



Child Protection Policy

Discovery Special Academy

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Purpose and Aim

Discovery Special Academy's whole-school Child Protection Policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with child welfare concerns. The policy also aims to make explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures to keep children safe in our school. This policy recognises that abuse can occur in all communities and contexts and that all staff have a responsibility and the opportunity to support children, in sharing concerns and worries in the academy to feel safe. The whole academy culture of vigilance in Discovery Special Academy creates a safe space where children are supported, listened to and valued in what they choose to share and that ALL staff act immediately with the necessary level of intervention to create the most effective outcome for every individual child.

The purpose of the policy is, therefore, to ensure that our children's welfare is of paramount importance, early and additional help is offered to prevent escalation and where child protection concerns are identified referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child's well-being.

Trustees and staff are committed within Discovery Special Academy to keeping children safe by safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in our care through all our policies, procedures and practices. We expect all our pupils' parents and visitors to share this commitment and understanding.

The term CLA refers to looked after children (children looked after) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route). Please note, in other authorities we serve, looked after children may also be referred to as LAC (children in local authority care) and CIOC (children in our care).

Introduction

Discovery Special Academy fully recognises the contribution it can make to keeping children safe and supporting the pupils in its care. There are four main elements to the academy Child Protection Policy:

- 1. Prevention** (positive school atmosphere, careful and vigilant teaching, pastoral care, support to pupils, providing good adult role models and the identification of early and additional support/services to children and families and recognising and reducing risks to children including harassment, bullying/cyber-bullying and prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, victimisation, sexual violence and sexual harassment, criminal/sexual exploitation including county lines and serious violent crime, preventing radicalisation (extremism, radicalisation and terrorism) and issues such as honour based abuse, female genital mutilation and forced marriage).
- 2. Protection** (following agreed procedures, ensuring all staff respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns and that every member of staff has regular training and updates at least annually and are supported to refer their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Cheryl Arkle or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, Jennifer Duncan, Ann Titchener and Andrew Wilkinson or the Children's Services (01642 726 004) directly IF NECESSARY. In certain specific cases such as female genital mutilation (Mandatory reporting of FGM from October 2015), radicalisation or forced marriage there are SPOCS/named teams and individuals within the police who can be contacted).
- 3. Reconsideration** (following and challenging the progress of new referrals and existing cases to ensure that individual cases are reconsidered if there remains no improvement to a child's circumstances).
- 4. Support** (for pupils and school staff and for children who may be vulnerable due to their individual circumstances or extra-familial harm and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes).

All staff have the added responsibility of recognising that there may be children with additional vulnerability who remain at higher risk of harm or abuse because of their existing vulnerability. All academy staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

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

(KCSIE 2024)

All staff have a responsibility to recognise child abuse, neglect and child on child abuse in its many forms by exercising professional curiosity at all times. This means that ALL staff will take a 'zero-tolerance' approach to any unacceptable behaviour including 'banter' and will seek to prevent, challenge and take action so that all children understand that any concerns regarding their welfare and safety will be taken seriously. This will encourage and promote a culture of acceptable behaviour and a safe educational environment for all children. All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Additional guidance on how our school supports the following areas of additional need or harm are provided in the hyperlinked documents in Appendix 1 of this Child Protection Policy and includes the full list taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

Broadly the areas taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 Annex B, include

- Child abduction and community safety incidents
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- County Lines
- Children in the court system
- Children missing from education
- Children with family members in prison
- Cybercrime
- Domestic Abuse
- Homelessness
- Mental Health

- Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism
- Preventing Radicalisation
- The Prevent Duty
- Channel
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges
- Serious Violence
- So called 'Honour' - Based Abuse inclusive of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage.
- FGM
- FGM mandatory reporting duty for teachers
- Forced Marriage
- Additional advice and support

(KCSIE 2024)

AS STATED THE FULL LIST OF ADDITIONAL ADVICE AND SUPPORTIVE HYPERLINKS CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX 1 OF THIS POLICY

In the event of any of the above issues being recognised, information should be shared directly with the Designated Safeguarding Leads or deputies which will result in the situation being recorded, evaluated and support offered in school or the pupil/s being referred to specific services.

This policy applies to Discovery Special Academy's whole workforce.

Framework and Legislation

No school operates in isolation. Keeping children safe from significant harm is the responsibility of all adults especially those working with children. The development of appropriate procedures and the monitoring of good practice are the responsibilities of South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership <https://stscp.co.uk/>, which includes the partnership of several agencies who work with children and families across the Borough.

Discovery Special Academy is committed to keeping children safe and safeguarding all children in accordance with Child Protection: South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership and partner agencies in all cases where there is a concern about significant harm.

Significant Harm is defined in The Children's Act 1989 as the ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and physical abuse) or the impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) as compared to a similar child.

Note: harm now includes the impairment of a child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill treatment of another person.

(Adoption and Children Act 2002)

Local Authorities have a duty to investigate (under S47 of the Children Act 1989). Where a Local Authority is informed that there is a child who is living, or is found, in their area and they have reasonable cause to suspect that child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm they must make such enquiries as necessary to promote or safeguard the child's welfare. Children's Services undertakes this responsibility on behalf of the Local Authority once a referral has been made.

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024 contains information on what schools and colleges **should** do and sets out the legal duties with which schools and colleges **must** comply. It should be read alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 which applies to all schools, including maintained Nursery schools. The Children Act 1989 sets out the legal framework.

Roles and Responsibilities for All Staff

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as: providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge and protecting children from maltreatment whether that is within or outside the home, including online; preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes; (including in addition to the four categories of harm, issues such as sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), child criminal exploitation (CCE), child sexual exploitation (CSE), county lines and serious youth violence, 'Honour' - Based Abuse (HBA) inclusive of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage, radicalisation, (extremism, radicalisation and terrorism), harassment, bullying including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying and victimization, preventing impairment of children's health (physical and mental health) or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. This includes everyone under the age of 18.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Due to the regular contact with children all staff at Discovery Special Academy have a particularly important role in safeguarding as we are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children and to prevent concerns from escalating. Children can make disclosures or show signs of abuse at any time and to any individual and safeguarding incidents can occur within schools. Therefore, through a thorough induction process and the sharing of this policy to all staff, students and volunteers, it is important that ALL staff:

- Ensure that they clearly understand their school's systems and procedures for sharing information to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as shared in this policy.
- Ensure that they listen to and reflect on the voice of the child at ALL times (taking the child's wishes and feeling into account) and reassure them that they will take seriously any concerns raised to them by the child and both support them and keep them safe. This will include determining what action to take and what services to provide on behalf of the child in need (for non-safeguarding concerns).
- Ensure that they report ANY concerns of harm to any child to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputies) immediately and consistently promote a culture of vigilance in school, where concerns are shared and dealt with as soon as possible. (However, ALL staff can refer their concerns directly to Children's Services if necessary and the police in the stated incidents above and all staff should be aware of their local referral process to Local Authority children's social care. They will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputies) as soon as possible if they have reported concerns directly).
- Ensure that they immediately share with the Designated Safeguarding Lead information shared with them by a child or directly observed/witnessed and record it. This could include sharing information on behalf of the Designated Safeguarding Lead with other agencies. All discussions, decisions and reasons for them should be recorded in writing adhering to Discovery Special Academy Recording and Information Sharing Policy/Procedure. Staff should never let fears of sharing information stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensure that they feel confident in reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.
- Ensure that they are aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.

- Therefore, all staff should ensure that they exercise their professional curiosity and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they have concerns about a child. This also means considering how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.
- Ensure that they maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** in respect of any safeguarding issues and report any concerns regarding the behaviour of a child/an adult/staff member in school directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead/Headteacher/ Head of Academy.
- Ensure that they feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practices of staff and potential failures in the school's safeguarding regime through whistleblowing procedures and the Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct inclusive of 'Low-Level' Concerns Policy.
- Ensure that they receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety which amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring. Filtering and monitoring should block harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting on teaching and learning) at induction. This training will be regularly updated. In addition, all staff will receive updates as required and at least annually to support them in recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse, particularly in support of early identification of needs of children to prevent an escalation of need or risk to the child.
- Ensure from the 1st July 2015 for schools, (or 18th September 2015 for Colleges) that under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act, April 2015, that the school has 'due regard' to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism and to assess risk of children and young people being radicalised or drawn into extremism/terrorism (based upon potential risks in local area and that clear protocols are in place for all visitors so that their views are appropriate and not an opportunity to influence others).
- Ensure from October 2015 that there is mandatory reporting to the police in all cases where teachers discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out.
- Ensure that they understand through online safety training that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and well-being cases and the additional risks for pupils online and continue to promote the school's Online Safety Policy/ Mobile and Smart Technology acceptable usage in the protection of all pupils. This includes the management of internet access via children's own mobile phones or electronic devices that can allow them unlimited access to the internet without any restrictions using their own data allowance (3G, 4G, 5G). It should be clear in every school's online safety policy/Mobile and Smart Technology /acceptable usage, the expectations of pupils regarding their own devices whilst on school site and the consequences of any evidence of inappropriate use of the internet. This includes not using their mobile phones or smart technology to sexually harass, share indecent images (consensually or non-consensually) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.
- Ensure that they remain vigilant whilst visitors are on site and continue to promote the school's commitment to keeping children safe through reminding visitors and parents of the school's appropriate use of personal mobile phones/devices whilst they are on school premises. This includes staff understanding and adhering to the Staff Handbook inclusive of use of mobile phones and electronic devices.

Discovery Special Academy will work with Local Authority children's social care, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead

Discovery Special Academy has appointed from our SLT Cheryl Arkle Deputy Head of Academy, to be our Designated Safeguarding Lead. This person has the overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place), a role which carries a significant level of responsibility. The Designated Safeguarding Lead has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post and is given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support needed to carry out the role effectively. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This person is able to take part in strategy discussions and inter agency meetings and to support other trained staff to do so as well as contribute to the assessment of children. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any Deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns (KCSIE 2024).

Role of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

At Discovery Special Academy we have appointed the following Deputy Designated Leads; Jennifer Duncan, Ann Titchener and Andrew, who are part of the safeguarding team. These individuals are trained to the same standard as the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Whilst the activities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate LEAD RESPONSIBILITY for child protection will not be delegated and remains with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Deputies are trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead and the role is explicit in their job description.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has a very detailed role, (see below)

However, if there is an IMMEDIATE safeguarding concern and the Designated Safeguarding Leads are unavailable please seek immediate support via the Children's Services (01642 726 004)

The broad areas of responsibility for the Designated Safeguarding Leads are identified here:

Availability

During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school hours) for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools, working with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, to define what "available" means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and /or Skype or other such media is acceptable.

At Discovery Special Academy, we will arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

Manage referrals

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is expected to refer cases:

- Of suspected abuse to the Children's Services and support staff who make referrals to the Children's Services.
- To the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required and support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme.
- Where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required.
- Where a crime may have been committed to the police as required.

Work with others

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff,
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners (South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership).
- Liaise with the Headteacher/ Head of Academy to inform them of issues, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. This includes being aware of the requirements for children to have an Appropriate Adult (PACE code C 2019)
- As required liaise with the case manager (Headteacher/ Head of Academy, or where the Headteacher/ Head of Academy is the subject of the allegations the Chair of Trustees and the Designated Officer, operating on behalf of the Local Authority for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member).
- Liaise with staff (especially teachers, pastoral support staff, school nurses, IT technicians and SENCOs or the named person with oversight for SEN and Mental Health Leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children's needs are considered holistically.
- Liaise with the Mental Health Lead and, where available, the Mental Health Support Team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health.
- Promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances;
- Work with the Headteacher/ Head of Academy and relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement and achievement at school.

- Ensure that the academy knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort.
- Support teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.

Information Sharing and Managing the Child Protection File

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date.

Information should be kept confidential and stored securely.

Records should include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved;
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or content within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice.

Where children leave the school (including in-year transfers) the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school as soon as possible and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained. Receiving schools should ensure key staff such as Designated Safeguarding Leads and SENCOs, are aware as required.

Lack of information about their circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. In addition to the child protection file, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school to continue supporting victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Raising Awareness

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should:

- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff.
- Ensure the school's Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with the Trust Board regarding this.
- Ensure the Child Protection Policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school or college in this.
- Link with the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership to make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest local policies on safeguarding and
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children who have or have had a social worker, are experiencing with teachers and school leadership staff.

Training, Knowledge and Skills

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and any deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should undertake Prevent awareness training. Training should provide Designated Safeguarding Leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care, so they:

- Understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and Local Authority children's social care referral arrangements.
- Have a working knowledge of how Local Authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Understand the importance of the role the Designated Safeguarding Lead has in providing information and support to children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and well-being, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes.
- Are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers.

- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and with the safeguarding partners (South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership), other agencies, organisations and practitioners.
- Understand and support the school or college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalization.
- Are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college.
- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and with the safeguarding partners (South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership), other agencies, organisations and practitioners.
- Understand and support the school or college with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation.
- Are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school.
- Can recognise the additional risks that children with SEN and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from online bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support SEND children to stay safe online.
- Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses and
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via e-bulletins, meeting other Designated Safeguarding Leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

Providing support to staff

Training should support the Designated Safeguarding Lead in developing expertise, so they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This includes specifically to:

- Ensure that staff are supported during the referrals processes;
- Support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.

Understanding the views of children

It is important that children feel heard and understood. Therefore, Designated Safeguarding Leads should be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:

- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them;
- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Holding and sharing information

Designated Safeguarding Leads should be equipped to:

- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with other schools and colleges on transfer including in-year and between primary and secondary education, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners,
- Understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as LA children's social care or the PREVENT program etc.

Taken from Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024: Annex C.

In addition, PG: Safeguarding First Ltd recommends as best practice that the Designated Safeguarding Lead's:

- Ensure each member of staff has access to and understands the school's suite of safeguarding policies particularly the Child Protection Policy and Peer on Peer/Child on Child Abuse Policy and the Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct (inclusive of 'Low Level' Concern) Policy, especially new or part-time staff who may work with different establishments.
- Be aware of all school excursions and residential and clarify with educational visit co-ordinator/group leader(s) their role and responsibility in connection with safeguarding/child protection.
- Ensure that a whole school policy for Induction is in place for all new starters including members of the workforce and volunteers, to induct them thoroughly into all key aspects of their role and responsibility in school across all five bubbles of the PG:SF business model.
- Are aware of all school excursions and residential and clarify with education visit co-ordinator/group leader(s) their role and responsibility in connection with safeguarding/child protection.

- Ensure a whole school policy about managing behaviour effectively is in place to ensure a good and safe educational environment for all children. This means that ALL staff will take a 'zero-tolerance' approach to any unacceptable behaviour including 'banter' and will seek to prevent, challenge and take action so that all children understand that any concerns regarding their welfare and safety will be taken seriously. This will encourage and promote a culture of acceptable behaviour and provide a safe educational environment for all children. This policy includes bullying/cyber-bullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying inclusive of measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. This policy should additionally include the use of reasonable force. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a young person needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. The use of force may involve either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of the classroom. When using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEN or disabilities or with medical conditions, we will consider the risks carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. We will also consider the duties under the Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010 in relation to making reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Ensure an effective whole school policy against bullying/cyber-bullying, prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying inclusive of measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils, is in place, as a stand-alone policy but also covered in the Behaviour Policy.
- Ensure that an effective Record-Keeping Policy regarding information on children's welfare is in place. This should detail the school's procedures and applications for recording information including use of CPOMS, what data will be recorded and for what purposes, who in school will have access to this information, how it will be shared and transferred and the school's retention schedule.
- Inform LA of any pupil to be deleted from school admission register and follow missing from education protocols.
- Inform the LA of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the academy's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Responsibilities of Trust Board

The Trustees at TVED has strategic leadership responsibility for Discovery Special Academy's safeguarding arrangements and will ensure that the school complies with its duties under legislation including the obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), the Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The Trustees will ensure that mechanisms are in place to assist staff to understand and discharge their role and responsibilities as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 including confirming that all policies and procedures adopted by the Trustees (particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect) are understood, and followed by all staff. The Trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction. The Trustees will also ensure that all Governors/LAC (Local Academy Committee) representatives receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online which amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring) training at induction. This training will equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place in Discovery Special Academy are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole school approach to safeguarding.

The Trustees has a senior board level (or equivalent) lead to take leadership responsibility for Discovery Special Academy's safeguarding arrangements. At Discovery Special Academy the senior lead Governor/board member for safeguarding is Richard Hodges.

The role of this individual is to:

- Ensure that the allocation of additional time, funding and resource is sufficient to meet the current safeguarding and child protection activity and challenge and test its effectiveness.
- Ensure the self-assessment tool and Designated Safeguarding Lead report demonstrates fully and accurately the safeguarding arrangements and any action to progress areas of weakness or development.
- Ensure that all Trustees receives training to clarify their statutory role in keeping children safe to support their quality assurance of those statutory arrangements.
- Ensure that the Trust Board is aware of the changes from Local Safeguarding Children Partnership to Safeguarding Partner arrangements and the need for the school/college to understand their role in effective multi-agency working under the new arrangements.

In Discovery Special Academy the Chair holds these additional responsibilities as they do not hold the safeguarding portfolio.

- Ensure that they liaise with the Local Authority and/or partner agencies on issues of child protection and in the event of allegations of abuse made against the Headteacher/ Head of Academy, the Principal of a College or Proprietor or member of Trustees of an independent school.
- Ensure that in the event of allegations of abuse being made against staff (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) and the Headteacher/ Head of Academy, where the Headteacher/ Head of Academy is also the sole proprietor of an independent school, allegations should be reported directly to the Designated Officer (DO). Therefore, ensuring effective whistleblowing procedures are in place.

- Ensure that the appointed member of the Trustees for safeguarding holds the Headteacher/ Head of Academy to account on all matters involving safeguarding through an effective Child Protection Policy that is embedded and followed by the entire workforce in all of the above raised areas.
- Ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates including online safety (which, amongst other things includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring) (for example, via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings) as required, and at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Trustees should also ensure that this training is integrated, aligned and considered as part of Discovery Special Academy's safeguarding approach and culture of vigilance.
- Ensure that the academy has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place to limit children's exposure to potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. This includes ensuring that an effective whole school approach to online safety is in place to empower the school to protect and educate pupils, students and staff in their use of technology and establish mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any concerns where appropriate. This also means confirming that staff, pupils and visitors to their site follow Discovery Special Academy's Online Safety/Mobile and Smart Technology/Acceptable Use Policy (which reflects the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (ie., 3G, 4G and 5G). Trustees will also ensure that this is regularly reviewed and risk assessed to keep up with evolving cyber-crime technologies and that parents and carers are communicated with to reinforce the messages of children staying safe online (inclusive of online sites that children access and who, from the school, they talk to online, for example remote education).
- Ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, keeping themselves safe, including online safety through Relationships Education (Primary) or Relationships and Sex Education (Secondary) and that this approach to teaching is tailored to meet the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children and how they identify, including children who are victims of abuse, children with special educational needs or disabilities and children who identify as lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBT).
- Ensure that a Designated Teacher is appointed to promote the educational achievement of looked after children, including working with the Local Authority's virtual school Headteacher and discuss how pupil premium funding for looked after children will be used.
- Ensure they have clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems.
- Ensure that the Child Protection Policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect for children with Special Educational Needs. These can include: assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration; being more prone to peer group isolation than other children; the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.
- Ensure that where children may need to learn online at home, there are clear, safe and effective protocols and provisions in place.

- Ensure that Discovery Special Academy premises are rented or hired to organisations or individuals that have appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place to keep children safe and that appropriate liaison occurs between organisation's and school on any safeguarding matters 'Guidance on keeping children safe in out-of-school settings' (DfE) details the safeguarding arrangements that schools and college should expect these providers to have in place.

Information for Parents

At Discovery Special Academy, Trustees and staff are committed to keeping our children safe and will take any reasonable action to safeguard and promote their welfare. In cases where the school has reason to be concerned that a child maybe suffering significant harm, ill treatment, neglect or other forms of harm, staff have no alternative but to follow South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership and inform Children's Services or police of their concern.

Procedures

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy DSL) will be informed immediately by an employee of the school, pupil of the school, parent of the school or other persons, in the following circumstances:

- Suspicion that a child is being harmed
- There is evidence that a child is being harmed

The threshold of significant harm is defined in the Children Act 1989 Section 31 (9) as:

- Ill-treatment
- Impairment of health (as compared to a similar child)

Note: harm now includes the impairment of a child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person (Adoption and Children Act 2002).

Working Together **2023** defines the categories of harm as:

Physical Abuse

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

Neglect

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

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

*The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue (also known as peer on peer/child on child abuse) in education and **ALL** staff should be aware of it.

** It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but all peer on peer/child on child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a 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 cyber 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 though it may occur alone.

Children potentially at greater risk of harm

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health. Local Authorities should share the fact a child has a Social Worker, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead should hold and use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. This should be considered as a matter of routine. There are clear powers to share this information under existing duties on both Local Authorities and schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

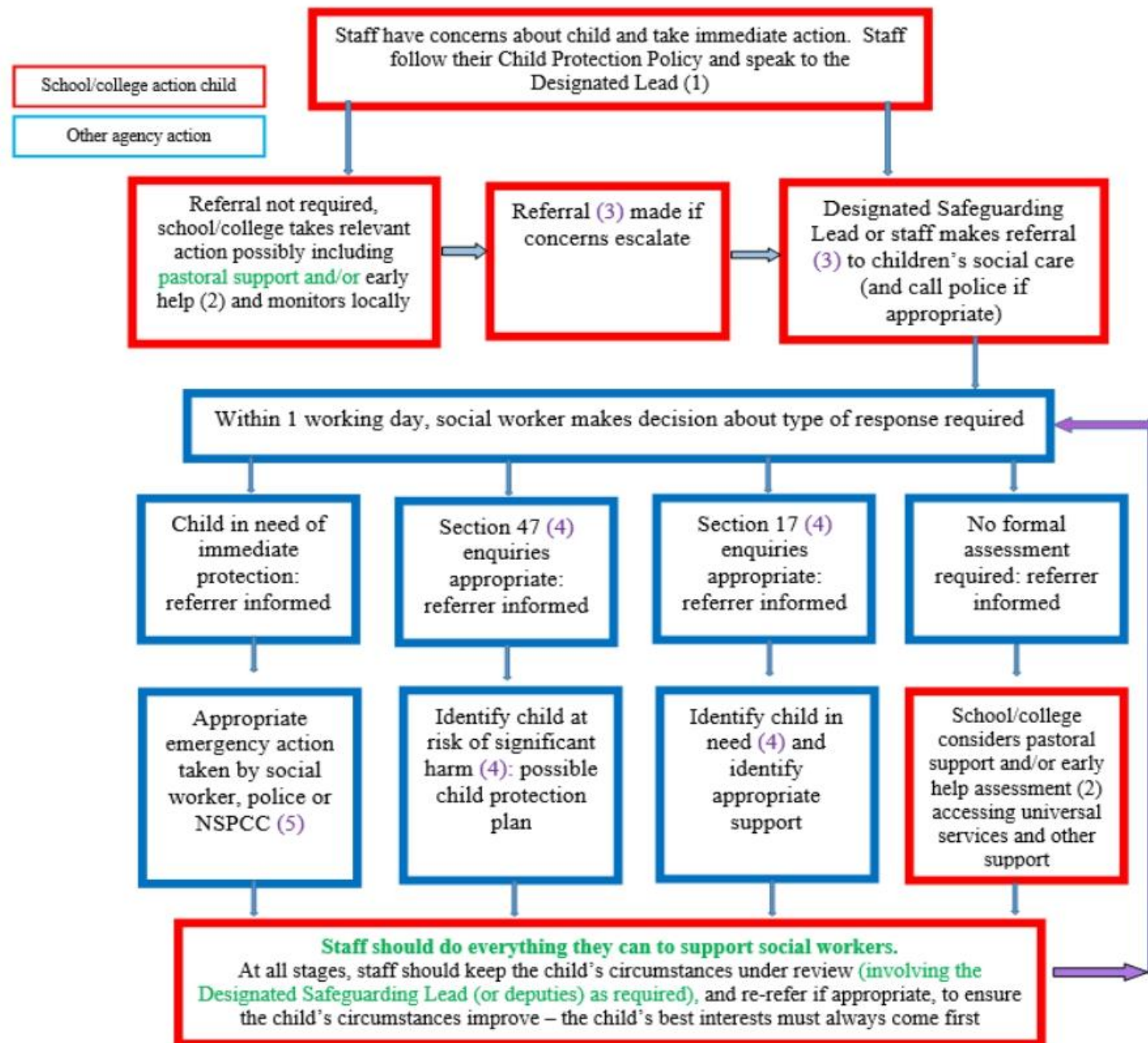
All staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff, but especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) should consider whether children 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. Staff should be aware that experience and indicators of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to boys but for both boys and girls being criminally exploited they may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation. Staff should also be aware of the indicators that signal a child is at risk from or involved in serious violent crime, for example being missing from education, changing friendships, a decline in school performance, self-harming and unexplained gifts and possessions.

Staff should be able to recognise the risk factors that increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education or permanently excluded from school, having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending such as theft or robbery.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will keep a full record of concerns raised and make referrals to Children's Services, if necessary. These records may be either handwritten or electronic but will be stored via a secure system. The Headteacher/ Head of Academy will be kept informed at all times.

KCSIE 2024

Actions where there are concerns about a child



1. In cases which also involve a concern or allegation of abuse against a staff member, see Part Four of KCSIE 2013.
2. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from co-ordinated early help, an early help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Chapter One of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides detailed guidance on the early help process.
3. Referrals should follow the process set out in the local threshold document and local protocol for assessment. Chapter one of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
4. Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make enquiries to decide whether to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Full details are in Chapter One of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
5. This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).

Safe Schools/Safe Staff

The Trust Board have agreed and ratified the following policies, procedures, processes or systems which must be read and considered in conjunction with this policy:

Whistle Blowing/Confidential Reporting

Discovery Special Academy's Whistle Blowing/Confidential Reporting Policy provides guidance to staff and volunteers and contractors on how they can raise concerns and receive appropriate feedback on action taken, when staff have concerns about any adult's behaviour.

Management of a safeguarding concern or allegation about an adult

If staff have safeguarding concerns, or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff and volunteers and contractors) posing a risk of harm to children, then this should be referred to the headteacher/ head of academy; where there are concerns/allegations about the headteacher, this should be referred to the chair of Trustees; and in the event of concerns/allegations about the headteacher, this should be reported directly to the Designated Officer(s) at the local authority.

Consultation without delay with the Local Authority Designated Officer Peter Storey 01642 726 004 / 0792 985 4418 or Middlesbroughlado@middlesbrough.gov.uk will determine what action follows. A multi-agency strategy meeting may be arranged to look at the complaint in its widest context, the Headteacher/senior member of school staff must attend this meeting, which will be arranged by the Designated Officer. All issues must be recorded on the allegation management form and the outcome reached must be noted to ensure closure.

<https://stscp.co.uk/>

Where this concern does not meet the harm threshold, all staff should continue to follow their Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct Inclusive of 'Low-Level' Concerns Policy and share information with the **Headteacher/ Head of Academy**. This concern may be where an adult's behaviour is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate behaviour outside of work but does not meet the allegation threshold.

Training and Support

All staff members should be aware of the systems within the academy which support safeguarding and these should be explained to them as part of their induction into the school to ensure they can discharge their responsibilities effectively. This includes: The Child Protection Policy, the policy and procedures to deal with peer on peer/child on child abuse; the Behaviour Policy (which should include measures to prevent bullying, including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying), the Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct (inclusive of 'Low Level' Concern, allegations against staff and Whistleblowing) Policy, the Safer Working Practice Document, the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education and the role and identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and their deputies.

All staff members receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training which is regularly updated. The Trust Board decides the frequency and content of this CPD. Our CPD for staff is integrated, aligned and considered as part of our whole school safeguarding approach, wider staff training and curriculum planning.

At Discovery Special Academy our training is held annually. In addition, all staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates via staff meetings held weekly or internal CPD as required to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively and allow them opportunities to contribute to reviewing and shaping the safeguarding arrangements in the academy inclusive of, the Child Protection Policy.

Professional Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of safeguarding. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputies) and Local Authority children's social care. Discovery Special Academy recognises that the only purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child. South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership <https://stscp.co.uk/>

Record Keeping

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes. Schools and colleges have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice. Discovery Special Academy is clear about the need to record any concerns, discussions held, decisions made and reasons for those decisions about a child or children within its care. All records include, a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome (Purpose, Action, and Outcome). All staff will follow the schools Information Sharing and Recording Policies to ensure record keeping is compliant and in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and Data Protection Act 2018.

Following a child leaving our school we follow the appropriate transfer procedures and retention guidelines and information regarding children who have required statutory intervention at any point in their school career will automatically be shared with the receiving school. This is to ensure that all children are given the right support and intervention and information is shared strictly on a need to know basis.

Safeguarding recording within Discovery Special Academy is held electronically through a secure management system of CPOMS and all staff have received training in the recording expectations and retention. Following a child leaving our academy we follow the appropriate transfer procedures and retention guidelines. All recording prior to this management system is in paper format. Retention guidelines are followed accordingly.

Attendance at Safeguarding Conferences

In the event of Discovery Special Academy being invited to attend child protection conferences, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputies), will represent the academy and/or identify the most appropriate trained member of staff to provide information relevant to child protection conference (initial/review).

Supporting Children

Discovery Special Academy recognises that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. The academy may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of some of the children in its care. The academy, therefore, recognises that such children might exhibit challenging and defiant behaviour and will take careful note of the context of such behaviour.

As an Operation Encompass partner we work closely with the Operation Encompass Lead with regards to domestic violence incidents and offer wellbeing checks to our pupils if we are contacted following an incident which has occurred in one of our pupils' homes.

Discovery Special Academy also recognises that children are capable of abusing their peers. Peer on peer/ child on child abuse can take many forms and any concerns raised will be investigated and dealt with appropriately as part of our school's zero tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour. No peer on peer/ child on child abuse should be tolerated or minimised as part of growing up and all those involved will be provided with an appropriate level of support. It is understood that those pupils who have experienced abuse in their own lives may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the child can receive appropriate help and support. See Child on child Abuse Policy for detailed information.

Therefore, Discovery Special Academy will endeavour to support all its pupils through a clear set of values and standards upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of school life:

- The curriculum to encourage self-esteem, self-motivation, self-protection.
- The academy ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all pupils and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
- Approaches which allow children and young people to develop critical thinking, literacy skills and digital literacy skills.
- A curriculum which explores human rights, equality, democracy and tolerance and prepares children and young people fully for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobic and sexual violence/harassment.

- A curriculum where children develop personal resilience, understand and can take appropriate risks or have personal strategies/safety plans that allow them to manage their own safety both on and off line. This can include topics covered as part of Relationships, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education as well as Fundamental British Values and the SMSC Curriculum which cover harm, abuse, positive and healthy relationships and crime. Such as a curriculum that is fully inclusive and developed to be age and stage of development appropriate (especially when considering the needs of children with SEND and other vulnerabilities) and will include; healthy and respectful relationships; boundaries and consent; stereo typing, prejudice and equality; body confidence and self esteem; how to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour; the concept of, and laws relating to sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so called ‘Honour’ – Based Abuse such as Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and how to access support and; what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable.
- A whole school approach to online safety that considers the four areas of risk: Content; being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism. Contact; being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example, peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial and other purposes. Conduct; personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying. Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.
- A coherent management of Behaviour and Discipline Policy & Procedures inclusive of the Use of Reasonable Force.
- Liaison with other professionals and agencies who support children and parents.
- A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents whenever it is in the child’s interest to do so.
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group whose role it is to respond appropriately in all safeguarding situations.

Discovery Special Academy recognises that, statistically, children with behavioural difficulties and disabilities are the most vulnerable to abuse. Academy staff who work, in any capacity, with children with profound and multiple disabilities, sensory impairment and/or emotional and behavioural problems will need to be particularly sensitive to signs of abuse. Academy staff must give consideration to children who are subject to a statement of special needs, an education health and care plan or have a medical condition, as these can mask safeguarding issues and may often be attributed to the medical condition rather than that a child may be being harmed. Concerns such as changes in behaviour and presentation (both physical and mental), mood or injury must be considered for each individual child and their own circumstances and must not be dismissed. Children with SEND and certain medical conditions are often more prone to peer group isolation than other children and there is greater potential for children with SEND and certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying (including prejudice-based bullying), without outwardly showing any signs. Therefore, time must be taken to ensure that the full circumstances of any child who has additional needs and requires support around language and communication is shared at the point of referral to ensure the best possible outcome for the child is always achieved and their voice through any form of communication is always heard. To address

these additional challenges, the academy should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND and certain medical conditions.

Discovery Special Academy also recognises that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol misuse or mental health issues children may also be vulnerable and in need of support and protection.

This policy **MUST** be read in conjunction with other related academy policies.

These include:

- **A Robust School Recruitment and Selection Policy** - inclusive of safer recruitment guidance and regulation, for example a **Single Central Record** which demonstrates the pre-employment checks for all staff (e.g. identity, professional qualifications, right to work in the UK, further checks on people who have lived or worked outside the UK), for the workforce who are in regulatory activity (enhanced DBS, children's/adult barred list, prohibition from teaching check, section 128 check for management positions) and supervision of those who don't meet this requirement.
- Clear recruitment procedures which embed keeping children safe across every aspect from vacancy to conditional appointments, induction and an on-going safeguarding culture of vigilance.
- Trained panel members who ensure that the policy works in practice in all recruitment and selection within the school.
- School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, Regulation 9: require governing bodies of maintained schools to ensure at least one member of a recruitment panel must undertake safer recruitment training to satisfy all requirements in the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and Working Together **2024**. At Discovery Special Academy we share this commitment.
- Schools Human Resources policies and procedures.
- **Staff Behaviour Policy** (code of conduct) inclusive of 'Low Level' Concerns Policy Safer Recruitment Consortium Guidance for Safer Working Practices for those working with Young People in Education Settings, May 2019 and Addendum April 2020. The school will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the need for maintaining appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationships with young people and agree to work within all policies and procedures to safeguard both children and adults.
- The academy will ensure that staff and volunteers are aware that sexual relationships with pupils aged under 18 are unlawful and could result in legal proceedings being taken against them under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Abuse of Position of Trust).
- **Behaviour Policy** -inclusive of the Use of Reasonable Force/positive handling and confiscating and searching.
- **Anti-Bullying Policy/Cyber/Online Bullying.**
- Online Safety Policy/Mobile and Smart Technology -inclusive of appropriate usage documentation (covering the use of mobile phones, cameras and all other technology within the school or setting and appropriate filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks.)

- **Record-Keeping Policy** inclusive of all procedures around the recording, storing and transferring of information regarding children.
- Inclusion & Special Education Needs Policy.
- The Schools Educational Visits/Off Site Policy (reviewed annually) reflects the consideration we give to the safeguarding of our children both within the school environment and when away from the school, when undertaking school trips, visits or pupils being creatively educated.
- Child on child Abuse Policy.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy/Process/Plan.
- Photographic & Digital Imagery Policy with parental consent forms annually signed.
- Administration of Medicines Policy and procedures with trained staff who manage this.
- Pupils with Medical Needs Policy and implications for the workforce, pupils and partnership with parents.
- Attendance Management Policy/ Children who are absent from education – school management for attendance including children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions (unexplainable and/or persistently absent) and the partnership with the LA in reporting children missing from education and those deleted from the school’s admission register. This includes the need for two emergency contact details for every pupil, where possible.
- Missing Children Policy -inclusive of runaways, missing, and children missing from education, ensuring appropriate safeguarding responses.
- Complaints Policy.
- Allegation Management Policy.
- Confidentiality and Whistle Blowing Policy.
- Information Sharing Policy (internal and external exchange of information).
- Looked After Children Policy -inclusive of named Looked After Teacher whose role is to champion the achievement of looked after children in your school and work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Virtual Headteacher within the LA who has responsibility for the LAC.
- Intimate Care and Care Plan Policy -inclusive of procedure to support pupils who have an accident and either wet, soil or menstruate and need assistance.
- Unaccompanied Travel to and from school procedure to ensure pupils safety.
- Single Equality Scheme.
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Curriculum -inclusive of Female Genital Mutilation, Domestic Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Mental Health and Well-being and Fundamental British Values.
- Relationship Education Policy (Primary) inclusive of Health Education content.

- Relationship and Sex education (RSE) Policy (Secondary) inclusive Health Education content.
- Invacuation/ evacuation policy

This template was originally developed by members of CAPE (The National Group of Education Leads for Safeguarding and Child Protection across the North West/East). Sunderland City Council Education Safeguarding Team remodeled and adapted it to suit local/regional need. Between 2014-2024, this template was again revised in partnership with Pam Gartland: Safeguarding First Ltd to provide a guidance tool for schools in light of the new statutory DfE guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

It has been informed by the following legislation and national & local guidance

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
(as amended)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/section/ZA2>

Children Act 1989/2004

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Child Protection SAFER Referral Form

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding>

Data Protection Act 2018

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted>

DfE Statutoryframework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
(EYFS) Sept 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Education Act 2002 Section 175

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/175

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made>

Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/en/ukpga/2021/16/enacted>

Equality Act 2010

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

General Data Protection Regulations, 2018

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules_en

Human Rights Act 1998

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights>

Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners providing safeguarding services

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

Freedom of Information Act 2000

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/pdfs/ukpga_20000036_en.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings

[Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings: code of practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings-code-of-practice)

Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/728/made>

Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance for Schools in England

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance-schools-england>

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/47/contents>

School attendance: Guidance for schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

Sexual Offences Act 2003

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>

South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements

<https://stscp.co.uk/>

What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What to do if you re worried a child is being abused.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf)

Working together to safeguard children HM GOV (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

This Policy will be reviewed annually or in light of any changes in legislation and/or guidance. This policy will be updated by our School/Setting at any time that local solutions such as front door services in social care or the DO details change. This policy may also be amended following the annual review with staff where our School/Setting's procedures or practices may change following whole staff discussion or training, to ensure it is the most effective policy in keeping our children safe.

This policy must be ratified by the Trustees signed/dated by both the Headteacher and Chair.

Whole-School Policy: Child Protection

Children and Young People Discovery Special Academy

Academic Year	Designated Safeguarding Lead	Deputy /deputies	Trust Board lead for Safeguarding
2024-2025	Cheryl Arkle	Ann Titchener Jennifer Duncan Andrew Wilkinson	Mr R Hodges

Review Date	Changes made	Ratification Date by Trust Board

Appendix 1

Abuse or Safeguarding Issue	Link to Guidance/Advice	Source
Abuse	<u>Supporting practice in tackling child sexual abuse - CSA Centre</u>	Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
	<u>What to do if you're worried a child is being abused</u>	DfE advice
	<u>Domestic abuse: Various Information/Guidance</u>	Home Office (HO)
	<u>Faith based abuse: National Action Plan</u>	DfE advice
	<u>Forced marriage resource pack</u>	
	<u>Disrespect NoBody Campaign</u>	Home Office website
	<u>Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy</u>	Home Office Policy Paper
	<u>Together we can stop child sexual abuse</u>	HM Government campaign
Bullying	<u>Preventing bullying including cyberbullying</u>	DfE advice
Children missing from education, home or care	<u>Children missing education</u>	DfE statutory guidance
	<u>Child missing from home or care</u>	DfE statutory guidance
	<u>Children and adults missing strategy</u>	Home Office strategy

Children with family members in prison	<u>National Information Centre on Children of Offenders</u>	Barnardo's in partnership with HM Prison and Probation Service
Child Exploitation	<u>Trafficking: safeguarding children</u>	DfE and HO guidance
	<u>Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children</u>	DfE statutory guidance
	<u>Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims</u>	HO statutory guidance
	<u>Child exploitation disruption toolkit</u>	Home Office
	<u>County Lines Toolkit For Professionals</u>	The Children's Society
	<u>Multi-agency practice principles for responding to child exploitation and extra-familial harm</u>	Non-statutory guidance for local areas, developed by the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Support Programme
Confidentiality	<u>Gillick competency Fraser guidelines</u>	NSPCC
Drugs	<u>Drug Strategy 2021</u>	Home Office strategy
	<u>Information and advice on drugs</u>	Talk to Frank website
	<u>Drug and Alcohol education – teacher guidance & evidence review</u>	PSHE Association website
(So-called) 'Honour' - Based Abuse" including FGM and forced marriage	<u>Female genital mutilation: information and resources</u>	Home Office guidance
	<u>Female genital mutilation: multi agency statutory guidance</u>	DfE, DH and HO statutory guidance
	<u>Forced Marriage</u>	FMU
	<u>Forced Marriage</u>	Home Office
	<u>FGM Resource Pack</u>	Home Office
Health and Well-Being	<u>Rise Above: Free PSHE resources on health, wellbeing and resilience</u>	Public Health England
	<u>Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions</u>	DfE statutory guidance
	<u>Mental health and behaviour</u>	DfE advice
	<u>Overview – Fabricated or induced illness</u>	NHS

Homelessness	<u>Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities</u>	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government guidance
Information Sharing	<u>Government information sharing advice</u>	DfE
	<u>Information Commissioner's Office: Data sharing information hub</u>	ICO
Online safety-advice	<u>Childnet</u>	Childnet
	<u>Educateagainsthate</u>	Educate Against Hate
	<u>London Grid for Learning</u>	London Grid for Learning
	<u>NSPCC E-safety for schools</u>	NSPCC
	<u>Safer recruitment consortium</u>	Safer Recruitment Consortium
	<u>Searching screening and confiscation</u>	DfE
	<u>South West Grid for Learning</u>	SWGFL
	<u>Use of social media for online radicalisation</u>	DfE & Home Office
	<u>Online Safety Audit Tool</u>	UK Council for Internet Safety
	<u>Online safety guidance if you own or manage an online platform</u>	DCMS
	<u>A business guide for protecting children on your online platform</u>	DCMS
	<u>UK Safer Internet Centre</u>	UK Safer Internet Centre
Online Safety – Remote Education, Virtual Lessons & Live Streaming	<u>Guidance Get help with remote education</u>	DfE
	<u>Departmental guidance on safeguarding and remote education</u>	DfE
	<u>London Grid for Learning</u>	LGFL
	<u>National cyber security centre</u>	National Cyber Security Centre
	<u>UK Safer Internet Centre</u>	UK Safer Internet Centre
Online Safety – Support for Children	<u>Childline</u>	Childline
	<u>UK Safer Internet Centre</u>	UK Safer Internet Centre
	<u>CEOP</u>	National Crime Agency Command

Online Safety – Parental Support	<u>Childnet</u>	Childnet
	<u>Commonsensemedia</u>	Common Sense Media
	<u>Government advice</u>	
	<u>Internet Matters</u>	Internet Matters
	<u>How Can I Help My Child?</u>	Marie Collins Foundation
	<u>Let's Talk About It</u>	Let's Talk About It
	<u>London Grid for Learning</u>	London Grid for Learning
	<u>Stopitnow</u>	Lucy Faithfull Foundation
	<u>National Crime Agency/CEOP Thinkuknow</u>	CEOP
	<u>Parentzone</u>	Parent Zone
	<u>Talking to your child about online sexual harassment: A guide for parents</u>	Children's Commissioner
Private Fostering	<u>Private fostering: local authorities</u>	DfE statutory guidance
Radicalisation	<u>Prevent duty guidance</u>	Home Office guidance
	<u>Prevent duty: additional advice for schools and childcare providers</u>	DfE advice
	<u>Educate Against Hate Website</u>	DfE and Home Office advice
	<u>Prevent for FE and Training</u>	Education and Training Foundation (ETF)
	<u>Extremism and Radicalisation Safeguarding Resources</u>	LGfT
	<u>Manging risk of radicalisation in your education setting</u>	Dfe Guidance
Serious Violence	<u>Serious violence strategy</u>	Home Office Strategy
	<u>Factors linked to serious violence and how these factors can be used to identify individuals for intervention</u>	Home Office
	<u>Youth Endowment Fund</u>	Home Office
	<u>Gangs and youth violence: for schools and colleges</u>	Home Office advice
	<u>Tackling violence against women and girls strategy-</u>	Home Office
	<u>Violence against women and girls: national statement of expectations for victims</u>	Home Office

Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment	<u>Barnardo's</u>	
	<u>Lucy Faithful Foundation</u>	
	<u>Marie Collins Foundation</u>	
	<u>NSPCC</u>	
	<u>Rape Crisis</u>	
	<u>UK Safer Internet Centre</u>	
Harmful Sexual Behaviour	<u>Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust</u>	
	<u>NICE guidance</u>	
	<u>HSB toolkit</u>	Lucy Faithfull Foundation
	<u>NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework-</u>	
	<u>Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals (Schools)</u>	Contextual Safeguarding Network
	<u>Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now</u>	Stop It Now
Support for Victims	<u>Anti-Bullying Alliance</u>	
	<u>Rape Crisis</u>	
	<u>The Survivors Trust</u>	
	<u>Victim Support</u>	
	<u>Childline</u>	
Toolkits	<u>ask AVA</u>	
	<u>NSPCC</u> Online self-assessment tool	
	<u>NSPCC</u> - Resources which help adults respond to children disclosing abuse.	
	<u>NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework</u>	
	<u>Safeguarding Unit, Farrer and Co. and Carlene Firmin, MBE, University of Bedfordshire.</u> This resource provides practical guidance for schools and colleges on how to prevent, identify early and respond appropriately to child-on-child abuse.	

	<u>Contextual Safeguarding Network</u>	
	<u>Childnet - STAR SEND Toolkit</u>	
	<u>Childnet - Just a joke?</u>	
	<u>Childnet - Step Up, Speak Up</u>	
	<u>NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework</u>	
	<u>Addressing child on child abuse: a resource for schools and colleges – Farrer & Co</u>	
Sharing Nudes & Semi-Nudes	<u>London Grid for Learning-collection of advice</u>	
	<u>UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people</u>	
Support for Parents/Carers	<u>National Crime Agency's CEOP CEOP Education Programme</u>	CEOP
	<u>#AskTheAwkward</u>	

Child on Child Abuse addendum

Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 states that *'Governing Bodies and Proprietors should ensure they facilitate a whole school approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the school, and ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the **best interests** of the child at their heart.'* Furthermore, *'Where there is a safeguarding concern, Governing Bodies, Proprietors and school leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. The school safeguarding policies and procedures should be transparent, clear and easy to understand for staff, pupils, students, parents and carers. Systems should be in place, and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse, exploitation or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback.'*

All staff are aware that children can abuse other children (child-on-child abuse) and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online (extra familial harm). It is important that all staff recognise indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify it and respond to reports.

All staff understand that even if there are no reports of this type of harm, it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such, it is important that if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they will speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy).

This means that ALL staff will take a 'zero-tolerance' approach to any unacceptable behaviour including 'banter' and will seek to prevent, challenge and take action so that all children understand that any concerns regarding their welfare and safety will be taken seriously. This will encourage and promote a culture of acceptable behaviour and a safe educational environment for all children.

All staff must ensure that they reassure any victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. No victim should ever be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should they ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

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

- bullying (including online bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying);
- hate incidents and hate crimes which may also include an online element
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as teenage relationship abuse);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse);
- racism
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) which is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive. HSB can occur online and/or face to face, and can also occur simultaneously between the two – and includes, for example:
 - sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
 - sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;

- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- online sexual harassment this may be stand-alone or part of a wider pattern of sexual violence and/or harassment. It may include; consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery); sharing of unwanted explicit content, sexualised online bullying, unwanted sexual comments and messages, including on social media, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats, and coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they are not comfortable with online.
- Misogyny – commonly defined as dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against girls and women. Misogynistic rhetoric is also commonly connected to extreme machoism or harmful ideas about masculinity which can impose damaging and unrealistic expectations and pressures on male students. There are concerns about such content being promoted or endorsed online, for example, by online influencers using TikTok or other social media platforms.
- Misandry – commonly defined as dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against boys and men.

(Farrer and Co, 2023).

At Discovery Special Academy we are committed to the prevention, early identification and appropriate management of child-on-child abuse.

In particular ensuring that school staff protect children by, wherever possible being aware of the nature and level of risk that children are exposed to, having a clear and comprehensive strategy specific to that child's safeguarding context and having a whole school safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to child-on-child abuse. This policy is preventative in its response to child-on-child abuse by raising awareness of issues, supporting staff in identifying them with children, and providing appropriate response and intervention that is followed consistently across the whole school workforce. This policy will also encourage parents to share information about any risk of harm to their child and be clear on the school expectations of how this will be managed. (Farrer and Co. 2023)

All staff and governors have signed to say that they have read, understood and agreed to work within this policy framework and parents have access to this policy.

This policy will be updated annually.

Purpose and Aim

'Research from Farrer and Co has shown that many children who present with harmful behaviour towards others, in the context of child-on-child abuse, are themselves vulnerable and may have been victimised by other children, parents or adults in the community, prior to their abuse of another child/other children'. (Farrer and Farrer, 2023)

Children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of child-on-child abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

At Discovery Special Academy we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

Child Protection Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Online Safety Policy - including Acceptable Use

Data Protection Policy

Retention of Records Policy

Children Missing from Education Policy

Behaviour and Discipline Policy – inclusive of positive handling and searching and confiscating

Mental Health Policy/Procedure/Process (may be part of another policy e.g. medical)

Weapons Policy

Framework and Legislation

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, highlighting that “Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023). This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 through ensuring procedures are in place in school to hear the voice of the child and to be mindful of the contexts children live in.

At Discovery Special Academy we are committed to the following described preventative strategies to protect and support children from child-on-child abuse.

Preventative Strategies for Schools and Settings

Recognition

At Discovery Special Academy we have appropriate strategies in place in order to prevent the issue of child-on-child abuse rather than responding reactively.

At Discovery Special Academy we recognise that child-on-child abuse can and will occur on any site even with the most stringent of policies and support mechanisms and that even if incidents are not being reported it does not mean that they are not happening. In which case it is important to continue to recognise and manage such risks and learn how to improve and move forward with strategies in supporting children to talk about any issues and through sharing information with all staff. This involves staff analysing any incidents for trends, patterns and identifying any areas around the site that may appear to be ‘less safe’.

Staff will also have access to regular CPD and training to ensure a consistent approach to managing child-on-child issues. All staff should also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. (KCSIE, 2024).

School Culture and Ethos and ‘Zero-Tolerance’ Approach

At Discovery Special Academy we take a ‘zero-tolerance’ approach to abuse, harm or bullying between children and this is clearly expressed in our school’s ethos and values and will be shared with all school partners including forward children, parents and carers. It will be made clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is never acceptable and it will not be tolerated and never passed off as ‘banter’, ‘just having a

laugh', 'a part of growing up' or 'boys being boys', as failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming to report it.

Therefore, in school, we recognise, acknowledge and understand the scale of harassment and abuse.

This means that all staff will challenge any form of behaviour both on or off line, from language and comments to physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them. All staff will also ensure that any information is shared directly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputies) and recorded factually and accurately as soon as possible so that any action required to prevent further incidents occurs immediately.

Therefore, a whole school approach is needed as part of preventative education. (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, Part 5)

A Safe Environment to Share Concerns Alongside a Positive Curriculum

As stated above it is therefore important that in school there is an open environment where children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them. This will be strengthened through a strong and positive PHSE/SMSC/RSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced-based and discriminatory behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than seek one on one opportunities to be harmful to one another. The curriculum will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse and children with special educational needs or disabilities.

All staff are made aware that children may not feel ready, or know how, to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected and they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. E.g., children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This will not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL (or Deputy) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

Therefore, to enable such an open and honest environment it is necessary to ensure that The Trust Board feel confident that the whole workforce is supported and enabled to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of children including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another. In order to create such an environment, it is necessary for whole staff training and CPD around abusive behaviours and talking to children in a way that continues to create an open and honest environment without prejudice. This is in line with school's legal obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty) and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action. If staff minimise the concerns raised it may result in a child seeking no further help or advice. Systems are in place and they are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for children to confidently report, any form of abuse, exploitation or neglect, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can express their views and give feedback. Staff will be enabled to discuss issues about online access and support and reinforce appropriate behaviours online including understanding why age limits are in place on social media platforms, encouraging children to share online concerns, talking about issues that have happened in an open forum and working closely with parents. (Farrer and Co, 2023)

All staff are aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and well-being issues. Children are at risk of abuse online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse will take place concurrently both online and offline. Children can also abuse other children online, this can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic/misandrist messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content. (KCSIE, 2024)

At Discovery Special Academy we have a clear Online Safety/ Mobile and Smart Technology/ Acceptable Use Policy that gives clarity and expectations to children about their role in keeping themselves and other children safe in regards to the use of technology both inside and outside of school.

Involve Parents

Parents need to be informed and included in policy forming, lesson plans and thorough open and frank conversations, training/courses about what child-on-child abuse is and how the school will be tackling it. This can help to alleviate any concerns and worries and create a joined-up approach supporting parents in how to approach conversations with children with the same consistency as school. In Discovery Special Academy we ensure open two-way communication is available through a variety of platforms so that both parents and staff are working together to deal with any issues. This includes parent's contribution to the school's Online/ Mobile and Smart Technology and Acceptable Use Policy around the use of technology and agreement to work consistently with the school in addressing issues both inside and outside of school. (See Child Protection Policy)

Signposting

Although every effort is made for children to have a variety of opportunities to seek support and advice, signposting is available to children in the event that they don't feel confident raising an issue directly to staff or a peer. A resource board with support services on a wide range of issues so children can seek their own solutions should they wish to is available in communal areas. External services or support programmes will be provided to talk to children about specific issues in support of the prevention of child-on-child abuse wherever necessary in school. This will encourage a variety of forms or mediums for children to have their voices heard.

Forums for Children to Make Changes/Have Their Voice Heard

It is useful to ensure children are part of changing their circumstances and that of the procedures within school. We have an academy council where we encourage pupil voice and encourage children to support changes and develop 'rules of acceptable behaviour' this helps to create a positive ethos in school and one where all children understand the boundaries of behaviour before it becomes abusive. In school, children should be able to effectively communicate how to improve the school's culture and ethos around acceptable behaviour so that they feel confident and empowered to identify unacceptable behaviours that can be dealt with accordingly and in the longer term eradicated.

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Partnership Working

Multi agency working can consolidate in house procedures in school- By accessing advice, support and guidance, effective decisions can be made in collaboration to improve outcomes for children who may be at risk of harm. Seeking advice and guidance can act as a preventative measure so that the right course of action is taken at the earliest opportunity. It is also necessary that we actively refer concerns/allegations of child-on-child abuse where necessary to Local Authority Children's Social Care and the police where appropriate. This is particularly important because child-on-child abuse can be a complex issue, and even more so where wider safeguarding concerns exist. It is often not appropriate for one single agency (where the incident cannot be managed internally) to try to address the issue alone – it requires effective partnership working (Farrer and Co. 2023).

Schools which excel at tackling bullying (child-on-child abuse) have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest. (Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017).

Child-on-Child Abuse Explained Further

For these purposes, child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control, exercised between children and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations. Child-on-child abuse can take various forms, including: bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying), intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse), physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos, causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, upskirting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (KCSIE, 2023). It may also involve gang related behaviours, including serious violence and county lines. Children's experiences of abuse and violence are rarely isolated events, and they can often be linked to other things that are happening in their lives and spaces in which they spend their time. Any response to child-on-child abuse therefore needs to consider the range of possible types of child-on-child abuse set out above and capture the full context of children's lived experiences. This can be done by adopting a Contextual Safeguarding approach and by ensuring that school's response alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse takes into account any potential complexity (Farrer and Co. 2023).

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. This means adopting a **whole school community approach** by ensuring all staff: are aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college and/or can occur between children outside of these environments (KCSIE, 2024), understand how a child's wider context may have impact on them; contribute to creating a strong safeguarding culture in school by following policies that address child-on-child abuse and harmful attitudes; promoting positive and healthy relationships and attitudes to difference (including gender, ethnicity sexuality and disability), hotspot mapping to identify risky areas in school, training on potential bias and stereotyped assumptions; being alert to and monitoring changes in children's behaviour and/or attendance, challenging poor threshold decisions about children at risk of harm in extra-familial settings as well as referring concerns about contexts to relevant local agencies. (Farrer and Co. 2023).

Research suggests that child-on-child abuse remains a serious concern affecting children in the UK (Farrer and Co, 2023). Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘part of growing up’. Research suggests that child-on-child abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. It is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators, but all child-on-child abuse must be taken seriously (KCSIE, 2024). Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of child-on-child abuse within their settings and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender imbalanced environments (Farrer and Co. 2023). *It is critical to be aware of the role that inequality and discrimination can play in child-on-child abuse. Socio-economic inequality within a school or college can increase bullying, and racial and ethnic minority status can be a risk factor for victimisation by peers. Children from minoritised groups are at much higher risk for poor health and behavioural outcomes as a result of discriminatory bullying. LGBTQ children may also be at greater risk of abusive behaviour from their peers.* (Farrer and Co, 2023).

It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child’s disability without further exploration;
- being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children;
- the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

To address these additional challenges, schools and colleges should consider extra pastoral support for children with SEND or certain medical conditions particularly when investigating any form of child-on-child abuse.

(KCSIE, 2024)

Children Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bi or Trans (LGBT)

Children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children and risks can be compounded where children who identify as LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff (KCSIE 2024).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the recognition that people’s experiences are shaped by their multi-layered identities. A person’s interactions with the world are shaped by their ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, class and abilities, and these aspects of a person’s identity interrelate. Someone may experience racism, sexism and ageism collectively or individually at different times and in different environments. The effect of a child’s experiences may influence whether he/she is comfortable accessing support if they are a victim of child-on-child abuse (Farrer and Co, 2023)

Adultification

This is a form of racial prejudice in which children from minoritised groups are treated as more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of development. This may lead to failure to recognise victims of child-on-child abuse and to respond appropriately to the experiences of children from minoritised ethnic groups. Whilst adultification can impact all children in certain ways it is important that there is an acknowledgement that it specifically affects Black children. (Farrer and Co, 2023).

At Discovery Special Academy the specific needs of all our children will be considered and supported in all incidents.

Language

For the purposes of this policy the language used will refer to 'victims'. It is a widely recognised term; however, all children may not recognise themselves as a victim or want to be described in this way. The term *alleged* perpetrators will also be used, this is to ensure that children are not given 'labels' about their behaviour unfairly and without any full and thorough conclusive investigation and because they themselves found the abusive behaviour harmful or may have been a victim of previous harm.

The language used is to support victims so that they understand that they will always be believed, supported, listened to and taken seriously. The language used to children and parents in the reporting of any incidents that may have occurred could impact on any future rehabilitation of children following any investigations that may occur. The use of certain words can be both inflammatory and distressing for children and their parents, so care will be taken in the discussion of incidents with parents to ensure they are factual and accurate.

Types of Abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between children and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Bullying (including Cyberbullying, Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory Bullying)

The new definition of bullying is, 'a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable'. (Taken from the Oxford, Cambridge and Collins Dictionary, updated 2018)

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyberbullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour.

Online/ Cyber Bullying

Online/Cyber- bullying is the use of phones; instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above. Many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This means that some children, whilst at school or college, sexually harass, bully and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images; consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content. (KCSIE, 2024)

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing sexual images of children under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support children may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

Prejudiced-Based and Discriminatory Bullying (including hate incidents and hate crimes which may also include an online element)

The term prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both and online, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual). This can also be described as a hate incident or crime.

Abuse in Intimate Personal Relationships Between Children (Teenage Relationship Abuse)

Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abuser uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

Physical Abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Racism

Racism occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, or cultural group. Racist behaviour can include verbal abuse, physical attacks, exclusion from activities or

opportunities and microaggressions, which can be conscious and unconscious. It can occur in person or online.

Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. It can include activities involving harassment, abuse, or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (Sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent, or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual. B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g., to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

- A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- The age of consent is 16
- Sexual intercourse without consent is rape

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. In referencing sexual harassment, it is in the context of child-on-child

sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment (KCSIE 2024).

Sexual harassment can include:

- Sexual comments, such as; telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- Sexual 'jokes' or taunting;
- Physical behaviour, such as; deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature;
- Displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- Upskirting (this is a criminal offence)
- Online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

It may include:

- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos;
- Sharing of unwanted explicit content
- Sexualised online bullying;
- Unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media;
- Sexual exploitation; coercion and threats and;
- Coercing others into sharing images of themselves or, performing acts they're not comfortable with online.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary through to secondary stage and college. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap. They can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college. Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated by factors outside the school, including intimate personal relationships. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. Staff should be aware that it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys (KCSIE, 2024).

Consensual and Non-Consensual Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes Images and/or Videos

This is also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery. 'Youth Involved/Produced' includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created themselves.

'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the policy).

Sexting (more commonly known as) is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can occur in any relationship, to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, children are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Upskirting

'Upskirting' 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. It is now a criminal offence.

Online Sexual Harassment including Consensual and Non-Consensual Sharing of Nudes and Semi-Nudes Images and/or Videos

This is also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery. 'Youth Involved/Produced' includes children sharing images that they, or another child, have created themselves.

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Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. The umbrella term is 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB). Harmful Sexual Behaviour can occur online and/or face to face and can also occur simultaneously between the two.

When considering Harmful Sexual Behaviour, ages and stages of development of children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, e.g., the child is disabled, or smaller in stature.

Harmful sexual behaviour from children is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a child engages in harmful sexual behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the child who instigates it as well as the child it is intended towards. Harmful sexual behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another, sexual assault, rape or abuse.

Measuring the Behaviour

Simon Hackett's continuum of behaviour (taken from Farrer and Co. 2019) can be a useful guide to measure the behaviour that has occurred and consider the circumstances around the incident (s).

The continuum looks at whether it:

- is socially acceptable
- involves a single incident or has occurred over a period of time
- is socially acceptable within the peer group
- is problematic and concerning
- involves any overt elements of victimisation or discrimination e.g., related to race, gender, sexual orientation, physical, emotional, or intellectual vulnerability
- involves an element of coercion or pre-planning
- involves a power imbalance between the child/children allegedly responsible for the behaviour and the child/children allegedly the subject of that power
- involves a misuse of power

Behaviour which is not abusive at first may potentially become abusive quickly or over time. Intervening early and addressing any inappropriate behaviour which may be displayed by a child is vital and could potentially prevent their behaviour from progressing on a continuum to become problematic, abusive and/or violent - and ultimately requiring (greater/more formal) engagement with specialist external and/or statutory agencies.

Expected Action Taken for All Staff

All staff will be alert to the well-being of children and to signs of abuse, and should engage with these signs, as appropriate, to determine whether they are caused by child-on-child abuse. However, staff should be mindful of the fact that the way(s) in which children will disclose or present with behaviour(s) as a result of their experiences will differ (Farrer and Co. 2023).

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and alleged perpetrator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

Firstly, all staff will need to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. It is important for all staff to deal with a situation of child-on-child abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get a true, accurate account of the facts around what has happened, so that nothing is forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and confidentially and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of child-on-child abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to children and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff will not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

Staff will also be mindful that wider safeguarding concerns may influence the child's account of the event(s). Alongside this peer pressure and the impact of sharing information about the incident(s) may also influence a child's account.

Gather the Facts

In cases specifically relating to sexual violence and sexual harassment, part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024 states that two members of staff (preferably one being the Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be present to manage the report, *where possible*. Staff should not view or forward illegal images of a child and instead confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to police for inspection. All staff should be aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult (PACE Code C 2019) particularly when multi agency partners such as Local Authority Children's Social Care or the Police have to interview the child.

The most appropriate member of staff with the best relationship with the child should be the person alongside the child who wishes to disclose wherever possible. However, staff should always be aware that children may choose to disclose to any member of staff that they feel most comfortable with and therefore all staff need basic training in managing disclosures. In any circumstance the member of staff must make clear to the child that they cannot maintain confidentiality if what is being shared has put or will put the child or another person at risk of harm and/or is criminal. Staff must also be aware that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse.

In all circumstances, staff need to speak to all the children involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the children to tell you what happened. This involves listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child's language, being non-judgemental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed and not asking leading questions. This means only interrupting the child to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?) Then, a full and clear record of exactly what the child has said in their own language should be made (and no individual interpretation of the facts made which could impact on the disclosure) after the child has finished the disclosure, so the child feels listened to and stored following each school/setting's own recording protocols (paper or electronic systems).

Consider the Intent (Begin to Risk Assess)

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a child to be able to harm another?

Decide on Your Next Course of Action

If from the information that school gather's we believe any child to be at risk of significant harm, a safeguarding referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care will be made immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). This action, in most circumstances, will be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but in the event of their absence the referral can be made by another member of staff. If this is the case, once Local Authority Children's Social Care has been contacted and made a decision on what will happen next then school will be informed of the next steps.

If Local Authority Children's Social Care and the police intend to pursue this further, they may ask to interview the children in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important for school to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that Local Authority Children's Social Care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case school/DSL may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, school agrees with the decision, we may then be left to inform parents.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Any staff member taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interest of the victim to seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies. Ultimately, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) will have to balance the victims wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.

Informing Parents

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/Local Authority Children's Social Care school have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then parents should be informed as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. Parents would not be informed if by doing so the child was put at further risk of significant harm.

If a child is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish school to share the information with parents, then this must be considered this especially for example if the child is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/Local Authority Children's Social Care case is likely or the child is under the age of 13).

In all circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then school will encourage the child to share the information with their parent or share it with parents on their behalf (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence are acting in the best interests of the child we would not be criticised, however this would be the case if we actively breached the rights and choices of the child.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a child may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

Points to Consider (Risk Assessment):

The Wishes and Feelings of the Victim

It is important to understand how the victim wants to proceed to allow as much control as is reasonably possible over the decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed.

The Nature of the Alleged Incident

This includes consideration as to whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether Harmful Sexual Behaviour has been displayed.

What is the Age and Development of the Children Involved?

How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)). Any imbalance of power and control must be considered.

Are There Any Additional Vulnerabilities inclusive of any minoritised children?

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Therefore, care must be taken to ascertain any changes in mood or behaviour without attributing that to the child's condition. Every effort must be made to overcome barriers to communication

and ensure the voice of the child is heard. This includes any child that may be minoritised due to their life circumstances.

Where Did the Incident or Incidents Take Place?

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so, was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

What Was the Explanation by all Children Involved of What Occurred?

Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the children involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one child different from another and why?

What is Each of the Children's Own Understanding of What Occurred?

Do the children know/understand what they are doing? E.g., do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the child's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the child have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other child?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If school are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, advice will be sought immediately from Local Authority Children's Social Care.

Repetition

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

Ongoing Risks

Are there any ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school, college or other setting staff?

Contextual Safeguarding/Extra Familial Harm

Is there any other related or wider context involving the child, including any links to child sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation?

Risk Assessment from KCSIE, 2024 (all risk assessments should consider:)

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other victims
- The alleged perpetrator
- All the other children at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrators or from future harms and
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

Outcomes

The outcome of the investigation will follow local threshold guidance. Therefore, either a referral has been made to either the police/Local Authority Children's Social Care for a full investigation (tier 4). It may have resulted in Local Authority Children's Social Care undertaking a further assessment (Tier 3) or as a school we may have identified additional services/intervention that are non-statutory and in which case completed an early help assessment (Tier 2). It may be that on investigation, a decision has been made to handle the incident (s) internally, in which case the school may implement a risk assessment plan (Tier 1).

In any of the above outcomes, school has a duty of care to manage the education needs of both children in which case a risk assessment plan may be needed irrespective of the outcome.

Next Steps

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

For the Child Who Has Been Harmed (Victim)

Victims may not display the whole picture immediately. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. 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. Therefore, school will remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting those signs and show sensitivity to the needs of the child irrespective of how overt the child's distress is.

What support they require depends on the individual child. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this child continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the child may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other children or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of Relationship / Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education, PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the child feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment/safety plan can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

For the Child Who Has Displayed Harmful Behaviour (Alleged Perpetrator)

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. It may be that the child is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through an early help referral and the child may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that child receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g., making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of harmful sexual behaviour it may be a requirement for the child to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this child cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the child will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the child has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the child and their parents. This may mean

additional supervision of the child or protective strategies if the child feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

A punishment or consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time may also be required to allow the child to reflect on their behaviour.

Record-Keeping

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse, and in promoting children's welfare, including in relation to their educational outcomes. Schools have clear powers to share, hold and use information for these purposes.

At Discovery Special Academy arrangements are in place that set out clearly the processes and principles for sharing information within the school or college and with local authority children's social care, the safeguarding partners and other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required. Information will be shared as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to the local authority children's social care. The Data Protection Act 2018, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) place duties on schools and to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. Under the Data Protection Law, legitimate safeguarding concerns about a child allow school and professionals to record, share and retain even the most sensitive personal data as necessary to support school policies (even when it is not feasible to obtain consent. (Farrer and Co, 2023).

After Care

It is important that following the incident the children involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the children do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the children following the incident(s) are imperative.

Safety Planning

Safety planning is a positive way of supporting a child who may benefit from a planned approach; this may be either the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator. Safety plans support the child by considering the behaviours that may be risky and plan ways to manage triggers and to seek support from adults and peers. They are inclusive of parents and staff and are a planned intervention to support children in feeling secure in the school, helping children identify behaviours that may leave them feeling anxious or at risk and have strategies that they can apply to keep themselves feeling safe. The language of safety planning is more positive than risk assessment and can give security to the child that a joined up approach is being followed by all in school. Safety Plans are available via PGSF.

Disciplinary Action and Sanctions

Taking disciplinary action, issuing sanctions and still providing support are not mutually exclusive actions. In some circumstances, the school may need to consider whether disciplinary action may be appropriate for any child/children involved – any such action should address the abuse, the causes of it, and attitudes underlying it. Disciplinary action may sometimes be appropriate, including (a) to ensure that the child/children take(s) responsibility for and realise(s) the seriousness of their behaviour; (b) to demonstrate to the child/children and others that child-on-child abuse can never be tolerated; and (c) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other children. However, these considerations must be balanced against the child's/children's own potential unmet needs and any safeguarding concerns. Before deciding on

appropriate action or sanctions school will always consider its duty to safeguard all children from harm; the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour; any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the child; the risk that the child may pose to other children; and the severity of the child-on-child abuse and the causes of it.

Where appropriate, school will consider the potential benefit, as well as challenge, of using managed moves or exclusion as a response, and not as an intervention, recognising that even if this is ultimately deemed to be necessary, some of the measures referred to in this policy may still be required. Exclusion will only be considered as a last resort and only where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the other children in the school. Engaging in Fair Access Panel Processes to assist with decision-making associated to managed moves and exclusions can also be beneficial. Disciplinary interventions alone are rarely able to solve issues of child-on-child abuse, and school will always consider the wider actions that may need to be taken. (Farrer and Co. 2023).

Review of Circumstances

Following any incident of harm, it is necessary for the school to consider if anything could have been done differently. Use of PG:SF proforma for internal lessons learnt, can support in identifying under the business model of PG:SF what identified changes within school needs to occur. This demonstrates how proactive school is in continually reviewing its policies and systems in effectively keeping children safe.

This policy has been heavily supported by the key document:

Farrer and Co: Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit 2023.

<https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/news-articles/downloads/peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-14.pdf>

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Discovery Special Academy Child Protection Policy 2024 and the local safeguarding partnership arrangements.

This policy template has been developed and supported by the following:

DFE: Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

DFE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies. July 2017

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

Working Together to Safeguard Children, **2018**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Sharing nudes and semi nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people, December 2020

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf