local authority children's social care and/or the police immediately.

### **Informing parents/carers**

The DSL will inform parents/carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

### **Referring to the police**

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the police, this will be done through dialing 101.

### **Recording incidents**

All incidents of sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, and the decisions made in responding to them, will be recorded. The record-keeping arrangements set out in section 14 of this policy also apply to recording these incidents.

### **Curriculum coverage**

Pupils are taught about the issues surrounding the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes as part of our relationships and sex education and computing programmes. Teaching covers the following in relation to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes:

- What it is

- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive and when it may be deemed as online sexual harassment
- Issues of legality
- The risk of damage to people's feelings and reputation

Pupils also learn the strategies and skills needed to manage:

- Specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images
- The receipt of such images

This policy on the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes is also shared with pupils so they are aware of the processes the school will follow in the event of an incident.

Teaching follows best practice in delivering safe and effective education, including:

- Putting safeguarding first
- Approaching from the perspective of the child
- Promoting dialogue and understanding
- Empowering and enabling children and young people
- Never frightening or scare-mongering
- Challenging victim-blaming attitudes

## **7.10 Reporting systems for our pupils**

Where there is a safeguarding concern, we will take the child's wishes and feelings into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

We recognise the importance of ensuring pupils feel safe and comfortable to come forward and report any concerns and/or allegations.

To achieve this, we will:

- Put systems in place for pupils to confidently report abuse
- Ensure our reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for pupils
- Make it clear to pupils that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback

Each academy within Four Hills Education Trust is responsible for developing and maintaining clear, accessible, and age-appropriate reporting systems that enable pupils to confidently raise safeguarding concerns. These systems must reflect the Trust's commitment to listening to children and acting in their best interests.

Local safeguarding policies must include:

- A description of how pupils can report concerns (e.g. trusted adults, anonymous reporting boxes, digital platforms)
- How pupils are made aware of these systems, including through the curriculum (e.g. PSHE, RSE), assemblies, and visual displays
- Measures to ensure pupils feel safe and supported when making a disclosure, including reassurance about confidentiality and follow-up

- Named staff members pupils can approach, and how those staff are introduced to pupils
- How feedback is gathered from pupils to improve safeguarding practice

While the Trust sets the overarching expectations, each school must tailor its approach to suit its pupil population and ensure that reporting systems are actively promoted, regularly reviewed, and embedded in the school's safeguarding culture.

## 8. Online safety and the use of mobile technology

Four Hills Education Trust recognises the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. Technology plays a significant role in many safeguarding and wellbeing concerns, and our Trust-wide approach ensures that all academies implement robust systems to protect pupils, staff, and the wider school community.

This section summarises our Trust's expectations. Each academy must either adopt the Trust's standalone policies on Online Safety and Mobile Phone Use, or develop local versions that reflect these principles and meet the needs of their school community.

### Trust-Wide Aims

To address the risks associated with online activity and mobile technology, the Trust aims to:

- Implement robust filtering and monitoring systems across all school networks and devices
- Protect and educate pupils, staff, volunteers, and governors in the safe and responsible use of technology
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile and smart technology (referred to as "mobile phones")
- Establish mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate online safety concerns

### Four Key Categories of Online Risk

Our approach is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

- Content – exposure to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material (e.g. pornography, racism, extremism, misinformation)
- Contact – harmful interactions with others online (e.g. grooming, exploitation, peer pressure)
- Conduct – unsafe or harmful online behaviour (e.g. sharing explicit images, cyberbullying)
- Commerce – financial risks (e.g. scams, gambling, phishing)

## Trust-Wide Measures

To meet these aims, Four Hills Education Trust will:

- Educate pupils about online safety through the curriculum, including:
  - Safe use of social media, internet, and technology
  - Protecting personal information
  - Recognising unacceptable behaviour online
  - Reporting cyberbullying, including when witnessed
- Train staff on online safety during induction and annually, covering:
  - Cyberbullying and online radicalisation
  - Filtering and monitoring responsibilities
  - Expectations for safe internet use
- Engage parents/carers through:
  - Website guidance and newsletters
  - Parents' evenings and safeguarding briefings
  - Clear procedures for raising online safety concerns
- Set expectations for staff use of mobile phones and cameras, including:
  - Personal phones used only during non-contact time
  - No photos or recordings of pupils on personal devices
  - Compliance with EYFS requirements for early years settings
- Require all members of the school community to sign acceptable use agreements covering:
  - Use of school ICT systems
  - Internet and mobile phone use
  - Consequences for breaches of policy
- Ensure staff understand their powers to search pupils' phones, in line with DfE guidance on searching, screening, and confiscation
- Maintain robust filtering and monitoring systems to limit exposure to online risks, including those associated with generative AI tools
- Conduct annual reviews and risk assessments of online safety practices across all academies

- Provide regular safeguarding updates, including online safety, to all staff at least annually
- Review this safeguarding policy annually, ensuring online safety procedures are up to date and consistently implemented

### **Local Adaptation and Early Years Requirements**

Each academy must ensure that its local safeguarding policy includes:

- Specific details of its filtering and monitoring systems
- Procedures for managing mobile phone use and camera access
- Additional detail for early years settings, in line with paragraph 3.6 of the EYFS statutory framework

For full details, please refer to the Trust's standalone Online Safety Policy available on the Trust website.

While this policy sets out the overarching safeguarding principles and expectations for Four Hills Education Trust, each academy within the Trust is required to develop and maintain its own safeguarding policy that reflects the specific procedures, systems, and contextual needs of its school community.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- School-specific reporting systems for pupils
- Local referral pathways and safeguarding partnership protocols
- Roles and contact details of Designated Safeguarding Leads and deputies
- Procedures for managing child-on-child abuse, online safety, and mobile technology
- Support structures for pupils, staff, and families

These local policies must align with the Trust's safeguarding framework and statutory guidance, and will be reviewed annually by the Trust Safeguarding Lead to ensure consistency and compliance.

## **8.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)**

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini.

Four Hills Education Trust recognises that AI has many uses, including enhancing teaching and learning, and in helping to protect and safeguard pupils. However, AI may also have the potential to facilitate abuse (e.g. bullying and grooming) and/or expose pupils to harmful content. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

Four Hills Education Trust will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully pupils in line with this policy and our anti-bullying/behaviour/ artificial intelligence policy.



Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools while they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the Four Hills Education Trust. Our trust/school's requirements for filtering and monitoring also apply to the use of AI, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## **9. Notifying parents or carers**

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents or carers. The DSL will normally do this in the event of a suspicion or disclosure. Other staff will only talk to parents or carers about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents or carers would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

The DSL will, along with any relevant agencies (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis):

- Meet with the victim's parents or carers, with the victim, to discuss what's being put in place to safeguard them, and understand their wishes in terms of what support they may need and how the report will be progressed
- Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss support for them, and what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g. moving them out of classes with the victim, and the reason(s) behind any decision(s)

## **10. Pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues**

We recognise that pupils with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Children with disabilities are more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, exploitation and neglect in this group, including:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- Pupils being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other pupils
- The potential for pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs



- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in school or being able to understand the consequences of doing so

Any abuse involving pupils with SEND will require close liaison with the DSL (or deputy) and the SENCO).

Four Hills Education Trust recognises that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or certain health conditions, may face additional safeguarding challenges. While this policy outlines the Trust's overarching safeguarding principles, each academy within the Trust is required to detail its own **pastoral support systems, communication strategies, and intervention procedures** tailored to the needs of its pupil population.

Local safeguarding policies must include:

- Specific pastoral support available for pupils with SEND
- Strategies to overcome communication barriers and promote pupil voice
- Roles of the SENCO and DSL in managing safeguarding concerns involving SEND pupils
- Referral pathways to external agencies and specialist services
- Measures to prevent and respond to prejudice-based bullying and peer isolation
- Curriculum adaptations to support cognitive understanding and online safety

## 11. Pupils with a social worker

Pupils may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

Where we are aware that a pupil has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks
- The provision of pastoral and/or academic support

## 12. Looked-after and previously looked-after children

We will ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked-after children and previously looked-after children safe. In particular, we will ensure that:

- Appropriate staff have relevant information about children's looked after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, and care arrangements
- The DSL has details of local authority children's social workers and relevant virtual school heads

Each academy within Four Hills Education Trust will appoint a **Designated Teacher**, in line with statutory guidance, who is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. This role must be held by a qualified teacher and be clearly identified in the school's safeguarding and inclusion policies. The designated teacher is appropriately trained and has the relevant qualifications and experience to perform the role.

As part of their role, the designated teacher will:

- Work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Work with virtual school heads to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children, including discussing how pupil premium plus funding can be best used to support looked-after children and meet the needs identified in their personal education plans

## 13. Pupils who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning

*This section is subject to ongoing review, in line with the Department for Education's commitment to publish updated guidance on supporting gender questioning children as part of future revisions to Keeping Children Safe in Education.*

We recognise that pupils who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children. See our behaviour policy for more detail on how we prevent bullying based on gender or sexuality.

We also recognise that LGBTQ+ children are more likely to experience poor mental health. Any concerns should be reported to the DSL.

When families/carers are making decisions about support for gender questioning pupils, they should be encouraged to seek clinical help and advice. This should be done as early as possible when supporting pre-pubertal children.

When supporting a gender questioning pupil, we will take a cautious approach as there are still unknowns around the impact of social transition, and a pupil may have wider vulnerability, such as a complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases, autism and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

We will also consider the broad range of their individual needs, in partnership with their parents/carers (other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the pupil). We will also including any clinical advice that is available and how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying.

Risks can be compounded where children lack trusted adults with whom they can be open. We therefore aim to reduce the additional barriers faced and create a culture where they can speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

## 14. Complaints and concerns about school safeguarding policies

### 14.1 Complaints against staff

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with the Trust's procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff (see Appendix 3). These procedures are consistent across all academies within Four Hills Education Trust and comply with statutory guidance.

### 14.2 Other complaints

Safeguarding-related complaints that do not involve staff allegations — such as those concerning pupil welfare, premises safety, or safeguarding systems — will be managed in line with the Trust's Complaints Policy. Each academy may include additional local procedures to reflect their operational context, including how complaints are received, logged, and escalated.

Early years providers within the Trust must also comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 3.75 of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which outlines specific expectations for handling complaints in early years settings.

### 14.3 Whistleblowing

Four Hills Education Trust has a separate Whistleblowing Policy that applies across all academies. This policy outlines how staff can raise concerns about safeguarding practices, including poor or unsafe behaviour, potential failures in safeguarding systems, or malpractice involving pupils or staff.

Key principles include:

- Clear procedures for reporting concerns internally (e.g. to the Headteacher, CEO, or Trust Safeguarding Lead) and externally (e.g. to Ofsted or the local authority)
- Protection for whistleblowers under the Public Interest Disclosure Act
- Assurance that concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately
- Specific guidance for early years providers, in line with paragraph 3.76 of the EYFS statutory framework

Each academy must ensure that staff are aware of the Trust's whistleblowing procedures and know how to access support if they wish to raise a concern.

For full details, refer to the Trust's Complaints Policy and Whistleblowing Policy, available on the Trust website or from the school office.

## 15. Record-keeping

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the rationale for those decisions, must be recorded in writing. This should include instances where referrals were

or were not made to another agency such as local authority children's social care or the Prevent programme, etc. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will 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

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child.

Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.

If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded promptly and securely, and separately from the main pupil file.

To allow the new school/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this should be within:

- **5 days** for an in-year transfer, or within
- **The first 5 days** of the start of a new term

In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

In addition:

- Appendix 2 sets out our policy on record-keeping specifically with respect to recruitment and pre-appointment checks
- Appendix 3 sets out our policy on record-keeping with respect to allegations of abuse made against staff

### **15.1 Local record-keeping arrangements**

While Four Hills Education Trust sets the overarching expectations for safeguarding record-keeping, each academy within the Trust is responsible for outlining its own procedures in their local safeguarding policy. These procedures must reflect the operational systems in place at the school and comply with statutory data protection requirements.

Local policies must include:

- Whether safeguarding records are maintained electronically, on paper, or both
- Where and how records are securely stored
- How confidentiality is upheld, including access controls and staff responsibilities

- Retention periods for safeguarding documentation, in line with Trust and legal guidance
- Procedures for sharing information with external agencies, including when and how this is appropriate under local safeguarding partnership protocols

## 16. Training

### 16.1 All staff

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training at induction, including on whistle-blowing procedures and online safety, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities, and can identify signs of possible abuse, exploitation or neglect.

This training will be regularly updated and will:

- Be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole-trust safeguarding approach and wider staff training, and curriculum planning
- Be in line with advice from the 3 safeguarding partners
- Include online safety, including an understanding of the expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff around filtering and monitoring
- Have regard to the Teachers' Standards to support the expectation that all teachers:
  - Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe environment
  - Have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including on online safety, as required but at least annually (for example, through emails, e-bulletins and staff meetings).

Contractors who are provided through a private finance initiative (PFI) or similar contract will also receive safeguarding training.

Volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

### 16.2 The DSL and deputies

The DSL and deputies will undertake child protection and safeguarding training at least every 2 years.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They, or any other designated Prevent lead, will also undertake more in-depth Prevent awareness training, including on extremist and terrorist ideologies.

### 16.3 Trustees and local governors

All trustees and local governors receive training about safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) at induction, which is regularly updated. This is to make sure that they:

- Have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities, such as providing strategic challenge
- Can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support the school to deliver a robust whole-school approach to safeguarding

As the chair of trustees may be required to act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the headteacher they receive training in managing allegations for this purpose.

#### **16.4 Recruitment – interview panels**

At least 1 person conducting any interview for any post at the school will have undertaken safer recruitment training. This will cover, as a minimum, the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures.

See appendix 2 of this policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

#### **16.5 Staff who have contact with pupils and families**

All staff who have contact with children and families will have supervisions which will provide them with support, coaching and training, promote the interests of children and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.


## **17. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO, in conjunction with DSLs. At every review, it will be approved by the full board of trustees [and the locally set safeguarding policies are then reviewed by the local governing body/headteacher.

## **18. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Behaviour
- Staff code of conduct
- Complaints
- Health and safety
- Attendance
- Online safety
- AI
- Equality
- Relationships and sex education

- First aid
  - Curriculum
  - Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children
  - Privacy notices
- 



**These appendices are based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education.**

## Appendix 1: types of abuse

**Abuse**, including neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by 1 definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

**Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse 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
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- 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
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

**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
- 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 (including via the internet)

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**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)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **Appendix 2: safer recruitment and DBS checks – policy and procedures**

# **Safer recruitment policy**

## **Recruitment and selection process**

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

### **Advertising**

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

- Our trust's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- That safeguarding checks will be undertaken
- The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children
- Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account

### **Application forms**

Our application forms will:

- Include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)
- Include a copy of, or link to, our child protection and safeguarding policy and our policy on the employment of ex-offenders

### **Shortlisting**

Our shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people and will:

- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them
- Explore all potential concerns

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

- Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information we may ask for includes:
  - If they have a criminal history
  - Whether they are included on the barred list
  - Whether they are prohibited from teaching
  - Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales

- Any relevant overseas information
- Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true

We will also consider carrying out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online. Shortlisted candidates will be informed that we may carry out these checks as part of our due diligence process.

### Seeking references and checking employment history

We will obtain references **prior to interview** wherever possible. Any concerns raised in a reference will be explored further with the referee and discussed with the candidate during the interview process.

When seeking references, we will:

- Not accept open references
- Liaise directly with referees and verify any information contained within references
- Ensure references are provided by the candidate's **current or most recent employer** and are **completed by a senior manager** (e.g. headteacher, principal, or department head)
- Where the referee is school-based, request that the reference be **confirmed by the headteacher or principal** as accurate, particularly in relation to disciplinary investigations or safeguarding concerns
- Obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed
- Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children, if they are not currently working with children
- Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and follow up on any inconsistencies with the candidate
- Resolve any concerns before confirming an appointment

This process ensures that safeguarding and professional standards are upheld across all recruitment within Four Hills Education Trust.

### Interview and selection

When interviewing candidates, we will:

- Probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently, and ask candidates to explain this
- Explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate's suitability to work with children
- Record all information considered and decisions made

### Pre-appointment vetting checks

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the trust's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals' personnel

files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

### **New staff**

All offers of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks. When appointing new staff, we will:

- Verify their identity
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken
- Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available
- Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- Verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards
- Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate
- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher
- Carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK. These could include, where available:
  - For all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records checks for overseas applicants](#)
  - For teaching positions: obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach
- Check that candidates taking up a management position\* are not subject to a prohibition from management (section 128) direction made by the secretary of state

\* Management positions are most likely to include, but are not limited to, headteachers, principals and deputy/assistant headteachers.

Where required by the relevant legislation: We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

**Regulated activity** means a person who will be:

- Responsible, on a regular basis in a school or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or



- Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or
- Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not

### **Existing staff**

In certain circumstances we will carry out all the relevant checks on existing staff as if the individual was a new member of staff. These circumstances are when:

- There are concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children; or
- An individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or
- There has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more

We will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- We believe the individual has engaged in [relevant conduct](#); or
- We believe the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#); or
- We believe the 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e. they may harm a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm); and
- The individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left

### **Agency and third-party staff**

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

### **Contractors**

We will ensure that any contractor, or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at the school has had the appropriate level of DBS check (this includes contractors who are provided through a PFI or similar contract). This will be:

- An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity
- An enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.

We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.

Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances.

We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

Where required by the relevant legislation: For self-employed contractors such as music teachers or sports coaches, we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

### **Trainee/student teachers**

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out.

Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.

Where required by the relevant legislation: In both cases, this includes checks to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006.

### **Volunteers**

We will:

- Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity
- Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity
- Carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment
- Where required by the relevant legislation: Ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought

### **Trustees, members local governors**

All trustees, local governors and members will have an enhanced DBS check without barred list information.

They will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information if working in regulated activity.

The chair of the board will have their DBS check countersigned by the secretary of state. All proprietors, trustees, local governors and members will also have the following checks:

- A section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#)) – though section 128 checks are only

required for local governors if they have retained or been delegated any management responsibilities

- Identity
- Right to work in the UK
- Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK

### **Staff working in alternative provision settings**

Where we place a pupil with an alternative provision provider, we obtain written confirmation from the provider that they have carried out the appropriate safeguarding checks on individuals working there that we would otherwise perform.

### **Adults who supervise pupils on work experience**

When organising work experience, we will ensure that policies and procedures are in place to protect children from harm.

We will also consider whether it is necessary for barred list checks to be carried out on the individuals who supervise a pupil under 16 on work experience. This will depend on the specific circumstances of the work experience, including the nature of the supervision, the frequency of the activity being supervised, and whether the work is regulated activity.

### **Pupils staying with host families**

Where the school makes arrangements for pupils to be provided with care and accommodation by a host family to which they are not related (for example, during a foreign exchange visit), we will request enhanced DBS checks with barred list information on those people.

Where the school is organising such hosting arrangements overseas and host families cannot be checked in the same way, we will work with our partner schools abroad to ensure that similar assurances are undertaken prior to the visit

## **Appendix 3: allegations of abuse made against staff**

# **Allegations against staff (including low-level concerns) policy**

## **Section 1: allegations that may meet the harm threshold**

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor, has:

- 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 – this includes behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school

If we're in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, we will consult our local authority designated officer (LADO).

We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the headteacher, or the chair of trustees where the headteacher is the subject of the allegation. The case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

## **Suspension of the accused until the case is resolved**

Suspension of the accused will not be the default position, and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned
- Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children
- Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children
- Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment and parents/carers have been consulted
- Temporarily redeploying the individual to another role in a different location, for example to an alternative school or other work for the trust

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the trust's personnel adviser and the designated officer at the local authority, as well as the police and local authority children's social care where they have been involved.

## **Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations**

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation

- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive, or to cause harm to the subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

### Procedure for dealing with allegations

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the case manager will take the following steps:

- Conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with the steps below
- Discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or local authority children's social care services. (The case manager may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police *before* consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the case manager will notify the designated officer as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)
- Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or local authority children's social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or local authority children's social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies
- Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or local authority children's social care services, as appropriate
- Where the case manager is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the individual's family, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and make a risk assessment of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to local authority children's social care
- **If immediate suspension is considered necessary**, agree and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details
- **If it is decided that no further action is to be taken** in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and



by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation

- **If it is decided that further action is needed**, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or local authority children's social care services as appropriate
- **Provide support to the individual facing the allegation.** This includes:
  - Assigning a **named representative** to keep the individual informed
  - Offering access to **welfare support**, such as:
    - Trade union representation
    - A trusted colleague or mentor
    - Counselling services available through the Trust or local authority
    - Occupational health or medical advice, if appropriate
  - Ensuring the individual understands the process and their rights throughout
- Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with local authority children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice
- Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case (only in relation to their child – no information will be shared regarding the staff member)
- Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child

For early years provision: we will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegations being made.

If the trust is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the trust will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

### **Additional considerations for supply teachers and all contracted staff**

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the trust, such as a supply teacher or contracted staff member provided by an agency, we will take the actions below in addition to our standard procedures.

- We will not decide to stop using an individual due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with our LADO to determine a suitable outcome

- The local governing body will discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the individual, or redeploy them to another part of the school/trust, while the school carries out the investigation
- We will involve the agency fully, but the school/trust will take the lead in collecting the necessary information and providing it to the LADO as required
- We will address issues such as information sharing, to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (we will do this, for example, as part of the allegations management meeting or by liaising directly with the agency where necessary)

When using an agency, we will inform them of our process for managing allegations, and keep them updated about our policies as necessary, and will invite the agency's HR manager or equivalent to meetings as appropriate.

### **Timescales**

We will deal with all allegations as quickly and effectively as possible and will endeavour to comply with the following timescales, where reasonably practicable:

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious should be resolved within 1 week
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be taken within 3 working days
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, this should be held within 15 working days

However, these are objectives only and where they are not met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter.

### **Specific actions**

#### **Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution**

The case manager will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or local authority children's social care services.

#### **Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated**

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the trust will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the trust will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

#### **Individuals returning to work after suspension**

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The case manager will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation, if they are still attending the school.

#### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports**

If a report is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the DSL will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation is in need of help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious allegations**

If an allegation is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the LADO and case manager will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation needs help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to local authority children's social care may be appropriate
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it

### **Confidentiality and information sharing**

The trust will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The case manager will take advice from the LADO, police and local authority children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

### **Record-keeping**

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved
- Notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome
- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

In these cases, the school will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with local authority children's social care or the police as appropriate.

We will retain all records at least until the accused individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

## **References**

When providing employer references, we will:

- Not refer to any allegation that has been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious, or any repeated allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated or malicious
- Include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions

## **Learning lessons**

After any cases where the allegations are *substantiated*, the case manager will review the circumstances of the case with the local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the trust's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual

For all other cases, the case manager will consider the facts and determine whether any improvements can be made.

## **Non-recent allegations**

Abuse can be reported, no matter how long ago it happened.

We will report any non-recent allegations made by a child to the LADO in line with our local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child, we will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police.

## **Section 2: concerns that do not meet the harm threshold**

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the school

- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

### **Definition of low-level concerns**

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school 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 allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating pupils

### **Sharing low-level concerns**

- Four Hills Education Trust recognises the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust, and transparency to encourage all staff to confidently and confidentially share low-level concerns. These concerns may relate to behaviour that does not meet the threshold for a formal allegation but could still pose a risk to pupils or indicate a need for early intervention.
- We will create and maintain this culture by:
  - Ensuring staff are clear about what constitutes appropriate behaviour and are confident in distinguishing expected conduct from concerning, problematic, or inappropriate behaviour – in themselves and in others
  - Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns in line with **Section 7.7** of this policy
  - Encouraging staff to **self-refer** if they feel they may have acted in a way that could be misinterpreted or cause concern
  - Addressing unprofessional behaviour early and constructively, with a focus on support and improvement
  - Providing responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of concerns when they are raised
  - Using low-level concerns to help identify and address any weaknesses in the Trust's or school's safeguarding systems

### **Creating an Open Culture in Schools**

- Each academy within the Trust is expected to foster an environment where staff feel safe and supported in raising concerns. This includes:

- Visible and proactive leadership from the **Headteacher** and **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**, who model transparency and openness
- Regular safeguarding briefings and training that reinforce the importance of professional boundaries and reporting mechanisms
- Clear, confidential reporting procedures for low-level concerns, which may include:
  - A designated email address or secure form
  - A named safeguarding contact for informal conversations
  - Anonymous reporting options, where appropriate
- Assurance that concerns will be handled discreetly, fairly, and without retaliation
- Opportunities for staff to reflect on safeguarding practice through supervision, peer discussion, or safeguarding reviews
- All low-level concerns will be recorded and monitored by the DSL or Headteacher, and patterns or repeated behaviours will be escalated appropriately. The Trust Safeguarding Lead will oversee the implementation of this framework across all academies and ensure consistency in approach.
- responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school or trust's safeguarding system

### **Responding to low-level concerns**

If the concern is raised via a third party, the headteacher will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The headteacher will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the [staff code of conduct. The headteacher will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

### **Guidance and Oversight**

This approach is informed by the report: *Developing and Implementing a Low-Level Concerns Policy: A Guide for Organisations Which Work with Children* (Farrer & Co, endorsed by the DfE)

The Trust Safeguarding Lead will oversee the implementation of this framework across all academies and ensure consistency with statutory guidance (*KCSIE 2025*). Each school must ensure staff are trained in recognising and reporting low-level concerns and that procedures are clearly communicated and accessible.

### **Record keeping**

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:



- Kept confidential, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the school

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

## **References**

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

## Appendix 4: specific safeguarding issues

### Assessing adult-involved nude and semi-nude sharing incidents

This section is based on Annex A of the UK Council of Internet Safety's [advice for education settings](#).

All adult-involved nude and semi-nude image sharing incidents are child sexual abuse offences and must immediately be referred to police/social care. However, as adult-involved incidents can present as child-on-child nude/semi-nude sharing, it may be difficult to initially assess adult involvement.

There are two types of common adult-involved incidents: sexually motivated incidents and financially motivated incidents.

#### Sexually motivated incidents

In this type of incident, an adult offender obtains nude and semi-nudes directly from children and young people using online platforms.

To make initial contact, the offender may present as themselves or use a false identity on the platform, sometimes posing as a child or young person to encourage a response and build trust. The offender often grooms the child or young person on social media, in chat rooms or on gaming platforms and may then move the conversation to a private messaging app or an end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) environment where a request for a nude or semi-nude is made. To encourage the child or young person to create and share nude or semi-nude, the offender may share pornography or child sexual abuse material (images of other young people), including AI-generated material.

Once a child or young person shares a nude or semi-nude, an offender may blackmail the child or young person into sending more images by threatening to release them online and/or send them to friends and family.

Potential signs of adult-involved grooming and coercion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications which may include the offender sharing unsolicited images
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Coerced/pressured into doing sexual things, including creating nudes and semi-nudes
- Offered something of value such as money or gaming credits
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Threatened or blackmailed into carrying out further sexual activity. This may follow the child or young person initially sharing the image or the offender sharing a digitally manipulated image of the child or young person to extort 'real' images

## **Financially motivated incidents**

Financially motivated sexual extortion (often known as 'sextortion') is an adult-involved incident in which an adult offender (or offenders) threatens to release nudes or semi-nudes of a child or young person unless they pay money or do something else to benefit them. Throughout 2022 and 2023, there has been a considerable increase in reporting of these incidents.

Unlike other adult-involved incidents, financially motivated sexual extortion is usually carried out by offenders working in sophisticated organised crime groups (OCGs) overseas and are only motivated by profit. Adults are usually targeted by these groups too.

Offenders will often use a false identity, sometimes posing as a child or young person, or hack another young person's account to make initial contact. To financially blackmail the child or young person, they may:

- Groom or coerce the child or young person into sending nudes or semi-nudes and financially blackmail them
- Use images that have been stolen from the child or young person taken through hacking their account
- Use digitally manipulated images, including AI-generated images, of the child or young person

The offender may demand payment or the use of the victim's bank account for the purposes of money laundering.

Potential signs of adult-involved financially motivated sexual extortion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person. They may be contacted by a hacked account of a child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications which may include the offender sharing an image first
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Pressured into taking nudes or semi-nudes
- Told they have been hacked and they have access to their images, personal information and contacts
- Blackmailed into sending money or sharing bank account details after sharing an image or the offender sharing hacked or digitally manipulated images of the child or young person

## **Children missing from education**

A child going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

### **Child criminal exploitation**

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. For example, young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- Suffering from changes in emotional wellbeing
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- Going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- Regularly missing school or education
- Not taking part in education

If a member of staff suspects CCE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

### **Child sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. It may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

CSE can include both physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity. It can also happen online. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam. CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge, for example through others copying videos or images.

In addition to the CCE indicators above, indicators of CSE can include a child:

- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant

If a member of staff suspects CSE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

### **Child-on-child abuse**

Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of school. It can also take place both face-to-face and online, and can occur simultaneously between the 2.

Our school has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are no reports, that doesn't mean that this kind of abuse isn't happening.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages; the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups; and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who don't want to receive such content.

If staff have any concerns about child-on-child abuse, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In



particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

When considering instances of harmful sexual behaviour between children, we will consider their ages and stages of development. We recognise that children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse and trauma, and will offer them appropriate support.

### **Domestic abuse**

Children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse and/or violence at home where it occurs between family members. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse (abuse in intimate personal relationships between children) and child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse. It can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological or emotional. It can also include ill treatment that isn't physical, as well as witnessing the 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.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background, and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. Children who witness domestic abuse are also victims.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children and affect their health, wellbeing, development and ability to learn.

If police are called to an incident of domestic abuse and any children in the household have experienced the incident, the police will inform the key adult in school (usually the designated safeguarding lead) before the child or children arrive at school the following day.

The DSL will provide support according to the child's needs and update records about their circumstances.

### **Homelessness**

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare.

The DSL and deputies will be aware of contact details and referral routes in to the local housing authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity (where appropriate and in accordance with local procedures).

Where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, the DSL will also make a referral to local authority children's social care.

### **So-called 'honour-based' abuse (including FGM and forced marriage)**

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community, including FGM, forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

Abuse committed in this context often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All forms of HBA are abuse and will be handled and escalated as such. All staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA or already having suffered it. If staff have a concern, they will speak to the DSL, who will activate local safeguarding procedures.

## **FGM**

The DSL will make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to be alert to children affected by FGM or at risk of FGM.

Section 7.3 of this policy sets out the procedures to be followed if a staff member discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out or suspects that a pupil is at risk of FGM.

Indicators that FGM has already occurred include:

- A pupil confiding in a professional that FGM has taken place
- A mother/family member disclosing that FGM has been carried out
- A family/pupil already being known to social services in relation to other safeguarding issues
- A girl:
  - Having difficulty walking, sitting or standing, or looking uncomfortable
  - Finding it hard to sit still for long periods of time (where this was not a problem previously)
  - Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating
  - Having frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems
  - Avoiding physical exercise or missing PE
  - Being repeatedly absent from school, or absent for a prolonged period
  - Demonstrating increased emotional and psychological needs – for example, withdrawal or depression, or significant change in behaviour
  - Being reluctant to undergo any medical examinations
  - Asking for help, but not being explicit about the problem
  - Talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

Potential signs that a pupil may be at risk of FGM include:

- The girl's family having a history of practising FGM (this is the biggest risk factor to consider)
- FGM being known to be practised in the girl's community or country of origin
- A parent or family member expressing concern that FGM may be carried out

- A family not engaging with professionals (health, education or other) or already being known to social care in relation to other safeguarding issues
- A girl:
  - Having a mother, older sibling or cousin who has undergone FGM
  - Having limited level of integration within UK society
  - Confiding to a professional that she is to have a “special procedure” or to attend a special occasion to “become a woman”
  - Talking about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent, or parents/carers stating that they or a relative will take the girl out of the country for a prolonged period
  - Requesting help from a teacher or another adult because she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk of FGM
  - Talking about FGM in conversation – for example, a girl may tell other children about it (although it is important to take into account the context of the discussion)
  - Being unexpectedly absent from school
  - Having sections missing from her ‘red book’ (child health record) and/or attending a travel clinic or equivalent for vaccinations/anti-malarial medication

The above indicators and risk factors are not intended to be exhaustive.

### **Forced marriage**

Forcing a person into marriage is a crime. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of 1 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.

It is also illegal to cause a child under the age of 18 to marry, even if violence, threats or coercion are not involved.

Staff will receive training around forced marriage and the presenting symptoms. We are aware of the ‘1 chance’ rule, i.e. we may only have 1 chance to speak to the potential victim and only 1 chance to save them.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into marriage, they will speak to the pupil about their concerns in a secure and private place. They will then report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- Speak to the pupil about the concerns in a secure and private place
- Activate the local safeguarding procedures and refer the case to the local authority’s designated officer
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or [fmu@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fmu@fco.gov.uk)
- Refer the pupil to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor, learning mentor, or school counsellor, as appropriate

## Preventing radicalisation

- **Radicalisation** refers to the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence
- **Extremism** is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:
  - Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
  - Undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
  - Intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results outlined in either of the above points
- **Terrorism** is an action that:
  - Endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people;
  - Causes serious damage to property; or
  - Seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system

The use or threat of terrorism must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Schools have a duty to prevent children from becoming involved with or supporting terrorism. The DSL, or designated Prevent lead, will undertake in-depth Prevent awareness training, including on extremist and terrorist ideologies. They'll make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to identify children at risk.

We will assess the risk of children in our school from becoming involved with or supporting terrorism. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the potential risk in our local area, in collaboration with our local safeguarding partners and local police force.

We will ensure that suitable internet filtering is in place, and equip our pupils to stay safe online at school and at home.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period. Staff will be alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

The government website [Educate Against Hate](#) and the [NSPCC](#) say that signs that a pupil is being radicalised can include:

- Refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from themselves
- Becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- Changes in friendship groups and appearance
- Rejecting activities they used to enjoy
- Converting to a new religion

- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- An unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- Expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions
- Accessing extremist material online, including on social media
- Possessing extremist literature
- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining, or seeking to join, extremist organisations

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem, or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour – staff should have confidence in their instincts and seek advice if something feels wrong.

If staff are concerned about a pupil, they will follow our procedures set out in section 7.5 of this policy, including discussing their concerns with the DSL.

Staff should **always** take action if they are worried.

Further information on the school's measures to prevent radicalisation are set out in other school policies and procedures.

### **Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur:

- Between 2 children of any age and sex
- Through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children
- Online and face to face (both physically and verbally)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap.

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.

If a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they 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 any form of abuse or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When supporting victims, staff will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again
- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence, and show sensitivity to their needs
- 

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

If staff have any concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

## **Serious violence**

Indicators which may signal that a child is at risk from, or involved with, serious violent crime may include:

- Increased absence from school
- Change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- Significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions (this could indicate that the child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation (see above))

Risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence include:



- Being male
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- Having experienced child maltreatment
- Having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery

Staff will be aware of these indicators and risk factors. If a member of staff has a concern about a pupil being involved in, or at risk of, serious violence, they will report this to the DSL.

### **Checking the identity and suitability of visitors**

All visitors will be required to verify their identity to the satisfaction of staff and to leave their belongings, including their mobile phone(s), in a safe place during their visit.

If the visitor is unknown to the setting, we will check their credentials and reason for visiting before allowing them to enter the setting. Visitors should be ready to produce identification.

Visitors are expected to sign the visitors' book and wear a visitor's badge.

Visitors to the school who are visiting for a professional purpose, such as educational psychologists and school improvement officers, will be asked to show photo ID and:

- Will be asked to show their DBS certificate, which will be checked alongside their photo ID; or
- The organisation sending the professional, such as the LA or educational psychology service, will provide prior written confirmation that an appropriate level of DBS check has been carried out (if this is provided, we will not ask to see the DBS certificate)

All other visitors, including visiting speakers, will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times. We will not invite into the school any speaker who is known to disseminate extremist views, and will carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any individual or organisation using school facilities is not seeking to disseminate extremist views or radicalise pupils or staff.

### **Non-collection of children**

While Four Hills Education Trust sets the overarching safeguarding expectations, each academy within the Trust is responsible for detailing its own procedures for managing incidents involving the non-collection of children and missing pupils. These procedures must be clearly documented in the school's safeguarding policy or referenced in a separate operational policy.

Local procedures must include:

- Steps for contacting parents/carers and emergency contacts
- Arrangements for supervising and safeguarding the child until collected
- How and where the incident will be recorded
- Escalation protocols if contact cannot be made or concerns arise

- Roles and responsibilities of staff involved in managing the situation

### **Missing pupils**

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible.

- Immediate actions to locate the child and secure the site
- Notification of parents/carers and, where necessary, emergency services
- Recording and reporting of the incident, including follow-up actions
- Measures to prevent recurrence and review safeguarding implications

Each school must ensure these procedures are regularly reviewed, communicated to staff, and aligned with local safeguarding partnership guidance.