



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (2021-22)

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Rationale and introduction

Ponteland High School fully recognises its responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

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

- Staff code of conduct
- Attendance
- Anti-bullying
- Behaviour (including the use of reasonable force and exclusions)
- Acceptable use of ICT and E-Safety
- Complaints
- Whistleblowing
- SEND
- Recruitment and selection (this document will reference your single central record which is statutory*)
- Confidentiality and information sharing
- Children Missing Education
- Relationships & Sex Education
- Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations against staff*
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school
- The Looked After Children and Post Looked After Children Policy (Including arrangements for the designated person)

School leaders are committed to creating a strong culture of safeguarding within the organisation that goes beyond the required compliance measures. Within staff we promote vigilance and provide annual training and regular updates to ensure that all colleagues are informed and attentive to this aspect of their role.

We are committed to taking timely and appropriate safeguarding action for children or learners who need extra help or who may be suffering or likely to suffer harm. We adhere to our statutory and other responsibilities ensuring these are met and that staff exercise their professional judgement in keeping children and learners safe. This policy contributes to the school's commitment to all local and national requirements.

This policy is available on the school website (www.ponthigh.org.uk) and is included in the staff handbook/electronically, and made available to all volunteers and visitors. This policy should be read in conjunction with our other school policies listed above, particularly our attendance, behaviour, E-safety, SEND policies and staff code of conduct.

Please not in the light of the current COVID pandemic we have made addendums to this policy which include:

- **School Risk Assessment**
- **PHS Safeguarding in Remote Education**

Both documents are available on the school website

Our core safeguarding principles are:

- our driving aims are to ensure our students are happy, feel safe and secure, and achieve exceptionally well
- the school's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance
- to maintain an attitude of "think the unthinkable" and "it could happen here"
- we believe that safer children make more successful learners

This policy will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review.

Child protection statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children/young people are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection.

At Ponteland High School students are taught about safeguarding, including online, through various teaching and learning opportunities and our assembly programme. The school is fully committed to this as part of the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. Children are taught to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it.

The procedures within this policy apply to all staff volunteers, visitors and governors and are consistent with those of the local safeguarding partnership (NSSP).

Policy principles

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

Policy aims

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

For the purposes of this policy the following terminology is used:

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

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's 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.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

Child protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering from or being at risk of suffering significant harm

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

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

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021

The statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021, is issued under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Education (Non-Maintained Special Schools) (England) Regulations 2011. Schools and colleges must have regard to this guidance when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Unless otherwise stated, 'school' in this guidance means all schools, whether maintained, non-maintained or independent, including academies and free schools, alternative provision academies and student referral units.

All staff are issued with a copy at the start of each year and must read, and **evidence** that they understand the content of Part One of this guidance. A record to confirm this is held with our single central record. An annual safeguarding training session takes place in the first week of each academic year with additional sessions throughout the year as required.

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 - Advice for practitioners is non-statutory advice which helps practitioners (everyone who works with children) to identify abuse and neglect and take appropriate action *and copies are available via our CPOMS library.*

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

Roles and Responsibilities

| Role | Named person(s) | Contact details |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) | Lyn Robinson (Assistant Headteacher/SENCo) | l.robinson@ponthigh.org.uk 01661 824711 |
| Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead | Jim Balkwill (Deputy Headteacher) | j.balkwill@ponthigh.org.uk 01661 824711 |
| Headteacher | Kieran McGrane | k.mcgrane@ponthigh.org.uk 01661 824711 |
| E-safety Lead | Mark Warland | m.warland@ponthigh.org.uk 01661 824711 |
| Academy Committee members | Pat Cox / Carole Butler | phs@ponthigh.org.uk |

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- has the status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources and supporting and directing other staff
- is appropriately trained, receiving annual updates and face to face training provided by the safeguarding board every two years.
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the school community
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings
- is alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers
- has a working knowledge of Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) procedures <https://www.proceduresonline.com/northumberlandcs/index.html>
- makes staff aware of NSSP training courses and resources
- agreed processes for providing early help and intervention
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Support.aspx#earlyhelpassessmntforms>
- keeps detailed written records of all concerns using our online Child Protection Monitoring System, ensuring that such records are stored securely but kept separate from, the student's general file
- refers cases of suspected abuse to children's social care or police as appropriate
- notifies children's social care if a child with a child protection plan has unexplained absences
- ensures that when a student leaves the school, their child protection file is sent securely to the new school (separately from the main student file and ensuring secure transit) and confirmation of receipt is obtained. The student's social worker should also be informed of the change in school
- attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences
- coordinates the school's contribution to child protection plans
- ensures that all appropriate staff members have a working knowledge and understanding of their role in case conferences, core groups and other multi-agency planning meetings, to ensure that they attend and are able to effectively contribute when required to do so
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including the NSSP
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the child protection policy
- ensures that the child protection policy and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated annually, working with governors and trustees
- liaises with the nominated governor and headteacher (where the role is not carried out by the headteacher) as appropriate
- ensures a record of staff attendance at child protection and safeguarding training is maintained
- ensures staff are kept up to date with key priorities within the LA, including learning from serious practice reviews

- makes the child protection & safeguarding policy available publicly, on the school's website or by other means
- ensures parents are aware of the school's role in safeguarding and that referrals about suspected abuse and neglect may be made
- has the lead role for Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour in the school and ensures the school meets all requirements set out in the LA procedures
- reports concern that a student may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism, following the Prevent referral process and refer cases by e-mail to OneCall . If the matter is urgent then Police must be contacted by dialling 999. In cases where further advice from the Police is sought dial 101. The Department of Education has also set up a dedicated telephone helpline for staff and governors to raise concerns around Prevent (020 7340 7264)
- meet all other responsibilities as set out for DSLs in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021

Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the designated safeguarding lead; this lead responsibility will not be delegated.

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

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

NB: If the DSL (or deputy) are not available, staff should contact the Headteacher, and if not available, another member of the Senior Leadership Team to seek advice.

Advice can also be sought from colleagues in One Call, the Local Authority's single point of access on 01670 536400

Headteacher:

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

Academy Committee:

Ensures that the school:

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

The Academy Committee nominates a member (normally the chair) to be responsible for liaising with the local authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the head teacher.

It is the responsibility of the Academy Committee to ensure that the school's safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations procedures consider the procedures and practice of the local authority and NSSP and national guidance.

Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards students we have agreed standards of good practice, which form our code of conduct for all staff. Good practice includes:

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

- applying the use of reasonable force only as a last resort and in compliance with school and NSSP procedures
- referring all concerns about a student's safety and welfare to the DSL, or, if necessary directly to police or children's social care
- following the school's rules with regard to relationships with students and communication with students, including on social media.

Abuse of position of trust

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

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

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

Children who may be particularly vulnerable

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

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

- displaying early signs of abuse and/or neglect
- experiencing anxiety or mental health problems
- looked after or returned home after a period of care
- disabled or have special educational needs
- young carers
- affected by parental substance misuse, domestic violence or parental mental health needs or misusing substances themselves
- asylum seekers
- living away from home or in temporary accommodation
- vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying
- live transient lifestyles
- living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
- vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
- at risk of sexual exploitation
- do not have English as a first language
- at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM)
- at risk of forced marriage
- at risk of being drawn into extremism or being radicalised
- showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation (inc. County Lines)
- privately fostered

This updated list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive.

Helping children to keep themselves safe

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

The school will therefore:

- establish and maintain an environment and positive ethos where children feel secure, supported and encouraged to talk; they are listened to, can learn, develop and feel valued
- ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty
- include in the curriculum, activities and opportunities for PSHE/RSE, which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse, develop resilience and know who to turn to for help

Support for those involved in a child protection issue

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

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

Complaints procedure

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a student or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a student that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Complaints are managed by senior staff, the headteacher and governors in line with our Complaints Procedures (available on the school website). Complaints that escalate to a child protection concern will automatically be managed under the school's child protection procedures.

Complaints from staff against a colleague are dealt with under the school's disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Whistle blowing if you have concerns about a colleague

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague, including supply staff towards a student are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount.

The school's whistleblowing policy, available on the school website, enables staff to raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

All concerns of poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues should be reported to the Headteacher. Complaints about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of the Academy Committee.

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

Allegations against staff

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, including supply staff, governors, volunteers and agency staff, set procedures must be followed including a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events do happen.

A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some professionals do pose a serious risk to students and we must act on every allegation.

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

The school allegation procedure will be used in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a teacher or member of staff (including volunteers) in a school or college that provides education for children under 18 years of age has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children

The full procedures for dealing with allegations against staff can be found in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2021)* and Disciplinary and Grievance Policy.

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

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

Staff training

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

New staff and governors will receive a mandatory briefing during their induction, which includes the school's child protection and safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, staff code of conduct, reporting and recording arrangements, and details for the DSL.

All staff, including the head teacher and governors will receive annual training updates and a detailed programme every 2 years in line with NSSP recommendations. The DSL (and deputies) will receive annual safeguarding training, with subjects to reflect local and national priorities including a refresher session on their roles and responsibilities every two years.

Each year staff provide a signature to confirm they have received a copy of the child protection and safeguarding policy and staff code of conduct, and have read Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 1).

Supply staff and other visiting staff will be given the school's Safeguarding Leaflet and a copy of the school's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

Safer recruitment

Our school endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ safe staff by following the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) and the school's Staff Recruitment procedures.

At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.

The school obtains written confirmation from supply agencies or third-party organisations that agency staff or other individuals who may work in the school have been appropriately checked. The school advises all agencies of their procedures for dealing with allegations, ensuring agencies are fully aware of the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) in relation to the school having a lead role in the management of any allegations, working with the LADO.

Trainee teachers will be checked either by the school or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained.

The school maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken.

Regulated Activity

Schools are 'specified places' which means that the majority of staff and volunteers will be engaged in regulated activity. A fuller explanation of regulated activity can be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) part three.

Volunteers

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

Supervised volunteers

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

Contractors

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

Site security

Visitors to the school, including contractors, are asked to sign in and are given a badge, which confirms they have permission to be on site. Parents who are simply delivering or collecting their children do not need to sign in. All visitors are expected to observe the

school's safeguarding and health and safety regulations to ensure children in school are kept safe. The head teacher will exercise professional judgement in determining whether any visitors should be escorted or supervised while on site.

Extra-curricular activities and off-site arrangements

Extra-curricular activities and off-site activities are subject to a risk assessment to satisfy health and safety and safeguarding requirements. Where extra-curricular activities are provided by and managed by the school, our own child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures apply. If other organisations provide services or activities on our site we will check that they have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures.

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

Photography and images

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

To protect students, we will:

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

E-Safety

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

Unfortunately, some adults and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to grooming and enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings.

Students may also be distressed or harmed by accessing inappropriate websites that promote unhealthy lifestyles, extremist behaviour and criminal activity.

The school's **e-safety policy, available on our website** explains how we try to protect and educate students in the safe use of technology so that they are kept safe in school and also whilst they are accessing online learning out of school. Cyberbullying and sexting by students will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures. Serious incidents may be managed in line with our child protection procedures.

All students sign an ICT acceptable use policy which explains the rules and expectations of ICT use that is provided by school and used on site. Students' online behaviour is also monitored by our SENSO online monitoring system, which provides a weekly report that highlights any misuse to the DSL, Deputy DSL and Headteacher. Parents regularly receive updates about safeguarding including e-safety via the Weekly Bulletin for Parents.

The school considers e-safety as a priority and included in this is how we manage students' use of their own electronic devices on the school site, and in particular mobile phones. When students use the school's network to access the internet, they are protected from inappropriate content by our filtering and monitoring systems. However, many students are

able to access the internet using their own data plan. To minimise inappropriate use, we do not allow any mobile phone or tablet use while students are in school without direct permission and supervision from a member of staff; this is clearly outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy (Section 12).

Staff/student relationships

The school provides advice to staff regarding their personal online activity through our Social Media Policy and Guidance; this sets out strict rules regarding online contact and electronic communication with students. Staff found to be in breach of these rules may be subject to disciplinary action or child protection investigation

The guidance for staff and the school's expectations are clearly set out in our Staff Code of Conduct document, which is provided to staff on induction to the school and re-shared annually to all staff.

Child protection procedures

Recognising abuse

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

Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people. The four types of abuse are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

Details of the definitions of the 4 types of abuse are included in Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education; it also includes definitions of the categories and further details on specific forms of abuse, e.g. sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and where there is evidence of increased vulnerability. All school staff need to understand the need to be particularly vigilant, taking advice from the DSL if they believe they have identified a child who may need extra support or referred to an external agency.

It should also be recognised that students (peer) may abuse other students (peer) this is referred to in Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

Peer on peer abuse (child on child)

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer on peer abuse) and that this is becoming pervasive in schools and wider society as outlined in the Ofsted report; 'Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges (June 2021). Staff need to be conscious of the fact that this form of abuse can and does happen both inside and outside of school and online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of peer on peer abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in their school, it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important if staff have **any** concerns regarding peer on peer abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead (or deputy).

It is essential that **all** staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers, many of which are listed below, that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as "just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Peer on peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or 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;

Impact of abuse

The impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although

most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and can occur between children outside school. All staff, but especially the DSL (and deputies) will consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. Children's social care assessments will consider such factors so it is important that schools provide as much information as possible as part of any referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

Taking action when you have concerns

Any child, in any family in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of “think the unthinkable” and “it could happen here”.

Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

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

If you are concerned about a student's welfare

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

Staff should use the **CPOMS incident form** to record these early concerns but this needs to be followed up in person with DSL. If the student does begin to reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below. Following an initial conversation with the student, if the member of staff remains concerned, they should discuss their concerns with the DSL.

Concerns that do not meet the threshold for child protection intervention will be managed through the Early Help process

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Support.aspx#earlyhelpassessmentforms>

Dealing with a disclosure from a student

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

If a student talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member needs to inform the student that they must pass the information on**; staff are not allowed to keep the matter confidential and just between them and the student.

The point at which they tell the student this is a matter for professional judgement. If they

jump in immediately the student may think that they do not want to listen, if left until the very end of the conversation, the student may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During their conversations with the student, staff will:

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

Notifying parents

The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a student with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will contact the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. However, if the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from children’s social care.

Referral to children’s social care

- **The DSL will make a referral to children’s social care** if it is believed that a student **is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm**
- The student (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child
- Any member of staff may make a direct referral to children’s social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a child
- The DSL should keep relevant staff informed about actions taken, they do not need to share all information but staff must be confident their concerns have been actioned

Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the student and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL, Headteacher or Chair of Academy Committee (depending on who is the subject of the concern). That person will then decide who else needs to have access to the information and they will disseminate it on a ‘need-to-know’ basis. However, following a number of cases where senior leaders in school had failed to act upon concerns raised by staff, *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)*

emphasises that **any** member of staff can contact children's social care if they are concerned about a child.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR. Information sharing is guided by the following principles; the information is:

- necessary and proportionate
- relevant
- adequate
- accurate
- timely
- secure

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share.

Incident Forms and other written information will be stored via our CPOMS online facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access, and sensitive information should not routinely be stored on the hard drive of laptop computers, which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen. Child protection information, including Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour notifications will be stored separately from the student's school file and the school file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held.

The DSL will normally obtain consent from the student and/or parents to share sensitive information within the school or with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the DSL may share information *without* consent, and will record the reason for not obtaining consent.

Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them. If any member of staff receives a request from a student or parent to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the Headteacher or DSL

The Data Protection Act and GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information when it is for the purposes of keeping a child safe. The school's confidentiality and information-sharing policy is available to parents and students on request, and is available via our website.

The child's wishes

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

Reporting directly to child protection agencies

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

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

Work Experience

The school has detailed procedures to safeguard students undertaking work experience,

including arrangements for checking people who provide placements and supervise students on work experience, which are in accordance with the guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)*.

Children staying with host families

The school may plan for students to stay with a host family during a foreign exchange trip or sports tour. In such circumstances the school will follow the guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)*, to ensure that hosting arrangements are as safe as possible.

Some overseas students may reside with host families during school terms and we will work with the local authority to check that such arrangements are safe and suitable.

Sixth Form students

We recognise that some procedures are different for those young people and adults over the age of 18 years. If the student is over 18, and is not a danger to themselves, permission must be obtained from the student to share the information they have disclosed with outside agencies.'

Once the student has reached the age of 18, he/she may be classed as a **vulnerable adult**. The definition of this is in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, i.e. a person who has reached the age of 18 and:

- is in residential accommodation or sheltered housing
- receives domiciliary care or any form of health care
- is detained in lawful custody
- is by virtue of an order of the court under supervision by a person exercising functions for the purposes of part one of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000
- receives the welfare service of an agency outside the school
- receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons who fall within subsection 9 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2009
- payments are made to him/her (or to another on his/her behalf) in pursuance of arrangements under section 57 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001
- requires assistance in the conduct of his/her own affairs' child (i.e. a student at school who has not yet reached their 18th birthday)

In general, adult safeguarding procedures should be implemented for 18-year olds and in these situations children's safeguarding agencies should remain equal partners throughout the process so any issues that impact on the service can be addressed. These situations may be complicated by the different procedures, timescales and processes. In such circumstances the school may refer to the adult services guidelines, '*Safeguarding Adults Procedural Framework Ten Step Summary*'

[*Safeguarding Adults ten step framework \(Northumberland\)*](#)