

LEAP FEDERATION



LEARNING EDUCATION ARTS PARTNERSHIP



Child Protection Procedures

2024-2025

LEAP FEDERATION CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

These procedures should be undertaken in conjunction with the LEAP Federation's Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy and LEAP Behaviour Policy (which incorporates the Anti-Bullying and Sexual Harassment Policies). They have been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, and in line with the government publications: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2023; 'What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused' 2015 and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' updated September 2024

Rationale for Child Protection procedures

Our federation of schools works in partnership with other children's services, and staff should always be mindful of local policies and procedures that must be followed, and which are under the direction of the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CHSCP) which includes Hackney Local Authority, the Clinical commissioning group within Hackney and the Chief office of police within Hackney

Everyone employed (including voluntary staff) at our federation of schools have a responsibility in relation to child protection. In most cases this will be the referral of concerns to a designated teacher or Headteacher. It is our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to work together with other agencies to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm or likely to suffer harm.

Staff at school are well placed to be able to recognise where children and families could benefit from Early Help interventions to prevent an escalation of concerns. Staff are also well placed to understand and respond to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families (contextual safeguarding).

These procedures outline the role that Leap federation staff have, the procedures that staff should follow and guidance on issues related to child protection generally. It is not exhaustive. All staff should use as a rule of thumb the needs and safety of the child as being at the centre of any decision they may need to take. The guiding principle for all actions is that the physical and mental health, safety and protection of a child are paramount.

Aims of these procedures

- to raise awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of an individual's responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- to provide guidance on how to recognise and report suspected child abuse, neglect or exploitation

Definition of Child Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation

Child abuse, neglect or exploitation is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse, neglect or exploit a child by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused, neglected or exploited in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (eg via the internet). They may be abused, neglected or exploited by an adult or adults or by another child or children (child on child abuse). It is not our responsibility to investigate suspected cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation or to decide whether a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm but it is our responsibility to act on any concerns or suspicions and follow safeguarding procedures.

Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Leads and their responsibilities are outlined in the LEAP federation's Safeguarding Policy.

Teaching staff and support staff

It is the responsibility of all staff to

- identify children who may be at risk of suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- take action to keep children safe from harm.
- know and recognise different types of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- know how to manage a disclosure by a child.
- know the names of the Designated Safeguarding Leads at their school and understand their role.
- know the staff code of conduct as set out in the LEAP federation Safeguarding Policy, Hackney Education Staff Code of Conduct and staff handbook.
- at all times act in the interest of the child.
- read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024

Guidance on recognising suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The law recognises the following categories of abuse under the Children Act (1989). See 'What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused - 2018' for detailed description of types of abuse and early and developing signs of abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Can include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, suffocating or causing any form of physical harm to a child.

Giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs is also physical abuse.

Possible signs of physical abuse include:

Unexplained injuries or burns
Refusal to discuss injuries
Improbable explanations of injuries
Untreated injuries or lingering illness
Admission of punishment which appears excessive
Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
Bald patches
Shrinking from physical contact
Fear of returning home or parents being contacted
Fear of undressing
Fear of medical help
Aggression/ bullying
Over compliant behaviour
Running away
Significant changes in behaviour/work
Unexplained pattern of absences

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This is persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It can include:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved
- placing inappropriate age-related expectations on children
- making children feel frightened or in danger on a frequent basis
- a persistent lack of affection
- being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted

- seeing or hearing another person being harmed such as domestic abuse or parental substance misuse.

Possible signs of emotional abuse include:

Continual self-deprecation
 Fear of new situations
 Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
 Self-harm or mutilation
 Compulsive stealing/ scrounging
 Drug/ solvent abuse obsessive
 'Neurotic' behaviour – obsessive rocking, thumb sucking
 Air of detachment 'don't care' attitude
 Social isolation
 Attention-seeking behaviour
 Eating problems
 Depression, withdrawal
 Sudden speech disorders

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This can include masturbation, oral sex, intercourse or fondling. They can include non-contact activities such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. It can include using sexualised language in front of a child.

Possible signs of sexual abuse include:

Bruises, scratches, burns or bite marks
 Scratches abrasions or persistent infection in anal or genital regions
 Pregnancy
 Sexual awareness inappropriate to the child's age
 Frequent public masturbation
 Attempts to teach other children about sexual activity
 Refusing to stay with certain people or go to certain places
 Aggressiveness, anger, anxiety, tearfulness
 Withdrawal from friends
 Sudden change in behaviour/performance
 Tendency to cling/cry easily
 Regression to young behaviour such as thumb sucking, acting like a baby
 Complaints of genital itching / pain
 Distrust of familiar adult
 Unexplained gifts of money
 Depression/withdrawal
 Apparent secrecy / Fear of undressing eg for sport
 Wetting day or night

NEGLECT

Neglect is also a form of abuse. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and /or psychological needs and can affect the child's health and development. It might include failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure appropriate access to medical care and treatment. A child may be left unsupervised or an adult may fail or refuse to give affection.

Possible signs of neglect include:

Constant hunger
Poor personal hygiene
Inappropriate clothing
Frequent lateness or non-attendance
Untreated medical problems
Low self-esteem
Poor social relationships
Compulsive stealing or scrounging
Constant tiredness
Emaciation
Destructive tendencies
Running away

Specific Issues relating to Child Protection

All staff will be supported and receive training to recognise warning signs and symptoms in relation to specific safeguarding issues and will receive training or briefings on these and other relevant issues. Staff have a duty to report any concerns relating to the following directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

SELF HARM

If it comes to the attention of a member of staff that a child is self – harming, they should alert the designated safeguarding lead. Actions by the designated lead might include:

- contacting parents
- contacting Child Adolescent Mental Health Services
- contacting Social Care

CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm and risk beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse or exploitation in a range of social contexts.

If, as a school, we are concerned a child is being exploited in an extra-familial context, as previously outlined, we will follow the procedures set out in this document and consult or refer to Children and Families Service.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, but may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

If we are concerned a child is being sexually exploited we will follow the procedures set out in this document and make reference to the guidance provided by CHSCP (<https://chscp.org.uk/child-sexual-exploitation>)

CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, criminal exploitation is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

County Lines

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons

CHILD MISSING FROM EDUCATION

A child going missing from education or being absent from school for prolonged periods of time or on repeat occasions is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. School staff will follow the Hackney Education: Children Missing Education Policy and Procedures July 2020 for dealing with children who go missing from education or are absent from education, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

We will work jointly with Hackney Education and Children and Families Service to ensure the safety of CME.

Where parents inform our school that they wish to 'home educate' their child, our school will inform the Education Attendance Service (EAS), who will implement the 'Elective Home Education' procedure. Hackney Education is responsible for the delivery of CME (Children Missing from Education) duties defined by the Education Act Amendments.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

It is essential that staff are aware of FGM practices and the need to look for signs, symptoms and other indicators of FGM. FGM involves procedures that intentionally alter/injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of human rights of girls and women. It is illegal in most countries including the UK. If a staff member becomes aware that a child has undergone FGM it is their statutory duty to inform the police immediately.

FGM is carried out due for some of the following beliefs:

- FGM brings status/respect to the girl – social acceptance for marriage
- Preserves a girl's virginity
- Part of being a woman / rite of passage
- Upholds family honour
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Gives a sense of belonging to the community
- Fulfils a religious requirement
- Perpetuates a custom/tradition
- Helps girls be clean / hygienic
- Is cosmetically desirable
- Makes childbirth easier

Circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM happening.

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

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM.

- Prolonged absence from school and other activities
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between the legs
- Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinal tract infection
- Disclosure

RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM

The government defines 'extremism' as vocal or active opposition to these fundamental British values. 'Radicalism' is defined as the process by which someone may come to support violent extremism and terrorism.

The Leap federation schools are committed to actively promoting the fundamental British Values of democracy, the Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, and Mutual Respect and Tolerance of those with different Faiths and Beliefs. Our federation also believes in the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs and ideology. However free speech or beliefs designed to manipulate the vulnerable or which advocate harm or hatred towards others will not be tolerated.

Our pupils are encouraged to develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in their own and wider communities.

The threat from terrorism in the UK can include exploitation of vulnerable young people, aiming to involve them in terrorism or to be active in supporting terrorism. Prevent is part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy designed to reduce the threat to the UK by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

All staff have a responsibility to seek to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism. Concerns should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Leads who may refer to Social Care or Channel (Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.).

Indicators of Vulnerability to Radicalisation

Children may:

- demonstrate discomfort about their place in society.
- be experiencing family tensions at home.
- be experiencing low self esteem and a sense of isolation.
- be distracted or distance self from existing friendship groups and become involved with a different group of friends.
- be searching for questions about their identity, faith and belonging.
- have perceptions of injustice and reject civic life.
- access extremist websites and be in contact with extremist recruiters.
- justify violence to solve societal issues.
- show significant changes in behaviour and/or appearance.
- use extremist narratives and global ideology to explain personal disadvantage.

What to do if you have a concern

Schools have a duty of care to their pupils and staff which includes safeguarding them from the risk of being drawn into terrorism

If a member of staff in a school has a concern about a particular pupil they should follow the school's normal safeguarding procedures, including discussing with the school's designated safeguarding lead, and where deemed necessary, with Children's Social Care.

If you have concerns, you can contact Hackney Education's Strategic Lead for Prevent - **Donna Thomas**, Head of Early Years, and the Service Lead is Paul Kelly, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding - 0208 356 8104 prevent@hackney.gov.uk

For consultations about referrals to the Channel process contact Tracey Thomas, Prevent Coordinator: Tracey.Thomas@hackney.gov.uk or 020 8356 8104.

You can also contact your local police force or dial 101 (the non-emergency number) or the Metropolitan Police Prevent Engagement Officer (0800 789 321). They can talk to you in confidence about your concerns and help you gain access to support and advice.

The Department for Education has dedicated a telephone helpline (020 7340 7264) to enable staff and governors to raise concerns relating to extremism directly.

CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE

There are different forms of child on child abuse which include bullying, cyber bullying, online abuse, harmful sexual behaviour (including sexual harassment), physical abuse, sexting and upskirting. In the LEAP Federation, there is an established ethos of respect, friendship, courtesy and kindness with a clear Behaviour Policy which sets out expectations and consequences for unacceptable behaviour with specific reference to bullying and sexual harassment in the appendices. We seek to educate all pupils on healthy relationships through the curriculum, however we recognise despite this we need to be alert to child on child abuse and all staff must maintain an attitude that child on child abuse could be happening in or out of school even if children are not reporting it and therefore must remain vigilant at all times. It is important to recognise that children do engage in sexual play and experimenting, which is usually age appropriate. It is important not to criminalise behaviour that is a perfectly normal and healthy part of growing up. However, the possibility that children can sexually, emotionally or physically abuse other children must be recognised and must not be normalised through dismissive actions or attitudes. Staff will take all allegations/disclosures seriously.

Concerns may be raised if:

- There is an age difference of two years or more between the children
- One of the children is significantly more dominant than the other
- One of the children is significantly more vulnerable than the other eg. in terms of disability, confidence, physical strength
- There has been some use of threats, bribes or coercion to secure compliance or to maintain secrecy
- developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour is displayed by children (Harmful Sexual Behaviour).

Any child on child allegation must be referred to a Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately. The response to child on child abuse will depend on the type of abuse and its severity. Responses will be graded from managing the situation within school pastoral systems, referring for Early Help with partnership agencies, referring to Children's Social Care and / or the police. Parents will be contacted and informed of the concern and following actions. Safeguards will be put in place to promote the well-being of the pupils affected, the victim and perpetrator will be provided with support to prevent any reoccurrence of harmful behaviour.

Where the abuse takes place off the school site or outside normal school hours (including online) the school will ensure that the concern is fully investigated. If required the school will collaborate with other schools.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

We have a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and therefore all sexual misconduct is treated extremely seriously. This is anything that involves sexual behaviour towards an adult or another child in the school. We understand that the 'victim' and the 'alleged perpetrator' can both be equally harmed by any sexualised behaviour and treat both as 'victims'.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is 'any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside the school. This can occur between any two children of any age and sex. 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.

Our ethos is to promote a healthy attitude to all relationships, free from unwanted sexual behaviour. We want all children to feel safe and secure in school and able to tell an adult if anything happens to them.

All adults in school must:

- Challenge inappropriate behaviours
- Make clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- Challenge physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers,

Unacceptable behaviour includes the following:

Verbal behaviour can include:

- Telling sexual stories,
- Making lewd comments,
- Making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance
- Calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual 'jokes' or taunting
- Unwanted sexual comments/messages on social media

Physical behaviour can include:

- Deliberately brushing against someone
- Interfering with someone's clothes
- Displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- Sharing of unwanted explicit material
- Sexual exploitation, coercion and threats

A sexual assault occurs if someone intentionally touches another person and the touching is sexual. This can cover a wide range of behaviours and can include:

- Kissing someone without their consent
- Touching a person's bottom, breasts, genitalia
- Upskirting (a criminal offence)

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. If a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they 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.

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Strategies for the Prevention of HSB (Sexual violence and harassment):

Around the school

- Consistent implementation of the school rules.
- Discussion of healthy relationships during SRE week

- All staff modelling a caring and positive ethos between all members of the school community
- Making sure that adults can see all areas of the playground at playtime
- Keeping main door (not individual doors) of bathrooms open
- Adults being vigilant and monitoring when children are in the toilets
- Displays and posters around school clearly identify who children can talk to if they have any concerns about anything.

In the classroom

- Friendships, appropriate boundaries, accessing help, managing changing relationships, relationship with self and relationships with technology are explicitly taught in Jigsaw PSHE Piece 5 'Relationships.'

In the playground

- Staff in the playground are clear on school procedures about behaviour
- Staff can see all children – there are no 'hidden' places
- Staff model positive playground interactions with children and with each other.

Responding to child on child abuse including Harmful Sexual Behaviours (read in conjunction with school Behaviour Policy):

Pupils who have experienced abuse will be supported by:

- Reassuring the pupil and providing continuous pastoral support.
- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their teacher, the designated safeguarding lead, or a learning mentor in a safe environment.
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this could include support through Early Help or Children Social Work Service, or support through CAMHS.

Pupils who have perpetrated abuse will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened, establishing the concern and the need to change.
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child.
- Providing appropriate education and support regarding their behaviour or actions.
- If online, requesting that content be removed and reporting accounts/content to service provider.

- Sanctioning, in line with school behaviour/discipline policy; this may include official warnings, removal of privileges (including online access when encountering cyberbullying concerns), and fixed-term or permanent exclusions.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this may include involvement from the Police or referrals to Early Help, CAHMS.

Domestic Abuse/Violence

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. Witnessing domestic abuse includes seeing, hearing or being exposed to it in any way.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence (Domestic Abuse) are likely to have low self-esteem and may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. We also recognise children who witness domestic abuse are victims, that witnessing domestic abuse can have a lasting impact on children, and that children can be victims in their own relationships too <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help> They may feel helpless, humiliated and have some sense of blame. Our school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in their lives.

Signs that a child has been exposed to Domestic Abuse include:

- aggression or bullying
- anti-social behaviour, like vandalism
- anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts
- attention seeking
- bed-wetting, nightmares or insomnia
- constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches and mouth ulcers
- drug or alcohol use
- eating disorders
- problems in school or trouble learning
- tantrums
- withdrawal.

Children might feel frightened and confused, keeping the abuse to themselves.

If a child discloses or we become aware of a child witnessing, the DSL will be informed immediately and CP procedures will be followed.

Mental Health

All staff should 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. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one. Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, and education.

We will access a range of advice to help them identify children in need of extra mental health support, this includes working with external agencies. If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the procedures set out in this policy and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

Serious Violence

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

Escalating Concerns

The LEAP federation schools have adopted the CHSCP Escalation Policy (June 2020) which outlines the 4 stages of resolution if professionals consider that the practice of other professionals is placing children at risk of harm. This document is displayed in school and is available to all staff.

DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES/ SUSPECTED ABUSE

Receive and Reassure

- Listen, take what they say seriously (children rarely lie about abuse), keep calm and offer reassurance but don't promise confidentiality: you have a duty to refer a child who is at risk. Don't make promises you may not be able to keep like "everything will be alright now"
- Try to alleviate any feelings of guilt. For example you could say "You're not to blame". Acknowledge how hard it must have been for the child to tell you.
- Empathise but don't tell them what they should be feeling.
- Observe marks/bruises but do not ask a child to adjust or remove their clothing to observe them

React

- Establish whether or not you need to refer the child but don't "interrogate" them for full details.
- Don't ask leading questions such as "what did he do next?" or "did he touch your private parts?"
- Ask open questions such as "anything else to tell me?" or "yes?...."
- Don't criticise the perpetrator.
- Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk
- Inform the designated teacher for child protection
- Try to see the matter through yourself and keep in contact with the pupil.
- Ensure that if a Social Services interview is to follow, the pupil has a 'support person' present if they wish (possibly yourself).

Record

- Write up a report of the incident/disclosure after discussion with designated teacher.
- Do not destroy any original notes; attach them to the report.
- Record date, time, place, any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child. If the child uses family's own private sexual words, record the actual words used, rather than "proper" words.
- Indicate any bruising/injuries on a body map: do not ask a child to adjust or remove clothing.
- Be objective: include statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations or assumptions.

Support

- Continue to support child, providing time and a safe place throughout the process of investigation and afterwards.
- Get some support yourself, without disclosing confidential information about the child to colleagues.

What stops children telling

- Direct threats
- Fear of punishment
- Guilt and shame
- Lack of appropriate vocabulary to describe what is happening
- Children may not recognise the abusive experience as abuse – they may believe sexual abuse is part of an affectionate relationship
- In sexual abuse the abusive experience may be all they receive in response to their need for love and physical contact
- In sexual abuse children may love their abuser and feel they are special, favoured in some way.
- Lack of opportunity to be heard.
- Awareness of possible implications, such as family break – up, medical examination – children may think their silence protects others.
- Children “tell” in a variety of ways – through their behaviour, play and creative work as well as through direct disclosure.
- Many children attempt to “tell” but are not heard.
- Children may feel that the abuse is normal or acceptable and therefore don’t report it.

Children may not feel ready to, or know how to tell someone they are being abused, exploited or neglected, but this shouldn't stop staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL.

The Leap federation understands the importance of all staff maintaining a professional curiosity:

- Not being afraid to ask a child or their parent or carer questions to seek clarity if they have concerns for the child’s wellbeing or safety.

- Being open to the unexpected and incorporate information that does not necessarily support initial assumptions of what life is like for the child in the family.

Inter – Agency Liaison

Social Care meetings

At times school staff will be called to participate in meetings organised and chaired by Social Care. These might be:

- Strategy discussion
- Child protection review conference
- Child protection conferences
- Team around the Family meetings – for children in need, in a range of circumstances where a plan is required for the child's future welfare
- Professionals' meetings – in which representative professionals from different agencies are asked to meet to discuss children and their families with a view to providing support or making recommendations in terms of next stages of involvement
- Core group meetings – meeting in which a 'core' group of professionals associated with the family are asked to meet to review the progress of actions decided at case conferences and register reviews

At these meetings, representatives from the school should be ready to report providing information about for example

- attendance and punctuality
- academic achievement
- the child's behaviour and attitude
- relationships with peer group and social skills generally
- child's appearance and readiness for school.
- contact with parents/ carers
- any specific incidents that need reporting

Prior to the meeting, class teachers and other adults working closely with the child should be asked for their comments. Following the meeting feedback should be given and staff brought up to date with any actions that are needed.

Children subject to a Child Protection or Child in Need Care Plan

Children who are subject to a care plan will require additional support and monitoring. The Social Care department will inform a school receiving a child who is subject to a care plan and accompanying records should follow from the child's previous school.

Confidentiality

We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.

Where children leave one school for another, the designated safeguarding lead must inform the receiving school and the key worker at the Social Care department. Records must be transferred to the new setting within five working days.

Education staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with the investigative agencies. Members of staff should not promise confidentiality but can let the child know that only those who need to know will be informed and that that will be for the child's own sake.

Time should be taken to reassure the child and confirm that information given will be treated sensitively.

Staff should be careful and ensure that information is only given to the appropriate people. All staff should be kept aware of issues relating to confidentiality and the status of information they may hold. Disclosure of any information about a child to other members of staff must be on a need to know basis only.

Members of staff, other than the designated member and those involved closely, should only have enough details in order to help them to act sensitively and appropriately to a pupil. Sensitive information regarding pastoral issues and for children on the child protection register needs to be kept separately and securely.

Discretion should be used when talking about the personal and changing circumstances of children e.g. when a child goes into care. Care is particularly necessary after attending child protection meetings. Information received should be treated sensitively and discretion will be needed as issues emerge on a formal and informal basis.

Supporting children at risk

For children at risk, school may be the one stable place from which they can expect security and reassurance. School can provide them with the coping skills that can help avoid situations arising and deal with the emotional difficulties afterwards if they do.

The pastoral support programme - children who are 'looked after' should have their own Personal Education Plan drawn up in discussion with the class teacher, foster carers and the child themselves.

Support in School – Pastoral care

All school staff are responsible for the pastoral needs of the children in their care. This includes maintaining opportunities for children to share their concerns and following the guidance in this document. The LEAP federation curriculum includes "circle time" during which children may be presented with issues included in our PHSE guidance. In addition, circle time can be used to raise issues spontaneously that are particularly relevant to the class at that time. Care should always be taken in regard to the discussion of sensitive issues and advice should be sought where there are concerns.

Support in school – the curriculum

Within our curriculum there will also be opportunities to discuss issues which some children might find sensitive and disturbing. Care should be taken particularly in relation to discussion about families and their make up. During health and safety discussion and sex education, staff should be alert to the fact that some children will have very different experiences and may find content 'sensitive' within their own histories. Staff should make themselves familiar with the background of the children in their care in order to avoid children becoming distressed.

Physical contact with pupils

Some form of physical contact with pupils by teachers is inevitable. In some cases it is necessary for reassurance. However, all teachers should be aware of issues related to touching and the way in which this might be misconstrued. This relates particularly to any sensitive areas of the body.

In the event of physical restraint being used it is important that only the minimum amount is used in order to prevent the pupil from causing injury to themselves, others or property. Following such an intervention a member of SLT should be informed and a record kept.

Staff are regularly trained in de-escalation techniques and when to use appropriate positive handling.

Working with Parents/Carers

It is important that school has an established approach to working with parents. At the Leap federation of schools we aim to work with parents/carers as partners and our approach is one of transparency and honesty. Parents' and children's need for privacy should be respected. Attitudes to and contact with parents should be non-judgemental in order to obtain the most conducive working relationship. The priority must be to promote the safety and welfare of the children in our care.

It should be recognised that families from different backgrounds and cultures will have different approaches to child-rearing. These differences should be acknowledged and respected provided they do not place the child at risk as defined earlier in the document.

Review and monitor

These procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if legislation should change.

Updated: September 2016; September 2017; April 2018; September 2018, September 2019, September 2020, September 2021, September 2022, September 2023, September 2024

Review date: September 2025

Chair of Governors.....

Headteacher.....