



UPDATED BY:	DATE:	REVIEW:
Mrs. Askey	Sept 2025	Sept 2026

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Values

Meir Heath Academy is a school where the children are at the centre of every decision and action; it is a school where day to day school life is underpinned by our vision and values and encourages characteristics such as honesty, respects, inclusion, resilience, confidence, tolerance, kindness, passion, consideration and an understanding of equality.

Along the journey to prepare pupils for a purposeful adult life, the Meir Heath Family are proud to be:

- Happy
- Hardworking
- Caring

Overview

This Academy gives the highest importance to the safeguarding and welfare of children. The Governors, Principal, Assistant Principal, SLT and staff will carry out their responsibilities efficiently, effectively and diligently to ensure that this school is a safe learning environment for children.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

Our Academy is a community and all those directly connected with it - staff members, volunteers, governors, parents, families and pupils; have an essential role to play in making it safe and secure.

The governing body will ensure that Meir Heath Academy has arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and will work together with other agencies to identify, assess and support those children who are suffering or likely to suffer harm.

This policy applies to all children (i.e. those who have not yet reached their 18th birthday;) who are pupils at this Academy or who visit /come into contact with our Academy community.

This policy applies to all members of staff in our Academy, including all permanent, temporary and support staff, governors, volunteers, contractors and external service or activity providers.

At Meir Heath Academy we strive to: -

- **Protect** children and young people from maltreatment.
- **Prevent** impairment of our children and young people's mental and physical health or development.
- **Ensure** that our children and young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provisions of safe and effective care.
- **Take action** to enable **ALL** children to have the **best outcomes**.

Purpose and Aim of this Policy

The purpose of Meir Heath Academy's Safeguarding policy is to ensure we:

- **Are committed** – to develop a robust culture of vigilance and challenge.
- **Build resilience** – by raising awareness of safeguarding and child protection issues, and equipping children with the language and skills to keep themselves safe.
- **Establish a safe environment** – in which children can learn and develop within an ethos of openness and where children are taught to treat each other with respect, to feel safe, to have a voice and know that they will be listened to.
- **Support vulnerable pupils** – who have been abused, have witnessed violence towards others or may be vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

- **Prevent unsuitable people** – from working with children by ensuring we practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of **all** school staff, supply staff and volunteers to work with our children. And to maintain an active vigilance thereafter in line with the safeguarding culture.
- **Providing** help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- **Prevent** the impairment of children's mental and physical health and development.
- **Protect** children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- **Protect** our pupils from maltreatment and prevent the impairment of their health and development.
- **Ensure that pupils grow up in circumstances consistent** with the provision of safe and effective care, enabling them to have the best outcomes in life.
- **Support pupil development** in ways that will foster security, confidence, resilience and independence
- **Create a learning environment** for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- **Take** action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- **Raise the awareness** of all teaching and non-teaching staff and volunteers of their responsibilities to safeguard children.
- **Ensure** that all members of the school community respond to cases of suspected abuse or neglect consistently, sensitively, professionally and in ways which best support the needs of the child.
- **Make** efficient arrangements for checks on new staff and volunteers.

Our aim is to follow the procedures set out by Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2025 by knowing and understanding that:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, and the voice of the child is evident.
- Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play.
- Everyone should ensure that their approach is child-centred considering, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.
- Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families should provide help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families should protect children from maltreatment, inside or outside the home, including online.
- By establishing a safe environment, we enable our children to learn and develop within an ethos of openness.
- No single practitioner can have the full picture of a child's needs and circumstances
- If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action
- The importance of providing children with a balanced curriculum including PHSE, healthy relationship education, online safety, sexting, child on child abuse as well as County Lines, contextualised issues and child criminal exploitation. Also supporting this with online activities, enabling them to enhance their safeguarding skills and knowledge whilst understanding the risks.
- Undertaking the role to enable children and young people at our school to have best outcomes.
- Ensuring that as a school we have awareness of our staff's knowledge and understanding as well as embedding safeguarding, through clear systems of communication and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) so that safeguarding is a robust element of our school practice.

This policy provides guidance to all adults working within the school, whether paid or voluntary or directly employed by the school or a third party.

- This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. We also inform parents/carers about this policy when their children join our school.
- This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on an annual basis or sooner should legislation/guidance change.
- This policy sets out how the school's governing body discharges its statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at this school. Our policy applies to all staff; paid and unpaid, working in the school, including Governors.
- The policy is provided to all staff (including temporary staff, supply staff and volunteers) at the point of induction, alongside our Staff code of conduct.
- Our Governing Body, working with the senior leadership team and especially our Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensure that those staff who do not work directly with children read Working together to safeguard children 2023 and either Part 1 or Annex A (condensed version of Part 1) of the KCSiE 2024 guidance.
- All staff who work directly with children, are provided with and read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.
- The school follows the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board policies and procedures. [StaffsSCB](#)

Our Ethos

The child's welfare is of paramount importance, we are a child centred school and make all efforts possible to capture the voice of the child and to try and understand what their daily lived experiences are like.

We all have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to maintain a professional attitude of *it could happen here* where safeguarding is concerned.

Our school is committed to safeguarding children and promoting children's welfare and expects all staff, governors, volunteers, and visitors to share this commitment and maintain a vigilant and safe environment. Everyone has a responsibility to **act without delay** to protect children by reporting anything that might suggest a child is being abused, neglected or exploited. It is everyone's responsibility to protect children from maltreatment, both in and outside of the home, including in online circumstances.

It is our willingness to work safely and challenge inappropriate behaviours that underpins this commitment. The school seeks to work in partnership with families and other agencies to improve the outcomes for children who are vulnerable or in need.

All staff are encouraged to report any concerns that they have and not see these as insignificant. On occasions, a referral is justified by a single incident such as an injury or disclosure of abuse. More often however, concerns accumulate over time and are evidenced by building up a picture of harm; this is particularly true in cases of emotional abuse and neglect. In these circumstances, it is crucial that staff record and pass on concerns in accordance with this policy to allow the Designated Safeguarding Lead to build up a picture and access support for the child at the earliest opportunity.

We maintain a professional attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When there are concerns about the welfare of a child, staff members will always act in the best interests of the child. This policy has been developed in-conjunction with our school culture of prevention, protection, and support.

Children at Meir Heath Academy are reassured that they have a voice, they are listened to and what they say taken seriously. They know that they will be supported and kept safe. They will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. Children at our school are encouraged to talk freely with staff if they are worried or concerned about something and our staff understand that a victim of any type of abuse should never be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Legal Framework and Guidance

Schools and colleges **must have regard** for the DfE statutory guidance '**Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE2025)**.

It is essential that everybody working in a school or college understands their safeguarding responsibilities.

This guidance is read alongside

- statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)
- departmental advice [What to do if you are Worried a Child is being Abused-Advice for Practitioners](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding Reform October:](#)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6705184530536cb927482dd6/Early_years_foundation_stage_safeguarding_reforms_-_response.pdf

and

All staff must read and understand Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686b94eefe1a249e937cbd2d/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2025.pdf

Governing bodies should ensure that those staff who work directly with children read at least Part one of this guidance.

Local authorities have a duty to make enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, **significant harm**, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out. **(See Appendix 1)**

A **child in need** is defined under the Children Act 1989, as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. A social worker will lead and coordinate any assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities (in relation to their education functions, and governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions, which include sixth-form colleges) **to exercise their functions** with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age attending further education institutions.

The same duty applies to independent schools (which include Academies and free schools) by virtue of regulations made under section 157 of the same Act.

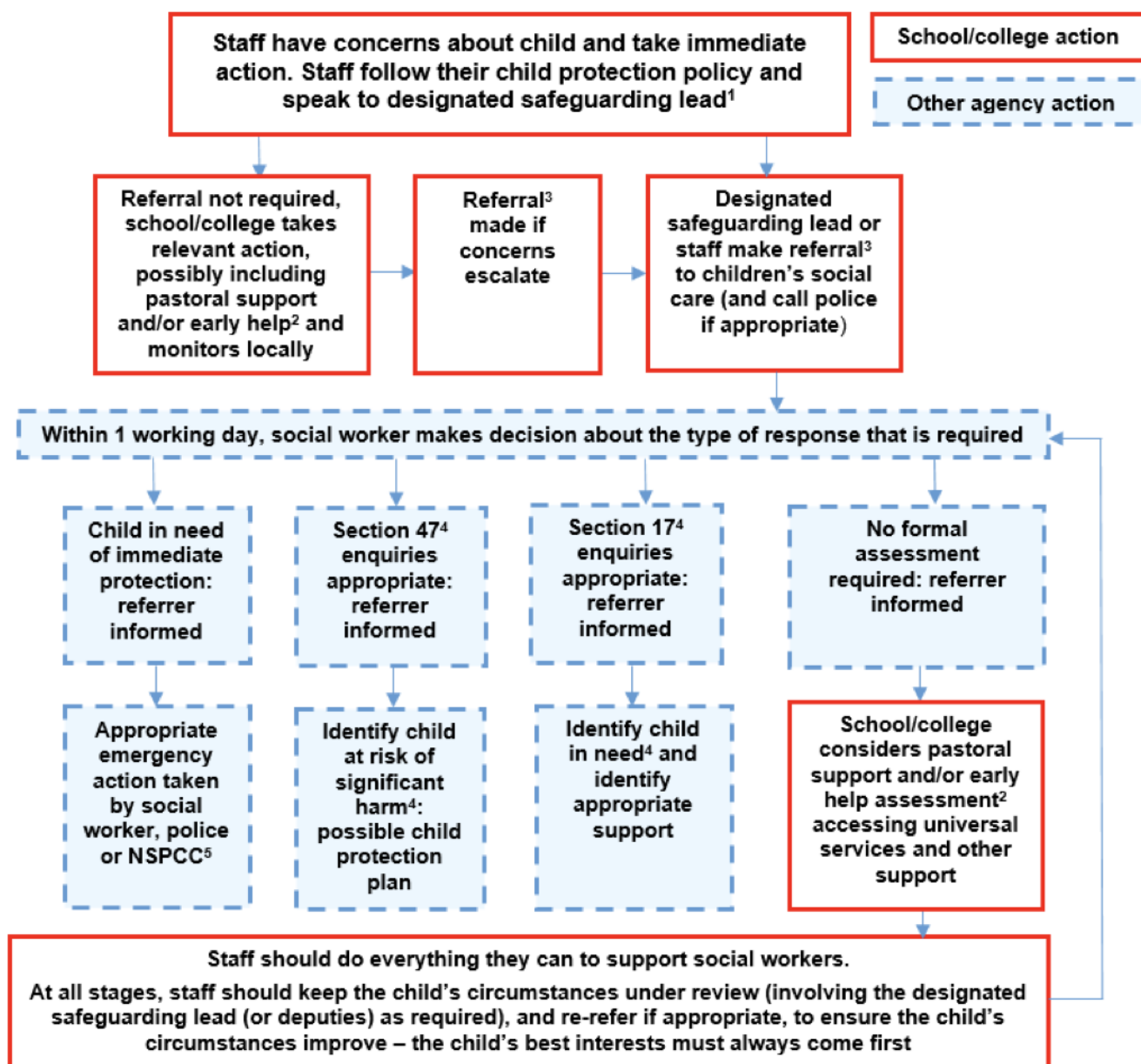
- This policy and the accompanying procedures have been developed in accordance with the following legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures:
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies of maintained schools and further education institutions (including sixth-form colleges) to make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.
- Section 157 of the same act places the same duty on non-maintained and independent schools, including free schools and academies.
- Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 applies to children who have highly complex needs (for example a child with a disability;) or a child who may be experiencing compromised parenting and require Children's Social Care involvement to ensure their needs are met through a Child in Need Plan.
- Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 applies to children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and require Children's Social Care involvement in order to ensure that they are protected from harm. A Child Protection plan is required which will be coordinated by a social worker.
- Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires all maintained schools, further education colleges and independent schools, including free schools and academies, to cooperate with the local authority to improve the well-being of children in the local authority area.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children (March 2018 revised Dec 2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (September 2025)
- Information Sharing – Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (2015)
- What to do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (March 2015)
- Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding Reform October:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6705184530536cb927482dd6/Early_years_foundation_stage_safeguarding_reforms_-_response.pdf
- Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Procedures
- EYFS Statutory Framework for Children
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/670f8c0f366f494ab2e7b93d/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_childminders.pdf

Key Legislation

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- KCSIE 2025:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686b94eefe1a249e937cbd2d/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2025.pdf
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Procedures
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board-Learning Zone
- Disqualification under the Child Care Act 2006
- Information Sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services
- The Children Act <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41>
- Education Act 2002 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents>
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused
- Whistle Blowing policy [SBMAT Whistleblowing Procedure.pdf](#)
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching_Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf
- Early Years Framework <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- Visa – Immigration/Asylum
- <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk>
- <https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk>
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64f8498efdc5d10014fce6d1/14.258_HO_Prevent_Duty_Guidance_v5c.pdf

Actions where there are concerns about a child



DSL Responsibilities

The Governing body has ensured that an appropriate senior member of staff, from the academy leadership team, has been appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety. This is explicit in the role holder's job description.

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – This is the lead person with overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection in our Academy.
- The DSL is on our Academy leadership team and their role as DSL is explicit in their job description. This person has the appropriate authority and is given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings – and/or to support other staff to do so; and to contribute to the assessment of children.
- In addition to the formal training, their knowledge and skills are refreshed at regular intervals, at least annually, through the termly DSL briefings, meeting other DSL's, emails and reading statutory guidance. The training provides DSL/DDSL's with a good understanding of their own role, the processes, procedures, and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care.
- DSL/Deputy DSL will refer cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children's social care as required. They will represent school at child protection conferences and core group meetings. The DSL will be the expert within our setting to support staff in liaising with other agencies, making assessments and referrals. Any staff member may be required to be part of strategy discussions with other interagency meetings and contribute to the assessment of child/ren
- The DSL/Deputy DSL should liaise with the three safeguarding partners and work with other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- [NPCC Guidance 'When to call the Police'](#) helps designated safeguarding leads understand when they should consider calling the Police and what to expect when they do.
- The DSL will support staff who make referrals to The Integrated Front Door, the IFD Portal or the Emergency Referrals line on 01782 235100 (Stoke) or Staffordshire's Children's Advice and Support Service (SCAS) on 0300 111 8007.
- The DSL will refer cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required, and support staff making Prevent referrals to the Channel programme.
- The Principal will refer cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required.
- The DSL will refer cases where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required.
- The DSL/Deputy DSL will maintain robust systems to monitor and record training of all staff, volunteers, supply annually, and refresher time scales are evident. Training is delivered in-line with Staffordshire's Safeguarding Children Board and Stoke-On-Trent Partnership training strategy and KCSIE 2025 recommendations. This will include bulletins, briefings, and inset day training as well as external events attended. Regular updates to be shared.
- The DSL will ensure all staff and regular visitors have training on how to recognise indicators of concern, how to respond to a disclosure from a child and how to record and report this information accurately. Staff/volunteers do not make promises to any child and will not keep secrets. Every child will be made aware of what the adult will have to do with any information they have chosen to disclose to a staff member/volunteer.
- The DSL monitors the electronic/paper case management systems - CPOMS is used to record concerns about children and young people, discussions, decisions and the rationales for the decisions made; ensuring that the quality of information is accurate, proportionate, timely and assessment/referrals are made appropriately. The recording and storing of information are kept in-line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection.
- Updated KCSIE 2025 guidance recommends that education professionals read the DfE Data Protection guidance for schools (DfE, 2024b). This guidance is aimed at school staff, governors and trustees and sets out how to: comply with data protection law; develop data policies; understand what staff and pupil data to keep; and prevent personal data breaches.
- Safeguarding and child protection records are kept in a secure location, separate and away from academic records and there is a clear recording process of transfer, in or out, using the transfer of records form which needs to be signed by the sending and receiving settings and a copy of this form kept by both.
- DSL has a clear system for Child Protection (section 47), Child in Need (section 17), Early Help Assessment (EHA) files being removed from school and returned for the purposes of case review meetings, Rapid Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) and DHR (Domestic Homicide Reviews).
- DSL helps to promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children (including children with or who have previously had a Social Worker) are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school leadership staff. Their role could include ensuring that the schools and their staff, know who these children are, understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; supporting teaching staff to identify the challenges that children in this group might face and the additional academic support and adjustments that they could make to best support these children
- DSL ensures that the systems in place to induct new staff/governors are robust and monitored and non-compliance shared with the Senior Leadership Team/Governance body. DSL to ensure induction policy is updated annually in-line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.

- DSL ensures each member of staff has access to and understands the school's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part time staff.
- DSL understands and supports the school/college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and can provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation. Schools on-line safety policy links with this policy.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Governing Body and Principal all encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school/college may put in place to protect them. DSL has developed systems to record these and ensure through case reviews the child/ren's voice have been heard/recorded and they have a child-centred approach.
- DSL will liaise with the Principal to inform her of issues especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.
- DSL notifies children's social care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two days without explanation.
- DSL as required, liaise with the "case manager" and the LADO (designated officer(s) at the local authority for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member).
- DSL will liaise with all staff (e.g. pastoral staff, school nurses, SEN staff and Mental Health Leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies. The DSL acts as a source of support, advice, and expertise for staff. Risk assessments/safety plans will be completed as required and should, where appropriate, involve other agencies, these are reviewed regularly.
- DSL, where a parent chooses to remove their child/ren from school to receive **EHE (Elective Home Education)**, will make arrangements to pass any safeguarding concerns **and** the safeguarding file if there is one, to the EHE Team within The Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire City Council and inform other professionals who may be involved with that child.
EHE email; electivehomeeducation@stoke.gov.uk electivehomeeducation@staffordshire.gov.uk or to refer to the EWO's after they have been missing for over 5 days but not yet the 20.
- The DSL ensures the safeguarding/child protection policy is available publicly and parents know that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect, may be made and the role of our setting in this.
- During term time, the DSL or DDSL is available (during school hours) for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns. As a school we have cover arrangements in place to cover any out of hours/out of term activities. This information is shared with the Local Authority.
- At times, education settings may require further assistance from interpreters to support children and families. These services will be accessed with support of the DSL.
- The DSL will ensure that appropriate checks are made when using supply agencies. The DSL will ensure that the supply agency supplies them with the details of an enhanced DBS, check the prohibition and barring list and will ensure that if the member of supply staff has worked abroad the appropriate checks have been made before they engage in employment in our academy.
- During term time, the DSL/DDSL is available (during school hours) for staff in the academy to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL can delegate activities to the DDSL(s); however, the ultimate responsibility remains with them, and this lead responsibility is not delegated. In the absence of the DSL the DDSL(s) will take a lead on safeguarding with clear direction from the Senior Leadership Team.

Other Professionals Responsibilities

- Safeguarding Governor – We have a nominated governor responsible for safeguarding who will champion good practice, liaise with the head teacher to provide support and challenge, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are audited and quality assured, and to provide information regarding safeguarding to the governing body. The Safeguarding Governor for Meir Heath Academy is Mr J Spencer.
- Early Help Champion - Our Early Help Champion is responsible for leading on, and supporting other staff to lead on, early help assessments and early help plans for children and their families requiring help and support that does not meet the threshold for involvement with Children's Social Care.
- Manager for Dealing with Allegations – The Principal is the person responsible for dealing with allegations of abuse made against Academy staff. The Manager for dealing with allegations against the principal is the chair of governors.
- The Principal will ensure that the policies and procedures adopted by the governing body are fully implemented and that sufficient resources and time are allocated to enable staff members to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The Governing Body is collectively responsible for ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fully embedded within the school's ethos and reflected in the school's day-to-day practice.
- All staff members, governors, volunteers and external providers understand their responsibility to safeguard and protect children, know how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, how to respond to pupils who disclose, and what to do if they are concerned about a child.

Governing Body Responsibilities

The Governing body and Principal are accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of this policy and school compliance.

- The Governors have a Safeguarding Link Governor who is Mr Julian Spencer.
- The Governing body has appointed Mrs Askey as the Designated Safeguarding Lead who is part of the senior leadership team. The Governing Body will monitor this post, to ensure that the DSL has the time and resources required, to fulfil the duty.
- The DSL and job role have been added to the staff member's job description. The Governing body have shared the content of "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (2025) with Designated Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and are confident the individuals have the knowledge, understanding to carry out their roles appropriately. The DSL training is compliant with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirement.
- The Governing body ensures that the DSL understands their responsibility in leading safeguarding and child protection across the school. This individual has the appropriate status, authority, funding, resources, training, and support to provide advice and guidance to all staff members within the school on child welfare and child protection. The DSL/Deputy DSL receives appropriate and regular supervision from the senior leadership team or external services.
- The Governing body ensures that they facilitate a whole setting approach to safeguarding. This means ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes, policies and practice, should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern, Governing bodies ensure the child's wishes and feelings are considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems are in place and are well promoted, explained properly and easily accessible for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback. The Governing Body ensures Safer Recruitment Procedures, that include the requirement for appropriate checks in line with national guidance, are followed.
- The Governing Body has an overview of training schedule and future training requirements and this is updated every term. All staff, volunteers and Governors have received an induction which includes regular updated safeguarding training compliant with SSCB / SOTSCP including online safety.
- At Meir Heath Academy we ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, see sections further on in this policy regarding this.
- There is an expectation that all teachers manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe educational environment and require teachers to have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils.
- All staff, volunteers and Governors have read and understood the staff handbook and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, including hyperlinks.
- At Meir Heath Academy we have developed a system, in-line with guidance, to ensure that regulated and non-regulated activities, as well as staff supervision, is understood across the school. The identification of volunteers, students, supply staff and visitors can be clearly identified by our visitor system.
- The Governing body will ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. These policies are updated at least annually with timely updates, if required sooner. These policies include: -
- This Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy and our whole setting culture and approach to all forms of safeguarding referencing SSCB / SOTSCP safeguarding arrangements by safeguarding partners, as well as other policies such as peer on peer abuse/child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment, online safety and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We ensure that we keep up to date with safeguarding issues as they emerge and evolve, including lessons learnt.
- A restorative behaviour policy including measures to prevent bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- A staff behaviour/code of conduct which includes acceptable use of technologies (including the use of mobile devices), staff/pupil relationships and communications including the use of social media.
- A whistleblowing policy and staff have received a copy and had the opportunity to raise concerns. There is a culture in our setting where staff can raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and such concerns are addressed professionally and sensitively in accordance with agreed whistle blowing procedures
- Appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place to respond to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions
- Our Governing Body and Principal have ensured that there is a current whistle blowing policy and staff have received a copy and had the opportunity to raise concerns. There is a culture in our setting where staff can raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and such concerns are addressed professionally and sensitively in accordance with agreed whistle blowing procedures
- Our Governing Body has ensured that there is a current whistle blowing policy and staff have received a copy and had the opportunity to raise concerns. There is a culture in our setting where staff can raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and such concerns are addressed professionally and sensitively in accordance with agreed whistle blowing procedures.

- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call on 0800 028 0285 and the line is available from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk Further guidance on [whistle blowing](#) can be found at this link.
- The Governing Body and Principal have a schedule to review policies and procedures to ensure they are current and in line with National and Local guidance.
- The Governing Body and DSL coordinate the updates within the training schedule to support the culture of learning for all staff/volunteers.

Information Sharing

At all times we will work in partnership and endeavour to establish effective working relationships with parents, carers, and colleagues from other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). Our setting works closely with Stoke and Staffordshire Children's Social Care.

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes. Schools and colleges have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes. As part of meeting a child's needs, our Governing body recognises the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies. This includes ensuring arrangements are in place to clearly set out the processes and principles for sharing information within our setting and with the three safeguarding partners, other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required.

We are proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to the local authority children's social care.

Our Governing Body are aware that among other obligations, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. Our Governing Body ensures that relevant staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. KCSIE 2025 recommends that education professionals read the DfE Data Protection guidance for schools (DfE, 2024b). This guidance is aimed at school staff, governors and trustees and sets out how to: comply with data protection law; develop data policies; understand what staff and pupil data to keep; and prevent personal data breaches.

When children leave our academy, the DSL will ensure that any relevant Child Protection file is transferred to the new setting as soon as possible, ensuring secure transit, with confirmation of receipt. Transfer through CPOMS will be activated where appropriate.

In addition to the child protection file, our DSL will also consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school in advance of the child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new setting to continue supporting the victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

Guidance documents:

- [Data Protection: Toolkit for schools](#)

Our Academy will support all pupils by:-

- Ensuring the content of the curriculum includes social and emotional aspects of learning;
- We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence are likely to have low self-esteem and may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helpless, humiliated and have some sense of blame. Our Academy may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in their lives.
- In these circumstances, a pupil's behaviour may range from that which is perceived to be 'normal' to behaviour which may be aggressive or withdrawn.
- Ensuring a comprehensive curriculum response to e-safety, enabling pupils and parents to learn about the risks of new technologies and social media and how to use these responsibly;
- Ensuring that child protection is included in the curriculum to help pupils stay safe, recognise when they do not feel safe, identify who they can talk to and where they can get help from;
- Ensuring access to a number of appropriate adults to approach if they are in difficulties;
- Building confidence, resilience and independence;
- Encouraging development of self-esteem and assertiveness while not condoning aggression or bullying;

- Ensuring repeated hate incidents, e.g. racist, homophobic, gender or disability-based bullying, are considered under child protection procedures; liaising and working together with other support services and those agencies involved in safeguarding children; and monitoring children who have been identified as having welfare or protection concerns and providing appropriate support.

Voice of the Child

In order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children it is essential that our staff gain a clear picture of a child's wishes, thoughts and feelings. Understanding the child's lived experience will be achieved through listening to what children say, observing their non-verbal cues (particularly for pre-verbal and non-verbal children) and observing their interaction with family members and peers is key to our academy's practice. A child's voice will be captured on CPOMS as the impact of direct work, a referral reason or as part of our lateral checks.

- The right of a child or young person to be heard is included in the [UN Convention of Rights](#)
- the [Children's Act 2004](#) emphasises the importance of speaking to the child or young person as part of any assessment
- the importance of speaking to a child or young person and gathering their views has been consistently highlighted in lessons learned from serious case reviews.

Curriculum

We provide opportunities for our children to develop skills, concepts, attitudes and knowledge that promote their safety and well-being. Relevant issues will be addressed through the curriculum, for example self-esteem, emotional literacy, assertiveness, power, exploitation, sex and relationship education, consent, e-safety, British Values, bullying and child on child Issues will be addressed through other areas of the PSHE, RHSE and Safeguarding curriculum. See embedded the safeguarding curriculum and the online safety progression curriculum:

[Safeguarding Policies | Meir Heath Academy](#)
[PHSE | Meir Heath Academy](#)

The Personal Development (RHSE/RSE) Curriculum is delivered through the use of Jigsaw resources, which adheres to the DfE Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education 2021 revised 2025 for introduction 1st September 2026.

Record Keeping

All child protection and welfare concerns will be recorded and kept in line with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board guidance. The Academy uses the CPOMS systems to log any concerns about any pupil. This is our Central Record for child protection matters and any other wellbeing matters. This is intensely monitored by the DSL and the Principal (DDSL), in school and centrally with the MAT's safeguarding lead. This is a confidential record keeping system and this information should only be shared by DSL and Deputy DSL via a requested formal report. Administrators are only able to download reports from CPOMS.

CPOMS is used to record concerns about children and young people, discussions, decisions and the rationales for the decisions made; ensuring that the quality of information is accurate, proportionate, timely and assessment/referrals are made appropriately. The recording and storing of information are kept in-line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection.

We will continue to support any pupil leaving the Academy about whom there have been concerns, by ensuring that all appropriate information, including child protection and welfare concerns, are forwarded under confidential cover to the pupil's destination school as a matter of priority.

Looked After Children

Looked after children (LAC) are a particularly vulnerable group and safeguarding them is a crucial responsibility for our school. We have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care, a concept known as "corporate parenting". This includes ensuring their physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as providing stable placements, good health support, and opportunities for development.

As a school we must ...

- **Ensure staff training and information is timely, appropriate and up to date.**

- **Assess concerns raised and whether decide on 'no further actions or a referral to the social care is appropriate. If a case is referred to social care the school should do everything, they can support social workers.**
- **The designated safeguarding lead should take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place)**
- **At all stages, staff should keep the child's circumstances under review, involving the designated safeguarding lead or deputies as required, and re-refer if appropriate, to ensure the child's circumstances improve- the child's best interests must always come first.**

Early Help Procedures

The academy has a trained Early Help Lead- Mrs Askey

“Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.”

Our team is aware that Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

Any child may benefit from Early Help, but **ALL** school/college staff are particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who: -

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has a mental health need
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of being drawn in to antisocial or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- is frequently missing/goes missing from school, care or from home.
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation.
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- has a family member in prison or is affected by parental offending is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug or alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse.
- is misusing alcohol or other drugs themselves.
- has returned home to their family from care
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is a privately fostered child and
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

Early help and early intervention are forms of support aimed at improving outcomes for children or preventing escalating need or risk. Because of this, they are also sometimes referred to as prevention or preventative services.

These services are part of a “continuum of support” that the academy offers. We provide help to families who do not, or no longer, meet the threshold for a statutory intervention.

Staff are alert to the potential need for Early Help for pupils who have “experienced multiple suspensions, [are] at risk of being permanently excluded from the academy.

The academy is aware that early help procedures strengthen the role of education and childcare settings in supporting children and keeping them safe, including information on a child's right to education and risk factors for practitioners to consider when identifying children and families who may benefit from early help.

Our staff are aware of the potential need for an Early Help for pupils who have experienced multiple suspensions, are at risk of being permanently excluded and are placed in Alternative Provision.

The Early Help Champion and DSL ensures that **all** staff are aware of the early help process and understands their role in it. This includes identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL/ DDSL, sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment and, in some cases, acting as the lead professional in undertaking an early help assessment.

Guidance documents can be accessed at the following links:

- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board

[Early Help - Helping Children and Families Early - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Threshold Guidance

Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedure

- We have developed a structured procedure in line with Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Procedures which will be followed by all members of the Academy community in cases of suspected abuse. This is detailed in Appendix 8.
- The name of the DSL is clearly advertised in the Academy, with a statement explaining the school's role in referring and monitoring cases of suspected abuse or neglect.
- We will ensure all parents and carers are aware of the responsibilities of staff members to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by publishing the policy and procedures on our website and by referring to them in our introductory school materials.
- In line with the procedures, the Safeguarding Referral Team (SRT) will be notified as soon as there is a significant concern (or the relevant Children's Social Care Team if there is already a social worker involved).

Extra Familial Safeguarding

Extra Familial Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse.

The Safeguarding Concerns that would trigger an Extra Familial (contextual) approach are:

Meir Heath Academy's extra Familial Issues:-

- Domestic Abuse (Emotional Impact on children)
- Impact on children of parental separation.
- Safe and Responsible Use of Social Media in and out of school.
- Affluent Neglect

Geographical / Local Issues

- Poverty
- Substance Misuse
- Gangs
- Criminal Exploitation
- Water Safety
- Road Safety
- Bike / Scooter Safety

The academy has a safeguarding curriculum that ensures that children are taught to keep safe.

[Safeguarding Policies | Meir Heath Academy](#)

Use of Reasonable Force

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in school to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involves a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a young person needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. The use of force may involve either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a child by the arm out of the classroom. Departmental advice for schools is available in [Use of reasonable force in schools](#)

When using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children including any with SEND or disabilities, or with medical conditions, staff should consider the risks carefully.

By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children and agreeing them with parents and carers, we will reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force.

Examples of contextual and extra familial harm:

County Lines:

County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. The 'County Line' is the mobile phone line used to take the orders of drugs. Important areas (areas where the drugs are taken to) are reporting increased levels of violence and weapons-related crimes because of this trend.

Cuckooing:

Cuckooing is a practice where people take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. People who choose to exploit will often target the most vulnerable in society. They establish a relationship with the vulnerable person to access their home.

The most common form of cuckooing is where drug dealers take over a person's home and use it to store or distribute drugs but there are different types of cuckooing:

- Using the property to deal, store or take drugs
- Using the property for sex work
- Taking over the property as a place for them to live
- Taking over the property to financially abuse the tenant

Academy staff to be aware of 'cuckooing' as this may be happening in a property where one or more of our children are residing.

Hate Crimes:

Hate crimes are crimes that are motivated by prejudice of some kind. These are crimes where the victim is targeted because they are a member of a particular social group or have a particular characteristic, which the perpetrator has negative views or beliefs about. The legal definition is: "Any crime which is understood by the victim or any other person as being motivated (wholly or partly) by malice or ill will towards a social group."

Modern Slavery

Modern Slavery is a term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. These crimes include holding a person or persons in a position of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Although human trafficking commonly involves an international cross-border element it is also possible to be a victim of slavery or trafficking within your own country. Furthermore, it is also possible to be a victim even if consent has been given to be moved or travel.

With regard to children, it is important to note that they cannot give consent to being exploited and as such, the element of coercion or deception does not necessarily need to be present to prove an offence.

Sexual Exploitation:

Sexual Exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. When a child is at risk of being exploited, they're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities. Children are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called grooming. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused.

Children and young people can be trafficked into or within the UK to be sexually exploited. They're moved around the country and abused by being forced to take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person. Children, young people and adults at risk in gangs can also be sexually exploited.

Prevent is about safeguarding and supporting those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation. Prevention is one of the elements of CONTEST, the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. It aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Radicalisation is when someone starts to believe and support extreme aspirations around terrorism, political, social or religious ideals.

Radicalisation is when someone starts to believe and support extreme aspirations. This can lead to participation in extremist groups, vocally or actively.

Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)

Fabricated or Induced Illness is a condition whereby a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of their carer, and which is attributed by the adult to another cause.

There may be several explanations for these circumstances, and each requires careful consideration and review. Concerns about a child's health should be discussed with a health professional who is involved with the child.

Guidance documents:

- [SOTSCP Safeguarding Children in whom illness is fabricated or induced](#)

<https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/downloads/file/35/fabricated-or-induced-illness>

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The DSL/DDSL are aware of local contact details and referral routes into local housing organisations, so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest

Opportunity. Indicators of risk include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse, and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority will be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this will **not** replace a referral into children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and

the DSL will ensure that appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances.

Further explanation is found at Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets [Homeless reduction factsheet](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-reduction-bill-policy-factsheets>

Children who identify as or are perceived as are Lesbian, Gay, Bi or Trans (LGBT+)

We know the fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT+ is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, we know that children who are LGBT+ can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT+ (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT+

.We are aware that risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT+ lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. We therefore endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff. LGBT+ inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum and a range of support is available to us to help counter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and abuse as below.

Mental Health

All staff have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils and **are** aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. We have clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.

The academy engages with the following agencies to support our pupil mental health:

- CAMHS
- Young Minds
- Dove
- GP and MPFT Nursing services
- SMHT

Guidance and helpful documents: -

- Addressing Trauma and Adversity <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/addressing-trauma-and-adversity/>
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2>
- Preventing and tackling bullying
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf
- Every Interaction Matters <https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/685525>
- MIND-Parenting Capacity and Mental Health <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/parenting-and-mental-health/#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20people%20may%20judge,as%20a%20less%20capable%20parent.>
- NSPCC-Mental Health and Parenting <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/mental-health-parenting/>

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following their child protection policy, and by speaking to the DSL or a DDSL.

Only appropriately trained professionals will attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to **observe** children 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. Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, and education.

Online Safety

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, radicalisation, sextortion, sexual predation, and technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm.

At Meir Heath Academy we realise that it is essential for our children to be safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. We have an effective whole school approach to online safety which empowers us to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms for us to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three areas of risk:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, and extremism.
- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **Conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying).

We ensure that online safety is a running and interrelated theme whilst devising and implementing policies and procedures. We consider online safety in other relevant policies, when planning curriculum, teacher training, the role and responsibilities of the DSL and parental engagement. We have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, on school devices and school networks and these are regulated, and risk assessed as part of the Prevent duty.

Our filtering and monitoring standards will:

- identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- review filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs.

The Governing body will review the standards and discuss with MAT IT staff and service providers what more needs to be done to support schools and colleges in meeting this standard.

Guidance documents:

- Children's Commissioner-Online Safety <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/news-and-blogs/statement-from-the-childrens-commissioner-on-ofcoms-new-childrens-safety-codes/>
- Teaching online safety in education settings <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-online-safety-in-schools/teaching-online-safety-in-schools>
- Appropriate Filtering and Monitoring <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring>
- CEOP-Safety Centre <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>
- National Cyber Security Centre
- 360 Degree Safe - Online Safety Review Tool <https://360safe.org.uk/>
- UKCCIS-UK Council for Child Internet Safety <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis>

Filtering and Monitoring

The academy staff receive training on the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring. The designated safeguarding lead takes lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.

The filtering and monitoring system used in our academy is Light Speed filter. Light Speed helps our DSL and central MAT team to safely manage classrooms and the use of I pads. With real-time visibility of student activity and control over their device workspaces to limit distractions, teachers have more time to support student learning. The system pushes out vetted URLs to all pupils, closes distracting tabs, and blocks inappropriate websites. The system is monitored by the DSL / DDSL and the Central MAT safeguarding team.

Artificial Intelligence and Internet Safety

Generative Artificial Intelligence products must effectively and reliably prevent access to harmful and inappropriate content by users. This may be achieved by:

- integrating the highest standards of filtering possible within the product.
- using additional filtering solutions that work on top of an AI product

Our academy takes the appropriate action to meet the [cyber security standards](#) and also references).

We expect that:

- users are effectively and reliably prevented from generating or accessing harmful and inappropriate content
- filtering will be adjusted based on different levels of risk, age, appropriateness and the user's needs - for example users with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- multimodal content is effectively moderated, including detecting and filtering prohibited content across multiple languages, images, common misspellings and abbreviations
- filtering should be updated in response to new or emerging types of harmful content

Cyber Security

Safeguarding, in the context of cyber security, refers to the measures that the academy takes to protect our children, from harm online. This includes protecting them from cyberbullying, online grooming, exposure to harmful content, and other online risks.

Guidance documents:

Cyber Security: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>

Safer Recruitment

Meir Heath Academy ensures that potential applicants are given the right messages about the academy's commitment to recruit suitable people. The academy adheres to the MAT Recruitment and Vetting Policy.

We adopt robust recruitment procedures that deter and prevent people who are unsuitable to work with children from applying for or securing employment, or volunteering opportunities in schools and colleges.

The Governing body ensures that those involved with the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We ensure that at least one of the person who conducts an interview has completed safer recruitment training. The Governing body chooses appropriate training and may take advice from the Trust and LA safeguarding procedures.

Where a post is advertised we include a statement in the application form or elsewhere in the information provided to applicants that it is an offence to apply for the role if the applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children.

We provide a copy of the academy's safeguarding and child protection policy and practices and policy on employment of ex-offenders in the application pack or refer to a link on our website.

We require applicants to provide:

- personal details, current and former names, current address and national insurance number
- details of their present (or last) employment and reason for leaving
- full employment history, (since leaving school, including education, employment and voluntary work) including reasons for any gaps in employment
- qualifications, the awarding body and date of award
- details of referees/references (see below for further information), and
- a statement of the personal qualities and experience that the applicant believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the person specification.

We only accept copies of a curriculum vitae alongside an application form. A curriculum vitae on its own will not provide adequate information.

When someone has worked abroad the following checks will be carried out:

- **An enhanced DBS check**
- **A prohibition check**
- **Criminal record check**
- **2 references will be gathered, one of which will be from the trainee's most recent employment. References will be obtained directly from the referee, who should be a senior person with appropriate authority.**
- **Onlines searches**
- **A request of employment history**
- **A letter from the organisation that regulates teachers in the country where the applicant qualified will be obtained.**

Shortlisting

Shortlisted candidates are asked to complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or information that would make them unsuitable to work with children. Self-declaration is subject to Ministry of Justice guidance on the disclosure of criminal records, further information can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

For example:

- if they have a criminal history
- if they are included on the children's barred list
- if they are prohibited from teaching
- if they are prohibited from taking part in the management of an independent school
- information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales, not the law in their country of origin or where they were convicted
- if they are known to the police and children's local authority social care
- if they have been disqualified from providing childcare (see paras 263-267), and,

- any relevant overseas information.

This information is only requested from applicants who have been shortlisted.

Applicants are asked to sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true. Where there is an electronic signature, the shortlisted candidate physically signs a hard copy of the application at point of interview.

The academy makes online searches as part of pre-recruitment checks.

References

Meir Heath Academy Academy obtains two references before interview, where possible, this allows any concerns raised to be explored further with the referee and taken up with the candidate at interview.

- We do not accept open references
- References that are from the candidate's current employer, training provider or education setting
- references that have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority
- We do not accept references that have been provided by an applicant's family member
- We ensure that the most recent relevant employment history has been verified
- If applicable, a reference from the applicant's most recent work setting involving children has been obtained
- Electronic references must be confirmed to be from a legitimate source
- Referees have been contacted to clarify information if it's deemed vague or insufficient
- Information on the application form and reference match, and any discrepancies have been clarified by candidate
- The reason for leaving their current or most recent post has been established

Any concerns must be resolved satisfactorily before appointment has been confirmed

Individuals who have not undergone suitability checks are not allowed unsupervised contact with children

Ofsted will be informed of any significant event (including disqualification), which is likely to affect the suitability of any person who is in regular contact with children on the premises.

Administering Medications:

Medicines are administered and recorded in line with the DFE Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions (Dec 2015) and SB MAT Medicines Policy.

A policy and procedure for administering medicines, including systems for obtaining and updating information about medical needs, are in place.

Prescription medicines are not administered unless they have been prescribed for a child by a doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist (medicines containing aspirin should only be given if prescribed by a doctor)

Medicines (both prescription and non-prescription) are only administered where written permission is obtained from a child's parent or carer to administer that medicine.

Safer Eating

Before a child is admitted to the setting, information about special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and special health requirements has been obtained. This has been shared with all staff involved in food preparation and handling and eating supervision.

Allergy care plans are created with health professionals to manage known allergies/intolerances.

While eating our EYFS children will be:

- Within sight and hearing of a staff member
- In the same room as a staff member with a valid PFA certificate
- Seated, in appropriately low seating or a highchair where possible
- In an area of minimal distractions, where possible
- Facing staff, so staff can prevent choking, food sharing and be aware of accidental allergic reactions

Confidentiality , Consent and Information Sharing:

- We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.
- The Principal or DSL will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only.
- Staff members cannot promise a pupil to keep 'secrets' which might compromise their safety or well-being, or the safety and well-being of others.
- All staff members have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children, and the Data Protection Act is not a barrier to this.
- All our staff members who come into contact with pupils will be given appropriate training to understand the purpose of information sharing in order to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- We will ensure that staff members are confident about what they can and should do under the law, including how to obtain consent to share information and when information can be shared without consent.

Inter-Agency Working

- We will develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, including agencies providing Early Help services, as well as the police and Children's Social Care.
- We will ensure that relevant staff members participate in multi-agency meetings, including Early Help meetings, child protection conferences and core groups.
- We will participate in serious case reviews, other reviews and file audits as and when required to do so by Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board. We will ensure that we have a clear process for gathering the evidence required for reviews and audits, embedding recommendations into practice and completing required actions within agreed timescales.

Low Level Concerns:

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that;

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

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

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to school policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

All low-level concerns are recorded in writing. The record includes details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns should also be noted, if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that should be respected as far as reasonably possible.

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the academy will decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low-level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it should be referred to the LADO.

Children and The Court System

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts (either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed). Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can also be stressful for children. In both cases, we will support children and families as much as possible and refer to the age-appropriate guides available for this purpose. There is an age-appropriate guides to support children from 5-11 years old

Please see the attached link for the age-appropriate guidance:

Children with a disability

Read in conjunction with Staffordshire / Stoke-on-Trent safeguarding children's partnership guidance

The term "child (ren) with a disability" is used to refer to children and young people with a range of very different conditions and identities, some of whom may not identify as having a disability.

This includes children who:

- are d/Deaf
- are on the autistic spectrum
- have a condition such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- have a learning disability
- have a physical disability such as cerebral palsy
- have visual impairment
- have a long-term illness.

Vulnerability and risk of children with a disability

Many factors can make a child with a disability more vulnerable to abuse than a child without a disability of the same age. Safeguarding children with a disability demands a greater awareness of their vulnerability, individuality and particular needs. Children with a disability may be especially vulnerable to abuse for a number of reasons.

Some children with a disability may:

- Have fewer outside contacts than other children.
- Receive intimate care possible from a number of carers, which may increase the risk of exposure to abusive behaviour and make it more difficult to set and maintain physical boundaries.
- Have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse.
- Have communication difficulties that may make it difficult to tell others what is happening.
- Be inhibited about complaining for fear of losing services.
- Be especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation.
- Be more vulnerable than other children to abuse by their peers.

Children with a disability living away from home in poorly managed settings are particularly vulnerable to over medication, poor feeding and toileting arrangements, issues around control of challenging behaviour, lack of stimulations and emotional support.

- Parents'/carers' own needs and ways of coping may conflict with the needs of the child.
- Some adult abusers may target children with a disability in the belief that they are less likely to be detected.
- Signs and indicators can be inappropriately attributed to disability.
- Children with a disability are less likely to be consulted in matters affecting them and as a result may feel they have no choice about whether to accept or reject sexual advances.

In addition to the universal indicators of abuse / neglect the following abusive behaviours must be considered:

- Force feeding.
- Unjustified or excessive physical restraint.
- Rough handling.
- Extreme behaviour modification including the deprivation liquid, medication, food or clothing.
- Misuse of medication, sedation, heavy tranquillisation.
- Invasive procedures against the child's will.
- Deliberate failure to follow medically recommended regimes.
- Non-compliance with programmes or regimes.
- Failure to address ill-fitting equipment e.g. callipers, sleep boards which may cause injury or pain, inappropriate splinting.
- Misappropriation / misuse of a child's finances.

Measures should:

Make it common practice to enable children with a disability to make their wishes and feelings known in respect of their care and treatment.

- Ensure that children with a disability receive appropriate personal, health and social education (including age and capacity appropriate sex education);
- Make sure that all children with a disability know how to raise concerns and give them access to a range of adults with whom they can communicate. This could mean using interpreters and facilitators who are skilled in using the child's preferred method of communication - Children and young people may use different language to describe themselves and their needs. You should ask what terms they would prefer and use these when talking to them.
- Use a 'communication book' or similar for children with multiple caregivers to enable information about noteworthy events to be shared. This can allow patterns of behaviour or incidents to be noted and assessed.
- Recognise and utilise key sources of support including staff in schools such as support workers, friends and family members where appropriate.
- Ensure that there is an explicit commitment to and understanding of safety and welfare for children with a disability among all providers of services used by children with a disability.
- Develop the safe support services that families want, and a culture of openness and joint working with parents and carers on the part of services.

Provide guidelines and training for staff on good practice in intimate care; working with children of the opposite sex; managing behaviour that challenges families and services; issues around consent to treatment; anti-bullying and inclusion strategies.

Coercive Behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. Our academy is signed up to Operation Encompass and acts appropriately when we receive an alert to support the children in our school:

Guidance documents:

- SOTSCP Domestic Abuse <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>
- NSPCC-Domestic Abuse <https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/professionals/information-professionals/10>
- Operation Encompass helpline 0204 513 9990 (8am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Operation Encompass

How does Operation Encompass work?

- Operation Encompass is a multi-agency approach to give early notification to schools, academies, colleges and nurseries that a child or young person has recently been present, witnessed or been involved in a domestic abuse (DA) incident.
- Operation Encompass is an information sharing partnership between Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent educational settings (from Reception through to Higher Education) which allows schools to offer immediate support for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.
- Information obtained by the police at the attendance of a domestic abuse incident is shared with a school prior to the start of the next school day which enables appropriate support to be given depending on the needs and wishes of the child.

How does the school receive notification by the police that a domestic incident has occurred?

- When an officer attends the incident and completes the risk assessment on their handheld device, the name(s) of the children who form part of the household (whether present or not) are included. Alongside the details of the child, the officer will select the school that the child attends from the dropdown list. By completing this section of the risk assessment, the officer generates an automatic referral to the school via an email in real time.

How does the notification help to support the child?

- Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure and this can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. By providing the school with the knowledge that a domestic incident has taken place in the child's home the previous day, it allows the school to put support in place for the child before they arrive at school.

Drugs

- Operation Encompass helpline 0204 513 9990 (8am-1pm Mon-Fri)

There is evidence that children and young people are increasingly misusing alcohol and illegal drugs. Consequences range from non-attendance and poor attainment at school, poor health, committing crime to support 'habits' and increased risk of being a victim of violent crime and criminal exploitation, including sexual exploitation.

Guidance documents:

- NSPCC-Parental Substance Misuse <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/children-and-families-at-risk/parental-substance-misuse>
- Drugs Advice for Schools <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools>

Contractors, Service , Activity providers and Work Placements Providers

- We will ensure that contractors and providers are aware of our Academy's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. We require that employees and volunteers provided by these organisations use our procedure to report concerns.
- We will seek assurance that employees and volunteers provided by these organisations and working alongside our pupils have been subjected to the appropriate level of safeguarding check in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education: 2025. If assurance is not obtained, permission to work with our children or use our Academy premises will be refused.
- When we commission services from other organisations, we will ensure that compliance with our policy and procedures is a contractual requirement, along with the requirement for them to have undertaken safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

Site Security

At Meir Heath Academy we provide a secure site which is controlled by precise management directives, but the site is only as secure as the people who use it. All people on the site must adhere to the rules which govern it. Laxity can cause potential problems with safeguarding, therefore: -

- All staff members have a responsibility to ensure our buildings and grounds are secure and for reporting any issues or concerns that may come to light.
- We check the identity of all visitors coming into the Academy. Visitors are expected to sign in and out and to display a visitor's badge while on the Academy site. Any individual who is not known or identifiable will be challenged for clarification and reassurance.
- The Academy will not accept the behaviour of any individual, (parent, professional or anyone else;) that threatens security or leads others, child or adult, to feel unsafe. Such behaviour will be treated as a serious concern and may result in a decision to refuse that person access to the site.
- Gates are kept closed during the school day; visitors gain access through the main entrance.
- Visitors, volunteers, and students must only enter through the main entrance and after signing in at the office will be issued with a school lanyard or visitor's pass. School has a clear system of ensuring staff are accompanied / supervised by regulated staff member. Any visitor on site who is not identifiable by a visitor's pass will be challenged by any staff member and this will be reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Parents, carers, and grandparents attending functions have access only through the designated and supervised entrances, with tickets for visitors for appropriate school events.
- Children will only be allowed home with adults with parental responsibility or confirmed permission.
- Empty classrooms should have closed windows and doors.
- Children should never be allowed to leave school alone during school hours unless collected by an adult such as a parent who is doing so for a valid reason. They should report to the office to do this.
- A minimum of three members of staff are always on duty at break times.
- A health and safety audit is completed annually with risk assessment/safety planning and will form part of the Governors annual report. This will include a fire evacuation, lockdown evacuation and evacuation and Prevent risk assessment.
- The risk management of site security is managed by senior leadership/governance, we have a clear system of risk assessments and review timescales of these.

Associated Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures are relevant to the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedure.

Administration of Medicines Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Behaviour Policy

Complaints procedure (including whistle blowing)

E-Safety Policy

Exclusions Policy

Child on Child Abuse Policy

Health and Safety Policy and other linked policies and risk assessments

Offsite Activities and Educational Visits Policy and risk assessments

Positive Handling and Physical Intervention (Use of Force) Policy and Guidance

Recruitment and Selection Policy and procedures

Sex and Relationship Education Policy

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy

Prevent Policy

Staff code of conduct/behaviour policy (within handbook)

Whistleblowing Policy

Role	Name
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs D Askey
Inclusion Team Manager	Mrs D Askey
Early Help Champion	Mrs D Askey
Lead Person for Online Safety	Mrs D Askey / Mr Burdett
Lead Person for Looked After Children (LAC)	Mrs D Askey
Lead Person for CSE	Mrs D Askey / Mrs Southern
Lead Person for PREVENT	Mrs D Askey / Mrs Southern
Manager responsible for allegations made against staff	Mrs M Southern
Mental Health Lead	Mrs D Askey / Mrs Southern
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	0300 111 8007
Staffordshire Education Safeguarding Advice Service (ESAS)	01785 895836 email: esas@staffordshire.gov.uk
Staffordshire Childrens Advice and Support (SCAS)	0300 111 8007
Emergency Duty Services (EDS-out of hours safeguarding concerns)	0345 604 2886 email eds.team.manager@staffordshire.gov.uk
Integrated Front Door (IFD) Portal or Emergency Referrals Line	(01782) 235100
Access and Advice Line	01782 232200

Staffordshire Police Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	101 in an emergency please dial 999
School Guidance around Asylum Seekers (Central Thoroughfare Team)	Dave Atherton david.atherton@staffordshire.gov.uk
Staffordshire Police coordinator	Mark Hardern 07539 3636299 Email: mark.hardern@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
Staffordshire Police Prevent Team	01785 232054, 01785 233109 or email prevent@staffordshire.police.uk
PHSE Coordinator Natalie McGrath	natalie@staffscvys.org.uk

Glossary of Key Definitions & Acronyms

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children- The Children Act 2004 (1.20) defines 'safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children' as:
- Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges 2024
- Providing support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- Protecting children from maltreatment, inside or outside of the home, including online.
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development;
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Enabling children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.
- Abuse, neglect and exploitation are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse, neglect or exploit a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger, for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Harm can include children witnessing the ill-treatment of others and that this is particularly relevant when children see, hear or experience domestic abuse and its effects.
- CAFCASS: The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) looks after the interests of children involved in family proceedings. It works with children and their families, and then advises the courts on what it considers to be in the children's best interests. CAFCASS only works in the family courts. Examples of matters that may be taken to family courts are: when parents who are separating or divorcing can't agree on arrangements for their children; an adoption application; when children are subject to an application for care or supervision proceedings by Children's Services. Social workers employed by CAFCASS are appointed as Family Court Advisors (FCAs).
Updated guidance now directs schools to two guides that support children in the court system, one for 5 to 11 year olds (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2017a) and the other for 12 to 17 year olds (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2017b).
- Care Order (CO) – A statutory order made under Section 31(1) of the Children Act, placing the child in the care of the Local Authority. The Local Authority shares parental responsibility with the parent.
- ChAD - Children's Advice and Duty Service - Children's advice and duty service (ChAD) is a conversation based referral service. Therefore all new referrals should be made via (01782) 235100, where a consultant social worker, experienced and trained in child protection and safeguarding, will discuss with you your concerns; and progress with the most appropriate service / outcome for that child/ren. All referrals should be phoned through to the CHAD service.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - Specialist multidisciplinary team to provide assessment and treatment for children and young people with emotional/mental health issues.
- Child Protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is a specific activity that is undertaken to protect a child who is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. All agencies should proactively aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need to take action to protect children from harm is reduced.
- Child Protection Conference - A formal inter-agency meeting, following an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act which decides whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and whether the child is to be subject to a child protection plan.
- Child Protection Plan - The aim of the plan is to safeguard the children from further harm, promote the child's health and development; provided it is in the best interests of the child, to support the family and wider family members to promote the welfare of the child.

- Child Protection Review Conferences -These ensure that children who are the subject of a child protection plan remain monitored and that their individual child protection plan remains valid. The first conference should be held within 3 months of the initial conference. Further reviews should take place within 6 months of each other for as long as the child's name remains subject to a child protection plan.
- Child Social Work Assessment – Previously, children's social work assessments were carried out as part of two separate processes, the initial and core assessment. The Child Social Work Assessment removes the distinction between the two so that all families are subject to a single assessment that is proportionate to their needs. Social Workers have 45 working days to complete the assessment, however it is expected that the majority of assessments will take less than 45 days to complete.
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs). When a child dies or is seriously harmed in circumstances where abuse or neglect are known or suspected (i.e. is a serious child safeguarding case), Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships/Boards are required to consider if a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is appropriate to consider the involvement of organisations and professionals with the child and family. In order to do this, a rapid review must be carried out within 15 days of the notification of the serious child safeguarding case to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- Children in Need - Children are defined as being 'in need', under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. They are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services [section 17(10)] . This includes children who are disabled. Critical factors to be taken into account in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 1989 centre upon what will happen to a child's health or development without services being provided, and the likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development. Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need.
- The Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (the Assessment Framework, published in 2000) sets out arrangements for undertaking assessment processes in determining whether a child is "in need" under the Act. It is the basis upon which primarily social workers will prioritise a child's need for supportive help or services, though these are not necessarily confined to services provided by the local authority.
- Children Act 1989 and 2004 (CA) – Legislation on which the protection of children is based and includes both public and private law, (family proceedings).
- Children Social Care Services – The national terminology used to describe local authority services provided to children.
- Core Group - Is made up of the agencies and carers with responsibility for carrying out the child protection plan following a conference. Meets monthly to discuss and monitor progress of the plan.
- Department for Education (DfE) – Government department responsible for safeguarding children policies.
- Elective Home Education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school. Throughout this guidance, 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility, including guardians (and foster carers, although in this case the local authority may be the corporate parent).
- Emergency Duty Team (EDT) - A team of social workers who deal with emergencies out of office hours.
- Emergency Protection Order (EPO) - A court order under the Children Act 1989, which lasts for up to 8 days. It gives the applicant parental responsibility.
- Emotional Abuse – is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may include serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.
- Hidden Harm – The term 'Hidden Harm' is used with reference to the impact of parental substance misuse on children and young people.
- Inter-Agency Working - Agencies, organisations and individuals working together. Interim Care Order (ICO) – Time limited court order under the CA1989 to be renewed by the court after no more than 8 weeks and then every 4 weeks.
- LADO - Local Authority Designated Officer (for allegations against staff). Has the responsibility to oversee allegations against members of staff across all organisations.
- Looked After Children (LAC) - Children cared for by the local authority. They may live with foster carers, other family members or in residential care.
- LSCB – Local Safeguarding Children Boards are the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.
- MARF - A Multi Agency Referral Form - This document is now only to be completed by the emergency services, not school settings.
- MAPPA – Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements - support the assessment and management of the most serious sexual and violent offenders.
- MARAC - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences - are multi-agency meetings which focus on the victims of domestic violence where there is a high or very high risk. They aim to provide a co-coordinated response to support the victim and to link into relevant groups (e.g. MAPPA).

- Multi-agency working - Agencies, organisations and individuals working together.
- Neglect – is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Neglect may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.
- Operation Encompass Operation Encompass is a multi-agency approach to give early notification to schools, academies, colleges and nurseries that a child or young person has recently been present, witnessed or been involved in a domestic abuse (DA) incident.
- Performance Indicators (PIs) – Targets set by the government so that local authorities can measure their performance in all aspects of service delivery.
- Physical Abuse – may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- Police Protection Order (PPO) – A 72 hour order taken by the police to protect a child in an emergency, under the Children Act 1989.
- Public Law Outline (PLO) – is the legal framework for pre consideration and instigation of Care Proceedings
- Referral – Term given to information gathered when an enquiry is first made to CYPS about a child or adult and a request is made for services.
- Residence Order – Court order, CA1989, regarding where a child should live.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children - The process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development, and ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care which is undertaken so as to enable children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.
- Section 17 - Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on Children’s Services Social Care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need.
- Section 47 Enquiry - Section 47 of the Children Act requires the Children’s Social Care Service to make enquiries about children thought to be at risk, enabling them to decide whether they need to take further action to safeguard and promote the child’s welfare.
- Serious Case Review (SCR) – An in-depth review of a case following the death or serious life threatening injury of a child, or a child protection issues arises that is likely to be of major public concern. This is conducted on a multi-agency basis on behalf of the LSCB.
- Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not a child is aware of what is happening.
- Significant Harm – The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child. Local authorities have a statutory duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Sometimes significant harm arises from a single traumatic event. It may otherwise arise from a combination or series of events (acute or long-standing) which when seen in the context of others, means that the threshold for significant harm has been reached. To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:
 - the nature of harm, in terms of maltreatment or failure to provide adequate care; harm can include children witnessing the ill-treatment of others and that this is particularly relevant when children see, hear or experience domestic abuse and its effects.
 - the impact on the child’s health and development;
 - the child’s development within the context of their family and wider environment;
 - any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child’s development and care within the family; the capacity of the parents to adequately meet the child’s needs; and; the wider and environment family context.
- There are no absolute criteria upon which to base a judgement of what constitutes significant harm; when determining whether the threshold for significant harm is met, professionals should take into consideration the:
 - severity of the maltreatment; including the degree and extent of physical harm; duration and frequency of abuse and neglect;
 - extent of premeditation; and presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism, bizarre or unusual elements.
- A court may make a Care Order (committing the child to the care of the local authority) or a supervision order (putting the child under the supervision of a social worker, or a probation officer) in respect of a child if it is satisfied that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and the harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to a lack of adequate parental care or control. Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them the corrosive elements of emotional, physical and, sometimes, sexual maltreatment cause impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. In each case it is necessary to consider the implications of maltreatment alongside the family’s strengths and supports. Where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant, turns on the child’s health and development, this should be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.
- Strategy Meeting - Meeting between the social services and police and other relevant agencies to plan an investigation under Section 47. Sometimes this can be a strategy discussion by phone.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children - Guidance published by the Department for Education setting out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children’s welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect.

- Youth Offender Service (YOS formally known as YOT) - Provides a range of services for young people who have committed offences or are at risk of committing offences. They are usually multi-disciplinary teams, providing reports for court and activating various orders imposed by the court to help prevent re-offending and protect the public.

Appendix 1 - The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead

1. MANAGING REFERRALS – the Designated Safeguarding Lead: -

Has a good understanding of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board's Threshold Framework (2023) to ensure that children and families get the right support and intervention at the right time.

Refers all cases of suspected abuse and neglect to the Staffordshire (SCAS) or Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Referral Team (IFD) and to the Police if a crime may have been committed.

Liaises with the Principal (DDSL) about safeguarding issues relating to individual children, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Acts as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff members on matters of child protection and safeguarding.

Liaises with agencies providing early intervention services and coordinates referrals from the school to early help services for children and families in need of support.

Refer cases to the Channel Panel where there is a concern regarding radicalisation/extremism.

1. RECORD KEEPING – the Designated Safeguarding Lead: -

Keeps written records of child protection and welfare concerns in line with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board guidance.

Creates a stand-alone file for pupils with safeguarding concerns.

Maintains a chronology of significant incidents for each pupil with safeguarding concerns.

Ensure such records are kept confidentially and securely and separate from the pupil's educational record.

Ensure arrangements to hand over the child protection file of a pupil transferring to another school, are made without delay. The DSL will verbally advise the DSL of the destination school of the concerns and make arrangements to securely and confidentially hand over the file.

Where the destination school is too far for the DSL to do a personal handover, the file will be sent separate from the pupil's education file and by secure courier. The DSL will retain evidence to demonstrate how the file has been transferred, and will require a receipt from the destination school.

Where a parent elects to remove their child from the school roll to home educate, the educational establishment will make arrangements to pass any safeguarding concerns to the local authority.

1. MULTI-AGENCY WORKING and INFORMATION SHARING – the Designated Safeguarding Lead:-

Cooperates with Children's Social Care for enquiries under section 17 and section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Attends, or ensures other relevant staff members' attendance at early help meetings, child protection conferences, core group meetings, child in need meetings and other multi agency meetings as required.

Liaises with other agencies working with the child, shares information as appropriate and contributes to assessments.

Ensures each member of staff has access to and understands the school's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, including providing induction on these matters to new staff members.

Makes the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures available publicly.

Raises awareness of parents and carers of the existence of the safeguarding and child protection policy, in particular that information may be shared with other agencies, cases of suspected abuse and neglect will be referred to Children's Social Care, and the role of the school in any investigations that ensue.

TRAINING – the Designated Safeguarding Lead: -

Undertakes appropriate safeguarding training **every two years**, in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025* and guidance from the SSSCB, order to: -

- be able to recognise signs of abuse and how to respond to them, including special circumstances such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, challenging extremism etc.;
- understand the assessment process for providing early help and intervention, e.g. Stoke-on-Trent's and Staffordshire Guide to Levels of Need, Early Help and Safeguarding Thresholds;
- have a working knowledge of how the local authority conducts initial and review child protection conferences and contribute effectively to these;
- be alert to the specific needs of children in need (as specified in section 17 of the Children Act 1989), those with special educational needs, pregnant teenagers and young carers.

Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the educational establishment's safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, including providing induction on these matters to new staff members.

Organises whole-school SCB level 1 safeguarding training for all staff members at least **every three years**.

Ensures staff members who miss the training receive it by other means, e.g. by joining an open session or another school's training.

Provides an annual briefing / update / training session to the whole school on any changes to child protection legislation and procedures (internally, locally or nationally;) relevant learning from local and national serious case reviews; or awareness raising regarding any safeguarding issues or themes emerging locally or nationally.

Links with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board to identify appropriate training opportunities for relevant staff members.

Ensures the school allocates time and resources every year for relevant staff members to attend training.

Encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any action the school takes to protect them.

Maintains accurate records of staff induction, staff training and staff briefings.

Designated Safeguarding Lead is required to undertake the following training: -

Level of training	Course title	Frequency	Notes
Level 1	Safeguarding Children Face to face session delivered by SSOTSCB approved trainer	Every 3 years as part of whole school update	<p>This must be completed irrespective of any other training undertaken.</p> <p>If you commission a level 1 course that is NOT APPROVED by Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent SCB, it may not be sufficiently in depth for Ofsted.</p> <p>SCB Level 1 workbook accompanying the course should be retained for Ofsted.</p>

Level 2	Level 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children – multi agency (full 2 days)	No requirement to renew providing some safeguarding training is undertaken every 2 years.	This course can only be delivered face to face in a multi-agency setting to be compliant. DSLs who wish to refresh this course need undertake day 1 only. (NB level 2 training to be compliant, it cannot be done online or as a whole school.)
Level 3	New to Role DSL Subject specific courses relevant to needs of school community. Suggested: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child sexual exploitation • Female genital mutilation • Prevent/challenging extremism • E-safety • Forced marriage 	No requirement to renew level 3 courses providing some safeguarding training is undertaken every 2 years.	See SSSCB Training Prospectus for additional relevant courses
Level 4 Stoke only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Safeguarding Lead training • Managing Allegations against Staff and Volunteers training 	No requirement to renew level 4 courses providing some safeguarding training is undertaken every 2 years.	
ANNUAL UPDATES	DSLs must update their knowledge and skills regularly and at least annually (via e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs or taking time to read and update themselves) on safeguarding developments relevant to their role. - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024		
IMPORTANT	DSLs are NOT required to undertake level 1 or level 2 safeguarding training every 2 years. They are required to undertake the comprehensive SCB level 1 course every 3 years, and SOME RELEVANT safeguarding training every 2 years, in order to expand and diversify their safeguarding knowledge.		

AWARENESS RAISING

Review the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures annually and liaise with the educational establishment's governing body to update and implement them.

Make the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures available publicly and raise awareness of parents that referrals about suspected abuse may be made and the role of the educational establishment in any investigations that ensue.

Provide updates to the educational establishment on any changes to child protection legislation and procedures and relevant learning from local and national serious case reviews, at least annually.

QUALITY ASSURANCE – the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Reviews the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures annually and liaises with the school's governing body to update and implement them.

Monitors the implementation of and compliance with policy and procedures, including periodic audits of child protection and welfare concern files (at least once a year).

Completes an audit of the school's safeguarding arrangements at frequencies specified by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

Remedies any deficiencies and weaknesses identified in child protection arrangements.

Provides regular reports to the governing body detailing changes and reviews to policy, training undertaken by staff members and the number of children with child protection plans and other relevant data.

Appendix 2 - Guide to Levels of Need

1. THE STOKE-ON-TRENT and STAFFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (SSSCB) THRESHOLD GUIDE TO LEVELS OF NEED, EARLY HELP & SAFEGUARDING THRESHOLD CRITERIA 2023.

1. Meir Heath Academy recognises the importance of identifying issues early, and providing early help children and families in order to prevent issues from escalating.
 2. Most parents can look after their children without needing help from anyone other than their family or friends. However, some parents may need additional help from our school or from other services such as the NHS.
 3. Providing help early is more effective in promoting the welfare of children, than reacting later.
 4. As such, we are committed to working collaboratively with other agencies and with the Early Intervention Teams to provide a coordinated offer of early help, in line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024* and local guidance.
1. We use Stoke-on-Trent's and Staffordshire's Guide to Levels of Need, Early Help and Safeguarding Threshold criteria (2023) to support us in our discussions with colleagues from other agencies, and to make decisions about the right level of support/assessment required for the child and family. And when this should be 'stepped up' or 'stepped down'.
 2. The Guide to Levels of Need has four levels and every child living in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire will fit into one of these four levels:

Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire 'The Windscreen Threshold Model'

Level 1 – Universal Services - Children do not have additional needs

- Children are achieving expected outcomes.
- Their needs are met by their parents alongside universal services.
- No additional support is required as there are no concerns about health and development, parenting capacity or environmental factors.

Level 2 – Initial Early Help - Children have some additional need

- Parents require professional support or guidance to help them to meet their children's needs.
- We are able to provide that additional support or make a referral to an agency that is able to provide that support.
- We will undertake an *initial early help assessment* to enable us to provide the right support.
- The paperwork and registration details for initial Early Help can be found at:
[Early Help – Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](https://staffsscb.org.uk)

Level 3 – Early Help - Children with multiple and complex needs

Needs cannot be met at previous levels and children and parents require coordinated, targeted, multi-agency intervention and support to meet the children's needs.

Needs such as:-

- Child is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care
 - Unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education.
 - has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in alternative provision or a pupil referral unit
 - has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending
-
- The initial early help assessment will be the referral into the Early Intervention Team, if additional support is required.
 - Needs are met through multi-agency support and the use of Early Help Plans.
 - We will register with the Early Help Assessment/plan with the Early Help Co-ordinator

.Level 4 – Safeguarding - Children with acute needs, including children in need of protection

- Children and parents require multi-agency responses which include specialist intervention coordinated by Children’s Social Care under section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- Risks and unmet needs have not been resolved through Early Help intervention.
- If there is an immediate risk of harm, then the Police will be contacted.
- If there is a risk of significant harm, Section 47, or a child meets the threshold for Child in Need, Section 17, a referral will be made to Children’s Social Care. Please see appendix 8 for the referral procedure. - <https://www.ssscb.org.uk/>

Appendix 3 - Categories of Abuse

1. Abuse, neglect and exploitation are forms of maltreatment. Someone may abuse, neglect or exploit a child by inflicting harm, by failing to act to prevent harm or by failing to meet a child’s basic needs. Harm can include children witnessing the ill-treatment of others and that this is particularly relevant when children see, hear or experience domestic abuse and its effects. Children may be abused within the family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or by strangers; and increasingly, via the internet. They may be abused, neglected or exploited by an adult or adults or another child or children.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such that it causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, although it may also occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve: -

- seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another, e.g. domestic abuse;
- making a child feel worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another;
- inappropriate age or developmental expectations;
- overprotection and limitation of exploration, learning and social interaction;
- high criticism and low warmth;
- serious bullying (including cyberbullying;)
- exploitation or corruption

NEGLECT

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

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse.

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

Once a child is born, it may involve a parent or carer failing to: -

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment;)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision, (including the use of inadequate care givers;)

- provide access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child, causing physical harm and injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

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

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Activities may involve physical contact, including penetration of any part of the body, or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images including on the internet, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual Exploitation is also sexual abuse. It involves children receiving something, for example accommodation, drugs, gifts or affection, as a result of them performing sexual activities, or having others perform sexual activities on them. It could take the form of grooming of children, e.g. to take part in sexual activities or to post sexual images of themselves on the internet – see **appendix 4** (specific safeguarding issues.)

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

For example, using undue influence or pressure to control individuals or ensure obedience, follow religious practices that are harmful such as beatings or starvation.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Children Absent from Education

All professionals working with children, as well as the wider community can help by remaining vigilant to children's safety. The law states every child should be receiving an education, and we stand a better chance of ensuring a child's safety if we know where and how they are receiving this. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children and young people of compulsory school age missing education in their area; we work closely to ensure we put appropriate safeguarding responses in place for children who go missing from education.

Meir Heath Academy recognises the need to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and protect those who may go missing from education. The school will follow the policy and guidance issued by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council on Children Missing from Education (CME) which can be found at Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Boards.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

We have an admission and attendance register and all pupils are placed on both registers.

If a registered pupil is continuously absent for two weeks without explanation, or fails to return from a holiday, the school will follow the normal procedures for investigating unexplainable pupil absence (i.e. telephone calls, letters, safe and well checks and invitations to meetings at the school etc.). If, after further enquiries, the child has not returned to school after a total of no more than two weeks, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority.

If a pupil suddenly ceases to attend without prior warning, and their whereabouts cannot be established, the school will immediately notify the Local Authority. If there are any reasons to be concerned for the child's safety, including any past history of concern, this will be raised immediately as a referral under Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Deliberately Missing Education:

Meir Heath Academy recognises the need to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and protect those who may go missing from education.

The school will follow the policy and guidance issued by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council on Children Missing from Education (CME) which can be found at Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Boards.

Deliberately missing education is regarded as educational neglect: by not making sure that your child receives an appropriate education on the 190 days per year that they are required to be present in school. This is a key safeguarding issue in schools and links heavily to the reasons why staff at Meir Heath Academy chase parents for evidence supporting absences from school. Parents must resist any urge to let their child have a day off without good reason and get them into school. If there are concerns or issues, please bring them too us to work with you on solving them.

Missing Children:

A child going missing, particularly repeatedly, can be a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding risks, including abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation; child criminal exploitation; mental health problems; substance abuse and other issues. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in future.

Our Academy will hold **two or more** emergency contact numbers for each pupil. It is good practice to give our school additional options to contact a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

The school will notify the Local Authority of any pupil/student who fails to attend school regularly after making reasonable enquiries or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. The school (regardless of designation) will also notify the Local Authority of any pupil/student who is to be deleted from the admission register because s/he:

- Has been taken out of school by their parents and is being educated outside the school system (e.g. elective home education).
- Has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within a reasonable distance of the school at which s/he is registered (moved within the city, within the country or moved abroad but failed to notify the school of the change).
- Displaced because of a crisis e.g. domestic violence or homelessness.
- Has been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither s/he nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- Is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe that s/he will return to the school at the end of that period; or
- Has been permanently excluded.

Our school will demonstrate that we have taken reasonable enquiries to ascertain the whereabouts of children that would be considered ['missing'](#)

Elective Home Education:

Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority

otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school. Throughout this guidance, 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility, including guardians (and foster carers, although in this case the local authority may be the corporate parent).

Parents may choose to engage private tutors or other adults to assist in providing a suitable education, but there is no requirement to do so. There are other settings which may be used, for example parental support groups which offer tuition, and companies which give part-time tuition. This can also include provision made at further education colleges for children aged 14 and over.

Although children being home-educated are not normally registered at any school, parents sometimes choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of the total provision at a school - the purpose of this will often be to provide education in specific subjects more easily than is possible at home. Such arrangements are sometimes known as 'flexi-schooling'. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so. When a child is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education, but the element received at school must be taken into account in considering whether that duty is met, just as it should be when a child attends other settings on a part-time basis as described above. Bearing that in mind, this guidance applies as much to children who are flexi-schooled as it does to others who are educated at home.

Parents who choose to educate a child in these ways rather than sending the child to school full-time take on financial responsibility for the cost of doing so, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision.

Schools must refer to the following guidance and refer to local authority guidance::

Dfe Guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/791527/Elective_home_education_guidance_for_LAv2.0.pdf

Local Authority Guidance:

Local Offer:

<https://localoffer.stoke.gov.uk>

Elective Home Education Stoke on Trent Policy:

https://www.stoke.gov.uk/directory_record/333174/elective_home_education_policy#:~:text=All%20parents%20are%20responsible%20for%20home%20instead%20of%20at%20school.

Appendix 4 - Signs and Indicator of Abuse

1. The most important sign/indicator of abuse or neglect is a disclosure from a pupil, and this will always be taken seriously.
2. Signs and indicators can often appear in a cluster. Serious case reviews have found that parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and parental mental health problems (known collectively as the 'toxic trio') coexisting in a family can increase the risks to children.
3. Pupils may show symptoms from one, all, or none of the categories, but staff will be vigilant to anything unusual displayed by the pupil. Many of the indicators below may be caused by other factors not connected to any form of abuse. However, if concerned, staff will always exercise professional curiosity and will share concerns with the DSL.
4. We are aware that in an abusive relationship, the child may: -
 - Appear frightened of their parent/carer
 - Act in a way that is inappropriate to their age and stage of development (whilst taking into account the different patterns of development and different ethnic groups.
1. We are aware that in an abusive relationship, the parent or carer may: -
 - persistently avoid child health services and treatment of the child's illnesses
 - have unrealistic expectations of the child
 - frequently complain about or to the child and fail to provide attention or praise
 - be absent
 - be misusing substances

- persistently refuse to allow access on home visits by professionals
- be involved in domestic violence and abuse
- be socially isolated

Staff are constantly mindful that pupils with **special educational needs and disabilities** can face additional safeguarding challenges including: -

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability
 - children with special educational needs and disabilities are particularly vulnerable to bullying and may show no outward signs
 - communication issues can be a barrier to effective safeguarding
1. The following table gives some examples of what staff may see or hear, but **this is not an exhaustive list and should not be used as a checklist.**

<p>Signs of potential PHYSICAL ABUSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bruise marks consistent with either straps or slaps ● Undue fear of adults - fear of going home to parents or carers ● Aggression towards others ● Unexplained injuries or burns – particularly if they are recurrent <p>(and especially in non-mobile babies)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them ● Injuries that occur on parts of the body which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games ● Injuries to the side of the face, the ear, the neck ● Black eyes, particularly bilateral ● Reluctance to change for, or participate in games or swimming ● Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental/ satisfactory explanation ● Cuts/scratches in areas that would be difficult to do accidentally ● Injuries to the soft tissue area ● Hitting (with the hand or implement) smacking, punching, kicking, slapping, twisting/pulling ear, hair or fingers, holding/squeezing with a tight grip, biting, and burning ● Fabricated or induced illness
<p>Signs of potential NEGLECT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exposure to danger ● Lack of supervision ● Under nourishment and subsequent failure to grow and thrive ● Constant hunger ● Stealing or gorging food ● Untreated illnesses ● Inadequate care ● Injuries that have not received medical attention ● Non-attendance for health appointments ● Inadequate/inappropriate clothing ● Poor standards of hygiene ● Unsafe home environment ● Persistent lack of attention, warmth or praise

Signs of potential EMOTIONAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. • Depression / aggression, extreme anxiety • Nervousness, frozen watchfulness • Obsessions or phobias • Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration • Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults • Attention-seeking behaviour • Persistent tiredness • Running away / stealing / lying • Parent humiliating, taunting or threatening child • Persistent lack of attention, warmth or praise. • Shouting / yelling at a child • Copying or role playing abuse seen in the home (ie domestic violence) • Radicalisation – use of inappropriate language, violent extremist literature, the expression of extremist views, advocating violent action
Signs of potential SEXUAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of language that is inappropriate for age / stage of development • Sexual knowledge inappropriate for their age / stage of development • Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters • Regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play • Wariness on being approached • Soreness or unexplained rashes or marks in the genital areas • Pain on urination • Difficulty in walking or sitting • Stained or bloody underclothes • Recurrent tummy pains or headaches • Bruises on inner thigh or buttock • Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse • Sexual activity through words, play or drawing • Child displaying ‘sexually inappropriate’ behaviour towards adults • Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home • Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations • Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia • Telling you about being asked to ‘keep a secret’ • Dropping hints or clues about abuse. • Unaccounted sources of money or gifts, or multiple mobile phones

Appendix 5 - Specific Safeguarding Issues

School staff members need to be aware of specific safeguarding issues and be alert to any risks.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Procedures, has detailed information, policy and procedure on many of the specific issues identified below. We will follow the local procedures for responding to risks.

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

The government website, [GOV.UK](http://gov.uk) also has broad government guidance on a variety of issues. The following is **not** a comprehensive list and staff members should search the GOV.UK website and the *Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Procedures* for advice on other issues:

-

- Children missing from home or care
- Children missing from education
- Child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Domestic violence
- Drugs
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Faith abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced marriage
- Gangs and youth violence
- Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Hate crime
- 'Honour-based' violence
- Mental health
- Online safety
- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Private fostering
- Preventing radicalisation and the Prevent duty
- Serious Violence
- Sexual Harassment
- Sexting
- Self-harm and suicidal behaviour
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Trafficking
- Voyeurism

Absconding:

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in common law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and always remain within the care of the school/centre throughout the school day and during school led activities.

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for schools to develop their individual policy and procedures for dealing with pupils who abscond.

Definition

To abscond is to **'leave without permission'**.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Where a pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site. (Leaving the building without permission)	Where a pupil leaves the school site without permission. (Absconding from academy grounds)
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site. (Leaving the room without permission)	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission, e.g., curriculum swimming, alternative education provision, etc. (Absconding off-site)
	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission, e.g., when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit. (Absconding off-site)
	Where a pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission (Absconding from transport)

If a child absconds either internally or externally the ST Bart's MAT Absconding Policy will be followed, and incidents will be logged on CPOMS.

Alternative Provision

Where Meir Heath Academy places a child with an alternative provision provider, it continues to be responsible for the safeguarding of that child and should be satisfied that the placement meets the child's needs.

At Meir Heath Academy we know that the cohort of children in our provision often have complex needs, our Governing bodies/proprietors are aware of this additional risk of harm that their pupils may be vulnerable to.

- Alternative provision
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school

If your child is placed in an alternative provision the academy we will:

1. Written confirmation of checks.

The academy will ensure that this written confirmation is saved in a location accessible to relevant members of staff.

2. Physically visiting the provision and conducting our own safeguarding quality assurance process

The academy will check its registration status (and whether it needs to be registered), its Child Protection policy and assessments of hazardous activity that the pupil may potentially be involved in. This will detail the safeguarding training of all AP staff to ensure they are adequately trained.

3. Agree an attendance policy.

We will agree and establish a procedure to follow if the pupil does not attend the AP as expected.

Any pupils with an EHCP will have their attendance monitored closely by the school and local authority.

4. Establish a contact plan.

The academy will visit the pupil at the Alternative Provision regularly to ensure safety.

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

We would expect the parents' decision to home educate to be made with their child's best education at the heart of the decision. Meir Heath Academy recognises that home education can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs.

From September 2016 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended so that the academy must inform their LA of all deletions from their admission register when a child is taken off roll.

Where a parent/carer has expressed their intention to remove a child from our academy with a view to educating at home, we would work with other LA professionals to coordinate a meeting with parents/carers where possible. Ideally, this would be before a final decision has been made, to ensure the parents/carers have considered what is in the best interests of each child. This is particularly important where a child has special educational needs or a disability, and/or has a social worker, and/or is otherwise vulnerable.

DfE guidance for local authorities on [Elective home education](#) sets out the role and responsibilities of LAs and their powers to engage with parents in relation to EHE.

CHILD MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE

There are strong links between children involved in criminal and sexual exploitation and other behaviours such as running away from home, care or school, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy, and substance misuse.

In addition, some children are particularly vulnerable, for example, children with special needs, those in residential or foster care, those leaving care, migrant children, particularly those who are unaccompanied, those forced into marriage, those involved in gangs and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Most children who go missing are not in care and go missing from their family home. However, children who are looked after are much more likely to run away than those who live at home, and over 50% of young people in care have run away at some point.

Guidance document

- [Children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm, from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

CSE can affect any child, who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

Meir Heath Academy recognises the need to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation. Education staff are more likely to see victims on a regular basis than almost any other professional. They will notice recurrent or prolonged absences and significant changes in behaviour. Therefore, we are key to identifying children at risk and will raise concerns at an early stage, to potentially halt the grooming process before sexual exploitation has begun.

We will follow the Safeguarding Children Board procedure which can be found at:-

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscbb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscbb.org.uk)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (DfE 2017.)

Children cannot consent to being abused. Irrespective of the child's age and even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them, it is not uncommon for children not to realise that they are being exploited.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation: -

- Children with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Having multiple mobile phones and worrying about losing contact via mobile phone;
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour;
- Sexual activity/underage sexual activity;
- Sexually risky behaviour, 'swapping' sex;
- Seen at known places of concern;
- Involved in abusive relationships;
- Intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations;
- Hanging out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers or known perpetrators;
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late;
- Children who regularly miss school or education or don't take part in education;
- Injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

Where a member of staff sees one or more of these indicators, or otherwise has cause for concern, this information will be recorded and passed, without delay, to the DSL following usual safeguarding procedures.

We will use the Sexual Exploitation Risk Factor Matrix (RFM) to identify pupils at low, medium or high risk of sexual exploitation. The Matrix can be found on the links below:-

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

Pupils will be referred to the CSE Panel if deemed appropriate, following completion of the Risk Factor Matrix.

We will also share information with Staffordshire Police Child Exploitation Team to contribute to their intelligence gathering to prevent and detect cases of CSE; so even apparently minor pieces of information should be given to the DSL.

Staffordshire Police CSE Information Report form can be found at **appendix 15**.

Where we identify that a child under the age of 13 is involved in sexual activity, this will always be immediately reported to the police.

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer on peer abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- voyeurism - up skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

SEXTING

- Sexting among children can be a common occurrence in which the police may need to become involved, depending upon the circumstances.
- The DSL will record all incidents of sexting, and include both the actions taken and the actions not taken, together with the justifications for the decisions made.

In applying judgement to the sexting incident, the following will be considered: -

- Significant age difference between the sender/receiver involved.
- If there is any external coercion involved or encouragement beyond the sender/receiver.
- If you recognise the child as more vulnerable than is usual.
- If the image is of a severe or extreme nature.
- If the situation is not isolated and the image has been more widely distributed.
- If this is not the first time children have been involved in a sexting act.
- If other knowledge of either the sender or recipient may add cause for concern.

1. 4.2. This is not an exhaustive list, but presence of the above will escalate concern. We will manage cases of sexting in line with the LSCB policy – Responding to Sexting and Youth Produced Imagery, which is found at :-

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffscb.org.uk\)](http://staffscb.org.uk)

SERIOUS VIOLENCE

All staff are aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include:

- increased absence from school,
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries.
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

All staff are aware of the associated risks and understand the measures in place to manage these. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-to-schools-and-colleges-on-gangs-and-youth-violence>

DOMESTIC Abuse

The definition of "domestic violence and abuse" was updated by the Home Office in March 2013 to include the reality that many young people are experiencing domestic abuse and violence in relationships at a young age. They may therefore be Children in Need or likely to suffer significant harm. The latest definition from the Home Office is as follows:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional"

Staff should be aware that any disclosures made by children may have a background in domestic abuse and that this abuse may be part of an overall pattern of abuse or violence towards women and girls in the family. That said domestic abuse can also be experienced by males and assumptions should not be made based on the gender of perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Operation Encompass -Operation Encompass is an information sharing partnership between Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent educational settings (from Reception through to Higher Education) which allows schools to offer immediate support for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. Meir Heath Academy are fully committed to this project and work closely with the Local Authority and partners. Further information can be found in Appendix 7

Guidance Documents:

- [Domestic Violence and Abuse](#)
- [NSPCC-Domestic Abuse](#)

The domestic violence and abuse policy can be found at :- [Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

HONOUR BASED ABUSE

Honour-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors, when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

Meir Heath Academy recognises its duty to protect children and young people against the practice female genital mutilation and to immediately report to the police, under section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) where it is known that FGM has been carried out on a child.

We will follow the Safeguarding Children Board procedure which can be found at:

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

1. Female Genital Mutilation comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.
2. FGM is known by several names including “cutting”, “female circumcision” or “initiation”. The term female circumcision suggests that the practice is like male circumcision, but it bears no resemblance to male circumcision and it has serious health consequences with no medical benefits. FGM is also linked to domestic abuse, particularly in relation to “honour-based abuse”.
3. FGM mandatory reporting duty for teachers Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either via disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18.
4. Those failing to report such cases may face disciplinary sanctions. It is rare to see visual evidence, and children should not be examined but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.
5. Girls who are threatened with, or who have undergone FGM may withdraw from education, restricting their educational and personal development. They may feel unable to go against the wishes of their parents and consequently may suffer emotionally; they may appear anxious, depressed and emotionally withdrawn; present a sudden decline in her performance, aspirations or motivation.
6. Staff **must** personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless there is good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the DSL (or deputy) and involve children’s social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where staff do not discover that FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, staff will follow local safeguarding procedures.

Signs that may indicate FGM is planned: -

- Child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony, procedure or celebration either abroad or in the UK;
- Family taking a long trip abroad;
- Child’s family being from one of the ‘at risk’ communities for FGM (examples include Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdistan, Indonesia and Pakistan;)
- Knowledge that the child’s sibling has undergone FGM;
- Child talks about going to be ‘cut’

- Child talks about preparing for marriage or preparing to become a woman;

(Nb – families travelling abroad for long holidays is not in itself unusual, and not all families from the above named countries will practice FGM.)

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- Prolonged absence from school and other activities;
 - Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued;
 - Bladder or menstrual problems;
 - Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable;
 - Complaining about pain between the legs;
 - Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about;
 - Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the peers;
 - Reluctance to take part in physical activity;
 - Repeated urinal tract infection;
 - Disclosure.
1. Where a member of staff sees one or more of these indicators, or otherwise has cause for concern, this information will be recorded and passed on without delay to the DSL following usual safeguarding procedures.
 2. Staff should be aware of new mandatory reporting requirements with regards to *known* cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) which require teachers to personally report to the police (on the telephone number 101) cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Further details can be found Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2020.
 3. DFE multi agency practice guidelines for female-genital-mutilation (April 2016) :-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation>.

NSPCC FGM helpline can be contacted on 0800 028 3550 or use the NSPCC email address to request support at: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

FORCED MARRIAGE

Meir Heath Academy recognises the need to protect children and young people against forced marriage. The sections on forced marriage have been updated to ensure compliance with the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 that came into force on 27 February 2023, raising the minimum age at which one can legally marry or enter into a civil partnership in England and Wales to 18.

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. In accordance with the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 that came into force on 27 February 2023, the minimum age at which one can legally marry or enter into a civil partnership in England and Wales to 18.

A forced marriage is one, entered, **without** the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter a marriage. The threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Some perpetrators use perceived culture practices, to coerce a person into marriage. Schools and colleges play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

There are some significant differences between the referral of a concern about a young person being forced into marriage and other child protection referrals. Professionals must be aware that sharing information with a young person's parents, extended family, or members of their community, could put the young person in a situation of significant risk.

Any disclosure that indicates a young person may be facing a forced marriage must be taken seriously by professionals who should also realise that this could be 'one

chance to save a life'. A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure. In cases of vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent to marriage, coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced.

Guidance Document:

- [Forced Marriage](#)

We will follow the Safeguarding Children Board procedure which can be found at: [Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. A forced marriage is a marriage that is performed under duress and without the full and informed consent or free will of both parties (and is therefore very different to an arranged marriage).

1. A forced marriage may be between children, a child and an adult, or between adults, and both males and females can be forced to marry against their will.
2. In referring to children, we refer to both primary and secondary school age children.
3. A forced marriage is considered to be domestic violence.
4. One Chance Rule - Where there are concerns about forced marriage, we will not speak to the family as professionals may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and we therefore must ensure that the appropriate intervention, response and support is initiated.
5. Staff will pass any concerns immediately to the DSL and child protection procedures will be activated.
6. Further information on the role of educational establishments can be found in [Multi-agency guidelines: Handling cases of forced marriage](#), pages 32-36.

The Forced Marriage Unit – tel: 020 7008 0151 e-mail: fmufco.gov.uk for advice or information.

FABRICATED AND INDUCED ILLNESS

Fabricated or Induced Illness is a condition whereby a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of their carer, and which is attributed by the adult to another cause.

There may be several explanations for these circumstances, and each requires careful consideration and review. Concerns about a child's health should be discussed with a health professional who is involved with the child.

HOMELESSNESS

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority, so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse, and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

Our staff will consider homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it is also recognised that in some cases 16- and 17-year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and they will require a different level of intervention and support.

Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances.

HONOUR BASED ABUSE

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors, when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR (HSB)

Meir Heath Academy is aware that sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is “harmful sexual behaviour” (HSB).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

Meir Heath Academy:

- makes clear that there is a **zero-tolerance** approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should **never** be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys”. Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.
- recognises, acknowledges, and understands the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.
- challenges physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

The academy is aware that victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment wherever it happens, may find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college.

Whilst **any** report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are also three times more likely to be abused than their peers.

All victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

Meir Heath Academy knows that it is important that staff and children are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse other children in this way and that The academy recognises that it **can happen both inside and outside of school**. When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual violence.

The academy will make appropriate referrals in the case sexual violence and risk assessments are completed. Police would be involved in these referrals.

SERIOUS VIOLENCE:

All staff are aware of the indicators of serious violence, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. We know that this may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

The academy makes appropriate referrals in the case of serious violence and risk assessments are completed. Police would be involved in these referrals.

PREVENTING RADICALISATION

Meir Heath Academy recognises the need to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism including that linked to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist, Al Qaeda / ISIS ideologies; Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and that linked to Animal Rights movements..

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a schools' or colleges' safeguarding approach.

- **Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.
- **Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.
- **Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

At Meir Heath Academy we value freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs and ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Pupils/students and school staff have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility and free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued. Free speech is not an unqualified privilege; it is subject to laws and policies governing equality, human rights, community safety and community cohesion.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

The normalisation of extreme views may also make children and young people vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation. Meir Heath Academy is clear that this exploitation and radicalisation must be viewed as a safeguarding concern and that protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of the school's safeguarding duty.

The school's or college's designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

We also recognise the statutory duty placed upon us by s26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in having due regard to preventing people from being drawn into terrorism, referred to as the "Prevent Duty".

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism.

Extremism is defined as a vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values of democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty and mutual respect for different faiths and beliefs.

There is no place for extremist views of any kind in our school, whether from internal sources – pupils, staff or governors, or external sources - school community, external agencies or individuals.

Our curriculum is broad and balanced, promoting respect, tolerance and diversity. Children are encouraged to share their views and recognise that they are entitled to have their own different beliefs which should not be used to influence others.

We actively explore the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils, and promote fundamental British Values.

Potential indicators if a child is at risk of being radicalised or exposed to extreme views might include: -

- Spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists.
- Day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred on an extremist ideology, group or cause.
- Loss of interest in friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause.
- Possession of materials or symbols associated with an extremist cause.
- Attempts to recruit others to the group/cause.
- Communications with others that suggests identification with an extremist group, cause or ideology.

- Using insulting to derogatory names for another group.
- Increase in prejudice-related incidents committed by that person, which may include physical or verbal assault; provocative behaviour; derogatory name calling; prejudice related ridicule or name calling; refusal to co-operate; attempts to recruit to prejudice-related organisations; or condoning or supporting violence towards others.

If staff become aware that a child is vulnerable to being radicalised or exposed to extreme views, (including peer pressure, pressure from family members or other people, or from online;) this will be reported directly to the DSL.

The DSL will liaise with other appropriate agencies, and make referrals directly to the Channel Panel if deemed necessary, at prevent@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into extremism or terrorism. Engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary but we will encourage and support engagement at all stages.

PREVENT

The Governing Body, Principal and the DSL will assess the level of risk within the school and put actions in place to reduce that risk. Risk assessment may include consideration of the school's RE curriculum, SEND policy, Assembly Policy, the use of school premises by external agencies, integration of students by gender and SEN, anti-bullying policy and other issues specific to the school's profile, community and philosophy.

All schools are subject to a duty to have "due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism" (section 26, Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015). This is known as The Prevent Duty and is part of our school's wider safeguarding obligations.

Designated safeguarding leads and other senior leaders familiarise themselves with the revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales, especially paragraphs 57-76, which are specifically concerned with schools (and covers childcare). We follow the guidance in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training, and IT policies.

Our School will monitor online activity within the school to ensure that inappropriate sites are not accessed by students or staff.

CHANNEL

Channel is a multi-agency approach to provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist related activity. It is led by the Staffordshire Police Counter-Terrorism Unit, and it aims to:

- Establish an effective multi-agency referral and intervention process to identify vulnerable individuals.
- Safeguard individuals who might be vulnerable to being radicalised, so that they are not at risk of being drawn into terrorist-related activity; and provide early intervention to protect and divert people away from the risks they face and reduce vulnerability.
- The Channel programme focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It provides a mechanism for schools to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation. An individual's participation in the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.
- Schools have a duty to cooperate with the Channel programme in the carrying out of its functions, and with the Police in providing information about an individual who is referred to Channel (Section 38, Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015).

Guidance Documents:

- [The Prevent Duty](#).
- [Educate Against Hate](#)
- [ACT Early | Prevent radicalisation](#)

SERIOUS VIOLENCE

All staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

All staff should be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Guidance documents:

- [Home Office Preventing Youth Violence and Gang Involvement](#)
- [Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults; County Lines](#)

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

We recognise that our safeguarding responsibilities are clearly linked to our responsibilities for ensuring that appropriate responses are in place for children who are **unexplainably and/or persistently absent from school** or **who go missing from education**. We will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of **10 school days or more**

As a school we are aware of the potential for children with SEN to have **additional barriers when it comes to safeguarding**, the school recognises that this group can be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Disabled children may be **especially vulnerable to abuse** because they may have an 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.

Heightened vulnerability linked to:

- Communications skills
- Maturity (Lower cognitive ability)
- Perceptions of intent from others
- Lower self-esteem/confidence
- Potential to trust unreservedly
- A need to have “friends” or find a partner
- Differing boundaries
- Online safety – digital technology understanding

A **combination** of these factors can make them more susceptible to risks.

Children develop and mature at different rates, so what appears to be worrying for a younger child might be normal behaviour for an older child. Parental behaviours may also indicate child abuse or neglect, so you should also be alert to parent/child interactions which are concerning and other parental behaviours. This could include parents who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, if there is a sudden change in their mental health or if domestic abuse is present. By **understanding the warning signs**, you can respond to problems as early as possible and provide the right support and services for the child and their family.

Children say they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon.
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them.
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent, rather than not.
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans.
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments, decisions and how they have been reached, positive or negative.
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family.
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy, to assist them in putting forward their views.

Children potentially at greater risk of harm-Children who need a social worker (Child in Need & Child Protection Plans)

Our DSL is aware that some children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Local authorities should share the fact that a child has a social worker. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances.

We know that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health. The DSL will hold and use information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes.

Where children need a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services.) We will strengthen provision to reduce absence and exclusions for this group as we recognise that regular attendance is important for vulnerable pupils and school can act as a protective factor.

We will work as a school to narrow the attainment gap, have high aspirations for all children with a social worker and will design our Pupil Premium strategy to meet the needs of CWSW (Children with a social worker).

The Mental Health Lead in school (Mrs Askey) will work to assess, understand, and meet the Social Emotional & Mental Health needs of Children with a social worker, as we recognise, they are more likely to experience issues than their peers.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

All Local Authorities are advised to support the raising of the educational attainment and achievement of their Looked After Children through the overarching support of the Virtual School. The responsibility for each child's education, target setting, learning, and teaching remains with the schools where they are enrolled.

The relevant authority's Virtual School for Looked After Children provides a support and challenge role for schools and Local Authority teams. This is in the form of staffing support; access to additional resources to enable the support of educational outcomes; information, advice and guidance (especially around Personal Education Plans); monitoring and tracking of educational outcomes and targets, and training and support at key transitional moments

The governing body must ensure that the designated teacher undertakes the appropriate training (section 20(2) of the 2008 Act).

The role of the designated teacher for LAC within the school

The designated teacher plays a crucial role leading the responsibility for helping school staff understand how things affect how looked after children learn and achieve.

The designated teacher will:

- Promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations for how looked after children learn.
- Make sure the young person has a voice in setting learning targets.
- Be a source of advice for staff about differentiated teaching strategies appropriate for individual children and in making full use of Assessment for Learning.
- Make sure that looked after children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home.
- Has the lead responsibility for the development and implementation of the child's personal education plan (PEP) within the school.

Guidance Document:

- [Designated Teacher for Looked After Children](#)

Children potentially at greater risk of harm

Children who need a social worker (Child in Need & Child Protection Plans)

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

Local authorities should share the fact a child has a social worker, and the designated safeguarding lead should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both local authorities and schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for

example, responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services).

PRIVATE FOSTERING

Meir Heath Academy recognises its duty to notify Children's Social Care if a child is living in a private fostering arrangement.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or immediate relative. If the arrangement is to last, or has lasted, for 28 days or more, it is categorised as private fostering.

Close relatives are defined as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), or a stepparent.

People become involved in private fostering for all kinds of reasons. Examples of private fostering include:

- Children who need alternative care because of parental illness.
- Children whose parents cannot care for them because their work or study involves long or antisocial hours.
- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their educational opportunities.
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children.
- Teenagers who stay with friends (or other non-relatives) because they have fallen out with their parents.
- Children staying with families while attending a school away from their home area.

Our staff at Meir Heath Academy will notify the DSL/DDSL when they become aware of a private fostering arrangement. There is a mandatory duty on the school to inform Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire's Children's Services of a private fostering arrangement by contacting ChAD on 01782 235100 or Staffordshire's Children's Advice and Support Service on 0300 111 8007 who then have a duty to check that the young person is being properly cared for and that the arrangement is satisfactory.

Guidance Document:

- [Children Act 1989 – Private Fostering](#)

This can include children sent from abroad to stay with family members, teenagers who may be living with the family of a friend, boyfriend or girlfriend and those living short term with host families while they take a course of study.

All staff are responsible for asking questions to clarify family arrangements if there is a change of living arrangements / person caring for the child if the relationship between the child and carer of the living arrangements are unclear, confusing or concerning.

Staff should also follow up any discussion with pupils about living arrangements which are unclear, confusing or concerning.

If a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil may be living in a Private Fostering arrangement, they will report this without delay to the DSL.

The DSL will encourage the parent/ carer to inform the Local Authority. Additionally, we will report the private fostering arrangements to the Local Authority by contacting the Staffordshire Childrens Advice and Support (SCAS) on 0300 111 8007 or CHAD Team on 01782 235100.

ANTI BULLYING

Meir Heath Academy has zero tolerance with regards to bullying and we have an Anti-Bullying Policy which is set out in a separate document. This policy relates to all forms of bullying including cyber, racist, homophobic and gender related bullying.

The subject of bullying is addressed at regular intervals in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum and anti-bullying assemblies.

If the bullying is particularly serious, or the anti-bullying procedures are deemed to be ineffective, the Principal and the DSL will consider implementing child protection procedures.

Staff members will neither allow nor condone bullying. To do so may lead to consideration under child protection and disciplinary procedures.

ONLINE SAFETY

At Meir Heath Academy we realise that it is essential for our children to be safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. We have an effective whole school approach to online safety which empowers us to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms for us to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate. We use Light Speed Filter to filter and monitor content on iPads.

The use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, radicalisation, sexual predation, and technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **Content**: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.
- **Contact**: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **Conduct**: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and
- **Commerce**: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

We considered the 4Cs (above) and will provide the basis of our online safety policy. We have a St Bart's Multi Academy Trust Mobile Phone / Devices Policy.

We ensure that online safety is a running and interrelated theme whilst devising and implementing policies and procedures. We consider online safety in other relevant policies, when planning curriculum, teacher training, the role and responsibilities of the DSL and parental engagement. We have filters and monitoring systems in place, and these are regulated, and risk assessed as part of the Prevent duty.

We have an online safety policy at Meir Heath Academy which identifies the usage and expected behaviour of children/students. As a school we appreciate the value of technology and that appropriate filters are in place, yet this does not lead to unreasonable restrictions which would limit online teaching and safeguarding.

Education at Home/Remote learning: - Where children are being asked to learn online at home, our school will refer to and use the links and resources provided by the DfE; Safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers and Safeguarding in remote education.

All staff at Meir Heath Academy have the knowledge and awareness that children can and sometimes do abuse other children (often referred to as child on child abuse).

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE

We have a specific and separate child on child Abuse Policy which includes more information about Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children, as well as an anti-bullying and behaviour policy to guide, inform and support children, staff and parents/carers.

Child on Child abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of **any** age and sex. It can occur with a single child or group of children. This can happen both inside and outside of our setting including online.

Children who are victims of child on child abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment will find the experience stressful and distressing. This is likely to have an adverse effects on their educational attainment. This type of abuse can exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable.

All staff at Meir Heath Academy recognise the indicators and signs of child on child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports of it. They understand the importance of the **timely** challenge of inappropriate behaviours between peers, many listed below, that are abusive in nature. They are aware of the importance of: -

- Making clear that child on child abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable and that we have a zero-tolerance approach.
- Not dismissing child on child abuse (incl sexual violence or sexual harassment) as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”; and
- Challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as physical and sexual assaults e.g. grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, flicking bras and the lifting up of skirts.

All staff know that if we do not challenge and support our children that this will lead to a **culture** of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

We strive for a culture where children feel safe to speak to staff about their experiences. We know that the initial response to a report from a child is vitally important. We do not want to miss that opportunity and so we reassure victims that their reports are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We never give victims the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. We reassure victims that they should not feel ashamed for making a report.

All victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. Staff are aware of the groups that are potentially more at risk as evidence shows that girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk. The DfE states ‘peer on peer abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

Victims of child on child abuse will be supported by the school’s pastoral system and referred to specialist agencies if appropriate. Risk assessment and/or safety planning are an integral part of this support plan, particularly regarding the post incident management.

All staff understand ,that even if there are no reports in our setting, this does not mean that it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is important that if staff at insert school name have any concerns regarding child on child abuse, they speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy (DDSL). Our staff will not develop high thresholds before acting.

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

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
- sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault and may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence. 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.
- sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks about clothes and/or appearance, jokes, taunting and online sexual harassment. This also includes the telling of sexual stories, making lewd comments and calling someone sexual names and physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and online sexual harassment.
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) Consensual image sharing, especially between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive – but children still need to know it is illegal- whilst non-consensual is illegal and abusive.
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

All staff are clear as to the school’s policy and procedures with regards to child on child abuse and the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.

If staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the safeguarding referral process. As is always the case, if staff are in any doubt as to what to do, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). Schools behaviour policy will support any sanctions.

The DfE states child on child abuse should be taken as seriously as abuse by adults and should be subject to the same child protection procedures.

Guidance Documents:

- [Disrespect NoBody](#)
- [CEOP-Safety centre](#)
- [UKCIS Guidance: Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes](#)
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>
- [Searching, screening and confiscation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Staff will report their concerns to the DSL if they believe that children are using the internet, mobile technology or social media inappropriately (e.g. sexting). In these instances, the DSL will be contacted for advice on how to proceed with regards to talking to parents and carers about Online Safety.

Cyber-bullying by pupils, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures.

We have systems in place to prevent pupils being exposure to harm online. We have filters and monitoring systems in place which are regulated and risk assessed.

If we become aware that a pupil may be accessing materials inappropriate to their age, (including Facebook if under 13 years of age;) sending inappropriate emails, texts or images; or playing games that are unsuitable (for example, games which have an 18 certificate;) we will contact parents to discuss our concerns and to raise parent's awareness about the potential risk to their children and our duties to safeguard, which may involve referral to other agencies.

If staff become aware that a pupil is vulnerable to harm online, this will be reported immediately to the DSL and safeguarding procedures will be implemented.

In some extreme cases the Police may become involved if a child is at risk of exploitation due to their use of the internet or social media.

EXTRA FAMILIAL SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside the school. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputy) should be considering the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as Extra Familial safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. We understand the importance of providing as much information as possible as part of the referral process to allow assessments to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any possible abuse.

For further information, see **Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025**

Appendix 6 - Allegations of Abuse made against other pupils.

Meir Heath Academy believe that all pupils have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment, free from harm by adults or other pupils.

We recognise that some pupils will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under the Behaviour Policy.

Child on Child abuse - Occasionally, allegations may be made against pupils by others in the school, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding allegations may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

To be considered a safeguarding allegation against a pupil, it is likely that some of the following features will be found: -

The allegation: -

- is made against a pupil in relation to their behaviour towards a more vulnerable pupil;
- is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- raises risk factors for other pupils in the school;
- indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this pupil and their actions;
- indicates that children/young people outside the school may be affected by this pupil.

Examples of a safeguarding allegation against a pupil could include (but are not limited to):-

- Physical Abuse – for example, violence (particularly pre-planned;) or forcing others to use drugs or alcohol;
- Emotional Abuse – for example, blackmail or extortion, threats and intimidation;
- Sexual Abuse – for example, indecent exposure, indecent touching or serious sexual assault, forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sexting;
- Sexual Exploitation – for example, encouraging other children to attend inappropriate parties; encouraging, photographing or filming other children performing sexual or indecent acts.

Where pupils are involved in gang activity, older pupils may attempt to recruit younger pupils using any or all of the above methods. Young people suffering from sexual exploitation themselves may be forced to recruit other young people.

Minimising the risk of safeguarding concerns presented by a pupil.

We will provide a developmentally appropriate PSHE and RSE syllabus which develops pupils' understanding of acceptable behaviour and keeping themselves safe.

Have systems in place for any pupil to raise concerns with staff, knowing they will be listened to, believed and valued.

Deliver targeted work on assertiveness and keeping safe to those pupils identified as being at risk.

What to do

When an allegation is made by a pupil against another pupil, members of staff should consider whether the complaint raises a safeguarding concern. If there is a safeguarding concern the DSL should be informed.

A factual record should be made of the allegation, but no attempt at this stage should be made to investigate the circumstances.

The DSL may contact the Safeguarding Referral Team, Education Lead or Consultation Line or other relevant agency to discuss the case. It is possible that Children's Social Care are already aware of safeguarding concerns around this young person.

The DSL will follow through the actions from the discussion and make any referrals necessary,

Keeping a record of the concern, the discussion and any outcome in the files of both pupils.

If the allegation indicates a potential criminal offence has taken place, the police will be contacted at the earliest opportunity and parents informed (of both the pupil being complained about and the alleged victim).

Where neither Children's Social Care nor the police accept the complaint, a thorough school investigation will take place into the matter using the school's usual disciplinary procedures.

In situations where the school considers a safeguarding risk is present, a risk assessment should be undertaken and an individual risk management plan will be put in place to ensure that other pupils are kept safe and that the pupil concerned does not become a target for malicious allegations.

The plan will be reviewed continuously and a date set for a follow-up evaluation with everyone concerned.

Appendix 7 - Dealing with disclosures made by a child

ADVICE FOR ALL MEMBERS OF STAFF

Meir Heath Academy will take seriously any disclosures of abuse or neglect made by a pupil.

When dealing with disclosures we don't 'lead pupils', make suggestions about what may have happened or who may be responsible, and we don't investigate what is being disclosed.

However, it may not always be clear from what a pupil first tells us, whether we are dealing with a safeguarding issue or not, and therefore we may need to clarify what is being said.

TED QUESTIONS are open questions that we will use to clarify or get a little more information about what has happened, so that we can initiate the right response, intervention and support: -

Tell me what happened

Explain to me what happened

Describe what happened

When talking to pupils, we will take account of their age, understanding and preferred language, (which may not be English and therefore translation services might need to be sought;) and consider how a child with a disability may need support in communicating.

The following guidance should be followed: -

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Allow the child to talk freely.
- Accept what is being said.
- Do not ask direct or leading questions – use only open questions, if necessary, to clarify what is being said or how something has happened (TED questions above).
- Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault and that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Do not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- Do not make promises that you may not be able to keep.
- Do not give your personal opinion.
- Do not talk about your own personal experiences.
- Do not promise confidentiality – it may be necessary to tell the DSL and to refer the child to Children's Social Care or inform the police.
- Do not ask the child to write anything down (this may be seen as a statement, and we are not trained to take statements).
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told – **see appendix 8** (over page)
- Inform the DSL without delay, using your agreed system/protocol. This may mean completing a hand written record of concern form or logging onto an electronic system, recording what's happened and sending it to your DSL. Dealing with a disclosure from a child and safeguarding issues can be stressful. Consider seeking support for yourself and discuss this with the DSL.

Appendix 8 - Action to be taken if you have a concern about a child

Action to be taken by:-	What action to take if you have concerns
Any member of staff (governor, volunteer, contractor, activity provider)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss your concerns with the a DSL or Deputy DSL (Mrs Askey or Mrs Southern) as soon as possible, before the child leaves for the day. <u>It is important that the child is not sent home at the end of the day without taking the right protective action.</u>1. Complete the record of concern on CPOMS and alert the Inclusion Team.1. If a DSL or deputy is not available, you can speak to another senior member of staff. However, if you are unsure if this is a safeguarding concern, please contact the Consultation Line or SRT, Advice and Access Team or Education Lead. If a referral to the Safeguarding Referral Team is required (SRT) please make the referral (see below)1. Inform the DSL about your consultation with SRT and what actions you have taken. Ensure all actions and decisions are recorded.
Action to be taken by:-	If you are concerned that the child is at risk of significant harm (Level 4)

DSL or
Deputy DSL

CHILD AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM – SECTION 47

Use the SSSCB Threshold Guide to Levels of Need 2023 and if you are unsure contact ESAS for safeguarding advice.

1. If the child is at **risk of significant harm (Section 47)**. Inform the family of your intention to refer to Children's Social Care (SRT), and why (unless to do so would increase the risk of harm; hinder the prevention / detection of a serious crime; lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries about allegations of significant harm).

**Regarding consent please refer to the SSSCB Threshold Framework
'Consent and Confidentiality'**

2. Contact the Safeguarding Referral Team without delay. Ensure you have all the relevant details to hand and provide as much information as you can about your concerns.
3. If you believe that the child is in immediate danger, or you suspect a crime has been committed, you must also contact the police immediately on 999.
4. If SRT have not informed you within 1 working day, whether or not your referral has been accepted, contact them to ascertain their decision.
5. SRT may decide, in consultation with you, that the child's needs are at Level 2 or 3 and that the school is best placed to provide support. See Early Help over page.
6. Record all your discussions and decision-making on the child protection record system (CPOMS). (If the child does not have a stand-alone child protection file, you will need to create one.)
7. Update/start the chronology. Continue to update the child's file and chronology as the investigation and resulting work continues.

Action to be
taken by:-

You do not think there is a risk of significant harm, but the child has highly complex needs and may be experiencing compromised parenting. Section 17 Child in Need (Level 4)

<p>DSL or Deputy DSL</p>	<p><u>CHILD IN NEED – SECTION 17</u></p> <p>Use the Guide to Levels of Need and if you are unsure contact the Consultation Line or your Education Lead for advice.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inform the family of your intention to refer to Children’s Social Care, (SRT) <p>**With regards to Consent please refer to the SSSCB Threshold Framework ‘Consent and Confidentiality’ **</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Contact ChAD or Staffordshire’s Children’s advice and support Service. 3. <u>If SRT have not informed you within 1 working day, whether or not your referral has been accepted, contact them to ascertain their decision.</u> 4. SRT may decide, in consultation with you, that the child’s needs are at Level 2 or 3 and that the school is best placed to provide support. See Early Help below. 5. Record all your discussions and decision-making on the child protection record or system (CPOMS). (If the child does not have a stand-alone child protection file, you will need to create one.) 6. Update/start the chronology. Continue to update the child’s file and chronology as the investigation and resulting work continues
<p>Action to be taken by:-</p>	<p>You do not think there is a need for children social care to be involved but multi-agency support is required (Level 3)</p>

<p>Early help champion</p> <p>DSL or Deputy DSL</p> <p>Any staff member in conjunction with one of the above</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have used the SSSCB's Guide to Levels of Need 2023, have completed an Initial Early Help Assessment but the family's needs are more complex and they would benefit from an early help assessment and multi-agency support. (Level 3) 2. Identify the most appropriate person to discuss the reasons for the assessment, how it will benefit the child and family, and gain consent. 3. Register the Initial Early Help with the Early Help Coordinator 4. Appoint a lead worker to complete the Early Help Assessment form with the parent/child. 5. Engage with other professionals who will help to provide the multi-agency support and intervention that is required by the family. Refer to Early Intervention Service where appropriate (using your initial early help as the referral.) 6. If the family refuses to consent, we will log this with the Early Help Coordinator, and we make a judgement about whether the needs of the child will escalate or the child will become unsafe without help.
<p>Action to be taken by:-</p>	<p>You do not think there is a need for children social care to be involved and we can meet the additional needs of the family (Level 2)</p>

<p>Early help champion</p> <p>DSL or Deputy DSL</p> <p>Any staff member in conjunction with one of the above</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You have used the SSSCB's Guide to Levels of Need 2023 and believe that we (the school) are able to meet the additional needs of the child /family through the use of an Initial Early Help Assessment. (Level 2) 2. We will undertake an Initial Early Help Assessment as a means of providing families with the help and support they need to prevent issues from escalating (and avoid involvement from Children's Social Care.) 3. Identify the most appropriate person to discuss the reasons for the assessment, how it will benefit the child and family, and gain consent. 4. Register the Initial Early Help with the Early Help Coordinator. 5. Appoint a lead worker to complete the Early Help Assessment form with the parent/child. 6. The lead worker will provide support in the school and/or refer the child / their family to the appropriate agency. 7. If the family refuses to consent, we will log this with the Early Help Coordinator, and we make a judgement about whether the needs of the child will escalate
---	--

Role of the Lead Worker in Early Help

The most appropriate professional to undertake the (Initial) Early Help Assessment is someone who has regular contact with the child/ren and has a relationship with them and their family. An Early Help Assessment is a holistic approach in identifying a family's needs and the support that is necessary to address their presenting needs.

The Lead Worker will be responsible for: -

- undertaking the (Initial) Early Help Assessment with the family;
- ensuring that the (Initial) Early Help Assessment considers both the needs and strengths of all family members; engaging with other agencies and professionals to provide the support required that has been identified through the (Initial) Early Help Assessment; and
- co-ordinating the Early Help Plan with the family, ensuring there is no duplication and that the support is manageable for the family.

All agencies/professionals will be responsible for: -

- providing the support that it identified through the Early Help Assessment;
- being flexible about the duration and intensity of support provided based on the needs of the family;
- offering practical 'hands on' support;
- challenging family members where necessary, so that things can improve for them in the long term;
- not giving up on families easily and persisting, even when things are difficult.

Appendix 9 - Making a Referral to Children's Social Care

It will almost always be the DSL, Deputy DSL or another member of the senior leadership team that makes referrals into Children Social Care. However, all staff know how to make a referral should they need to, in the absence of SLT.

Referrals to Children Social Care are made initially **by telephone only** if the child is '**At risk of significant harm**' to the Safeguarding Referral Team (SRT) on 235100 (Stoke) or 0300 111 8007 (Staffordshire) during office hours and outside of office hours Emergency Duty Team on 234234 (Stoke) or

0345 604 2886 (Staffordshire). Stoke referrals made under Section 17 Child in Need do not require a telephone call. Not urgent Stoke referrals to be made via the IFD online portal.

Before making the referral, ensure that you have all of the information to hand so that you can provide detailed and accurate information and answer any questions.

Give as much information as you can about the child and family, including: -

- Child's full name;
- Parents' names;
- Full address and contact telephone number for parents;
- Date of birth for the child;
- Family's ethnic origin;
- Does the child have a disability?
- Are there any additional support needs? (Learning difficulties; communication needs)
- Any information regarding the family composition; for example - other siblings in the household (how old and what school do they attend?) Who else lives at the house? Who usually looks after the child?
- Do you have details of the GP or any other agencies involved with the family?

1. Highlight the concerns with evidence: -

- What are your concerns?
- What is the trigger for this referral?
- What is your evidence?
- Use the Guide to Levels of Need document to evidence your referral/concerns.

Clarify that your information has been received and understood as intended.

Do the parents / carers have knowledge of this referral?

- What is their response likely to be if professionals undertake a home visit?
- Are there any risks to staff?
- Are there further risks to child if the parents are made aware of the referral?
- Have they refused to give consent?

1. Early Help Assessment Refusal?

- Has an Early Help Assessment been completed with the family? If so when?
- Attach all assessment documentation where possible.
- Have the family refused an Early Help Assessment?

Provide your details:

- Your full name, job title and relationship to the child.
- Your contact details.

Appendix 10 - Information. Sharing and Consent

(This can be found on the homepage of SCB website and is the same for Stoke and Staffordshire)

Meir Heath Academy is committed to working openly and honestly with parents, carers and other agencies in order to ensure that pupil's needs are met. It is essential that everyone working with children can confidently share information. This is necessary not only to safeguard and protect children from harm but also to work together to support families to improve outcomes for all.

We may share information about parents, carers or children for investigations undertaken by Children's Social Care.

We will exercise professional curiosity by proactively seeking out information as well as sharing it. This means checking with other professionals whether they have information, and speaking to pupils alone.

The Data Protection Act 2018 is not a barrier to sharing information. It is there to ensure that personal information is managed in a sensible way and that a balance is struck between a person's privacy and public protection.

We will share any concerns we have with parents at an early stage, unless this would put a child at greater risk or compromise an investigation. Parents must be clear that our responsibilities are for safeguarding and protecting children and that this involves sharing information about them with other professionals.

It is expected that we will seek the consent of parents or carers to make a referral to Children's Social Care under s.17 Children's Act – **Child in Need**. If parents refuse to give consent but we decide to continue with the referral, we will make this clear to Children's Social Care when we contact them.

Any decision to refer the pupil without the parents' consent will be recorded in the pupil's child protection file with a full explanation for the decision.

We do not need parents' consent to make a referral if we consider the child is in need of protection, under s.47 Children's Act; although in most cases we will inform them of the child protection referral.

However we will not inform parents of referrals if we believe that: -

- This would place the child or someone else at increased risk of harm;
- It would prejudice the prevention or detection of a crime, or lead to loss of evidence for a police investigation;
- It would lead to an unjustified delay in making enquiries into allegations of significant harm.

Any decision not to discuss concerns with a pupil's parents or carers will be recorded in the pupil's child protection file with a full explanation for the decision.

Consent is not necessary in cases where Children's Social Care are making child protection enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and therefore when contacted by Children's Social Care, we can comply with their requests for information without seeking consent. Staff members must record what information has been shared and why.

If we are in any doubt about the need to seek consent, we will seek advice from the Consultation Line, SRT or Education Lead.

Keep a record of your decision to share information, with or without consent, and the reasons for it. Remember also that it is just as important to keep a record of why you decided not to share information as why you did so.

RECORD KEEPING

Good record keeping is an important part of the school's accountability to pupils and their families and will help us in meeting our key responsibility to respond appropriately to welfare concerns about children.

Records should be factual, accurate, relevant, up to date and auditable. They should support monitoring, risk assessment and planning for children and enable informed and timely decisions about appropriate action to take.

The DSL will ensure that records are maintained appropriately for pupils with safeguarding concerns and stand-alone files are created and maintained in line with requirements of the above guidance.

DISCUSSING CONCERNS WITH THE PUPIL, PARENTS OR CARERS

Meir Heath Academy is committed to working openly and honestly with parents and carers in order to ensure that their child's needs are met.

This means that in most cases, any concerns the school may have about a pupil, will be discussed with parents or carers. This is because parents and carers need to know when we are worried about their child, so that we can work together to address any issues or concerns.

Professional curiosity will be exercised by staff, particularly where there is a concern about a pupil. This means that staff may ask questions of the pupil, parents or carers in order to clarify or ascertain the necessary facts to make a decision regarding what (if any) action to take.

We will abide by the principles set out above regarding information sharing and consent. When we make the referral, we will agree with Children's Social Care what the pupil and parents will be told, by whom and when.

Appendix 11 - Working with Parents and Carers

Meir Heath Academy is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child/ren and to support them to understand our statutory responsibilities in this area.

We are committed to working with parents positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all parents are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission or it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard a child from harm.

When new pupils join our school, parents and carers will be informed that we have a safeguarding policy. A copy will be provided to parents on request and is available on the school website. Parents and carers will be informed of our legal duty to assist our colleagues in other agencies with child protection enquiries and what happens should we have cause to make a referral to Children's Social Care or other agencies.

We will abide by the principles of information sharing and consent as outlined in Appendix 11. A lack of parental engagement or agreement regarding the concerns the school has about a child will not prevent the Designated Safeguarding Lead making a referral to the Safeguarding Referral Team in those circumstances where it is appropriate to do so.

In order to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them, the school requires parents to provide accurate and up to date information regarding:

1. Full names and contact details of all adults with whom the child normally lives;
 2. The relationship between the child and the adults (as private fostering arrangements must be referred into Children's Social Care.)
 3. Full names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility (if different from above);
 4. Where reasonably possible, a minimum of two emergency contact details for responsible people to contact in the event that parents/carers cannot be contacted;
 5. Full details of any other adult authorised by the parent to collect the child from school (if different from the above).
 6. Any legal or criminal changes which affect parental responsibility e.g. Bail condition, court orders, MARAC arrangements (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference).
1. The School will retain this information on the pupil file. The school will only share information about pupils with adults who have parental responsibility for a pupil or where a parent has given permission and the school has been supplied with the adult's full details in writing.
 2. The school will share information with statutory agencies as outlined in appendix 11 and 13.

Appendix 12 - Children's Social Care Response

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE RESPONSES TO CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD

Once Children's Social Care has accepted our referral as needing a social-care-led response (Level 4 on the Guide to Levels of Need), a social work practitioner and their manager will evaluate the concerns to identify the sources and levels of risk and to agree what protective action may be necessary.

The evaluation of concerns and risks involve deciding whether: -

The child needs immediate protection and urgent action is necessary; or

The child is suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm and enquiries need to be made under section 47 of the Children Act 1989; or

The child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

We will cooperate with Children's Social Care and the police in any emergency action they take using their legal powers for immediate protection of the child.

We will participate in any multi-agency discussions (strategy discussions), if invited to do so, and share information about the child and their family to plan the response to concerns.

We will share information about the child and their family for section 47 enquiries and section 17 assessments undertaken by Children's Social Care.

We will ensure that a relevant staff member participates in all initial and review child protection conferences, that we are invited to attend. The staff member will work together with other agencies to discuss the need for and agree to an outcome-focused child protection plan and will ensure that the child's wishes and views are considered in their own right.

If we are members of the core group to implement a plan, we will ensure a relevant staff member participates in all core group meetings.

We will ensure that we complete all actions allocated to us as part of the outcome-focused plan, whether a child protection plan or a child in need plan, in a timely way.

We will continue to monitor pupils once their plans are ended to ensure that they are supported and kept safe.

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE AND DISAGREEMENTS

Meir Heath Academy recognises that working with children and families, and in particular child protection work, can be stressful and complex, as well as involving uncertainty and strong feelings. To ensure that the best decisions are made for children, we need to be able to challenge one another's practice.

We will promote a culture within our school that enables all staff members to raise, without fear of repercussions, any concerns they may have about the management of child protection in the school. This may include raising concerns about decisions, actions and inactions by colleagues in respect of individual children.

If necessary, staff members can speak with the Designated safeguarding lead, the head teacher, the chair of governors or with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Cooperation across agencies is crucial; professionals need to work together, using their skills and experience, to make a robust contribution to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare within the framework of discussions, meetings, conferences and case management.

If there are any professional disagreements with practitioners from other agencies, that the staff member involved has been unable to resolve informally, the DSL or the head teacher will raise concerns formally with the relevant agency's safeguarding lead in line with LSCB escalation policy.

The Escalation Policy can be found at the link below: -

[Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

Appendix 13 - Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers

Meir Heath Academy aims to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the well-being and very best outcomes for pupils at our school.

We do recognise however, that sometimes the behaviour of adults may lead to an allegation of abuse being made.

Meir Heath Academy follows the local Safeguarding Children Board procedures - Managing Allegations against Adults Working with Children and Young People :- [Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board \(staffsscb.org.uk\)](http://staffsscb.org.uk)

If an allegation is made, or information is received about an adult who works or volunteers in our school which raises concerns, the member of staff receiving the information should inform the Head teacher immediately.

Should an allegation be made against the Head teacher, this will be reported to the Chair of Governors.

In the event that neither the Head teacher nor Chair of governors is contactable on that day, the information must be passed to and dealt with by either the member of staff acting as Head teacher or the Vice Chair of governors.

Any member of staff or volunteer who does not feel confident to raise their concerns with the Head teacher or Chair of governors can contact the Local Authority Designated Officer directly.

We also have a Whistle Blowing Policy which is accessible to all staff.

When a concern is raised about an adult in our school, the Principal (or other appropriate person, as above;) will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at the earliest opportunity (and certainly within 1 working day.) No one will undertake further investigations until they receive advice from the LADO.

The Local Authority Designated Officer will convene a strategy meeting when there are concerns that a person in a position of trust has: -

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

We will work closely with Children's Social Care and the police, if they are involved, to support with any assessment or investigation as required.

The staff member who is the subject of the allegation will be advised to contact their union, professional association or a colleague for support, (depending on the outcome of the strategy discussion/meeting with the LADO). HR will ensure that the staff member is provided with appropriate support, if necessary, through occupational health or welfare arrangements.

If the LADO deems that the referral does not meet the criteria for their involvement, we may still undertake our own investigation into the alleged events and if necessary, invoke disciplinary procedures.

The school has a legal duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or if there is reason to believe the member of staff has committed one of a number of listed offences, and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left. The DBS will consider whether to bar the person.

If these circumstances arise in relation to a member of staff at our school, a referral will be made as soon as possible after the resignation or removal of the individual in accordance with advice from the LADO and HR.

FOR INFORMATION - The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally.

- Telephone free: - 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.)
- Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Appendix 14 - Safer Recruitment

Our school has robust recruitment and vetting procedures to help to deter, reject and prevent unsuitable people from working or volunteering within our school.

Our job advertisements and application packs make explicit reference to the school's commitment to safeguarding children, including clear statements in the job description and person specification about the staff member's safeguarding responsibilities.

We require evidence of original academic certificates.

We do not accept testimonials and insist on taking up references prior to interview.

We will question the contents of application forms if we are unclear about them or if there are gaps in employment.

All staff members who have contact with children, young people and families will have appropriate pre-employment checks (including Disclosure and Barring Service checks) in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education; 2024

At least one member on every shortlisting and interview panel will have completed safer recruitment training.

We maintain a Single Central Register of all safer recruitment checks carried out in line with statutory requirements. Guest visitors will also be checked in line with statutory requirements and risk assessed robustly. The Governing Body will check the SCR on a term basis and record accuracy and actions.

Appendix 15 - Staffordshire Police CSE Information Report

Staffordshire Police CSE Information Report

Gathering Intelligence about Child Sexual Exploitation

Staffordshire Police have devised a process by which agencies, parents, carers and young people can provide information about perpetrators. This is gathered and used in situations where there may be no evidence available or the victim is either unwilling or unable to provide a police statement. This occurs in the vast majority of cases of sexual exploitation. Therefore, the opportunity to provide intelligence means that the police can build a sufficient picture over a period of time and act upon it. This could potentially interrupt and disrupt criminal activity where young people are being exploited.

What to collect?

Information on child sexual exploitation includes details on:-

- Suspects – names, nicknames, addresses, dates of birth and descriptions of suspects of CSE
- Vehicles – registration numbers, partial registration numbers, make and model, colour and distinguishing features or marks of vehicles used by suspects
- Telephones – details of phone numbers and mobile phones used by suspects and details of any text messages or phone calls made by them or to them
- Locations – details of locations where offences have taken place or suspects/victims frequent
- Offences – details of criminal offences that have not been recorded by the police either because the victim has not been identified or the victim denies them or refuses to cooperate with the police
- Date and times – that incidents occurred or suspects or vehicles seen
- Links – between suspects, vehicles, locations and young people identified at risk of CSE

The more detailed and precise the information is the better the quality of intelligence. The intelligence forms are not to be used for the following:

- To report a crime
- To pass information to the police about a crime that is already being investigated
- To raise a child protection concern

Intelligence can be reported from 3 perspectives:

1. Disclosure by a Young Person at Risk

2. Incident Witnessed by a Professional
3. Information from another Person

Once completed please e-mail this form to childexploitation@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

If you do not have a secure email facility, then please call CET on 101 ext 3604 to discuss

Please note – this form is **NOT** a referral form.

Agencies should refer to the CSE Policy document Staffs Section 4Ha, S-o-T Section D14 and follow the process outlined. Referrals should be made to First Response (Staffordshire) or the Safeguarding Referral Team (Stoke-on-Trent) or to the Police. This form is to collect intelligence only and may then be used to assist police in building a case.

Staffordshire Police – Child Sexual Exploitation Information Report

Date/Time of report:

Details of Professional submitting:

Name					
Post / Job Title					
Agency					
Contact Details					
Witnessed Incident		Professional		Member of the Public	

Details of Child/Young Person (if known):

Name	
Age	
Address	

If the information is from a 3rd party are they be willing to engage with the Police? Yes / No

Please provide information: Include as much detail as possible re names /descriptions /nicknames/ vehicle details/addresses etc.: DO NOT USE THIS FORM IF THE INFORMATION YOU ARE SHARING IS A POTENTIAL CRIMINAL OFFENCE (FOR EXAMPLE, PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT).

IF YOU ARE REPORTING AN OFFENCE, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ORGANISATION'S DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD AND FOLLOW LOCAL SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES.

IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, REPORT DIRECT TO THE POLICE – DIAL 101 OR, IF A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 999

Appendix 16

Role of the Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire LADO

The Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) promotes a safer children's workforce by providing effective guidance, advice, and investigation oversight to cases. They may be able to offer advice and assist with communication in situations which sit outside the statutory criteria, albeit at the discretion of the LADO Duty Officer and where the broader goals of a safer children's workforce are relevant.

The service will give advice on how concerns or allegations should be investigated, including if a referral needs to be raised with the Police and/or Children's Social Care. Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire LADO is not directly responsible for investigatory activities but will actively support any investigation and give advice around a range of parameters including suspension, possible media interest, when to tell the adult, and ensure all interested parties are appropriately linked together. They will retain oversight of individual cases to ensure concerns or allegations

are investigated thoroughly in a fair and timely manner, and will advise in relation to any subsequent duties to communicate with regulatory bodies and/or the DBS.

The Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership / Staffordshire Local Designated Officer follow inter-agency procedures for:

[Managing Allegations of Abuse against a person who works with children](#)

is based on the framework for dealing with allegations made against an adult who works with children, this is detailed in [Working Together 2023](#) and should be followed by all organisations providing services for children and young people. Compliance with these procedures will help to ensure that allegations are dealt with consistently and in a timely manner; that a thorough, proportionate, and fair process is followed and that processes are open to challenge.

Arrangements for managing concerns or allegations of this nature should be robust and effective in keeping children safe. All allegations should be taken seriously, approached with an open mind, and not be driven by preconceived opinions about whether a child has or has not been harmed.

[Guide for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children](#) is available which will help individuals form judgements on what may constitute behaviour that is unsafe or abusive.

Who to refer concerns to:

All reports of concern or allegation to the Stoke on Trent / Staffordshire LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) that an adult working or volunteering with children:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

Step 1: Follow KCSiE 2024 Guidance. Principal/ Chair of Governors/ Proprietor will contact the LADO on 01782 235100 / 0300 111 8007.

Step 2: Stoke on Trent's Children's Advice & Duty service (ChAD) will ensure that the matter is passed promptly to the Staffordshire LADO Duty Officer and assist in initiating any additional safeguarding activities.

If your concern or allegation is urgent and outside of office hours telephone: 01782 234234 (Stoke Emergency Duty Team) or 0345 604 2886 (Staffordshire Emergency Duty Team).

This single referral point will provide a responsive and inclusive service for all children's workforce sectors, focus the advice and support where it is needed most and enable the team to continue to work effectively with partners.

Appendix 17 -

Useful safeguarding contacts

- Staffordshire Education Safeguarding Advice Service (ESAS) on 01785 895836 or email esas@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 0300 111 8007
- Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support (SCAS) 0300 111 8007
- Emergency Duty Services (EDS-out of hours safeguarding concerns) 0345 604 2886 or email eds.team.manager@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Staffordshire Police Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) via 101, in an emergency please dial 999
- Stoke-on-Trent Children's Services: Chat and Advice Service (CHAD) 01782 235100 Emergency Duty Team: 01782 234234 (outside office hours)
- Staffordshire Police coordinator: Mark Hardern Tel: 07539 3636299 Email: mark.hardern@staffordshire.police.uk
- Staffordshire Police Prevent Team 01785 232054, 01785 233109 or email prevent@staffordshire.police.uk
- PHSE Coordinator Natalie McGrath natalie@staffscvys.org.uk
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre [CEOP](#) & knowaboutcse.co.uk
- NSPCC– 24-hour Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000
- [Stop It Now! child sexual abuse helpline](#)
- Women's Aid - 24 Hour Helpline: 0870 2700 123
- UNICEF – Support Care Team 0300 330 5580 (Mon – Fri 8am-6pm). If you think a child is in immediate danger, please call 999. [Unicef](#)

National Contacts

- CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) [CEOP Safety Centre](#)
- Professionals Online Safety Helpline – 0844 381 4772 [Safer Internet Helpline](#)
- Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) – [Internet Watch Foundation](#)
- Safer Internet Centre – helpline@saferinternet.org.uk
- Childline – 0800 1111 [Childline](#)

- Ofsted – General enquiries: 0300 123 1231
About Schools: 0300 123 4234
Concerns: 0300 123 4666
e-mail: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- HM Government (advice on protecting children from radicalisation for parents, teachers, and leaders) www.educateagainsthate.com
- NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour project: 0844 892 0273

Useful websites

- SOT Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board [StaffsSCB](#)
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) – [Ceop-Police](#) & [knowaboutcse](#)
- NSPCC – 24-hour Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000

[NSPCC](#)

- WOMENS AID - 24 Hour Helpline: **0870 2700 123**
- UNICEF – Support Care Team 0300 330 5580 (Mon – Fri 8am-6pm). If you think a child is in immediate danger, please call 999. [Unicef](#)

Approved by:

Mrs M Southern
(Principal)

Mr J Spencer
(Chair of Governors)

Date: September 2025

Last reviewed on: September 2025

Next review due by: September 2026