



The Avenue School  
Special Needs Academy

**WHOLE SCHOOL POLICY FOR CHILD  
PROTECTION TO SAFEGUARD AND  
PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Persons Responsible: Symon Cooke (DSL) / Kellie Relf (Operational DSL)**

Policy date: 10/23

Next Review date: 10/24

## INTRODUCTION

The Avenue Special Needs Academy recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children/young people and protecting them from harm.

This Child Protection Policy will be reviewed by the Full Trustee Body.

Date of last review: October 2023

Date of next review: October 2024

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## **The Avenue Special Needs Academy**

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the The Avenue Special Needs Academy and takes into account statutory guidance provided by the Department for Education and local guidance issued by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (replaced Local Safeguarding Children Board).

We will ensure that all parents/carers are made aware of our responsibilities with regard to child protection procedures and how we will safeguard and promote the welfare of their children/young people through the publication of this The Avenue Special Needs Academy safeguarding and child protection policy.

These duties and responsibilities, as set out within the Education Act 2002 sec 175 and 157, DfE Statutory Guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023 and HM Working Together to Safeguard Children February 2019 are incorporated into this policy.

# SAFEGUARDING

## **Safeguarding children is defined as:**

- The actions we take to promote the welfare of children/young people and protect them from harm are everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children/young people and families has a role to play.

## **Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:**

- Protecting children/young people from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children/young people's health or development.
- Ensuring that children/young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes Working Together to Safeguard Children 2020.

NB. Children/young people includes everyone under the age of 18 years of age.

## **Safeguarding is not just about protecting children/young people from deliberate harm. It also relates to broader aspects of care and education including:**

- Children/young people's health and safety and well-being, including their mental health
- Meeting the needs of children/young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- The use of reasonable force used in strict accordance with legislation.
- Effective and reasonable management of pupil behaviour.
- Meeting the needs of children/young people with medical conditions
- Providing first aid
- Educational visits (including residentials)
- After School Club
- Intimate care and emotional wellbeing
- Online safety and associated issues
- Appropriate arrangements to ensure school security, taking into account the local context
- Health and Safety

## **Safeguarding can involve a range of potential issues such as:**

- Neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse

- Bullying, including online bullying (by text message, on social networking sites, etc) and prejudice based bullying
- Racist, disability and homophobic or transphobic abuse
- Gender based violence/violence against women and girls
- Extremist behaviour and/or radicalisation
- Child sexual/criminal exploitation and trafficking
- The impact of new technologies, including 'sexting', Upskirting, accessing pornography and online abuse
- Young peoples relationship abuse
- Substance misuse
- Issues which may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity, youth violence and county lines
- Particular issues affecting children/young people including domestic violence, female genital mutilation and honour based violence and forced marriage
- Child on Child abuse
- Mental Health

Our ethos is that the effective safeguarding of children/young people can only be achieved by putting pupils at the centre of a system. Every individual within The Avenue Special Needs Academy will play their part, to meet the needs of all our pupils and keep them safe, including working with professionals from other agencies, to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children/young people and keep them safe. We will take opportunities to teach pupils (where appropriate) about important safeguarding issues.

Our school therefore, led by senior members of staff/trustees, aims to provide a safe environment and vigilant culture where young people can learn and be safeguarded. If there are safeguarding concerns we will respond with appropriate action in a timely manner for those children/young people who may need help or be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Where staff members have concerns about a children/young person (as opposed to a pupil being in immediate danger) they will decide what action to take in conjunction with the designated safeguarding leads, although any staff can make a referral to children's social care. Where a pupil is identified as being in immediate danger then there should be no delay in one of the DSL's reporting the concerns directly to children's social care and remaining tenacious to achieve positive outcomes.

Kellie Relf (DSL) (Symon Cooke/Maarit Eben if Kellie Relf not available), who are familiar with national and local guidance and will share concerns, where appropriate, with the relevant agencies.

# The Policy

## There are five main elements to our policy:

- Providing a safe environment in which children/young person can learn and develop.
- Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children/young people.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse.
- Supporting children/young people who have been abused or harmed in accordance with his/her child protection plan/CIN plan/CLA plan.
- Raising awareness of safeguarding children, child protection processes and equipping children/young people with the skills needed to keep them safe.

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with children/young people, The Avenue Special Needs Academy staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The Avenue Special Needs Academy will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children/young people feel secure.
- Ensure children/young people know that there are trusted adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Ensure that every effort is made to establish effective working relationships with parents, carers and colleagues from other agencies.
- Include opportunities in the PSHE or SRE curriculum for children/young people to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse:
  - availability of local and online advice
  - recognising and managing risks including online, sexual exploitation, sexting and running away as well as radicalisation
  - developing healthy relationships and awareness of domestic violence, bullying and child on child abuse
  - recognising how pressure from others can affect their behaviour.
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure any risk of harm to children/young people's welfare and health is minimised.
- Take all appropriate actions to address concerns about the welfare of a children/young people, working to local policies and procedures in full working partnership with agencies.
- Ensure robust child protection arrangements are in place and embedded in the daily life and practice of the school.

- Promote pupil health and safety.
- Promote safe practice and challenge unsafe practice.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to deal with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff including volunteers (DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023), and the LSCB/Local Inter-agency Procedures
- Provide first aid and meet the health needs of children/young people with medical conditions including mental health. Following the medication and individual care plans accurately.
- Ensure school site security.
- Address drugs and substance misuse issues.
- Work with all agencies with regard to missing children/young people, anti-social behaviour/gang activity and children/young people at risk of sexual exploitation.
- Everyone having a duty to safeguard children/young people inside/outside the school environment including school trips, extended schools, activities and vocational placements.
- Address all incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour.

**We will follow the procedures set out by the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance issued by the DfE in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 to:**

- Ensure we have DSL's for child protection who have received appropriate Level 3 training and support for this role.
- Ensure we have a nominated Trustee responsible for child protection.
- Ensure that we have a designated member of staff for Children Looked After (Symon Cooke/Becky Pritchard).
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary, bank staff, supply staff and volunteers) and the governing body knows the name of the Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for child protection and their role.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or to children's social care/police if a child is in immediate danger.
- Ensure that there is a whistleblowing policy and culture where staff can raise concerns about unsafe practice and that these concerns will be taken seriously.
- Ensure that there is a complaints system in place for children and families.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations on the school website.
- Notify Children's Social Care/Adult Social Care/Attendance Support Worker at appropriate local authority if there is an unexplained absence of a pupil who is

subject to a child protection plan/Child in Need (CIN) plan/Child Looked After (CLA) plan.

- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters, including attendance at child protection conferences, CORE group meetings, CIN reviews and STRAT meetings.
- Keep electronic records (CPOMS) of concerns about children/young people, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately; documenting and collating information on individual children/young people to support early identification, referral and actions to safeguard.
- Ensure all historic records are kept securely; separate from the main pupil file, and in locked locations.
- Ensure that we follow robust processes to respond when children/young people are missing from education or missing from home or care.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer. Recording accurately and promptly on CPOMS Staffsafe.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.
- Apply confidentiality appropriately and a 'need to know' principle.

## **Supporting children/young people**

We recognise that children/young people who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children/young people at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging or they may be withdrawn. We also recognise that there are children/young people who are more vulnerable than others. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum.
- A school ethos/culture which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school Behaviour Policy and Anti-bullying Policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Children's Social Care, ASW service, Virtual school for Children Looked After and the Police.
- Ensuring that, where a pupil leaves and is subject to a child protection plan or where there has been wider safeguarding concerns, their information is transferred securely to the new school immediately and that the child's social worker is informed.

- Ensuring that the vulnerability of children/young people with special educational needs and or disabilities is recognised.

### **Safe Staff and Supporting Staff**

- Safer recruitment processes will be followed in accordance with DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.
- Checks and references are an essential part of this process including ringing referee to check authenticity.
- Barred list check and Risk Assessment completed if no enhanced DBS on start date.
- Staff will have access to advice on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and will be aware of our code of conduct. This includes contact between staff and pupils outside the work context.
- In the event of any complaint or allegation against a member of staff, the Headteacher (or the DSL) if the Headteacher is not present, will be notified immediately. If it relates to the Headteacher, the Chair of Trustees will be informed without delay. We will respond to all allegations robustly in collaboration with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and HR colleagues.
- Staff may find some of the issues relating to child protection upsetting and may need support which will be offered by the school. Advice and support will be made available by the LADO where appropriate to the leadership team.

## **Other policies:**

This policy, together with the following, should be read alongside and in conjunction with other policies regarding the safety and welfare of children/young people. These together make up the suite of policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at The Avenue Special Needs Academy.

- *Anti-Bullying Policy*
- *Behaviour Policy*
- *Bite Protocol*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaint Procedure and Guidance*
- *Curriculum Policy*
- *Equal opportunities Policy*
- *Head Injury Protocol*
- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Grievance and Disputes Procedure*
- *Manual Handling Policy*
- *Medicines in school Policy*
- *Online Safety Policy*
- *Positive Handling Policy*
- *Racial Equality and Cultural Diversity Policy*
- *Recruitment and Pre-employment Procedures*
- *Remote Learning Policy*
- *Restrictive Interventions Policy*
- *Risk Assessments*
- *Sun Policy*
- *Teacher capability procedure*
- *Whistleblowing Policy*
- *Touch Policy*
- *Residential Policy*
- *Visitors Policy*

Other Agencies:

Hyperlink to Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership -

<https://www.berkshirerwestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp>

Hyperlink to Reading Services Guide -

<http://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/home.page>

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Everyone**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/young people is everyone's responsibility. Everyone in our The Avenue Special Needs Academy who comes into contact with children/young people and their families have a role to play in safeguarding children/young people. All staff in our school consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of children/young people.

All staff within our school are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help to children/young people to prevent concerns from escalating. All staff contribute to providing a safe environment in which children can learn and feel safe.

All our staff are aware of the early help process and understand their role in this, this includes being able to identify emerging problems to recognise children/young people who may benefit from early help. Staff know in the first instance to discuss their concerns with the DSL and understand they may be required to support other agencies and professionals in assessments.

All our staff are aware of systems within The Avenue Special Needs Academy and these are explained to them as part of staff induction, which include our child protection policy; the employee code of conduct and the role of the designated safeguarding lead and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 Part One.

All our staff receive Universal safeguarding and child protection training which is updated every three years. In addition to this training, all staff members receive child protection and safeguarding updates when required, but at least annually, including Prevent Training/CSE/Online safety/this Policy/Keeping Children Safe in Education Part One/local information/FGM/Domestic Abuse/Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence/Sexting and Social Media.

All our staff know what to do if a children/young people raises concerns, disclosures of abuse and neglect. Staff will maintain a level of confidentiality whilst liaising with the designated safeguarding lead and children's/adult social care. Our staff will never promise a children/young people that they will not tell anyone about a disclosure or allegation, recognising this may not be in the best interest of the student.

## **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

We have DSL's who take lead responsibility for safeguarding children/young people and child protection, who have received appropriate training and support for this role.

They will provide additional support to ensure the responsibilities for child protection and safeguarding children/young people are fully embedded within the school ethos and that specific duties are discharged. They will assist the Operational DSL in managing referrals, attending Child Protection Conferences, STRATS and supporting the students/families etc.

We acknowledge the need for effective and appropriate communication between all members of staff in relation to safeguarding pupils. Our DSL's will ensure there is a structured procedure within the school, which will be followed by all of the members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.

### **The Designated Safeguarding Leads are expected to:**

- **Manage Referrals**
  - Refer cases of suspected abuse or allegations to the relevant investigating agencies;
  - Support staff who make referrals to children's social care and other referral pathways;
  - Refer cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child and the DBS as required.
  
- **Work with others**
  - Liaise with the Headteacher (where the DSL role is not carried out by the Headteacher) and Trustees to inform them of any issues and ongoing investigations;
  - Liaise with the case manager and the LADO where there are concerns about a staff member;
  - Liaise with staff on matters of safety and safeguarding and deciding when to make a referral by liaising with other agencies. Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for other staff;
  - Take part in strategy discussions/meetings or attend inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so and to contribute to the assessment of children/young people;

- Liaise with the local authority and other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2020.

- **Undertake training**

- Formal DSL training (level 3) will be undertaken every two years. Other training and updating of knowledge and skills will be at regular intervals, undertaken at least annually. The DSLs are responsible for their own training and should obtain access to resources or any relevant refresher training. Overview is maintained by Headteacher and Operational DSL.
- The training undertaken should enable the DSL to:
  - understand the assessment process for providing the appropriate help and support to individuals and families;
  - Have a working knowledge of how the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership operates, the conduct of a child protection conference, and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so;
  - Ensure that each member of staff has access to, and have understood, the child protection policy and procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 part 1;
  - Be alert to the specific needs of children/young people in need, including those with special educational needs and or disabilities and young carers;
  - Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals;
  - Understand the Prevent Duty and provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation;
  - Encourage a culture of protecting children; listening to children/young people and their wishes and feelings.
  - Developing a knowledge and understanding of the ever changing national and local safeguarding issues.

- **Raise awareness**

- Ensure that the child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately by all staff;
- Ensure that the child protection policy is reviewed annually, procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly and work with governing bodies regarding this;

- Work strategically to ensure policies and procedures are up to date and drive and support development work within the school;
  - Ensure that the child protection policy is available via the school website to parents and carers and make parents/carers aware that referrals may be made about suspected abuse or neglect;
  - Liaise with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership and ensure all staff receive induction training covering child protection and are able to recognise and report any concerns immediately as they arise.
- **Child protection file**
    - The Operational DSL is responsible for ensuring that where children start/leave the school or college their CPOMS/child protection file is transferred securely to the new school or college as soon as possible.
- **Availability**
    - During term time and additional school activities eg. Youth club/After School Club a DSL will always be available for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Emails are checked regularly in school holidays and outside of school hours.
    - Residential trips to have regular daily contact with the Head teacher as per residential trips policy and have DSL contact details available at all times.

## **Headteacher**

### **The Headteacher of the school will ensure that:**

- The policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Trustees are fully implemented, and followed by all staff.
- Sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable the DSL's and other staff to discharge their responsibilities, including taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings, and contributing to the assessment of children/young people.
- All staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice with regard to children/young people, and that such concerns are addressed sensitively and effectively in a timely manner in accordance with agreed whistle-blowing policies.
- The headteacher will ensure all staff have access to: the Whole School Child Protection Policy, the staff code of conduct and DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance 2023, part one, as a minimum.

- The headteacher will ensure there are mechanisms in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

## Trustee Body

**The Trustee body will be collectively responsible for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fully embedded within the school's ethos and reflected in the school's day to day safeguarding practices by:**

- Ensuring there is an individual member of the Trustee body to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding and supporting child protection issues within the school.
- Ensuring that the school has effective policies and procedures in line with statutory guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2020) as well as with local Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance and monitor the school's compliance with them at least annually.
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place for *appropriate* action to be taken in a *timely* manner to promote a child's welfare
- Recognising the importance of information sharing between agencies. Ensuring cooperation with the local authority and other safeguarding partners.
- Appointing a DSL from the leadership team to take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection and a designated teacher for looked after children.
- Ensuring that all staff read and understand at least part one of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and ensure that there are mechanisms in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in part one.
- Ensuring that the Trustee body is collectively responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. All members of the board of trustees will undertake training about child protection to ensure they have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities.
- Ensuring there is a training plan in place for all staff, including the headteacher, so that child protection training is undertaken with refresher training at three yearly intervals. The DSL's should receive refresher training at two yearly intervals.
- Ensuring that staff undergo safeguarding child protection training at induction and that there are arrangements in place for staff to be regularly updated in order to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority.
- Ensuring that temporary staff, volunteers, bank staff and all visitors who work with children/young people are made aware of the school's arrangements for child protection and their responsibilities.
- Ensuring that there are procedures in place to manage allegations against staff.

- Exercising their disciplinary functions in respect of allegations against a member of staff or as a consequence of dealing with a complaint.
- Ensuring a response if there is an allegation against the headteacher by liaising with the LADO or other appropriate officers within the local authority.
- Ensuring appropriate responses to children/young people who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, including child sexual exploitation and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.
- Ensuring that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect children/young people online.
- Ensuring that children/young people are taught about safeguarding online through teaching and learning opportunities.
- Ensuring that Child on Child abuse is included in the safeguarding child protection policy, sexting and the school's response is included and different gender issues that are prevalent in Child on Child abuse.
- Giving staff the opportunities to contribute and shape safeguarding arrangements and policy.
- Prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children/young people by adhering to statutory responsibilities to check staff who work with children/young people, making decisions about additional checks and ensuring volunteers are supervised as required.
- Ensuring at least one person in each appointment process has undertaken safer recruitment training.
- Recognising that certain children/young people are more vulnerable than others, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs and disabilities.

### **Children Looked After – the role of Designated member of staff and the Designated Safeguarding Lead**

- A member of the leadership team is appointed who has responsibility for promoting the education achievement of children/young people who are looked after. They have the appropriate training. The designated professional will work with the Virtual School team to ensure that the progress of the child is supported through the PEP process.
- The Operational DSL will also have details of the child's social worker and the name of the virtual head for CLA. The DSL will work closely with the designated member of staff as we recognise that children/young people may have been abused or neglected before becoming looked after and we need to ensure their ongoing safety as well as supporting their education and development by linking with the designated safeguarding lead, their social worker and parents where appropriate.

## Identifying Concerns

All members of staff, volunteers and trustees will know how to identify children/young people who may be being harmed and then how to respond to a child/young people who discloses abuse, or where others raise concerns about them. Our staff will be familiar with procedures to be followed.

Staff understand that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition, and that in most cases multiple issues will overlap with each other.

Some of the following signs might be indicators of abuse or neglect:

- Children/young people whose behaviour changes – they may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive, withdrawn or clingy, or they might have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed;
- Children/young people with clothes which are ill-fitting and/or dirty;
- Children/young people with consistently poor hygiene;
- Children/young people who make strong efforts to avoid specific family members or friends, without an obvious reason;
- Children/young people who don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities;
- Children/young people who are having problems at school, for example, a sudden lack of concentration and learning or they appear to be tired and hungry;
- Children/young people who talk about being left home alone, with inappropriate carers or with strangers;
- Children/young people who reach developmental milestones, such as learning to speak or walk, late, with no medical reason;
- Children/young people who are regularly missing from school or education;
- Children/young people who are reluctant to go home after school;
- Children/young people with poor school attendance and punctuality, or who are consistently late being picked up;
- Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners' concerns;
- Parents who collect their children from school when drunk, or under the influence of drugs;
- Children/young people who drink alcohol regularly from an early age;
- Children/young people who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why;
- Children/young people who talk about running away; and
- Children/young people who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.

The four categories of child abuse are as follows:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Emotional Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse, and
4. Neglect

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

*May be recognised by: Children/young person with frequent injuries, injury such as bruising, bite marks, burns and scalds, fractures but also by aggressive behaviour. It may also be an indicator of concern where a parent gives an explanation inconsistent with the injury or gives several different explanations for the injury.*

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

*May be recognised by: Developmental delay, attachment issues, aggressive behaviour, appealing behaviour, watchfulness or stillness, low self esteem, withdrawn or a loner, or having difficulty in forming relationships. Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise as signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. Signs of emotional abuse may be associated or similar to other forms of abuse so presence of emotional abuse may indicate other abuse is prevalent as well.*

**Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child/young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child/young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children/young people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children/young person to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child/young person 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/young people.

*May be recognised by: Inappropriate sexualised conduct, age inappropriate sexualised play or conversation, sexually harmful behaviour – contact or non-contact, self-harm, eating disorders, continual, inappropriate or excessive masturbation, anxiousness or unwillingness to remove clothes – sports / PE etc, pain or itching in genital area, blood on underclothes, bruising in genital region and / or inner thighs etc.*

All actions/allegations considered as Sexual Abuse or Sexual Child on Child Abuse will be reported to the Safer Schools Police for support and advise.

**Neglect** the persistent failure to meet a child/young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child/young person's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child/young person 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/young person from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child/young person's basic emotional needs.

*May be recognised by: Being constantly hungry; constantly tired; have a poor state of clothing; be emaciated; have untreated medical problems; be frequently late or have poor or non-attendance at school; have low self esteem; display neurotic behaviour and/or have poor social relationships, have poor personal hygiene. A neglected child/young person may also be apathetic, fail to thrive, or be left with or in the care of adult's under the influence of alcohol or drug misuse.*

**Children with Special Educational Needs** We recognise that children/young people with special educational needs (SEN) and or disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Children/young people with SEN and or disabilities are especially vulnerable

when identifying concerns due to their impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse. They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening. This policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children which include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child/young person's disability without further exploration;
- children/young people with SEN and disabilities can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying- without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

### **Taking action where concerns are identified**

Our staff recognise the difference between concerns about a child/young person and a child/young person in immediate danger.

If staff have concerns about a child/young person they will need to firstly record it on CPOMS and discuss it with Operational DSL to agree a course of action.

If a child/young person is in immediate danger or risk of harm a referral will be made immediately to the Childrens' Single Point of Access and/or the police. In this case a referral will be made by the Operational DSL if required, with the member of staff being informed of the referral if possible.

Our staff recognise that children/young people are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse will be taken seriously by staff and will not be dismissed.

If a child/young person chooses to tell a member of staff about alleged abuse, there are a number of actions that staff will undertake to support the child/young person:

- The key facts will be established in language that the child/young person understands and the child/young person's words will be used in clarifying/expanding what has been said;
- No promises will be made to the child/young person, eg to keep secrets;
- Staff will stay calm and be available to listen;
- Staff will actively listen with the utmost care to what the child/young person is saying.
- Where questions are asked, this should be done without pressuring and only using open questions.
  - Leading questions should be avoided as much as possible.
  - Questioning should not be extensive or repetitive.

- Staff will not put words in the child/young person's mouth but subsequently note the main points carefully;
- A full written record will be kept by the staff duly signed and dated, including the time the conversation with the child took place, outline what was said, comment on the child/young person's body language, etc;
- It is not appropriate for staff to make children/young people write statements about abuse that may have happened to them or get them to sign the staff record;
- Staff will reassure the child/young person and let them know that they were right to inform them and inform the child/person that this information will now have to be passed on;
- The DSL's will be immediately informed, unless the disclosure has been made to them;
- Information should be shared with children's social care without delay, either to the child's own social worker or to the Children's Single Point of Access. Children's Social Care will liaise with the police where required which will ensure an appropriate police officer response rather than a uniformed response.
- The Police would only therefore be contacted direct in an emergency or if directed by other professionals. Non-emergency 101 or Safer Schools police will be contacted if advice is needed.

**Staff will never attempt to carry out an investigation of suspected abuse by interviewing the child or any others involved.**

## Confidentiality

We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential; however, a member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to child/young person; children/young people will not be given promises that any information about an allegation will not be shared.

Where there is a child protection concern it will be passed **immediately** to the Operational DSL or other DSL's in their absence. When a student is in immediate danger children's social care/the police will be contacted.

The Head teacher or DSL will only disclose personal information about a child/young person to other members of staff, including the level of involvement of other agencies, on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff are aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children/young people. They are aware that the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 should not be a barrier to sharing of information where failure to do so would result in a child/young person being placed at risk of harm.

## **Records and Monitoring**

Any concerns about a child/young person will be recorded on **CPOMS without delay**. All records will provide a factual and evidence based account and there will be accurate recording of any actions. Where an opinion or professional judgement is recorded this should be clearly stated as such.

**At no time should an individual teacher/member of staff or school be asked to or consider taking photographic or video evidence of any behaviours or any injuries, marks to a child/young person's person unless agreed by all parties including parents.**

Historic safeguarding, child protection and welfare concerns will be kept in a red 'concerns' file which will be securely stored (in the Safeguarding Office or in archives) and away from the main child/young persons file.

### ***Why recording is important***

Our staff understand why it is important that recording is comprehensive and accurate and what the messages from serious case reviews are in terms of recording and sharing information. It is often when a chronology of information is pieced together that the level of concern escalates or the whole or wider picture becomes known.

It is also true that without information being recorded it can be lost; this could be crucial information, the importance of which is not necessarily apparent at the time. On occasions this information could be crucial evidence to safeguard a child or be evidence in future criminal prosecutions.

### **CPOMS**

All children/young people have a named file on CPOMS. All staff have a personal login for CPOMS and can therefore record incidents as necessary at all times.

It needs to be borne in mind that what constitutes a 'concern' for one child/young person may not be a 'concern' for another and the particular child/young person's circumstances and needs will differ ie a child/young person subject to a child protection plan, child looked after, CIN may be looked at differently to a child/young person recently bereaved, parental health issues, etc. Professional judgement will therefore be an important factor when making this decision.

CPOMS records of concerns about children/young people even where there is no need to refer the matter to Children's Single Point of Access/Children's Social Care (or similar) immediately will be permanently stored.

Records will be kept up to date and reviewed regularly by the Operational DSL to evidence and support actions taken by staff in discharging their safeguarding arrangements.

Where children/young people leave the school or college CPOMS can electronically transfer records to their new setting. Should that setting not use CPOMS the records can be printed and if possible hand delivered or sent via recorded delivery.

### ***Recording Practice***

Timely and accurate recording will take place when there are any issues regarding a child/young person. A recording of each and every episode/incident/concern/activity regarding that child/young person, including telephone calls to other professionals (if appropriate), needs to be recorded on CPOMS. This will include any contact from other agencies who may wish to discuss concerns relating to a child/young person. Actions will be agreed and roles and responsibility of each agency will be clarified and outcomes recorded.

## **Specific Safeguarding Issues**

The Avenue is aware of a range of specific safeguarding issues and situations that can put children/young people at greater risk of harm. Where staff are unsure how to respond to specific safeguarding issues, they should follow the processes as identified in this policy and speak with the DSL.

### **Online safety in schools and colleges**

The Avenue Special Needs Academy provides a safe environment, including online.

Where children/young people are using computers in school, appropriate supervision will be in place and an online filtering system is in place.

With increased time being spent online by the general population, and often in more private settings than in the work environment, the illegal consumption of child sexual exploitation material has increased. Offenders with the technical expertise to administrate and create forums have more time to create new forums.

There is also a significant increase in the use of online gaming platforms across the world, and continue to be used for the distribution of child sexual abuse material and as a means for offenders to make contact with children/young people.

Staff and parents will receive regular information and training to develop their understanding and knowledge during these ever changing times.

## Children/young people and online safety away from school

It is important that all staff who interact with children/young people, including online, continue to look out for signs a child/young people may be at risk. Any such concerns should be dealt with as per the Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals should still be made to children's social care or the police, as required.

Online teaching should follow the same principles as set out in the school policy.

The Avenue Special Needs Academy will ensure any use of online learning tools and systems is in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

Below are some things to consider when delivering virtual lessons, especially where webcams are involved:

- No 1:1s, groups only;
- 
- Staff and children/young people must wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household;
- 
- Any computers used should be in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and the background should be blurred;
- 
- Any live classes should be recorded so that if any issues were to arise, the video can be reviewed;
- 
- Live classes should be kept to a reasonable length of time, or the streaming may prevent the family 'getting on' with their day;
- 
- Language must be professional and appropriate, including any family members in the background;
- 
- Staff should record, the length, time, date and attendance of any sessions held.
  
- Blurred backgrounds
  
- Class leads/all staff leading sessions will have had access to and read the Home Learning Policy

## **Supporting children/young people not in school**

The Avenue Special Needs Academy is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children and young people.

Where the DSL's has identified a child/young person to be on the edge of social care support, or who would normally receive pastoral-type support in school, they should ensure and check that at least weekly communication is in place for that child or young person. The DSL and Family Support Worker (in charge of daily attendance recording and communication) will review attendance and risk assessments weekly. Records of contact with families are to be recorded by the individual staff/class lead and monitored by the DSL in conjunction with Family Support Worker and class lead, as appropriate.

Communication can include; remote contact, phone contact, door-step visits. Other individualised contact methods should be considered and recorded. It is expected that the child be 'viewed' weekly, face to face or remotely. Any concerns will be recorded via CPOMS.

The DSL will work closely with all stakeholders to maximise the effectiveness of any communication.

The school will share safeguarding messages on its website and social media pages, as appropriate.

The Avenue Special Needs Academy recognises that school is a protective factor for children and young people, and the current circumstances can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents/carers. Class leads at The Avenue are aware of this in setting expectations of pupils' work where they are at home.

## Child on Child Abuse

All members of staff at The Avenue recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers, and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online.

The Avenue recognises that Child on Child abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- upskirting (which is a criminal offence), 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 (a ritual that involves risk, pain or harm) type violence and rituals

The Avenue believes that abuse is abuse and it will never be tolerated or dismissed as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys' as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children/young people.

All staff have a role to play in challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers. Staff recognise that some Child on Child abuse issues may be affected by gender, age, ability and culture of those involved, i.e. for gender based abuse, girls are more likely to be victims and boys more likely to be perpetrators.

Concerns about learners' behaviour, including Child on Child abuse taking place offsite will be responded to as part of a partnership approach with learners and parents/carers. Offsite behaviour concerns will be recorded and responded to in line with existing appropriate policies, for example anti-bullying, acceptable use, behaviour and child protection policies.

In order to minimise the risk of Child on Child abuse, The Avenue will, as appropriate:

- Risk Assess
- De-brief incidents
- Make staff aware, leading to increased vigilance
- Inform parents
- Inform Safe Schools Police and other external professionals as appropriate
- Provide an age/ability appropriate PSHE and RSE curriculum, providing a range of reporting mechanisms e.g. worry boxes.

The Avenue Special Needs Academy want children/young people to feel able to confidently report abuse and know their concerns will be treated seriously. All allegations of Child on Child abuse will be reported to the DSL and will be recorded, investigated, and dealt with in line with associated school policies, including child protection, anti-bullying and behaviour. Learners who experience abuse will be offered appropriate support, regardless of where the abuse takes place.

Alleged victims, perpetrators and any other child/young person affected by Child on Child abuse will be supported by:

- Individual approaches, including taking reports seriously, listening carefully, avoiding victim blaming, providing appropriate pastoral support, working with parents/carers, reviewing educational approaches, following procedures as identified in other policies e.g. the school anti-bullying, behaviour policy, and where necessary and appropriate, informing the police.

### **Child on Child Sexual Violence or Harassment**

When responding to concerns relating to child on child sexual violence or harassment, The Avenue will follow the guidance outlined in Part Five of KCSIE 2023.

The Avenue recognises sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two young people of any age and sex. It can occur through a group of children/young people sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child/young person or group of children/young people and can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally). Sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable.

All victims of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment or be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When there has been a report of sexual violence or harassment, the DSL will make an immediate risk and needs assessment which will be considered on a case-by-case

basis which explores how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children/young people involved/impacted).

- The risk and needs assessment will be recorded and kept under review and will consider the victim (especially their protection and support), the alleged perpetrator, and all other children/young people, adult students and staff and any actions that are required to protect them.

Reports will initially be managed internally by the school and where necessary will be referred to Integrated Children's Services and/or the Police.

- The decision making and required action taken will vary on a case by case basis, but will be informed by the wishes of the victim and parents, the nature of the alleged incident (including whether a crime may have been committed), the ages and developmental stages of the children/young people involved, any power imbalance, if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse, if there are any ongoing risks to the victim, other children/young people, adult students or school staff, and, any other related issues or wider context.

If at any stage the DSL is unsure how to proceed, advice will be sought from Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership.

### **Nude and/or Semi-Nude Image Sharing by Children/Young People**

The term 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes' is used to mean the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams of/by young people under the age of 18. Creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under-18s (including those created and shared with consent) is illegal which makes responding to incidents complex.

The Avenue recognises that consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as youth produced/involved sexual imagery or 'sexting') can be a safeguarding issue; all concerns will be reported to and dealt with by the DSL.

When made aware of concerns involving consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos by children/young people, staff are advised to:

- **Report** any concerns to the DSL immediately.
- **Never** view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery, or ask a child to share or download it – this may be illegal. If staff have already viewed the imagery by accident, this will be immediately reported to the DSL.

- **Do not** delete the imagery or ask the child to delete it.
- **Do not** say or do anything to blame or shame any children/young people involved.
- **Do** explain to child(ren)/young person involved that they will report the issue to the DSL and reassure them that they will receive appropriate support and help.
- **Do** not ask the child or children/young people involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery and not share information about the incident with other members of staff, the child(ren)/young person involved or their, or other, parents and/or carers. This is the responsibility of the DSL.

DSLs will respond to concerns as set out in the non-statutory UKCIS guidance: [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). When made aware of a concern involving consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos:

- the DSL will hold an initial review meeting to explore the context and ensure appropriate and proportionate safeguarding action is taken in the best interests of any child/young person involved. This may mean speaking with relevant staff and the children/young people involved as appropriate.
- parents and carers will be informed at an early stage and be involved in the process to best support children/young people, unless there is good reason to believe that involving them would put a child/young person at risk of harm.
- All decisions and action taken will be recorded in line with our child protection procedures.
- a referral will be made to the police immediately if:
  - the incident involves an adult (over 18), informing all parties including parents.
  - there is reason to believe that a child/young person has been coerced, blackmailed, or groomed, or there are concerns about their capacity to consent, for example, age of the child/young person or they have special educational needs.
  - the image/videos involve sexual acts and a child/young person under the age of 13, depict sexual acts which are unusual for the child/young person's developmental stage, or are violent.
  - a child/young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.
- The DSL may choose to involve other agencies at any time if further information/concerns are disclosed at a later date.
- If DSLs are unsure how to proceed, advice will be sought from the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership.

## **Children/Young People Requiring Mental Health Support**

All staff will be made aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child/young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff are aware that children/young people's experiences, for example where children/young people have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

Staff are well placed to observe children/young people day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child/young person that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the DSL or wellbeing co-ordinator, who will access the appropriate library of resources.

## **Children/Young Person Missing from Education**

Children/young people missing from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Where the school/college have concerns that a child/young person is missing from education, we will respond in line with our statutory duties and local policies. Local support is available via the Attendance Support Worker, Head of Education Access and Support and SEND Manager at the appropriate Local Authority.

## **Lettings**

The Board of Trustees and Headteacher, via the Lettings Officer, will ensure safeguarding requirements are included in any hire agreement as a condition of use of the premises. Any failure to comply with lead to termination of the letting agreement. The Lettings Officer should ensure that arrangements are in place to liaise with the Operational DSL on all safeguarding matters as appropriate. Anyone letting the building must have due regard of KCSIE (2023), and follow it's guidance when using the school premises. They will have appointed their own DSL and safeguarding procedures specific to their activity.

Any Safeguarding concerns that are raised on our premises are reported to our Operational DSL alongside following their own policies and protocols. It is the letting parties responsibility to inform outside agencies ie. LADO.

## APPENDICES

The following appendices are a part of this policy:

Appendix 1	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
Appendix 2	Prevent Duty
Appendix 3	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
Appendix 4	Child trafficking
Appendix 5	Concerns relating to families with Multiple Needs
Appendix 6	Harm that is linked to culture, faith or beliefs
Appendix 7	Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
Appendix 8	Domestic Abuse
Appendix 9	Flow chart for raising Safeguarding concerns about a child

# Appendix 1

## Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Policy

The Avenue Special Needs Academy adheres to the LSCB procedure in relation to child sexual exploitation. This is our policy to summarise our position.

We recognise that child sexual exploitation is a high profile issue both nationally and locally.

The Avenue Special Needs Academy recognises that the child sexual exploitation can cause a great deal of harm to a child/young person, including physically, emotionally, educationally and socially. Where it exists it can also cause harm to communities including our academy.

Child sexual exploitation can happen in a number of ways to both boys and girls, for example it can happen in the virtual world through various social media and this can still cause significant harm. It can happen through inappropriate relationships such as older boy/girlfriends or through parties, gangs or organised abuse. Some children/young people will be particularly vulnerable to being exploited, for example if they have had a chaotic upbringing or if they are in care or go missing, involved in gangs or being bullied. We recognise however that any child can become a target for exploitation, particularly where the internet and social media are involved. This is because the normal life events that go with being a child or teenager in today's age can be a challenge and make them susceptible to being groomed and exploited.

As an academy we recognise that prevention is the best position with regard to CSE. We seek to support children/young people to develop confidence and build resilience. We will endeavour to support their age appropriate knowledge and raise awareness and understanding of what CSE is, to understand the risks of CSE and to spot the warning signs for themselves and also their friends and peers and by doing so keep safe.

If prevention is not possible we aim to identify children/young people who are at risk of, or being exploited very early. Early intervention is key to effectively working with the child to prevent or reduce the level of risk. We commit to working with our inter-agency partners to safeguard and protect children/young people.

Much of this work will be through our programmes of personal, social and health education (PSHE) or through our Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) work.

An important part of educating our children/young people is focussing on what is a healthy relationship. This will also target potential abusers at an early age with the intention of helping to shape their attitudes to others.

We have a culture where the welfare of children/young people is actively promoted and staff and pupils are vigilant. As part of this children/young people will feel listened to and safe.

## Appendix 2

### Prevent Duty and Radicalisation

There are now duties imposed on Schools under the 'Prevent Duty' CTSA2015. Schools must have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Paragraphs 57-76 of the [DFE Revised Prevent duty guidance](#) are specifically concerned with schools.

- Risk assessment - we assess the risk of children being drawn into terrorism. We have clear procedures in place for protecting children at risk of radicalisation.
- Working in partnership - we ensure their safeguarding arrangements takes into account the policies and procedures of the NSCB. We effectively engage with parents.
- Staff training - staff are trained to identify children/young people at risk of being drawn into terrorism and challenge extreme ideas (annual on-line training).
- E-safety policies - we ensure that children/young people are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in schools.

Where we are concerned about individual children/young people there is a referral pathway.

We seek to protect children/young people from being drawn into, and against, the messages of all violent extremism.

This includes and is not restricted to ISIL, AQ, Far Right, Neo Nazi, White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

The use of social media and the internet as tools to radicalise young people cannot be underestimated. We recognise that those that seek to recruit young people to follow extremist ideology often target those who are already vulnerable in some way and that exposure to extreme views can make young people vulnerable to further manipulation and exploitation.

As a school we are clear that we have a duty to safeguard children/young people from such dangers and we will actively promote resilience to such risks through our RE curriculum, our SMSC and anti-bullying work, and in our policies for use of the school premises by external agencies and our E-safety policy.

## Appendix 3

### Female Genital Mutilation

#### Guidance Notes for Staff/Governors

Female Genital Mutilation is a safeguarding issue; it is child abuse and a form of violence against girls. Local guidance for schools is contained within Guidelines for all agencies including schools within the Reading Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

A duty for staff to report 'known' cases of Female Genital Mutilation FGM was introduced on the 31st October 2015. If a member of staff discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 the teacher must report this to the police (informing SLT/DDSL).

FGM is a procedure that includes the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for 'cultural' or other non-therapeutic reasons.

It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. Despite the harm it causes, FGM practising communities consider it normal to protect their cultural identity. It is estimated that 24,000 girls in the UK are at risk and 103,000 women living in England and Wales with the physical and psychological consequences; this is the scale of the problem. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. The majority of children have the procedure between the age of 5-8 years.

School staff should be alert to the following indicators:

- The family comes from a community that is known to practise FGM or is less integrated within the community.
- A child may talk about a long holiday to a country where the practice is prevalent.
- A child may confide that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion.
- A child may request help, directly or indirectly, from a teacher or another adult.
- Any female child born to a woman or has a sister who has been subjected to FGM must be considered to be at risk, as must other female children in the extended family.
- A girl is withdrawn from PSHE/SRE.

In brief the signs that FGM may have occurred are:

- Difficulty walking, sitting or standing.
- Spending longer in the bathroom.
- Urinary or menstrual problems.
- Prolonged absence and then noticeable behaviour changes.
- Reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations.
- May confide in a professional but may not be explicit or may be embarrassed.

Where you know or suspect that FGM has occurred:

- Be sensitive to the child/young person, and family, be gender sensitive, make no assumptions, be non-judgemental, use simple language, record clearly.
- You have a duty to protect, safeguard and share information.
- Refer to Children's Social Care for coordination of careful assessment (not necessarily with consent).
- There will be potential enquiries under Section 47.
- Potential police enquiries.
- Possible use of police protection or legal orders such as EPO, prohibitive steps but not necessarily the removal of the child.

Government Equalities Office: Fact sheet [Equalities Office Fact Sheet](#)



## The Avenue Special Needs Academy - Safeguarding Updates Information Sheet

### Harm that is linked to culture, faith or beliefs

Professionals are in a good position to recognise any potential signs that a child may be subject to abuse and to act quickly to help protect the child.

Some parent/s or carers may have a perspective on child rearing practices underpinned by culture or faith which are not in line with UK law and cultural norms, and they may put their child at risk of harm.

Not all practices related to culture, faith and beliefs are harmful, but there are some known practices involving children which are unsafe and in some cases against the law in the UK.

#### These include:

- branding a child as a witch
- breast ironing
- child trafficking
- cupping therapy
- female genital mutilation
- forced marriage,
- honour based violence,
- harsh forms of physical chastisements,
- scaring initiations,
- certain healing practices and ritual practices.

Practices such as these can cause emotional, psychological and physical harm and in the worst cases death.

Culture, faith, belief or tradition is no excuse for harming a child and is condemned by people of all communities. Child abuse is never acceptable wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes.

Since the Children Act 2004, there is a responsibility on professionals, voluntary organisations and faith communities to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Therefore, building trust and understanding between the school, parents and communities is important.

Schools should also adhere to guidance in child protection set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2016).

#### Preventative education

Schools can invite faith and community leader or lessons or assemblies to raise children's understanding about faith, culture and safeguarding.

Specific cultures should not be targeted in lessons, rather the general issue of children's rights which can be covered in citizenship lessons and the importance of emotional and physical wellbeing which can be covered in PSHS lessons if appropriate.

#### Response and action to take on suspicions or disclosures

It must be stressed that being sensitive to the family's culture, faith and beliefs is important, but staff need to be prepared to challenge views and actions which expose children to harm. Staff should feel able to question the parent or carer's practice or interpretation of their faith or belief system if it impacts on the wellbeing of their students.

If a student reports that they fear for themselves because of the behaviour of a family member, ensure that they are listened to, follow the school's procedure for referrals and do not contact the pupil's parents/carers if it is felt that this would put the pupil at risk of further harm.

#### Useful resources and links

Department for Education (2012). National action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175437/Action\\_Plan\\_-\\_Abuse\\_linked\\_to\\_Faith\\_or\\_Belief.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf)

NSPCC Case Reviews

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/>

NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000  
ChildLine - 0800 1111



## The Avenue Special Needs Academy - Safeguarding Updates Information Sheet

### Responding to concerns relating to child trafficking

Child/young people trafficking is the recruitment and movement of children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a form of child abuse. Identifying if a child has been trafficked is not easy. Trafficked children are often hidden; they may be scared or unaware that they have been trafficked.

There is a wide variety of reasons why children are trafficked to the UK, including:

- sexual exploitation work or labour exploitation
- domestic servitude in private homes criminal activity
- drugs trafficking
- illegal inter-country adoption forced marriage
- removal of organs.

Traffickers can be parents, family members, organised gangs or individuals – they can be men or women.

#### What are schools' legal responsibilities?

Schools' legal responsibilities are outlined in HM Government (2011) *Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked* (2011).

Schools should also refer to department of Education Statutory Guidance (2015) *Children Missing Education* (2015)

#### Identifying child trafficking

Children trafficked into the country may be registered at a school for a term or so, before being moved to another part of the UK or abroad again. Schools therefore need to be alert to this pattern of registration and de-registration. This pattern has been identified in schools near ports however it could happen anywhere in the UK.

Schools need to be alert to the possibility that a child who goes missing from school, may be, or have been, a trafficked child, who is living with or is running away from an exploitative situation.

Victims of trafficking may find it difficult to speak out because:

- English is not their first language
- They are frightened of their abusers or of retribution
- They are frightened or suspicious of adults who are trying to help them
- They fear for their immigration status or fear getting a criminal record
- They may not see themselves as victims
- They have a false sense of loyalty to their abuser, including a sense of respect for elders and not wanting to get them into trouble.

#### Signs and indicators in a school setting

- it can difficult to identify a trafficked child, but the following are possible indicators:
- children have no documents when registering with school (birth certificate or passport)
- it is unclear who the child lives with or the relationship between the child and carer is unclear
- the adults speak for the child
- children look intimidated and behave in a way that does not correspond with behaviour typical of children their age
- children and young people being overly tired in school
- not being registered with a school or a CP practise, or appearing to change school and GP frequently
- symptoms of STIs or pregnancy, signs of sexual or physical assault, poor dental health
- poor school attendance with no or vague explanation/s given for absences
- receiving repeated unexplained or unidentified phone calls
- seen entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- possesses money or goods not accounted for
- having a history with gaps and unexplained moves or going missing for periods

- having what appears to be a prepared story, which lacks credibility.

In some cases, children may disclose exploitation, for example being made to do excessive household work or being forced to commit crime.

### **Response and action to be taken**

The impact of trafficking on children's health and welfare can be considerable. Trafficked children are not only deprived of their rights to health care and freedom from exploitation and abuse, but may also not be provided with access to education or only to fragmented and interrupted schooling. In addition, the creation of a false identity with an implied criminality, together with loss of family and community, may seriously undermine their own sense of identity. The nationality or immigration status of the child does not affect a school's responsibilities to act, but bear in mind some children may be very worried about their immigration status, application or appeals.

### **Working with parents**

Trafficked children are unlikely to be living with their parents. Many trafficked children will be staying in informal fostering arrangements with unrelated adults. Often these adults will claim to be related but often don't have anything to prove this relationship.

### **References, useful resources or links**

NSPCCs Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC)

0808 800 5000 or [www.nspcc.org.uk/ctac](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/ctac)

[HM Government \(2011\) Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked](#)

Department for Education (2015) [Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities](#)



## The Avenue Special Needs Academy - Safeguarding Updates Information Sheet

### Concerns relating to families with Multiple Needs (domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, mental health)

Children/young people who live in families with multiple needs are at an increased risk of negative outcomes.

Difficulties within families may be commonly known by the school or by the local community, but it can be difficult to know when problems within families have reached the threshold for taking action. Schools have regular contact with children and young people, and are in a good position to be able to identify when these problems are impacting upon a child's safety and welfare.

#### A brief outline of the subject

The terms 'families with multiple needs' covers a wide range of experiences and circumstances each of which may be experienced by families from time to time and pose difficulties for them, but may not represent long-term damaging effects for their children.

For children, the most high-risk of these problems are:

- Living with domestic violence
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse
- Parental mental health problems

Living with domestic violence is included in the definition of 'significant harm' and so any concerns about domestic violence must follow child protection procedures. Parents with substance misuse must follow child protection procedures. Parents with substance misuse problems or mental health problems may struggle at times to provide their children with the care and protection they need. Concerns about these issues should follow child protection procedures, to ensure that the family gets the support they need to keep the children safe from harm.

#### Recognition of possible signs and indicators.

- Poor attendance at school or setting
- Poor attachment to parents due to emotional unavailability
- Behaviour problems such as anxiety, stress and anger.

Other indications that a family is experiencing a multiplicity of problems is when they are known to be regular users of a wide range of services such as welfare and benefit services, social housing, health, social care, youth offending or probation as well as community services for identified problem areas.

#### Response and action to be taken

If you are concerned that a child may be experiencing problems at home, then report your concerns to your DSL as soon as possible, in line with policy and procedures. It is important to record your concerns especially if they occur incrementally over time. Sometimes the evidence builds up with each incident appearing mild but the frequency and impact on the child being highly significant.

#### Working with parents

The principle of working with parents must of course be upheld, but suspicions relating to a perception of their multiple needs and the impact on their child/ren must be handled very carefully. Neither schools nor members of staff should carry out their own enquiries and any decision about informing parents should be made by Children's Social Care/Adult Social Care.

There should be a presumption of openness, joint decision making, and a willingness to listen to families and capitalise on their strengths and resilience, but the guiding principle should always be what is in the best interest of the child.

Where it is suspected that the level of parental impact on a child/young person, of their behaviour or circumstances, is at an unacceptable level, all decisions about what and when (and by whom), to tell parents should be taken by SLT/DSL within the multi-agency team. While professionals should seek, in general, to discuss any concerns with the family and, where possible, seek their agreement to action, this should only be done where such discussion and agreement-seeking will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm.



## The Avenue Special Needs Academy - Safeguarding Updates Information Sheet

### Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a type of child abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity.

- Living with domestic violence
- Parental drug or alcohol misuse
- Parental mental health problems

Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. Criminal exploitation often happens alongside sexual or other forms of exploitation.

Criminal exploitation takes many forms, the most commonly known relating to the supply and movement of drugs, often referred to as **County Lines**, offences in relation to guns and other weapons, money laundering, violent offences and in some cases Cuckooing where criminals forcibly take over control of a person's home.

Child Criminal exploitation is broader than just County Lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms, to commit theft, shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

#### County Lines

County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets – suburban areas, market and coastal towns – using dedicated mobile phone lines or 'deal lines'. Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation, selling and manufacturing drugs.

- Airbnb and short term private rental properties
- Budget hotels
- The home of a drug user, or other vulnerable person, that is taken over by a criminal gang – this may be referred to as cuckooing.

#### What is a gang?

The word 'gang' means different things in different contexts, the government in their paper 'Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity' distinguishes between peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs.

- **Peer group** – a relatively small and transient social grouping which may or may not describe themselves as a gang depending on the context.
- **Street gang** – groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity.
- **Organised criminal gangs** – a group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise). For more crime is their occupation.

It is not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of 'gang' and not every 'gang' is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised criminal gangs involved in trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime.

#### How are young people recruited?

A child or young person might be recruited into a gang because of where they live or because who their family is. They might join because they don't see another option or because they feel like they need protection. Children and young people may become involved in gangs for many reasons, including:

- peer pressure and wanting to fit in with their friends
- they feel respected and important
- they want to feel protected from other gangs, or bullies
- they want to make money, and are promised rewards
- they want to gain status, and feel powerful

- they've been excluded from school and don't feel they have a future

Organised criminal gangs groom children and young people because they're less suspicious and are given lighter sentences than adults.

**Studies show that a child is more at risk of being recruited if:**

- they've been excluded from school
- **they have special educational needs**
- there are problems at home like neglect, domestic abuse or sexual abuse
- they have problems with their mental health
- they live in existing gang territory

**Signs of criminal exploitation**

There are some signs to look out for if you're worried a child or young person has joined a gang, or is being criminally exploited. It might be hard to spot at first, but the sooner you're able to talk to the young person the more you'll be able to help them.

**Signs you may notice**

- Frequently absent from and not progressing at school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Using new slang words.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online. Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog.

**Dangers of Criminal Exploitation**

It's important to be aware of the risks of criminal exploitation or being involved with a criminal gang. They can use different tactics to recruit and exploit children and young people, including bribing them with rewards, befriending them, threatening them or coercing them.

- Danger of criminal exploitation include:
- Being subject to threats, blackmail and violence
- Being exploited and forced to commit crimes
- Being arrested, including for crimes committed by the gang that they have not directly committed under the law of joint enterprise
- Not being able to leave or cut off ties with the gang
- Having their safety or the safety of friends and family threatened
- Risk of physical harm, rape and sexual abuse
- Risk of emotional abuse
- Risk of severe injury or being killed
- Abusing drugs, alcohol and other substances
- Long term impact on education and employment options.

Exploiting a child into committing crimes is abusive. Children who are targeted can also be groomed, physically abused, emotionally abused, sexually exploited or trafficked. However, as children involved in gangs often commit crimes themselves, sometimes they aren't seen as victims by adults or professionals, despite the harm they have experienced. It's important to spot signs and act quickly if you think a child is being groomed or is becoming involved with a gang.

**Support**

- Follow The Avenue Child Protection procedures (contact Kellie Relf/Symon Cooke).
- Contact the NSPCC Helpline on [0800 800 5000](tel:08008005000) or by emailing [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)



## The Avenue Special Needs Academy - Safeguarding Updates Information Sheet

### Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

**Abusive behaviour** is defined in the act as any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and 'personally connected'.

**Personally connected** is defined in the act as parties who:

- are married to each other
- are civil partners of each other
- have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
- are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child (under 18)
- are relatives

**Domestic abuse can include:**

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money
- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

**Coercive behaviour** is an act or a pattern of acts of threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Isolation - a behaviour that aims to cut the survivor off from family, friends or community.

Humiliation - a behaviour that aims to lower someone's position and diminish respect.

Love bombing - a behaviour that attempts to influence a person by demonstrations of attention and affection

Gaslighting – a behaviour where the abuser misleads the survivor, creating a false narrative, making them question reality.

Controlling finances – a behaviour that aims to restrict freedom and the ability to leave the relationship

Prolonged control - a behaviour that is typified by patterns of oppression. Used to make the abuser omnipotent in the survivor's.

**Witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse:**

Children never just 'witness' domestic abuse; it always has an impact on them. Exposure to domestic abuse or violence in childhood is child abuse.

Children may experience domestic abuse directly, but they can also experience it indirectly by:

- hearing the abuse from another room
- seeing a parent's injuries or distress afterwards
- finding disarray like broken furniture
- being hurt from being nearby or trying to stop the abuse
- experiencing a reduced quality in parenting as a result of the abuse.

## Impact of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can have a serious effect on a child's behaviour, brain development and overall wellbeing. It undermines a child's basic need for safety and security and can have a negative impact on a child's:

- development
- education outcomes
- mental health.

**Psychological effects** of experiencing domestic abuse include:

- aggression and challenging behaviour
- depression
- anxiety - including worrying about a parent's safety
- changes in mood
- difficulty interacting with others
- withdrawal
- fearfulness, including fear of conflict
- suicidal thoughts or feelings (Diez, et al 2018; Early Intervention Foundation, 2018).

Children who experience parental conflict may also have an increased likelihood of risk-taking behaviour like smoking, drug use and early sexual activity (Early Intervention Foundation, 2018).

**Domestic abuse can cause confusing relationships with parents.** Children may:

- not be able to develop a strong bond with their parents/carers (poor attachment)
- worry their parents will divorce
- hope an abused parent will leave for safety reasons
- be afraid of their parents.
- Teenagers may worry that being raised in abusive environment will affect their own future relationships.

**Physical effects** include:

- higher rates of illness and fatigue
- reduced physical growth
- impact on nervous and hormonal systems

**Developmental effects** of trauma and adverse childhood experiences, including domestic abuse, can affect a child's brain development. This may impact:

- executive functioning skills
- brain architecture
- and lead to overactive stress responses

## Recognising domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship. It can continue even after the relationship has ended, for example during contact visits or on social media. Both men and women can be abused or be abusers. Young adolescents or older teenagers can also experience domestic abuse in their own relationships (Barter et al, 2009).

### Risk and vulnerability factors

#### Times of transition or adversity

All families have their ups and downs. While many parents or carers experiencing challenging circumstances are able to provide safe and loving care for their family, it can be difficult to cope if problems mount up. This can leave children more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

Times of transition, such as pregnancy, having a baby or separation and divorce, can increase levels of stress and conflict in a relationship.

When parents are already experiencing challenges such as mental health problems or substance misuse it can be more difficult to maintain healthy relationships.

In some cases, these factors can lead to or worsen domestic abuse.

#### Links to other forms of abuse

If a child lives in a home where domestic abuse is happening, they're more at risk of other types of abuse (Stanley, 2011).

#### Signs and indicators

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because perpetrators can act very differently when other people are around. Children who experience domestic abuse may:

- display challenging behaviour

- suffer from depression and anxiety
- not do as well at school as usual.

### Signs of anxiety

Children who experience domestic abuse may feel on constant alert. Signs of anxiety or fear-related behaviour include:

- bed wetting or unexplained illness
- running away from home
- constant worry about possible danger or safety of family members
- aggression towards others (Early Intervention Foundation, 2018).

## Responding to domestic abuse

### Reporting

**ALWAYS follow The Avenue School's safeguarding policies and procedures.** Record ASAP on CPOMS/Talk to Kellie Relf (Designated Safeguarding Lead) as your first port of call. The risk will be assessed and action taken to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority. All information disclosed/reported to a staff member **MUST** remain confidential.

#### Out of school hours:

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns:

**Contact Kellie Relf** Mobile 01182145305 (diverts to mobile) [krelf@avenue.reading.sch.uk](mailto:krelf@avenue.reading.sch.uk)

**Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk). Their trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.

**Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.

#### Talking about domestic abuse

Children may find it difficult to talk about domestic abuse for many reasons. They may feel ashamed, afraid, or not have the language to describe what they've experienced. If they have been living with domestic abuse since they were very young, they may not realise that it's wrong – and they may think it's their fault.

If a child shares details of domestic abuse with you, it's important to:

- listen carefully
- let them know they've done the right thing by telling you
- tell them it's not their fault
- say you will take them seriously
- don't confront the alleged abuser
- explain what you'll do next
- follow the instructions above to report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

**Never promise to keep what a child has told you a secret. Explain that you need to tell someone else who can help.**

## Preventing domestic abuse

### Early help

By supporting families as soon as challenges are identified, practitioners can help parents and carers develop the skills needed to cope with stress and adversity, reducing potential conflict and improving outcomes for children.

### Healthy family relationships

Effective interventions to help adults develop more healthy ways to interact with each other include:

- helping them understand the impact of conflict and see what they could do differently
- developing coping and problem-solving strategies to help handle stress
- building skills to communicate better and avoid conflict through modelling, role play and feedback
- improving the quality of parenting
- learning how to co-parent positively (if divorced or separated) (Early Intervention Foundation, 2018).

### Giving children a voice

People who work with children have a key role to play in recognising the signs of domestic abuse and reporting any concerns. But they also have an essential role in teaching children to recognise if it's happening in their family or in their own relationships and know where to go for help.

# Appendix 9 - FLOW CHART FOR RAISING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD/YOUNG PERSON



