

MERTON COURT SCHOOL



Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to the whole school inclusive of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Prevent Officer for the whole school: Mrs T Langton Direct Line: 0208 300 2112 Email: t.langton@mertoncourtprep.co.uk	
Head of Pastoral Care: Mrs A Macdonald Email: a.macdonald@mertoncourtprep.co.uk Direct Line: 0208 300 2112 Mobile: 0780 108 2726	
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and Deputy Prevent Officer for the whole school (To be informed in the absence of the DSL): Mr L Barley	

This Policy is publicly available on the School website and a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Our School takes its responsibilities for personal data very seriously and has a policy in place to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 incorporating the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR (UK)) and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

The data collected when dealing with any safeguarding or child protection issue is defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 as 'special category' data. This is the most sensitive category of data and as such is essential that every care is taken to keep the data secure. All staff involved in collecting and processing data relating to safeguarding and child protection must ensure they have read, understand, and operate according to the school's Data Protection Policy.

Policy updated 3 September 2026 by Authors Mrs. T Langton Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and D. Price Headmaster/Proprietor and Jacqueline Jenkins Chair of the Advisory Board

To be reviewed by: Headmaster, Mrs T Langton, Advisory Board	
Signed by the Headmaster/Proprietor: 	
Shared with staff:	2/9/26
Put on Website:	2/9/26

Date Policy to be reviewed September 2027 (at Advisory Board Meeting) or earlier to reflect any changes in legislation.

In this policy, 'child' and 'children' are used throughout. These are intended to refer to children of all ages. Child as written in this policy is of statutory school age.

It is the responsibility of all staff, including volunteers, the Advisory Board and staff of contractors to be fully aware both of Part 1 Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2026 and the School's procedures in relation to child protection and child safeguarding. **It is essential that everybody working in our school understands their safeguarding responsibilities, mindful that early information sharing, as soon as problems emerge, is vital for the effective identification, assessment and allocation of appropriate service provision.** All staff are given a copy of this during their induction day as well as the School's Child Protection Policy. **All staff receive appropriate Safeguarding & Child Protection training, including on-line safety training on Induction.** Staff Code of Conduct (part of the employment), the school's Behaviour and Attendance (including Children Missing Education) **and Whistleblowing policies are also issued to staff at induction.** These policies must be read.

Part 1 of KCSIE September 2026 must be read and signed 'as read' by all staff. Safeguarding training including Prevent awareness and online safety are part of the school's annual INSET programme.

Monitoring and Review: This policy is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headmaster and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Advisory Board. The Headmaster/Proprietor will undertake a full annual review of this policy and procedures, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. This discussion will be formally documented in writing. This policy will be reviewed at the Advisory Board Meeting, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay.

Policy Reviewed and Signed:



Date: 11/9/26

Mr Dominic Price
Headmaster/ Proprietor

Policy reviewed and agreed by Advisory Board:

Date:

Mrs Jacqueline Jenkins
Chair of the Advisory Board

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Glossary:

- CSC – Children’s Social Care
- CCE – Child Criminal Exploitation
- CSE – Child Sexual Exploitation
- DBS – Disclosure & Barring Service
- DfE – Department for Education
- DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead
- DDSL – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- FGM – Female Genital Mutilation
- LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer
- LSCP - Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership
- BSP – Bexley Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People
- MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

1a) Introduction

This Policy is publicly available on our School website and applies to all members of staff including supply staff, volunteers, members of the Advisory Board and Contractors. It has regard to [‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ \(March 2026\)](#) which is statutory guidance to be read , and followed by all those providing services for children and families, including those in education(WT18), [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (September 2026) which is the statutory guidance for Schools and College, [“What to do if worried a child is being abused” \(March 2015\)”](#) [“Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners](#) providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (July 2018), [“The Prevent Duty”](#) Guidance for England and Wales (July 2021), [“Disqualification under the Childcare Act”](#) (2006)(updated Sept 2018), [“Information Sharing”\(2018\),](#) [“The Prevent Duty: Departmental advice for Schools & Childminders”\(2015\)](#) , [“The use of Social Media for on-line radicalisation”\(2015\)](#) and also [COVID-19: Safeguarding in Schools, Colleges and other Providers \(2019\)](#) as well as the statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education (DfE 2021) and a number of other documents . The School is aware of the link between legal duties and safeguarding duties in relation to The Equality Act (2010) and The Human Rights Act (1998) (Public Sector Equality Duty).

This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

Safeguarding and Child Protection approach is included in all the following related documents for the whole school including the EYFS;

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour & Exclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection & GDPR (UK)
- Online Safety (incl content, contact, conduct & commerce) Policy
- Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
- Educational Trips & Visits Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Induction Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Medication Policy
- All Electronic Devices Capable of Capturing or Sharing Images Policy
- Relationships, Health Education Policy
- Remote Learning Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- SEND Policy

- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Supervision of Children (including Missing or Absent Children) Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Visiting Speakers Policy

Any deficiencies or weaknesses identified in Merton Court Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be remedied immediately.

All staff will receive Induction Safeguarding training and regular safeguarding updates at least annually in-line with our Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) advice that includes PREVENT, on-line safety and informal updates.

The Safer Recruitment Policy details the processes and procedures the school follows when recruiting staff. The Safer Recruitment policy sets out the school's process from the beginning to the end, including details of the required checks. This includes the KCSIE (September 2026) to include changes around Britain leaving the EU.

Furthermore, we will follow our Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSP) (bexleysafeguardingpartnership.co.uk) is the London Borough of Bexley Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People shield@bexley.gov.uk. The London Borough of Bexley Safeguarding Partnership has approved the Merton Court Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which is in accordance with locally agreed interagency procedures. Merton Court recognises *it is an agent of referral and not of investigation*. Any person may make a referral (including whistle blowing) to external agencies such as the London Borough of Bexley Safeguarding Partnership, Children's Social Care (CSC), the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (**MASH**), Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (**MASAs**) or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the police, if necessary.

This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy forms part of a suite of documents and policies which relate to the safeguarding responsibilities of the school.

Safeguarding is defined by KCSIE September 2026 as **protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health and/or development, ensuring that children grow up in the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. The school will always act in the best interests of the child.**

1b) Key safeguarding details for this policy

External Agencies

Contact details
In the case of a concern about a child's safety, wellbeing or abuse of a child (including FGM) contact Bexley Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People. Tel: 020 3045 5440 Children who are at risk of immediate risk of significant harm should be referred directly by phone to: Children's Services-Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) contact: Mon-Fri (9-5pm) Tel: 020 3045 5440. Out of hours/weekends Tel: 0208 303 7777/0208 303 7171 Followed by a referral form sent to: Email: childrensocialcareadmin@bexley.gov.uk or childrensocialcare.admin@bexley.gcsx.gov.uk IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999
Discussions should be recorded in writing, and communication with both the individual and the parents of the child/children agreed. Parental consent is not required if a referral is made. If we have a reason to be concerned about the welfare of a child, we will always seek to discuss this with the child's family in the first instance. On occasions, according to the nature of our concern, it may be necessary for us to make an immediate referral to Social Care Services when to do otherwise may put the child at risk of further harm either because of delay, or because of the actions of the parents or carers.
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Megan Rumball
Tel: 0203 045 3436 Email: LADO@bexley.gov.uk
Telephone (outside office hours): 5.00pm to 9.00pm and weekends you will be connected to the Bexley Emergency Duty Service.
The Local Authority Prevent Lead for support and advice for the prevention of radicalisation is: Claire McGarry, Email: Claire.mcgarry@bexley.gov.uk Tel: 0208 345 3990/ out of hours Tel: 0208 303 7777. The non –emergency police telephone number is: 111 and the Department for Education (DfE) dedicated telephone helpline and mailbox for non –emergency advice for staff and Proprietors: 0207340 7264 and counter-extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk
Discussions should be recorded in writing, and communication with both the individual and the parents of the child/children agreed. In the absence of the Headmaster the allegation should be reported directly to Jacqueline Jenkins, the Chair of the Advisory Board. Email: j.jenkins@mertoncourtprep.co.uk
NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email at: help@nspcc.org.uk. Parents or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline: 0808 800 5000 (24-hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk . 42, Curtain Road, London, EC2A 2NH
Children Missing or Absent from Education please contact: Sarah Furlong at London Borough of Bexley. Tel: 0203 045 4441/0208 303 7777 x 4441 Email: sarah.Furlong@bexley.gov.uk
ChildLine: 08001111

1c) SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING CONTACT LIST

You have a statutory and moral duty to protect children. If you hear or become aware of anything that leads you to believe that the safety or welfare of any child is at risk due to neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse; YOU MUST pass on the information following the Safeguarding of Children Procedures.

SCHOOL CONTACTS

The people you should talk to at this school are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Prevent Officer for the whole school:

Mrs T Langton (Head of Pastoral Care)

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: t.langton@mertoncourtprep.co.uk



Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) and Deputy Prevent Officer for the whole school:

In the absence of the DSL inform the Deputy DSL

Mr L Barley (Assistant Head, Academic)

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: l.barley@mertoncourtprep.co.uk



Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), Deputy Prevent Officer & Designated Lead for LAC/PLAC for the whole school:

Mrs.R.Harding

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: r.harding@mertoncourtprep.co.uk



Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the whole school.

Mrs C Jahaj

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: c.jahaj@mertoncourtprep.co.uk



Any allegation or disclosure involving someone who works with children in a paid or voluntary capacity must be reported directly to the Headmaster, or the DSL, unless it involves them and then it should be reported directly to the chair of our Advisory Board Jacqueline Jenkins. Email: j.jenkins@mertoncourtprep.co.uk

Our Mission

Inspiring Education for Life

Merton Court provides an environment that fosters confidence, curiosity and resilience. **“Head, Hand, Heart”** is central to the ethos of Merton Court School and delivers innovative first-class teaching that inspires and challenges each child. Within the context of ‘Every Child Matters’ and ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ (Sept 2026), we want each child to be educated in all matters to ensure that they have the skills to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make positive contributions, achieve economic well-being and thrive in a safe environment. The prime concern always must be the interests, welfare and safety of the children. We operate a child-centred approach: a clear understanding of the needs, wishes, views and voices of children.

Raising awareness with children

We aim to create a friendly, caring, and perceptive environment in which every individual is valued. Our mission is to contribute positively towards the growing autonomy, self-esteem, and safety of each child. We prepare all our children to make reasoned, informed choices, judgments and decisions. Children are taught about safeguarding, including on-line safety, how to keep themselves and others safe through age-appropriate curriculum and designated Pastoral lessons. We encourage a culture of listening to children and understand difficulties that children may have approaching staff. Staff are trained to build trusted relationships to facilitate communication, it is important that children feel heard and understood.

Circulation

This policy is addressed to the Headmaster/Proprietor, all teaching staff, all business support staff including lunch supervisors, Before school and After School Activity staff, peripatetic self-employed staff using Merton Court School premises, cleaners, sports coaches, members of the Advisory Board, any volunteers working on behalf of the school in a paid or un-paid capacity, visitors as well as any paid contractors who are working on site during term time. It applies to all areas of the school including EYFS and Main School.

Policy Statement

The welfare of our children is the school’s paramount concern. As a School we do everything possible to promote the welfare of children and to ensure that children are protected from harm both within the School and beyond our direct control. The aim of this policy is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the school’s values and expected behaviour which is set out in the staff code of conduct are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff. The School recognises that we have a duty to protect children at risk of harm and those children who need extra help, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

To that end we are committed to:

- Establishing and maintaining an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to;
- Ensuring that all children know there is an adult or an older child mentor in the School who they may approach if they are worried or in difficulty;
- Including across the curriculum, such as through the Pastoral programme, opportunities which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to ensure they know to whom they should turn for help. This would necessarily include a focus on online and on promoting emotional and mental well-being and resilience in a rapidly changing world which presents new challenges, such as the risks of extremism and radicalisation;
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is in or outside school the home or online;
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes as soon as problems emerge;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- Low level concerns are taken seriously with 'zero tolerance' and has a low-level concerns log;
- Working in partnership with parents/carers in building positive, trusting and cooperative relationships;
- Successful outcomes for children with having strong, multi-agency partnership working across the whole system of help, support and protection;
- Children expressing their views in a safe environment.

Corporal punishment, or the threat of it, is never permitted in this School.

Part A: Aims and objectives of safeguarding at Merton Court School

Our children are fully supported by creating and maintaining an open, safe, caring and supportive atmosphere.

We have three primary aims:

- **Prevent harm.**
- **Protect children from harm.**
- **Support children, staff and parents when safeguarding and child protection incidents occurs.**

The school achieves these aims by:

- Ensuring the recruitment of individuals who are suitable and appropriate to work with children and who have positive safeguarding attitudes;

- Providing excellent pastoral care and fostering optimism and a positive school atmosphere where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk;
- Children are encouraged to find a person (whether a staff member or another child) whom they trust and to speak to that person about any issues which may be worrying them. Children are additionally reminded of specific individuals with whom they are able to talk;
- Valuing and promoting effective relationships with parents and professionals from other agencies;
- Teaching children, via SMSC and a varied curriculum, to identify, reduce and manage risks. This includes educating children, through regular internal and externally provided ICT safety talks, about the safe use of electronic equipment, AI and access to the internet;
- Ensuring that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material through embedding a whole school approach towards online safety Including the acceptable use of mobile/Smart technology and the use of appropriate filters and monitoring systems;
- Ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained, supported and supervised to enable them to identify abuse and welfare concerns and deal with such concerns appropriately and sensitively;
- Encouraging staff to discuss child protection, safeguarding and welfare concerns confidentially with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure they have confidence in their own abilities to identify and appropriately handle welfare concerns and cases of abuse and neglect;
- Creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which any concerns about the conduct of staff, visitors and other adults in school can be shared and dealt with in an appropriate and sensitive manner;
- To engage in child protection statutory assessment and interventions as required, recognising our duty to work with other agencies in protecting children from harm (e.g. Children's Social Work Services, Police Public Protection Unit, health professionals including mental health professionals);
- Following the procedures laid down in this Policy and by the BSP(s) (Bexley) locally as appropriate.

The Advisory Board

The Advisory Board receive annual safeguarding training and Advisory Board training, along with the Induction procedure. They ensure that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective and always comply with the law and support the DSL in their role. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the safeguarding and child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually or when new statutory government regulations are published. The Advisory Board ensures there is a named designated safeguarding lead and at least one deputy safeguarding lead in place.

The Advisory Board ensures the school contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance. It ensures that information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Advisory Board ensures that all staff members undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction and that it is then regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least three times a year, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The nominated member of the Advisory Board for safeguarding is Mrs Emma Aiyere and the Deputy is Mrs Sue Gower.

The Advisory Board ensures our children are taught how to keep themselves safe (including online) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Our school will work in accordance with government regulations which make the subjects of Relationships, Health Education with relevant topics (for primary age children).

The Advisory Board and school leadership team are responsible for ensuring the school follows recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children. It adheres to statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and has recruitment and selection procedures in place (**see the school's 'Safer Recruitment' policy for further information**). It ensures that volunteers and contractors are appropriately supervised in school.

Part B: Actions where there are concerns about a child.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all staff, regardless of their role, should exercise vigilance and 'professional curiosity', and be aware of signs that a child may need help as well as the signs of abuse and neglect as Safeguarding issues often overlap. Staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in the Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026).

Staff should be aware that children may not be always ready to report a concern.

All staff have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Consequently, staff should:

- Be alert to signs of abuse as outlined in this policy, as well as other children in need issues;
- Feel free to discuss any general concerns about a child's progress and well-being at any time including at weekly staff meetings;
- Refer any specific concern about a school child or Early Years child to the DSL. School has a rota in place to cover the DSL in the event of them being unavailable to report to the Headmaster/Proprietor;
- Be prepared to contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard the child and promote their welfare;
- Receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety which, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring).

- Read **Part One of KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) 2026** and sign the document to that effect;
- **Action to be taken by a member of staff after a Disclosure/Suspicion of abuse has been made.** The member of staff should ensure that a disclosure is dealt with immediately. It is normal for the member of staff to refer this to the DSL/DDSL, although anyone can make a referral. If anyone other than the DSL makes a referral, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible. The urgent referral must be done immediately to provide the Police/Children's Social Care with as much time as possible to arrange the appropriate response. Any delay may affect the outcome for the child. Remember that if there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral can and should be made to children's social care immediately. Anybody can make a referral and parental consent is not required to refer to a statutory agency. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed to the Police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator/s is under thirteen, the starting principle of reporting to the Police remains. The Police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach. A child under the age of thirteen can never consent to any sexual activity (KCSIE 2026).
- Staff should reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment, nor should the victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Any concerns/disclosures should be recorded confidentially in writing, this should contain a summary of the concern, follow up, and action taken, the decision made and the outcome. These should be stored securely.

Universal Service and Community Support & Targeted Family Help

All staff should understand the continuum from universal and community support through targeted Family Help to statutory intervention, and their role in identifying need, acting promptly, liaising with DSL and sharing information with other professionals. This includes:

- identifying emerging problems and potential unmet needs as soon as possible;
- any concerns about a child's welfare being acted upon immediately;
- liaising with the DSL;
- sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment; and
- in some cases, acting as the lead professional in undertaking an assessment of the need for early help.

All staff should identify children who may benefit from universal or community support or targeted Family Help. Family Help provides coordinated support where needs cannot be met by one service alone and local criteria apply. A member of staff should discuss emerging needs with the DSL without waiting for certainty or for the situation to worsen.

Where a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency, the school will follow the current local Family Help assessment and referral pathway. The DSL will support staff to work with partner agencies, review progress and use the local escalation procedure if the child's situation does not improve.

Child in need, suffered or at risk of significant harm or in immediate danger.

If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, has suffered or is at risk of significant harm, or is in immediate danger, a referral should be made immediately to the DSL who will act upon this and refer to early help/pastoral support/children's social care as appropriate – in the local authority where the child lives and in accordance with the threshold document published by the relevant BSP. In cases of significant harm or immediate danger the police should be notified immediately.

A child's wishes.

A child's wishes and feelings should be considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems are in place for children to express their views and give feedback to School staff. These operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. Where possible, referrals will be made by the DSL, although any member of staff can make a referral to children's social care. If a member of staff makes a referral themselves, they should inform the DSL as soon as possible. The exception to this is that where a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, has a concern about Female Genital Mutilation having been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, they have a legal duty to notify the police immediately and directly. Any other member of staff must report concerns immediately to the DSL.

Please refer to Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026) and the flowchart in KCSIE (2026) for further details on the process for staff when they have concerns about a child.

Part C: Identifying Concerns – Types and signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation (including online).

Knowing what to look for is vital in the early identification of abuse or neglect. Further information can be found in **“What to do if you are worried a child is being abused - Advice for practitioners”**.

Staff should be particularly alert to potential need for a child who:

- Is disabled, has specific additional needs, has certain health conditions or has a Special Education Need or Disabilities (SEND) (whether they have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or not;
- Has a mental health need or a medical health condition;
- Is a young carer;
- Is a privately fostered child, a child living in kinship including special guardianships;
- Is adopted, 'looked after' in foster or residential settings;

- Is frequently missing from home/goes missing from education, including absences for part of the school day;
- Is known to be misusing drugs or alcohol or involved in sexual harassment/violence, sending or sharing of 'consensual' and 'non-consensual nudes/semi nudes';
- Has challenging family circumstances such as an adult with mental Health, drug or alcohol problems or domestic abuse or has returned home from their family from care.
- Is at risk of modern slavery (See National Referrals Mechanism), trafficking, sexual & criminal exploitation, being radicalised into terrorism, risk of honour or faith-based abuse, forced marriage and FGM.
- Has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of permanently excluded from school.
- Is pregnant and/or is a parent themselves.
- Has exhibited early signs of abusive, violent, anti-social, criminal and/or harmful behaviours (such as gang involvement, organised crime groups or county lines).
- Is affected by a parent or carer in custody.

If staff members are unsure, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). All Staff should be aware of indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse, neglect and specific safeguarding issues such as child criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation so that staff can identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm may include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including what they see, hear or when they experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

One of the best ways to help children is by being aware of the signs of possible abuse. All staff should be aware of the signs of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify children who may need help or protection. These signs can take many forms including physical injuries and behavioural indicators. Although in most cases these signs will manifest themselves in children who are themselves the victims of abuse, it is important to remember that adults can also display significant indicators which suggest the existence of their own abuse as children. Staff should also be alert to any comments or jokes made by other children in the School.

All staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and can occur between children outside these environments. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside

their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and serious youth violence and coercive control.

All staff should familiarise themselves with the types of abuse below which, although not exhaustive, includes common signs of abuse which, if present, may indicate a problem requiring follow up. It is important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited or abused do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse. Sometimes children do not even realise that what's happening is abuse. It is also sometimes difficult to tell the difference between injuries suffered as part of normal childhood activities and those caused by abuse. If a staff member is unsure, he/she should discuss the case with the DSL. **The NSPCC website includes advice on how to spot signs and patterns of abuse and neglect.**

There are four types of child abuse as defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (March 2026) which is defined in the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance' (September 2026).

Physical abuse.

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

There is not one sign to look out for that will prove that a child is being physically abused. But if a child often has injuries, there seems to be a pattern, or the explanation does not match the injury then this should be investigated. Signs of physical abuse can include:

- injuries to parts of the body where accidents are unlikely, such as thighs, back, abdomen;
- respiratory problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning;
- untreated or inadequately treated injuries;
- bruising which looks like hand or finger marks; cigarette burns, human bites; or
- scarring, scalds and burns.

Sexual abuse/Harmful Sexual Behaviours.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening. A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet) including AI generated images and Deep Fakes to create child sexual abuse material. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children, including siblings. The sexual abuse/violence/coercion and harassment of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education. (See child-on-child abuse.)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and as defined by Working Together (July 2023). Please refer to the document. Children who have experienced sexual violence display a wide range of responses to their experience, including in some cases clear signs of trauma, physical and emotional responses, or no overt signs at all. School remains alert to the possible challenges of detecting these signs and will show sensitivity to the needs of the child, irrespective of how overt the child's distress is.

Signs of sexual abuse displayed by children may include:

- pregnancy sexually transmitted infection;
- pain/itching/bleeding/bruising/discharge to the genital area/anus;
- urinary infections/sexually transmitted diseases;
- difficulty walking or sitting; or
- persistent sore throats.

All staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, sexual abuse, serious youth violence and county lines.

How school responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward. Not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying of some behaviours may lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. The voice of the victim is very important, and they should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. If the victim moves to another educational setting, the new educational institution will be made aware of any ongoing support that is needed, as well as transferring their child protection file. The DSL will take responsibility to ensure this happens after discussions with the parents and child involved.

Neglect

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

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

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

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

Signs of possible neglect include:

- the child seems underweight or is very small for their age;
- the child is always hungry;
- they are unkempt, poorly clothed, with inadequate protection from the weather;
- they are often absent from school for no apparent reason; or
- they are regularly left alone, or in charge of younger brothers or sisters.

Emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve verbal abuse, belittling, name calling along with conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved or 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 involve serious bullying (including online bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone. Signs of emotional abuse/coercive control tend to be behavioural rather than physical (see below).

Bullying and forms of bullying, on and offline, including prejudice and discriminatory based and online Bullying are also abuse, which will include at least one if not two, three or all four, of the defined categories of abuse [**Please refer to the School's Anti-Bullying Policy and Social Networking Policy**].

Bullying – Child Protection Related Issues.

A bullying incident is treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases the school reports its concerns to the London Borough of Bexley Children's Social Care by telephone on 0203 045 5440 during office hours or the out of office hours Duty Team (evenings and weekends) on 0208 303 7777. **Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.**

Child on child abuse.

Education settings are an important part of the inter-agency framework not only in terms of evaluating and referring concerns to Children's Services and the Police, but also in the assessment and management of risk that the child or young person may pose to themselves and others in the education setting. All staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse and the important role they must play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from

it. Staff should recognise that if there are no reported cases of such abuse it may still be taking place and is simply not reported.

Abuse is abuse and will never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘just having a laugh’, ‘part of growing up’ or ‘boys being boys’ whether inside or outside of school or on-line. Children are encouraged to report any kind of abuse as the school has a culture of ‘zero tolerance’ and any concerns are reported to the DSL. It is vital that all staff challenge abusive behaviours between children and deal with concerns.

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse. When considering whether behaviour is abusive, it is important to consider:

- whether there is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned;
- that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys the perpetrators, but all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously;
- whether the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- Whether there are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways and may occur inside or outside of school or online. This may include bullying (including online bullying), prejudice-based and discriminatory, abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour, ‘up-skirting’, making or sharing of consensual and non-consensual nudes/semi nudes pictures/videos or initiation / hazing type violence and rituals , use of AI generated intimate images and deepfakes. We do not tolerate any harmful behaviour in school and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. Once it has been established abuse is taking place both parties will be spoken to and depending on the severity, behaviour slips will be issued with staff monitoring the situation. These are recorded in teacher’s pastoral files and the minor incident log/CPOMS/BromCom. Sanctions (missing break time allowing time for reflection) and parents being informed if necessary. This could lead to internal exclusion or suspension of the child. The Head of Pastoral Care will offer support to both parties with time for them to reflect and talk about their feelings about what has happened. We use lessons and assemblies to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is, and we encourage them to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable and that their concerns will be taken seriously. The initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. Merton Court understands the different gender issues that can be prevalent when dealing with child-on-child abuse but understands that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

- bullying including online bullying is a whole school approach;
- Physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or anything causing physical harm (this may include an on-line element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
- **Up-skirting (The Voyeurism Offences Act 2019) is a criminal offence**, 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;

- Intimate personal relationships with other children;
- Sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- Children who are LGBT or who are gender-questioning can also be targeted by other children. 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. Staff will endeavour to reduce any additional barriers faced by these children and provide a safe space to speak and discuss their concerns and be aware that they may have wider vulnerabilities.

LGBT inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum and there is a range of support available to help schools counter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and abuse.

Domestic Abuse.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. This can be particularly relevant in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a long lasting emotional, psychological, physical, sexual or financial impact on children. Staff as much as possible should be 'trauma informed' of any historic abuse.

NSPCC-UK domestic-abuse Signs and Symptoms Effects.

www.bexleydomesticabuseservices.org.uk

Behavioural signs of abuse, neglect & Exploitation.

If a child is being abused, their behaviour may change in several ways. For example, they may:

- behave aggressively or be disruptive, act out, demand attention and require more discipline than other children;
- become angry or disinterested and/or show little creativity; seem frightened of certain adults; become sad, withdrawn or depressed;
- have unexplained and/or persistent absences from school;
- have trouble sleeping;
- become sexually active at a young age; exhibit inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age or sexualised behaviour in their play with other children;
- refuse to change for gym or participate in physical activities;
- develop eating disorders; self-harm; refuse to attend school or run away from home; lack confidence or have low self-esteem; or use drugs or alcohol.

Homelessness

Being homeless or at the risk of becoming homeless, presents a real risk to a child's welfare. 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. The DSL should be aware of contact details and any referral routes into the Local Housing Authority, so they are able to raise/progress concerns, this does not replace a referral to children's social care if a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) and the Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets usefully summarise the new duties.

Children with a parent in prison

Children who have a parent in prison are at risk of poor outcomes due to possible poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) provides information for DSL and staff about how to help mitigate negative consequences for these children.

Child abduction and community safety incidents

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members, by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances) and by strangers. Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a school can raise concerns amongst children and parents, eg, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation.

Children should have guidance on practical advice on how to keep themselves safe and lessons on building confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers.

Further information available: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org

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. (See guidance to support children 5–11-year-olds which explains process and gives support to families.)

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Additional barriers may exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

This may include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's impairment without further exploration;
- Reluctance to challenge carers, (professionals may over empathise with carers because of the perceived stress of caring for a disabled child),

- Disabled children often rely on a wide network of carers to meet their basic needs and therefore the potential risk of exposure to abusive behaviour can be increased,
- A disabled child's understanding of abuse,
- Lack of choice/participation,
- Child on child abuse
- Isolation
- LGBT or gender questioning (See Child on Child Abuse)

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face additional safeguarding challenges and additional barriers may exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These include:

- assumptions that indicate possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury related to the child's disability without further exploration;
- that children may be more prone to isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- that children with SEND or certain medical conditions may be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs;
- that children may have communication barriers/non-verbal and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges;
- that children lack cognitive understanding and cannot understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeat the contents/behaviours in school or the consequences of doing so;
- Additional barriers can include dependence on adults, intimate-care needs and difficulty communicating what has happened. The DSL and SENCO will liaise on safeguarding reports involving a child with SEND and will ensure that communication needs and reasonable adjustments inform the assessment and response.

Signs of abuse, neglect & exploitation manifested by the parents or other responsible adult:

- unrealistic expectations of the child i.e. demand a level of academic or physical performance of which they are not capable;
- offers conflicting or unconvincing explanation of any injuries to the child; appears indifferent to or overtly rejects the child;
- denies existence of or blames the child for the child's problems at home or at school;
- Sees and describes the child as entirely worthless, burdensome or in another negative light;
- refuses offer of help for the child's problems; or
- is isolated physically/emotionally.

Further information from DfE:

SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years

Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions.

Young carers

Staff will recognise that caring responsibilities can affect a child's attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing. Concerns that indicate unmet need or safeguarding risk will be discussed with the DSL so that appropriate school, Family Help or statutory support can be considered.

Medical Conditions

A medical-management incident alone does not automatically require safeguarding referral. Staff must report the matter to the DSL where the circumstances indicate possible abuse, neglect or exploitation, including repeated failure to provide essential medication or treatment.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

All staff should be aware that mental health problems may, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. 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, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is important that staff are aware of how these experiences, and their high prevalence of special educational needs and mental health needs, can impact on their behaviour and education.

Staff should remain alert to self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide warning signs. If a mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern, staff will act immediately and speak to the DSL. Only trained professionals should diagnose mental health conditions. Where there is immediate danger, staff should call 999.

Not all Mental Health concerns are automatically Safeguarding concerns.

Mental Health Lead: Mrs C Bays

Gov.uk - Preventing and Tackling Bullying (2017)

Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (Nov 2018)

Self-Harm, Suicidal Ideation or taking of their own life

Self-Harm and suicidal threats by a child may put them at risk of significant harm and are always a safeguarding concern, therefore are always taken seriously and responded to without delay. School will deliver timely, consistent, proportionate and safe response to presenting self-harm concerns.

Self-harming is NOT attention-seeking behaviour, it is attention-NEEDING behaviour. Self-harm may be a way a child copes with difficult or overwhelming situations or emotional

states. It can take many different forms and as an individual act is hard to define. However, general self-harm (also known as self-injury or self-mutilation) is the act of deliberately causing harm to oneself either by causing a physical injury (including, ingesting substances) by putting themselves in dangerous situations and/or self-neglect.

Self-harm is often thought to be linked to a child taking their own life, as it can be a coping mechanism rather than an attempt to take their own life. Children who self-harm may go on to attempt to take their own life, so it is important that staff do not dismiss any previous history of self-harming behaviours.

Part D: What to do if a member of staff has a safeguarding Concern about a Child.

- a) If a member of staff has any safeguarding concern they should act upon straight away. “Where a child is suffering or is likely to suffer from harm it is important that a referral to children’s social care (and if appropriate the police) is made immediately (KCSIE 2026).

All cases of suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation against a child should be given the highest priority and must be reported on the day they arise. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm on them or by failing to act to prevent harm.

- Where teachers or other staff see signs which cause them concern, they should discuss their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead,
- A factual record must be made on CPOMS immediately,
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead has specific responsibility for co-ordinating action in the School and for liaising with social services departments and other agencies over suspected or actual cases of child abuse.

The DSL contact Mrs T Langton: (Head of Pastoral Care)

Tel: 0208 300 2112

Email: t.langton@mertoncourtprep.co.uk.

She will determine whether a concern regarding a child reaches the social care/child protection threshold.

Referral Form to record details if the concern is to be reported to the appropriate investigating agencies, which may include Bexley Social Care or the Bexley Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). For the Referral Form please contact the DSL.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will refer the case or discuss the issues with the appropriate investigating agencies within 24 **hours**, following up in **writing within 48 hours** using the London Borough of Bexley Children’s Social Care referral form for Professionals that is accessible from Bexley BSP website. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the Headmaster/Proprietor if a referral is made. Any member of staff may make a referral to external agencies.
- All conversations regarding the disclosure must be in a written format and sent to Social Care/ LADO with a copy being forwarded to the Headmaster/Proprietor.
- Following the referral, the investigating agency will acknowledge receipt of the referral and decide the next course of action.

- Staff must NOT question any other persons implicated in the disclosure. To do so may prejudice any potential police investigations.

b) What to do if a child makes a disclosure:

1. A disclosure may happen at any time.
2. Stay calm, listen carefully, and allow the child to speak for as long as they want to.
3. Teachers should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child may influence the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings. They should not question the child, ask leading questions, or make suggestions about what the child means.
4. Record the facts ONLY and speak to the DSL or DDSL.
5. NSPCC helpline 0800 028 0285

The TED principles of Tell me, Explain to me, Describe to me should be used.

For example:

- Tell me what is happening?
- Explain what happened next?
- Describe to me what happened then?
- Do not promise to keep details confidential,
- **Make it clear from the start that the information must be shared.**

5. The Teacher/adult should listen to the child and make accurate and factual notes of the discussion on CPOMS. A Body Map is included on CPOMS should it be needed.

6. Where an allegation is made, teachers or other members of staff should report the information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will follow steps 4-7 in the section above, **“What to do if you are concerned about a child’s welfare”**.

7. Schools have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigating agencies. If a child confides in a member of staff requests that the information is kept secret, it is important to explain to the child that the member of staff has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies on a need-to-know basis.

8. Teachers and other members of staff should share information only within appropriate Professional contexts. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide whether it is appropriate to contact parents. **Do not contact parents yourself.**

Part E: Actions where there are safeguarding concerns or allegations about the conduct of another adult.

The safety and wellbeing of children at Merton Court School is dependent on the vigilance of all our staff and their prompt communication to the DSL, Deputy DSL /Headmaster of any concerns, no matter how small, about any conduct by an adult which causes you to doubt that adult's suitability to work with or have access to children. Such concerns may arise in relation to any adult. All references in this section to "adult" should be interpreted as meaning any adult (defined above) and any visitor, unless otherwise stated. The School

is conscious of its duty of care to children and will always act, including if alerted to the possibility of abuse arising from situations or persons outside the school setting.

Safeguarding plays a more proactive approach involving planning to keep children safe and should be at the forefront of all thoughts, actions, policies and procedures involving Merton Court children. Staff receive compulsory training which supports all aspects of safeguarding including an understanding of signs of abuse in children and examples of abuse by staff. It is important that children receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating, acting on and referring the early signs of abuse and neglect, keeping clear records, listening to views of the child, reassessing concerns when situations do not improve, sharing information quickly and challenging inaction.

Other staff responsibilities.

- All Staff / anyone who has contact with a child or young person including members of the Advisory Board and volunteers should recognise what is child sexual exploitation and trafficking and know that they should seek advice and how to report any issues / incidents;
- All Staff / anyone who has contact with a child or young person including members of the Advisory Board and volunteers should recognise a child may be criminally exploited or involved in gang culture and should seek advice and report any issues/ incidents;
- When using reasonable force this is in line with national guidelines and considers individual child needs and risk management /care plans and in particular with regard to SEND;
- All Staff / anyone who has contact with a child or young person including members of the Advisory Board and volunteers should recognise homelessness and the impact of the child facing homelessness, or who is homeless.

Part F: Specific Safeguarding Issues.

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues some of which are listed below. Further details should be read in Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026).

Safeguarding can link to issues such as drug-taking, alcohol abuse, truanting and sending of consensual or non-consensual nudes/semi-nudes images/videos. Sending of consensual or non-consensual nudes/semi nudes can become an aspect of online safety abuse, between adults/children.

In understanding the signs and indicators of specific issues listed earlier in this policy, Merton Court will incorporate the signs of abuse and specific safeguarding issues on safeguarding into briefings, staff Induction training, and ongoing development training for All Staff / or anyone who has contact with a child or young person including members of the Advisory Board and volunteers.

Merton Court will also access broad Government guidance, local procedures, strategies and tools through the **Bexley S.H.I.E.L.D - Safeguarding Partnership for Children and Young People**.

The Designated lead and the Safeguarding Team will use the information available to them to help all staff develop the knowledge and understanding pertaining to national and local emerging concerns.

Visiting Speakers

As part of educating our children, we frequently invite speakers from the wider community into school who enrich our children's experience. The School has clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers, whether invited by staff or by the children themselves, are suitable and appropriately supervised. Staff must adhere to our School safeguarding and Visiting Speaker's procedures. (See Visiting Speakers Policy.)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. There is a range of potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, which individually may not indicate risk but if there are two or more indicators present it could signal a risk to the child or young person. Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM. Staff should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject. Warning signs that FGM may be about to take place, or may have already taken place, *can be found on pages 16-17 of the Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines. Chapter 9 of those Guidelines (p42-44) focuses on the role of schools. FGM can also link to Honour Based Abuse (see KCSIE (Sept 2026) for further information).*

Signs and symptoms

Below are some indicators that may suggest that FGM may be planned, further investigation to exclude the risks of FGM, may be require:

- Parents from practising communities state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period;
- A child may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice of FGM is prevalent, including African countries and the Middle East;
- A child may confide to a member of staff that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to celebrate to become a woman;
- A member of staff hears a reference to FGM in conversation, for example children chatting about it;
- A child may ask for help from a member of staff;

- Any female born to a woman who has been subjected to FGM or an older sister must be considered to be at risk, as must other female children in the extended family,
- Staff should not assume that FGM can only happen outside the UK.

Where a teacher discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18, they have a statutory duty to personally report it to the police. Those failing to report such cases to the police will face disciplinary sanctions. Unless the teacher has good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss the case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate. Any other adults with concerns about FGM should report their concerns to the DSL immediately.

Breast Ironing

Breast Ironing or Breast Flattening is a traditional practice cited mainly from Cameroon, but girls in some other African countries are also affected. It is the process by which girls usually aged 9-15 years, have their breasts ironed, massaged or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects.

There may be an impact on the girl's social and psychological wellbeing. The girl may believe that the practice is for her own good and therefore be compliant even though it causes pain and discomfort.

Indicators that a girl has undergone breast ironing could be unusual behaviour after an absence from school and may appear depressed, anxious or withdrawn. Reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations and fear of changing for physical activities due to scars showing or bandages being visible. Some girls may ask for help, perhaps worried about their chest area, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Further Information

Cawogido is a leading charity in this area and has produced some helpful information and guidance regarding the issues. It is working with the associated communities in this country to end the practice.

www.cawogido.co.uk/breastironing.php

Forced marriage and Honour Killing.

Arranged Marriage - in an arranged marriage the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Forced Marriages - "Forced Marriage is an abuse of human rights" Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 16 (2)

Since February 2023, it is a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriages law, this law applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used.

- Hundreds of young people, some as young as 13, are taken abroad each year and forced into marriage;
- Forced marriage can involve child and sexual abuse including abduction, violence, rape, enforced pregnancy and enforced abortion;
- Rejection can place a young person at risk of murder, also known as “Honour Killing”;
- Forced marriage is not sanctioned within any culture or religion.

Young people rarely feel able to disclose their feelings about forced marriage. However, there are some warning signs that may indicate the possibility of an impending forced marriage:

- extended absence from school/college, truancy, drop in academic performance, low motivation, excessive parental restriction and control of movements, and history of siblings leaving education early to marry;
- poor attendance in the workplace, poor performance, parental control of income and limited career choices;
- evidence of self-harm, treatment for depression, attempted suicide, social isolation, eating disorders or substance abuse;
- evidence of family disputes/conflict, domestic violence/abuse or running away from home.

A young person demonstrating any of the above may not be necessarily at risk, but if you feel concerned about a potential forced marriage you should contact Children’s Social Care.

Honour-based Abuse (HBA)

Honour-based abuse is where the person is being punished by their family or their community. They are being punished because of a belief, actual or alleged that a person has not been properly controlled enough to conformity and thus this is the “shame” or “dishonour” of the family.

Staff working with victims of forced marriage and honour-based abuse need to be aware that they may only have one chance to speak to a potential victim and may only have one chance to save a life.

If a disclosure is made health professionals should provide information about specialist advice and services or assist by referring to the Police, Social Care, Support Groups, and Counselling Services.

There may be occasions when the level of concern or the imminence of marriage requires referral to Social Services.

Accurate records must be maintained at all times documenting what has been said and done.

Honour-based abuse is an ancient cultural tradition that encourages violence towards family members who are considered to have dishonoured their family. It is rooted in domestic violence and is often a conspiracy of family members and associates meaning victims are a risk from their parents and families.

For this reason, staff should not approach the family or family friends, or attempt to mediate between the child and family, as this will alert them to agency involvement.

National Contact Numbers: Forced Marriage Unit – 0207 608 0151

Honour Network – 0800 5999 247 National Domestic Helpline – 0808 2000 247

Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes & semi nudes (images and/or videos)

Non-consensual sharing of nudes & semi nudes (images and/or videos) previously known as Sexting is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit intimate images, through mobile picture messages or webcams over the Internet. Children may also call it cybersex or sending a nudie/semi-nude picture, dick pic or pics. Non-consensual and consensual sharing of nudes & semi nudes is illegal. By sending an explicit image, a child is producing and distributing child abuse images and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with their permission. It is easy to send a photo or message, but the sender has no control about how it is passed on. When images are stored or shared online, they become public. They can be deleted on social media or may only last a few seconds on apps like Snapchat, but images can still be saved or copied by others. These images may never be completely removed and could be found in the future, for example when applying for jobs or university. Children may think non-consensual sharing of nudes & semi nudes is harmless, but it can leave them vulnerable to:

- Blackmail when an alleged offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends money or more images;
- Bullying may result when images are shared with other children or in school;
- Unwanted attention when images posted online may attract the attention of sex offenders, who know how to search for, collect and modify images;
- AI altered and wholly AI generated images including deepfakes and deep nudes;
- Emotional distress resulting from embarrassment, humiliation and mental health issues.

If they are very distressed this could lead to self-harm or taking of their own life. Children are informed of the consequences of non-consensual sharing of nudes & semi nudes and the legal implications through PSE, RHE and through the curriculum.

Staff should never view, copy, print, share, store or save these images themselves and they must not ask a child to share or download them – this is illegal. If a member of staff has already viewed the image by accident, then report this to the DSL and they must seek support. Images must not be deleted by staff or the children. Children must not be asked

to disclose information regarding the imagery as this is the job of the DSL. Information must not be shared with other members of staff, parents or carers and the member of staff must not do anything to shame or blame the child involved. Staff must explain that they need to report this to the DSL but they will be always supported.

Missing Children and Children who are deliberately missing Education (unexplained and/or persistent absences from Education).

The School needs to be aware of those children who are persistently absent or missing from school, including absences for part of the school day, as this may be an indicator of welfare concerns, including abuse or neglect. Staff will act on and record and/or refer early signs of abuse, neglect and radicalisation including support for children that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. All staff must also be aware of their role to prevent children from going missing from education. Our staff will follow the school's procedures for dealing with children who go missing or absent, particularly on repeat occasions. They should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. Merton Court School will put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing or absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Staff are alert to signs to look out for, and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage. More information can be found in 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' and KCSIE (September 2026). Merton Court School has admissions registers and an attendance register. All children are placed on both registers. (See Supervision of Children Policy Including Children Missing or absent from Education.)

Trafficking

In our school we are diligent in following all aspects of our child protection procedures. Trafficked children may not only be deprived of their rights to health care and freedom from exploitation and abuse but may also be denied access to education. The creation of a false identity and implied criminality of the children, together with the loss of family and community, may seriously undermine their sense of self-worth. At the time they are found, trafficked children may not show any obvious signs of distress or imminent harm, but they may be vulnerable to particular types of abuse and may continue to experience the effects of their abuse in the future.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. These may include transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shop lifting or pick-pocketing, vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other

resources. In some cases, the abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and the range of opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual, and it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online. Children may be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and serious youth violence. Staff must look beyond the crime and look at the child as still a victim, even if they committed the crime themselves. They may still have been criminally exploited, even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

CSE is a form of sexual abuse. This may involve forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening. A child under 13 can never give consent. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). CSE is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children, including siblings. Staff should be aware of the importance of understanding intra-familial harms, providing any necessary support and be aware of ongoing risks to siblings following any incident. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge eg through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. It can affect any child, who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. Some children may not realise they are being exploited eg they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

Any concerns regarding CSE or CCE should be reported immediately to the DSL.

Further Information:

Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm.

Private Fostering

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 years (under 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Close relatives are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or marriage/affinity). Staff/DSL will notify the Local Authority if they are aware of any child being privately fostered as set out in the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

- All staff/volunteers are aware of what private fostering is;
- Understand that it is a safeguarding concern and are vigilant to the risks;
- Understand their responsibility to report to the DSL if they become aware of any child being the subject of private fostering agreement or if they suspect that a child is or is likely to become the subject of such an agreement.

Preventing radicalisation and extremism

It is the School's duty under the Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015 (The Prevent Duty) and Marty's Law to have due regard to the need to prevent children from being drawn into terrorism. The referral procedures set out above also apply where there are concerns about children who may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism. The School also has in place a specific Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy which sets out in detail the training requirements, prevention measures and procedures which staff must follow if they have concerns about a child being drawn into terrorism. All staff should familiarise themselves with and follow the procedures set out in this policy. The DSL is the designated Prevent duty person responsible for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies, including the Prevent Lead. We will make referrals into **CHANNEL** where the risk is identified, and the child may need de radicalisation. The school is committed to providing effective filtering and monitoring systems, this will include monitoring the activities of children when on-line in school and actions taken relevant to the activity.

DfE published additional Support on the Prevent duty:

Prevent awareness e-learning - an introduction to the Prevent duty.

Prevent referrals e-learning - supports staff to make Prevent referrals that are robust, informed and with good intention.

Channel awareness e-learning - aimed at staff who may be asked to contribute to or sit on a multi-agency Channel panel

Websites: Educate Against Hate.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to 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.

Staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may need help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead making a Prevent referral.

Extremism

Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental British values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Signs of grooming for radicalisation

There are no known definitive indicators that a young person is vulnerable to radicalisation, but there are several signs that together increase their risk of being groomed in this way.

Signs of vulnerability include:

- Underachievement
- Being in possession of extremist literature
- Poverty
- Social exclusion
- Traumatic events
- Global or national events
- Religious conversion
- Change in behaviour
- Extremist influences
- Conflict with family over lifestyle
- Confused identity
- Victim or witness to race or hate crimes
- Rejection by other children, family, social groups or faith

The department has published advice for schools **on the Prevent duty**. The advice is intended to complement the Prevent guidance and signposts other sources of advice and support.

Contextual safeguarding

Safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside our school. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding and the fact they should consider whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and / or welfare. To this end, we will consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and share it with other agencies to support better understanding of a child and their family.

Online safety

Staff should be aware of the risks from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. The school has given sufficient consideration to cybercrime including the use of phishing, fake emails and AI tools along with fake news. School is in regular contact with parents to reinforce the importance of online safety and the use of electronic equipment, internet and mobile technology. Parents understand the school's filters and monitoring

system 'Light Speed Systems' and our expectation on online safety, which is reviewed yearly.

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

CONTENT: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material e.g. pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;

CONTACT: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; e.g. commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults, and

CONDUCT: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes harm, e.g. making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying. (See on-line safety policy);

COMMERCE: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and financial scams.

Education at Home (Remote Learning).

Where children are being asked to learn online at home the school follows the government guidelines to support schools to do so safely. (See Remote Learning Policy).

[Safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other providers and Safeguarding-and-remote-education.](#)

Annex C of KCSIE (Sept 2026) provides useful information and web links for teachers.

Teaching about safety and safeguarding.

The School takes a proactive approach to teaching children about safety and safeguarding. In addition to PSE/RHE, this is undertaken across the curriculum. As well as explicit teaching opportunities, staff use incidental opportunities to promote safe messages and teach about how to manage risk.

Merton Court School internet is protected by 'Light Speed Systems'.

Also see the School's Social Networking Statement, Computing Policy, All Electronic Devices Capable of Capturing or Sharing Images Policy and Online Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Advisory Board and Headmaster.

- Take overall responsibility for online safety;
- Ensures that staff receive suitable training to carry out their online safety roles;
- Ensure that Merton Court School is an environment in which children can learn and staff can work safely whilst using IDMT;
- Are aware of **the procedures** to be followed in the event of **a serious online incident.**

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber-dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer).

Cyber-dependent crimes include unauthorised access (hacking), denial of service (Dos or DDoS) attacks or 'booting', making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses.

Children with particular skills and interests in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime. Any concerns should be reported to the DSL.

Additional advice can be found at Cyber Choices, 'NSPCC- When to call the Police' and National Cyber Security Centre – NCSC.GOV.UK

Grooming

Grooming is the process by which an individual prepares a child, significant adults and the environment for abuse of this child. Children and young people can be groomed online (**through gaming**) or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people do not understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse. The signs of grooming are not always obvious. Groomers will also go to great lengths not to be identified. Children may: be very secretive, including about what they are doing online;

- have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- go to unusual places to meet friends; have new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain; have access to drugs and alcohol;
- go missing from home or school; display behavioural changes;
- have sexual health issues; or present as suicidal, self/harming, feeling depressed, unworthy.

In older children, signs of grooming can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour, but you may notice unexplained changes in behaviour or personality, or inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age. **See the NSPCC website for further information about grooming link.**

Signs of grooming and/or online abuse

A child may be experiencing abuse online if they:

- spend lots, much more, or much less time online, texting, gaming or using social media;
- are withdrawn, upset or outraged after using the internet or texting;

- are secretive about who they are talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone; and/or have lots of new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Signs of grooming manifested by sex offenders.

It is important to remember that not all sex offenders will exhibit these signs and if an individual exhibit some or all these signs it does not mean that they are a sex offender.

- Overly affectionate behaviour with a child,
- Affording special attention or preferential treatment to a child,
- Excessive time spent alone with a child outside of the classroom/school,
- Frequently spending time with a child in private or isolated areas,
- Transporting a child to or from the school,
- Making friends with a child's parents and visiting their home,
- Acting as a particular child's confidante,
- Giving small gifts, money, toys, cards, letters to a child,
- Using texts, telephone calls, e-mails or social networking sites to inappropriately communicate with a child,
- Flirtatious behaviour or making suggestive remarks or comments of a sexual nature around a child.

Modus operandi of institutional grooming

- Target vulnerable victim – Alleged perpetrator's target victims who are vulnerable, isolated, insecure and/or have greater emotional needs.
- Gain victim's trust – Alleged offenders may allow a child to do something (e.g. eat ice cream, stay up late, view pornography) which is not normally permitted by the child's parents or the school to foster secrecy.
- Gain the trust of others – Institutional alleged offenders are often popular with children and parents, successfully grooming not only the victim but also other members of the victim's family and the community at large.
- Filling a need / becoming more important to the child - This can involve giving gifts, rewards, additional help or advice, favouritism, special attention and/or opportunities for special trips or outings.
- Isolating the child - The alleged perpetrator may encourage dependency and subtly undermine the victim's other relationships with friends or family members.
- Sexualising the relationship - This can involve playful touches, tickling and hugs. It may involve adult jokes and innuendo or talking as if adults, for example about marital problems or conflicts.
- Maintaining control and secrecy (coercive control) – Alleged offenders may use their professional position to make a child believe that they have no choice but to submit to the offender.

Serious violence

All staff are aware of indicators which may signal children are at risk from or 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 well-being, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that a child has been approached by, or is 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 frequent absences or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

We will pay adherence to the guidance- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment in Schools between children (December 2017) and have a strategy in the school to identify, report and respond to any issues/incidents raised. We aim to challenge this type of abuse. We also aim to use approaches in the curriculum to address and tackle child on child abuse.

Please refer to our **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy** which will demonstrate how we tackle this.

The criminal exploitation of children: County Lines & Serious Youth Violence

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of deal line. (Staff can refer to the 'County Lines toolkit for Professionals'.)

Signs which may indicate criminal exploitation:

- Persistently going missing or absent from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones;
- Excessive receipt of texts /phone calls;
- Relationships with controlling /older individuals or groups;
- Leaving home / care without explanation;
- Suspicion of physical assault /unexplained injuries;
- Parental concerns;
- Carrying weapons or threatening others with the intent to use them;
- Significant decline in school results / performance;
- Gang association or isolation from other children or social networks;
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Criminal exploitation of children is a Safeguarding concern and will require a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will seek advice from agencies and professionals; including, reference to the Safeguarding procedures as outlined by Bexley

S.H.I.E.L.D & Safeguarding Partners. This will mean a referral into the Police and Social Care. The school will offer support to the victim.

The carrying of prohibited items, knives/offensive Weapons & Gang Culture

The DfE Guidance on Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for Schools (July 2022) will be consulted, and School will consider applying any lawful disciplinary procedures.

Bringing and carrying a knife/offensive weapon onto school premises is a criminal offence and immediate action will be taken by calling the police and informing parents. If a member of staff suspects a child being involved in gang culture, initiation/hazing type violent rituals, this is a safeguarding concern and will require a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will seek advice from agencies and professionals including reference to the Safeguarding procedures as outlined by the local authority. The child may be an exploited child and victim to which the school will offer support.

Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs. More information along with support for staff is available in the Modern Statutory Guidance. Modern Slavery.

Miscellaneous

Disciplinary, Grievance Procedures.

Where a safeguarding concern or allegation triggers another procedure such as grievance or disciplinary, that procedure shall only be followed once the immediate safeguarding concern or allegation has been fully investigated.

Parents and children.

If a parent or child has a safeguarding concern, question, doubt or allegation about the conduct of an adult, they should raise it with the DSL or Deputy DSL/Headmaster. If a parent or child raises their concern with another member of staff, it will be immediately passed onto the DSL in accordance with this policy, who will then make immediate contact with the LADO. School has good links with parents. They are given opportunities to share any concerns during meetings with staff and at forums. The School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the school. Copies of this policy, together with our other policies relating to issues of child protection are available from the School office and available on our website.

Feedback.

The School uses regular training to seek feedback from staff, parents and children on their ability to raise concerns and allegations. This enables the School to ensure:

- (a) that all staff, children and parents have the confidence to raise concerns or allegations and know who to speak to if they have a concern; and
- (b) that these concerns or allegations are dealt with promptly and appropriately by the School.

Part F: Specific Safeguarding Issues

Expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. For example, NSPCC offers information for schools on the TES website and on its own website (www.nspcc.org.uk).

Whistleblowing

All members of staff and the wider school community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the school leadership team. (See Whistleblowing Policy). However, for any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, or where they feel their concerns have not been addressed, they may contact the [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email at: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents or others in the wider school community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline: 0808 800 5000 (24-hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Confidentiality

The school will promptly report to the DBS any person whether employees, contracted (volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used for regulated activity and the DBS referral criteria are met, that is, they have caused harm or posed a risk of harm to a child.

Independent schools are also under a duty to consider making a referral to Teaching Regulation Authority (TRA) where a teacher has been dismissed (or would have been dismissed if they had not resigned) and a prohibition order may be appropriate. The reasons such an order would be considered are: “unacceptable professional conduct”, “conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute” or a “conviction, at any time, for relevant offence”.

Part G: Responsibilities and Training

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL)

Duty of the DSL and Deputy DSL

Mrs T Langton (DSL) is the DSL with overall responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

The responsibilities of the DSL include the following: keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for their decisions. Managing referrals which were or were not made to another agency such as the LA children’s social care or the Prevent programme. Working with other

professionals and agencies, keeping up to date with relevant training, keeping staff up to date with relevant safeguarding training, maintaining a secure awareness of safeguarding and child protection including on-line safety, maintaining accurate records and managing secure transferring of records. The DSL takes lead responsibility for Safeguarding including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.

The DSL has a specific job description which reflects the designated safeguarding lead responsibilities in Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026). Please refer to Annex B.

The actions taken will keep the welfare of all children at the forefront by:

- Implementing Merton Court Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Ensuring a review process is in place for all Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies/procedures;
- Being responsible for and undertake training every two years. This will include local interagency working protocols and the Bexley Safeguarding Partnership's approach to the Prevent Duty;
- Ensuring up to date Prevent Duty awareness has been completed;
- Providing training for all staff in line with advice from Bexley Safeguarding Children Board and when new legislation is received;
- Considering the nature and the seriousness of the suspicion or complaint;
- Ensuring a complaint involving a serious criminal offence will always be referred to Children's Social Care or the police without further investigation within the school;
- Considering the wishes of the child who has disclosed, although a serious situation would override their wishes;
- Considering the wishes of the parents of the child who has disclosed, although a serious situation would override their wishes;
- Seeking advice from relevant professionals, including the Headmaster, before deciding to disclose maintaining duties of confidentiality, so far as applicable, if the DSL is concerned that disclosing information to parents would put a child at risk;
- Ensuring that all staff have read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (September 2026). All staff must acknowledge in writing to the DSL the reading of this document. The DSL will ensure that it is recorded;
- The DSL, Deputy DSLs and the Safeguarding Team will work closely with the mental health leads and have half-termly team meetings;
- DSLs should promote educational outcomes by working closely with the teachers and sharing information about a child's welfare, safeguarding and child protection concerns;
- Remaining up to date with multi agency working by maintaining contact with Bexley Local Authority;
- Attending multi agency network meetings;

- Carrying out induction training for all new staff, including temporary staff and volunteers;
- Being easily contactable in emergency situations during school hours via the Safeguarding and Child Protection mobile phone. The number is available to all staff;
- The Headmaster will maintain robust DSL cover when the DSL is ill, off site or on leave. At least one deputy will have the authority, safeguarding-system access and case information needed to act without delay. A confidential monitored reporting route will be checked throughout school hours so that a concern does not depend on one person's presence.
- Concerns regarding a Child in Need will be reported to the DSL who in turn will report to Children's Social Care (In line with KCSIE September 2026);
- Concerns regarding a Child at Risk will be reported to the DSL who in turn will report to Children's Social Care and/or the Police if a crime has been committed. This will be reported immediately/24hours/one working day OR a referral can be made directly by staff to Children's Social care or the Police;
- Designated safeguarding lead and deputies will liaise with the 3 safeguarding Partners. NSPCC - 'When to call the Police' will help the DSL understand when to call the Police;
- If a child changes school, the Designated safeguarding lead will ensure that any child protection files are transferred securely to the new educational setting that the child will be attending.

Inter-agency working

We are fully committed to inter-agency working in line with statutory guidance. We work with all external agencies in the best interests of the child. We will always adhere to the procedures and practice of the local authority as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures set up by the three Safeguarding Partners. Information will be shared securely with other professionals and local agencies.

In line with statutory guidance, where a child transfers from our school to another school/educational setting, their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting. These will be marked 'Confidential' and will be delivered by hand by the DSL. We will obtain a signature when the file has been received by the new school. Where appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead may also contact the new educational setting in advance of the child, a trained safeguarding lead will promptly review the received file, identify current risk and support needs, and seek to clarification from the previous setting where information is incomplete.

The transfer of child protection files rules applies to transfers between year groups in school.

Support for and supervision of staff

All staff should feel comfortable and confident approaching the DSL, Deputy DSL or any other member of senior leadership about any safeguarding and/or pastoral care concerns,

including in relation to unsafe practice (see Whistleblowing section below). If a staff member would like additional support and/or training in order to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, including in identifying and/or handling concerns they should speak to the DSL who will work with the member of staff to ensure that they are adequately supported. Safeguarding and pastoral care responsibilities are a key part of staff appraisals and staff should use this process to build and improve their knowledge, confidence and experience in this area.

Induction and Training for Staff

Every new member of staff, including part-time staff, temporary, visitors who have contact with children while working in the school, should receive appropriate briefing / training on:

- their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse;
- The procedures for recording and referring any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

All staff, including temporary staff, trainee teachers/supply staff and volunteers, will be provided with induction training that includes:

1. The school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
2. The staff code of conduct policy
3. The identity of the DSL and the Safeguarding Team
4. A copy of Part 1 of KCSIE (September 2026), and Part 5
6. Whistleblowing Policy
7. Behaviour & Exclusion Policy
8. Supervision of Children (including children missing or absent from Education) Policy & Attendance Policy
9. Online Safety
10. How to manage a report on child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.

- DSLs will be provided with a good understanding of their own role and the processes, procedures, and responsibilities of other agencies particularly Children's Social Care.
- Staff will receive additional training / information where necessary in relation to policy updates at least annually.
- All staff will receive effective supervision and will be provided with support, coaching and training,
- promoting a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.
- All school staff, all teaching staff and those support staff who routinely have contact with the children, are trained, and receive refresher training regularly, in line with advice from **BSP**, about their safeguarding responsibilities and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.
- All staff have been provided **with a copy of Part 1 of the guidance KCSIE (September 2026)** and a list indicating that they have read it is kept by the Headmaster. Leaders,

teachers and those who work directly with children will be required to read and sign to indicate they have read this document in conjunction with Part 1 and Part 5.

- Where staff are employed by another organisation and are working with children outside of the school's premises, assurance is obtained that the appropriate child protection checks have been undertaken and that the staff are familiar with the appropriate child protection policies and procedures.
- Annual and thorough training on all aspects of Safeguarding.

Record Keeping

- All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons of those decisions, must be recorded in writing. Information must be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child. Records must include:
 - A clear, comprehensive and factual summary of the concern,
 - Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved,
 - A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome,
 - If in doubt staff must discuss requirements with the DSL.

It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address the safeguarding risks, prevent issues from escalating and to promote children's welfare. Examples of poor practice include:

- Failing to act on and refer the early signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation,
- Poor record keeping,
- Failing to listen to the views of the child,
- Failing to re-assess concerns when situations do not improve,
- Not sharing information with the right people within and between agencies,
- Sharing information too slowly,
- A lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.

Part H: Other Safeguarding Issues Relating to Best Practice.

Complaints

If a parent considers that the School has not operated the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy correctly, they may submit a complaint under the Complaints Policy which is on Merton School website or available on request from the school office. If a member of staff has a concern with regards to the School's safeguarding and child protection practice and procedures, then they should do so by **following the Whistleblowing Policy**.

Complaints/allegations/safeguarding concerns made against staff, supply staff, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors and third-party staff

Safeguarding concerns, complaints or allegations made against staff/ DSL / supply staff and volunteers will be brought immediately to the attention of the Headmaster in order that he may activate the appropriate procedures.

In the Headmaster's absence, or where the Headmaster is the subject of a complaint, allegation or safeguarding concern, the person to contact is the Chair of the Advisory Board **Jacqueline Jenkins: j.jenkins@mertoncourtprep.co.uk**, who will then inform the LADO.

As the Headmaster is also the main Proprietor of the School, it is mandatory to report the allegation to the LADO. Where there is a conflict of interest of reporting to the Head, the member of staff must go to the LADO direct.

Allegations will be managed according to the following procedure:

1. The complaint or allegation must be reported without delay to the Headmaster.
2. The Headmaster will contact the LADO **within 24 hours** of receiving the complaint/allegation.
3. The Headmaster will not conduct his own investigation in order that statutory investigations are not jeopardised, but he will ask the person making the complaint/allegation to write a detailed account of his/her concerns.
4. The compilation of the report from the person making the complaint/allegation must not be aided by the Headmaster.
5. This report is stored in a locked cabinet and held securely.
6. After the complaint/allegation is investigated by the statutory authorities, the appropriate referring is made by the School to relevant agencies
7. If there has been a substantial allegation against a member of staff, the school will work with the LADO to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the school's procedures or practice to prevent similar events in the future. Should any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements be identified, these will be remedied without undue delay.

The following points are important.

1. If an allegation, complaint or Safeguarding concern is made against a teacher the quick resolution of that allegation will be a clear priority to the benefit of all concerned. At any stage of consideration or investigation, all unnecessary delays should be eradicated.
2. All allegations are brought to the attention of the Headmaster (except where the allegation concerns the Headmaster) and the LADO is contacted immediately to agree a course of action and possible involvement of the police.
3. In some cases, the LADO may be contacted for informal discussion without naming the School or individual;
4. In response to an allegation, staff suspension will not be the default option. An individual will only be suspended if there is no reasonable alternative. If suspension is deemed appropriate, the reasons and justification will be recorded by the School and the individual notified of the reasons.
5. Allegations against a teacher or other member of staff who is no longer working will be referred to the DBS.

6. Allegations about supply teachers or any third party dealt with appropriately and the procedure for managing allegations, complaints and safeguarding concerns will be applied with the appropriate agency involved.
7. If an allegation is made in relation to the Headmaster, the Chair of the Advisory Board will report directly to the LADO and partner agencies as appropriate. The referral will be made without the Head being informed.
8. There are four possible outcomes following an investigation into an allegation against staff: **substantiated, malicious, false, and unsubstantiated.**
9. An allegation that is found to have been malicious will be removed from personnel records and any that is not substantiated is unfounded or malicious will not be referred to in employer references. Allegations that are found to have been malicious are likely to have breached School policy and are proscribed in the Whistle-blowing Policy. The School will therefore consider whether to apply an appropriate sanction, which could include temporary or permanent exclusion (as well as referral to the police if there are grounds for believing a criminal offence may have been committed).
10. The School will send a report promptly to the Disclosure and Barring Service if the School dispenses with a person's services because of their unsuitability to work with children or would have done so had the person not resigned; the School will also refer a member of staff who is suspended or redeployed because of concerns that they pose a risk of harm.
11. Consideration is given to making a referral to the TRA (Teaching Regulation Authority) where a teacher has been dismissed (or would have been dismissed had they not resigned) and a prohibition order may be appropriate, because of 'unacceptable professional conduct', conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute, or a 'conviction at any time for a relevant offence'.

Allegations against staff that meet the harms threshold

Members of staff should be careful about what their actions are outside of the school as their behaviour might indicate a person is a risk to children. Staff should not:

- behave in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child/ren in a way that indicates he/she may pose a risk of harm to children;
- behave or may behave in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children e.g drink driving, violence at home. **(See Low Level Concerns Policy.)**

EYFS – Additional requirements (Also please refer to EYFS Child Protection Additional Guidance)

The Safeguarding and Child Protection policy which applies to the rest of the school also applies to the EYFS and details our procedures for safeguarding in the EYFS. We inform Ofsted immediately (on the same day), or as soon as is reasonably practicable, but certainly within 24 hours, of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working or looking after children at the premises (whether that allegation relates to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere). This could include any other abuse

which is alleged to have taken place on the premises, and of the action taken in respect of these allegations.

Disqualification by Association - Early Years and later Years provision.

Pre-appointment checks in this regard may also be needed for relevant staff, leaders and managers as part of following the KCSIE (Sept 2026) supplementary advice (applicable for all staff appointed to Leadership & Management positions since August 2015, **also refer to the updated Version July 2018**). Employees who teach or manage any aspect of provision for children up to the age of 8 years are not allowed (in accordance with regulations made under Section 75 of the Childcare Act 2006, and regulations of services on Childcare Register from March 2017) to work in this capacity at our school if they, or others in their household are disqualified. A self-declaration form is incorporated into the appointments process.

Health and Safety and Welfare

The safety and welfare of all Children in the EYFS at Merton Court School is our highest priority. Our ethos is to know everyone as an individual and to provide a secure premises and a caring environment where every child can learn in safety. In all matters relating to child protection the School will follow the procedures laid down by our own (or where appropriate the relevant child's) (with DfE guidance contained in Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026) **and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE September 2026)**).

All members of staff have a duty to safeguard our children's welfare and must therefore familiarise themselves and always comply with the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the EYFS Health and Safety and Welfare guidelines. This includes a duty both to children in need and to children at risk of harm. All staff have read Part 1 of KCSIE (September 2026). Safeguarding children and child protection issues are on the agenda of regular staff meetings and discussions whereby the school draws on the expertise of staff to help shape safeguarding arrangements and policies. All School staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents can happen at any time and anywhere and are required to be alert to any possible concerns.

It is important to us that all children in the EYFS are safe. We aim to educate children on boundaries, rules, and limits and to help them understand why they exist. We provide children with choices to help them develop this important life skill. Children should be allowed to take risks but need to be taught how to recognise and avoid hazards. We aim to protect the physical and psychological well-being of all our children.

“Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.”
‘Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage’ (September 2026)

We understand that we are legally required to comply with certain welfare requirements as stated in the Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (September 2026). We understand that we are required to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguarding of children,
 - Promote good health, preventing the spread of infection and taking appropriate action when children are ill,
 - Manage behaviour effectively in a manner appropriate for the children's stage of development and individual needs,
 - Ensure all adults who look after the children or who have unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so and have undergone the relevant checks,
 - Ensure that the premises, furniture, and equipment is safe and suitable for purpose,
- Ensure that every child receives enjoyable and challenging learning and development experiences tailored to meet their needs,
- Maintain records, policies and procedures required for safe efficient management of the setting and to meet the needs of the children.

There are clear procedures for assessing risk which includes procedures for keeping children safe during trips and for any aspects of the environment or provision that may require a further risk assessment.

In line with the EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2026), we undertake to ensure that:

Medicines and the systems for obtaining information about a child's needs for medication are kept up to date,

Fresh drinking water is always available,

The safer sleeping and safer eating programmes are followed (EYFS Statutory Framework September 2026),

Children's dietary needs are recorded and acted upon when required,

The lunch provided is healthy, balanced and nutritious, a healthy snack is available during the morning session. EYFS staff have received training in food hygiene.

A paediatric first aider is always accessible, and a record of accidents and injuries are kept. A fire and emergency evacuation procedure and policy are in place.

The staff: children ratio meets the statutory guidelines for our young children.

All staff involved with the EYFS aim to develop good relationships with all children, interacting positively with them and taking time to listen to them. Each child in EYFS is assigned a 'Key Person'. The EYFS teachers act as **key person** to all children in Reception supported by the Teaching assistant. In Early Years, the role of the key person may be the teacher or the teaching assistant. The key person engages and supports parents in guiding their child's development both at school and at home.

SAFER EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The School follows the Government's recommendations for the safer recruitment and employment of staff who work with children (**Part 3 and Part 4 as prescribed in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Please refer to Safer Recruitment guidelines DFE 2018**). All members of the teaching and non-teaching staff at the School including part time staff, temporary and supply staff, and visiting staff, such as musicians and sports coaches are subject to the statutory child protection checks before starting work. Any child having music lessons by peripatetic music teachers during school holidays that are not held on Merton Court premises, will not be under Merton Court School umbrella of safeguarding.

Merton Court School follows the Government's recommendations for the safer recruitment and employment of staff that work with children. The *Single Central Register (SCR)*, is rigorously maintained. All employees and volunteers are checked in accordance with the full requirements of the SCR before starting work. Further details on the exact nature of checks for certain parties can be found in our Safer Recruitment Policy.

Our school prioritises embedding a culture of safe recruitment as part of our strategy for preventing harm to children (see Safer Recruitment Policy). Statutory procedures for checking the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with children are always followed, including checking their identity, obtaining enhanced Disclosure and Barring certificates from the applicant including barred list information for those in regulated activity, mental and physical fitness, right to work in the UK, verifying professional qualifications as appropriate, overseas background checks as appropriate, prohibition from teaching and/or management of an independent school checks, detailed references and interview information. School also should consider an online Google search. All such recruitment checks are recorded on the School's Single Central Register and all applicants show the original DBS certificate to the School before they take up the post.

Assurance is obtained that appropriate suitability checks apply to any staff employed by another organisation who might be working onsite (such as building or service contractors) and to any individual working with the school's children (such as after school clubs) or on an external site (such as on school visits). Any individual working on our School site, and/or off-site with our children, for whom an enhanced DBS check with barred list has not been obtained will not be allowed to work in regulated activity and will be always supervised by school staff. The School adheres to the definition of supervision as "reasonable day to day supervision by another person engaging in regulated activity" and follows Annex F of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) accordingly.

Importantly, the following points are adhered to:

- there must be supervision by a person who is in regulated activity,
- the supervision must be regular and day to day; and
- the supervision must be 'reasonable' in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of children.

Raising Awareness and Policy Review

The DSL reports termly to the main Proprietor on all matters relating to Safeguarding – this is usually in the termly Proprietors' Meeting. Mr D Price Headmaster who is the main Proprietor and a member of LT and Advisory Board. Mrs S Price is a member of LT, Advisory Board and Safeguarding Team. Mrs T Langton (DSL) is a member of LT. The annual review of the school's child protection policies, including an annual update and review of their implementation, is carried out by the Headmaster and the Advisory Board. It is the responsibility of the main Proprietor to:

- Review the procedures for and the efficiency with which the child protection duties have been discharged;
- Ensure that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay;
- Approve amendments to child protection arrangements in the light of changing Regulations or recommended best practice;
- Ensure that the school contributes to inter-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026) through effective implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and good cooperation with local agencies;
- Ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep safe children who are looked after by a local authority. This includes ensuring that staff have the information they need about the child's status, contact arrangements with parents, care arrangements and delegated authority to carers, and information available to the DSL.
- Minutes of the termly and/or annual review are taken.

Use of mobile phones, smart phones and cameras.

Staff must not use mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities, along with Smart watches & Meta glasses in the presence of children. Personal mobile phones or cameras should never be used for taking or storing images or recordings of children. Any images or recordings should only be taken, edited or stored on school computers unless with the express permission of the Head. Photographs or recordings should only be made where there is a legitimate school purpose. A child's privacy and dignity must always be preserved. Images or recordings should not be transmitted to third parties without permission of the Head or parents of the child involved. This guidance also applies to all children, including in the EYFS setting.

The School operates a 'No Phone Zone' (including videoing and photographing) inside school grounds at any time. This includes off-site school occasions such as our Harvest Festival Service and Carol Service at St John's Church. Taking images of any kind of other people's children without consent and posting them on social media is prohibited. Parents will be issued with a formal warning for taking pictures/videos and if caught re-offending will be unable to attend future School events.

Senior children who travel to school unaccompanied leave their phone switched off with a member of the Office staff who will sign it in and out on arrival and leaving school.

There is a separate policy on the use of Mobile Phones, Smart phones and Cameras and all staff read our All Electronic Devices Capable of Capturing or Sharing Images Policy in conjunction with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Email, electronic communication and computers.

Staff will only use the School's digital technology resources and systems for professional purposes or for uses deemed 'reasonable' by the Headmaster/Proprietor. Staff will only use the approved School email, or other School-approved communication-systems with children or parents/guardians, and only communicate with them on appropriate School business and will not disclose their personal telephone numbers and email addresses to children or parents/Guardians.

All computer equipment and internet access within the School will be subject to appropriate "parental controls" and Internet safety rules in line with our Online Policy. Children, staff and parents will sign the Acceptable Use Policy, and regular mention of appropriate use of IT is made at staff training sessions.

Filtering and Monitoring

Whilst considering their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, the Proprietors, Advisory Board and staff will do all they reasonably can to limit children's exposure to the risks from the school's IT system. As part of this process, Proprietors and Advisory Board ensure the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and reviewed yearly for their effectiveness (or sooner where new harms emerge). The Leadership Team and relevant staff will have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively and know how to escalate concerns when identified. Proprietors and Advisory Board consider the number of and age range of the children, those who are potentially at greater risk of harm and how often they access the IT system along with the proportionally of costs versus safeguarding risks.

NSM are alerted by 'Lightspeed' of any safeguarding risk that may occur, and will carry out a monitoring process, informing the DSL of any issues. Daily reports are forwarded from NSM to the DSL.

The appropriateness of any filtering and monitoring systems will be informed in part, by the risk assessment required by the Prevent Duty.

To support schools to meet this duty, the DfE has published filtering and monitoring standards which set out that schools should:

- Identify and assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems:

- Review filtering and monitoring provision annually or sooner where new harms emerge;
- Block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably affecting teaching and learning;
- Have effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs;
- Undertake training with all staff to understand the risks of poor filtering and monitoring, and know how to share or report their concerns to the DSL;
- Ensure all staff take part in annual cyber-security training;
- Regularly review harmful or inappropriate words used by the children regularly.

Further information: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring>

Site Security

Merton Court provides a secure site, but the site is only as secure as the people who use it. Therefore, all people on site must adhere to the rules, which govern it. Therefore:

- Main gates from carpark are always locked excluding 30 minutes during arrival time in the morning and departure time at the end of the school day, where members of staff will be on gate duty;
- All exit doors are closed to prevent intrusion;
- Visitors must only enter through the main entrance. They will be entered into the School Inventory System and given a visitors' badge. ID will be required;
- Children will only be allowed home with adults with parental responsibility or confirmed permission and a 'password';
- Children are never allowed to leave school alone during school hours and, if collected by an adult, signed out;
- Should a child leave the school premises without permission, staff have been informed never to chase after a child, but rather to report immediately to the office. Then parent and police will be informed of the circumstances.

School Residential Trips

The Assistant Head (Academic) and the Headmaster sign off all trips involving any overnight stays. If a child on the Safeguarding list of concerns is included in that trip, the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and the DDSL (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) will confer with the relevant member of staff so that proper support of the child (which might involve not allowing him or her to take part due to concerns about welfare) can be guaranteed. This will be recorded on CPOMS and the Risk Assessment for the trip.

Admissions and Attendance

All parents/carers applying for places at the School will be informed of our safeguarding responsibilities and the existence of this policy. Any child whose attendance falls below

95% during a full school term will be monitored very closely and vigilance is applied mindful of the risks for children associated with going missing or prolonged absence from education. Please refer to our Attendance Policy.

APPENDIX A

The Channel Process.

The Channel process is part of the government's overall strategy of preventing radicalisation, and sets out a framework within which its agencies work together to:

1. Identify individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism;
2. Assess the nature and extent of that risk;
3. Develop the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.

Safeguarding children from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from other forms of harm. Indicators for vulnerability to radicalisation overlap with those, which underlie other vulnerabilities that might give rise to safeguarding concerns, including:

1. Family tensions
2. Sense of isolation
3. Distance from cultural heritage
4. Experience of racism or discrimination either personally or as a witness to the event
5. Feeling of failure

Channel assesses vulnerability using a consistently applied vulnerability assessment framework built around three criteria. The three criteria are;

1. Engagement with a group, cause or ideology
2. Intent to cause harm
3. Capability to cause harm

Children at Merton School present a low risk of intent or capability to cause harm but the examples below are useful to highlight possible indicators.

1. Example indicators that an individual is engaged with an extremist group, cause or ideology include.
2. Spending increasing time in the company of other suspected extremists.
3. Changing their style of dress or personal appearance to accord with the group.
4. Day-to-day behaviour becoming increasingly centred around an extremist ideology, group or cause.
5. Loss of interest in other friends and activities not associated with the extremist ideology, group or cause.
6. Possession of material or symbols associated with an extremist cause (e.g. the swastika for far-right groups).
7. Attempts to recruit others to the group/cause/ideology.
8. Communications with others that suggest identification with a group/cause/ideology.

Example indicators that an individual has an intention to cause harm, use violence or other illegal means include:

1. Clearly identifying another group as threatening what they stand for and blaming that group for all social or political ills,
2. Using insulting or derogatory names or labels for another group,
3. Speaking about the imminence of harm from the other group and the importance of action now,
4. Expressing attitudes that justify offending on behalf of the group, cause or ideology,
5. Condoning or supporting violence or harm towards others,
6. Plotting or conspiring with others.

Example indicators that an individual is capable of causing harm or contributing directly or indirectly to an act of terrorism include;

1. Having a history of violence
2. Being criminally versatile and using criminal networks to support extremist goals
3. Having occupational skills that can enable acts of terrorism (such as civil engineering, pharmacology or construction)
4. Having technical expertise that can be deployed (e.g. IT skills, knowledge of chemicals, military training or survival skills).

The examples above are not exhaustive and vulnerability may manifest itself in other ways. There is no single route to terrorism nor is there a simple profile of those who become involved. For this reason, any attempt to derive a 'profile' can be misleading. It must not be assumed that these characteristics and experiences will necessarily lead to individuals becoming terrorists, or that these indicators are the only source of information required to make an appropriate assessment about vulnerability. Outward expression of faith, in the absence of any other indicator of vulnerability, is not a reason to make a referral to Channel.

The Channel referral process requires that concerns should be passed on to the DSL/DSLs, who may consult with the local Prevent Officer (Police/Local Authority). If further action is considered appropriate, screening by the police Channel Coordinator might take place, followed by a preliminary assessment by the Local Authority's Prevent Lead and Police Channel Coordinator. Again, if further action is considered necessary, the next step might be the creation of an assessment and action plan by the local Multi-Agency Channel Panel, and subsequent implementation of that plan, which would be aimed at re-engaging the individual and preventing radicalisation. The framework for referral, review and action is not intended to criminalise individuals, but to set a course to precisely avoid that.

APPENDIX B

DECLARATION FOR STAFF

Child Protection & Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2026)

SAFEGUARDING DECLARATION FORM

Name (please print): _____

I have read and am familiar with the contents of the following documents and understand my role and responsibilities as set out in these documents.

- 1.The School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 2.Part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' DfE Guidance, 2026

I have also read all related policies and documents to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

I am aware that the DSLs are:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

and I am able to discuss any concerns that I may have with them.

I know that further guidance, together with copies of the policies mentioned above, are available from the School Office and are on the Staff Shared Drive (O Drive/School Office).

Signed: _____

Date: _____