

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Statement for Middle England Farm

The purpose and scope of this policy statement is to ensure all children and vulnerable people visiting the farm whether as a guest or as a volunteer is treated with respect and can enjoy their time here completely safe from harm of any kind.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To protect children and young people who receive Middle England Farms services from harm. This includes the children of adults who use our services - from here referenced to as MEF.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as children and young people and their families, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of Middle England Farm including the owners, paid staff, volunteers and students.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. A summary of the key legislation is available from [nspcc.org.uk/learning](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/learning)

In line with Safer Recruitment Standards, all staff have been interviewed before employment, including volunteers. Pre-employment checks have been carried out and references were obtained. All staff working with children without supervision are DBS checked, and staff working 1-2-1 with children are Enhanced DBS checked.

We ensure that we employ a sufficient number of staff to ensure and maintain a high level of service to meet the needs of children and young people.

Our staff have the appropriate skills and competencies to work with children and young people with SEND.

All of our staff have annual appraisals, where we cover workforce development focussing on challenging behaviour, and the proactive steps they can take to reduce it for children and young people with autism and SEMH.

Our unique position

The vast majority of students who are referred to us are referred via their schools. Therefore, our first port of call for all issues that occur is our contact within the students school. If this is not appropriate we will directly contact the schools safeguarding lead. In all of the following policies it should be noted that this will be our course of action before taking the further steps listed.

Contact details

Nominated child protection lead

Name: Andrea Stevens-Moore

Phone/email: bookings@middleenglandfarm.co.uk

Deputy child protection lead(s)

Name: Jeanne Shotton

Phone/email: carefarm@middleenglandfarm.co.uk

NSPCC Helpline

0808 800 500

Policy statement and principles

MEF is committed to Child Protection and Safeguarding. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Andrea Stevens-Moore.

This policy is available for all staff and able/necessary volunteers to read and they need to confirm they have done so before commencing work with us.

Child protection statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff and volunteers and are consistent with statutory guidance and those of the locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Policy principles:

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

- MEF's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.
- Children who are safe and feel safe are better equipped to learn.
- MEF is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All adults are required to take all welfare concerns seriously and to encourage children and young people to talk to them about anything that worries them. Staff will always act in the best interests of children.
- Due to their day-to-day contact with students, staff are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and the outward signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and radicalisation. Children may also turn to a trusted adult when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that all staff are alert to the signs of abuse, are approachable and trusted by students, listen actively to children and understand the procedures for reporting their concerns. MEF will act on identified concerns and will provide early help to prevent concerns from escalating.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm at home, in the community or at MEF.
- All staff members will maintain an attitude of 'It could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child.
- If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral will be made to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately. **Anybody can make a referral.** If the child's situation does not appear to be improving, any staff member with concerns should press the Designated Safeguarding Lead for re-consideration.
- If a member of staff remains concerned about a child, they can discuss their concerns with the Andrea Stevens-Moore or Tom Stevens-Moore.
- Students and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support.
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident, new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review. Representatives of the whole community of students,

parents, staff and volunteers will be involved in reviewing, shaping and developing MEF's safeguarding arrangements and child protection policy.

Policy aims:

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
- To ensure consistent good practice.
- To demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding and child protection to students, parents and other partners.
- To contribute to MEF's safeguarding portfolio.

Terminology

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of 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. **Child protection** refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

Staff refers to all those working for or on behalf of the school, full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

Child includes everyone under the age of 18.

Parent refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

Safeguarding legislation and guidance

Alternative providers of education - Section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require proprietors of independent schools (including academies and city technology colleges) to have arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school. We are not classed as a school but still follow the same principles.

Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct

- Treating all students with respect
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving pupils in decisions that affect them

encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among students

- being a good listener
- being alert to changes in student's behaviour and to signs of abuse and neglect and exploitation
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- asking the student's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between students and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- not participating in, tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter"
- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature) which constitute sexual harassment, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts.
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some pupils lead to an increased risk of abuse

- referring all concerns about a student's safety and welfare to the their schools, parents or, if necessary, directly to the Police or Children's Social Care
- following MEF's rules with regard to communication and relationships with students, including via social media
- referring all allegations against members of staff, volunteers or other adults that work with children and any concerns about breaches to the directors/s.

Abuse of position of trust

All staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards students is unacceptable and that their conduct towards students must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of MEF staff and a student under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that student is over the age of consent.

Children who may be particularly vulnerable

Some children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect than others. Several factors may contribute to that increased vulnerability, including prejudice and discrimination; isolation; social exclusion; communication issues; a reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur; as well as an individual child's personality, behaviour, disability, mental and physical health needs and family circumstances.

To ensure that all of our students receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to children who are:

- disabled, have special educational needs or have mental health needs
 - young carers
- affected by parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and violence or parental mental health needs
- asylum seekers
 - looked after by the Local Authority, otherwise living away from home or were previously looked after
 - vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying behaviours
 - living away from home or in temporary accommodation
 - living transient lifestyles
 - living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
 - vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
 - at risk of child sexual exploitation and/or child criminal exploitation
 - at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime
- do not have English as a first language
- at risk of female genital mutilation
 - at risk of forced marriage
 - at risk of being drawn into extremism.

This list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive. Special consideration includes the provision of safeguarding information and resources in community languages and accessible formats for children with communication needs.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities or have mental health needs

Children with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities or who have mental health needs can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children, which can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability or mental health issues without further exploration;
- 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.

Staff are trained to manage these additional barriers to ensure this group of children are appropriately safeguarded.

Attendance

We recognise that full attendance, as per each student's personalised timetable, is an important aim so that our students can access the opportunities made available to them. Attendance is monitored closely. Attendance is reported to our referrers and completed daily.

Support for students, families and staff involved in a child protection issue

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved.

We will support students, their families, and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- nominating a link person (*usually the DSL*) who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact
- Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a student, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest
- responding sympathetically to any request from students or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- storing records securely
 - offering details of helplines, counselling or other avenues of external support
 - following the procedures laid down in our child protection, whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures
 - co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

Complaints procedure

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a student or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a student that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Poor practice examples include unfairly singling out a student or attempting to humiliate them, bullying or belittling a student or discriminating against them in some way. Complaints are managed by the directors. Serious complaints will be investigated and accelerated to the relevant authorities upon receipt.

Staff reporting concerns about a colleague or other adult who works with children (Whistleblowing)

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague - including visiting practitioners and volunteers - towards a student are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood a situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise a colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. MEF's **whistleblowing** policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence, and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

Staff are expected to report all concerns about poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues - including what may seem minor contraventions of staff behaviour – to the directors; to facilitate

proactive and early intervention in order to maintain appropriate boundaries and a safe culture that protect children and reduce the risk of serious abuse. All such forms should be passed directly to the directors. Alternatively, staff are free to approach the directors directly to discuss their concerns. Staff may also report concerns about suspected abuse or neglect directly to Children's Social Care or the Police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.

Staff can also contact the Designated Officer in the Local Authority, who is responsible for the co-ordination of responses to allegations against people who work with children (see contact and referral details in section 16 below). The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 between 8.00a.m. and 8.00p.m., Monday to Friday or email help@nspcc.org.uk. Information is also available on the NSPCC website at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline and contact numbers for Children's Social Care, the Police and the Designated Officer are all displayed in the staff room.

Managing allegations against staff

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Suspension is not the default option and alternatives to suspension will always be considered. However, in some cases staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that allegations are investigated fairly, quickly and consistently and that all parties are protected. In the event of suspension MEF will provide support and a named contact for the member of staff. Staff and parents are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a member of staff who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including content placed on social media sites. Allegations concerning staff who no longer work at MEF or historical allegations will be reported to the Police. In accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021*, MEF will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

As required by *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, all allegations in respect of an individual who works at MEF that fulfil any of the following criteria will be reported to the Designated Officer in the Local Authority (LADO) within one working day:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children. The Designated Officer's contact number is **01926 743433**. Referrals to the Designated Officer should be submitted to lado@warwickshire.gov.uk.

NB it is the director's responsibility to contact and refer to the Designated Officer when necessary. If the concern is about the directors then it should be referred directly to the Designated Officer using the contact details above.

Staff training

It is important that all staff have training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and radicalisation and to know what to do if they have a concern.

Safer recruitment

MEF endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ 'suitable' staff and allow 'suitable' volunteers to work with children by complying with the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021*. Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- complete an application form which includes their employment history and explains any gaps in

that history

- provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children
- provide evidence of identity and qualifications
- if offered employment, be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations as appropriate to their role.
- This will include an enhanced DBS check and a barred list check for those including unsupervised volunteers engaged in Regulated Activity;

Volunteers

Volunteers will undergo checks commensurate with their work in MEF and contact with students. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately checked be left unsupervised or be allowed to engage in regulated activity.

Supervised volunteers

Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are not in regulated activity will undergo the safer recruitment checks appropriate to their role, in accordance with MEF's risk assessment process and statutory guidance.

Contractors

Contractors are not allowed on site when children are present.

Behaviour Management

Our behaviour policy is set out in a separate document and is reviewed regularly. It is shared with all staff before they start working with children as part of their induction. The policy is transparent to staff, parents and pupils.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2021) highlights that there are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools and colleges to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people. 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.

MEF operates in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's *Guidance on the Use of Force and Physical Intervention*, which highlights that staff should deploy every possible strategy to prevent the need for physical intervention. Those strategies would include de-escalation whenever there is a threat of violence or aggression towards an individual or property; communicating calmly with children; using non-threatening verbal and body language; helping children to recognise their own 'triggers' and 'early warning signs', and distracting or helping children to see a positive way out of a difficult situation. However, MEF strategies are unsuccessful in calming a situation and a risk of violence, serious damage to property or disruption to the school remains. Staff should always be able to demonstrate that any such intervention is reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the circumstances, is used for the shortest possible period of time, deploys the minimum force that is necessary and is never used as a sanction.

Record Keeping

MEF will maintain safeguarding and child protection records in accordance with the guidance document provided by WCC Education Safeguarding Service *Child Protection Record Keeping Guidance*.

MEF will:

- keep clear detailed written records of concerns about children (noting the date, event and action taken), even where there is no need to refer the matter to Children's Social Care immediately;
- keep records in a folder in a meticulous chronological order;
- ensure all records are kept secure and in locked locations (the office in the house);
- ensure all safeguarding records are transferred - separately from the child's main pupil file - to the receiving school, college or other education establishment when a student moves.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent school staff from sharing information with relevant agencies without the consent of parents, where that information may help to protect a child.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

MEF will manage and share confidential information about children in line with *Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (HMG 2018)*. All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the student, family and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the GDPR places duties on the school and individual staff to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure. However, neither the DPA nor the GDPR prevent or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2021)* states clearly that ***"Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children"***.

Staff will ensure confidentiality protocols are adhered to and information is shared appropriately. However, staff should report all child protection and safeguarding concerns to the directors or – in the case of concerns about the directors – to the council. The person receiving the referral will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Information sharing will take place in a timely and secure manner and where:

- it is necessary and proportionate to do so; and
- the information to be shared is relevant, adequate and accurate. All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child/parent to keep secrets. Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. Child protection information will be stored separately from the student's file and the MEF file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held. All such information will be handled in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, which require that sensitive information is:
 - processed for limited purposes
 - adequate, relevant and not excessive
 - accurate
 - kept no longer than necessary
 - processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
 - secure

MEF's policy on confidentiality and information-sharing is available to parents and students on request.

Photography and images

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

To protect students we will:

- seek their consent for photographs or video images to be taken;
- seek parental consent or school consent
- ensure students are appropriately dressed; and encourage students to tell us if they are worried about any photographs/images that are taken of them. Furthermore, when using images for publicity purposes (e.g. on our website or in newspapers or publications), we will:
 - avoid naming children when possible
 - if it is necessary to name children, use first names rather than surnames
 - if children are named, avoid using their image
 - establish whether the image will be retained for further use, where and for how long

Online Safety

We do not have an internet connection on the farm for students to use, there will not be any online learning.

Online communication between staff and pupils

Staff also receive advice regarding personal online activity, use of social networking and electronic communication with students, about which there are strict rules *refer to* the FLOURISH Staff Behaviour Policy. Staff found to be in breach of these rules may be the subject of a referral to the Designated Officer in the Local Authority and/or may be subject to disciplinary action.

Child protection procedures

Recognising abuse

To ensure that our students are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of children. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, for example by hitting them, or by failing to act to prevent harm, for example by leaving a small child home alone.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by adult men or women or by other children or young people. Staff are trained to understand and recognise indicators of all four categories of abuse as defined below.

There are four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect

1. **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 (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

2. **Emotional abuse** The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and 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, although it may occur alone.
3. **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 in education
4. **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, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
 - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
 - ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Indicators of abuse

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For those reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

It is the responsibility of staff to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries;
- show signs of pain or discomfort;
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather;
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming;
- look unkempt and uncared for;
- change their eating habits;
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships;
- appear fearful;
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety;
- self-harm;
- frequently miss school or arrive late;
- show signs of not wanting to go home;
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn;
- challenge authority;
- become disinterested in their school work;
- be constantly tired or preoccupied;
- be wary of physical contact;
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol;
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age and/or stage of development; and/or
- acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends' or adults recently acquainted with the child's family. Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw and each small piece of information will help the DSL to decide how to proceed.

It is very important that staff report all of their concerns, however minor or insignificant they may think they are – they do not need 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk.

- **Impact of abuse**

The impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long- term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

- **Taking action**

Any child in any family in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of "It could happen here". Key points for staff to remember when taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999
- **report your concern to the DSL as quickly as possible – immediately when there is evidence** of physical or sexual abuse and certainly by the end of the day
- do not start your own investigation
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family;
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed or need to debrief.

If a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about a student's welfare

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a student may be at risk without unequivocal

evidence. The student's behaviour may have changed. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the student the opportunity to talk. The signs they have noticed may be due to a variety of factors, for example a parent has moved out, a pet has died, a grandparent is very ill or an accident has occurred. Staff are encouraged and supported to ask students if they are OK, if there is anything the child would like to talk to them about and if they can help in any way. Staff are trained to do this by asking appropriate open questions which do not lead the child in any particular direction but invite the child to talk about anything if they wish to.

If a student discloses to a member of staff or volunteer

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual. Their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell. They may have lost all trust in adults. Or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a student talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member will need to let the student know that they must pass the information on** – staff are not allowed to keep unsafe secrets. The point at which they tell the pupil this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the student may think that they do not want to listen but if left until the very end of the conversation, the student may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise. They should have a good knowledge and understanding of why staff cannot keep some information confidential but also know that information is passed on to specific people on a 'need to know' basis only.

During their conversations with students staff will:

- allow them to speak freely
- remain calm and not overreact – the student may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – **'I'm glad you told me'/'thank you for telling me'; 'I believe you'; 'What happened to you is not your fault'/'This isn't your fault'; 'I'm going to do what I can to help you'**
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the student
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the student's mother think about it; (**however**, it is reasonable to ask questions to clarify understanding and to support a meaningful referral if that is required, e.g. 'when did this happen', 'where did this happen?')
- at an appropriate time tell the student that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on
- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be the staff member's way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong;
- tell the student what will happen next
- let the student know that someone (either the member of staff or another named person, e.g. the DSL) will come to see them before the end of the day
- report verbally to the DSL (or director if the child has made an allegation against a member of staff)
- write up their conversation as soon as possible and hand it to the DSL (or director if the child has made an allegation against a member of staff); and seek support if they feel distressed or need to debrief.

Notifying parents

MEF will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a student with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.

Our focus is the safety and wellbeing of the student. Therefore, if we believe that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will be sought first from Children's Social Care.

Making a referral to Children's Social Care

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 emphasises that the DSL (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. The DSL will make a referral to Children's Social Care (and if appropriate the Police) if it is believed that a student is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The student (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child or create undue delay. 28.

Submitting child protection referrals

All child protection referrals should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by completing a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and submitting it to the MASH at mash@warwickshire.gov.uk. The form can also be completed online. All urgent child protection referrals, i.e. where there is an immediate concern about a child's safety, should be made in the first instance by telephoning the MASH on 01926 414144. This should be followed by submission of a MARF as above.

NB If a child is already the subject of an open case to Children's Social Care, the DSL will have the name and contact details of the allocated social worker. Further child protection concerns about any child in those circumstances must be referred directly to the allocated social worker, **not** to the MASH. Again, where there is an immediate concern about a child's safety, the DSL should contact the social worker by telephone in the first instance. Any difficulties in contacting the social worker must be escalated to their line manager, **not** to the MASH. Outside of office hours, immediate concerns about a child should be referred to the Emergency Duty Team on telephone number 01926 886922.

If staff are ever concerned that a child is in immediate danger, they will contact the Police by dialling 999. Staff may seek support directly from the Education Safeguarding Manager should they consider that necessary.

Staff reporting directly to child protection agencies

Staff should ordinarily follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, as highlighted above, **all** staff should be aware of the early help process and understand their role in it; and **all** staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to Children's Social Care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989. **Any member of staff may therefore refer their concerns directly to Children's Social Care and/or the Police if:**

- the situation is an emergency and the DSL and the deputy DSL are both unavailable;
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the student's safety; or for any other reason they make a judgement that a direct referral is in the best interests of the child.

In any of those circumstances, staff may make direct child protection referrals and share information without being subject of censure or disciplinary action. However, staff should inform the DSL and/or Deputy DSL at the earliest opportunity that they have done so unless in their

judgement doing so would increase the risk of harm to the child. If in any doubt, members of staff may consult the MASH (details above) or seek support from the Education Safeguarding Manager via 01926 742525.

What will Children's Social Care do?

Children's Social Care should make a decision about the type of response that is required within one working day of a referral being made; and should let the referrer know the outcome. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required;
- whether the child is in need, and should be assessed;
- there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made and the child assessed under section 47;
- any services are required by the child and family and what type of services; and
- further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what further action to take.

Bullying, peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour

MEF believes that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment.

Children should be free from harm, both from adults and other students. Children may be harmed by other children or young people. All staff recognise that children can abuse their peers and are trained to understand and implement MEF's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. It is most likely to include, but is not limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- sexting including pressuring another person to send a sexual image or video content (also known as 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 (upskirting is a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment)
- teenage relationship abuse - defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, perpetrated against a current or former partner
- initiation/hazing - used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as sports team or school groups by subjecting them to a series of potentially humiliating, embarrassing or abusing trials which promote a bond between them and
- prejudiced behaviour - a range of behaviours which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless or excluded and which relates to prejudices around belonging, identity and equality, in particular prejudices linked to disabilities, special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender and sexual identity.
- Bullying is a very serious issue that can cause children considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying can have a disastrous effect on a child's well-being and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying should be reported
- Abuse is abuse and will not be tolerated, minimised or dismissed as 'banter'; 'just having a laugh'; 'part of growing up'; 'boys being boys'; or 'girls being girls'. Different gender issues can be prevalent when dealing with peer on peer abuse, for example girls being sexually touched/assaulted

or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence. Whilst mindful of the particular vulnerability of women and girls to violence, it is also recognised that boys as well as girls can be abused by members of the opposite sex as well. Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by others at MEF, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Members of staff to whom such allegations are made and/or who become concerned about a peer on peer student's sexualised behaviour, including any known online sexualised behaviour, should record their concerns in the usual and report them to the DSL as soon as possible, as with any other safeguarding concern. It is likely that for an allegation or concern to be addressed under child protection procedures, some of the following features will be found. The allegation or concern:

- is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger student or a more vulnerable student
- is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- raises risk factors for other students at MEF
- indicates that other students may have been affected by this student

What is sexual violence and sexual harassment?

When referring to sexual violence, this policy uses the definitions of sexual offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as follows: **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.

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 in the context of peer on peer behaviour is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline. 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. Online sexual harassment may happen on its own or as part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. Sexual harassment creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence. The school/college therefore recognises the importance of recognising the nature of, identifying and challenging sexual violence and sexual harassment in its wider approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; through policies; and through the curriculum.

How MEF will respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment MEF will respond to reports in accordance with Part 5 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021*.

•It is not possible to anticipate every particular set of circumstances and therefore what MEF's response will be to every case. This policy sets out a set of principles which we will consider in responding on a case by case basis. All responses to reports of sexual violence will be subject to an immediate risk and needs assessment undertaken by the DSL (or a deputy), using her/his professional judgement and supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the Police. The need for a risk and needs assessment in relation to reports of sexual harassment will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk assessment

The risk and needs assessment will consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support
- the alleged perpetrator/s (if she/he/they attend the same school/college)and
- all the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff), especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. MEF's risk assessment should not replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment - what to consider

The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and will therefore be the most appropriate person to lead MEF's initial response. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims will be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. However, if the victim asks the school/college not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment, the DSL (or a deputy) will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children. It is likely to be justified and lawful to share the information if doing so is in the public interest, e.g. to protect the victim and other young people from harm and to promote the welfare of children
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour
- the ages of the children involved
- the developmental stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse
- whether there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school/college staff
- informing parents/carers unless this would put the victim at greater risk
- only sharing information with those staff who need to know in order to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigation.

Initial considerations following a report of sexual violence

Whilst we establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with Children's Social Care and the Police, the alleged perpetrator will usually be removed from any situations they share with

the victim. Consideration will also be given to how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator. For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator will be considered immediately. In all cases, the wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

Responding to the report

If an offence has been committed, the Police will be informed. It is the prerogative of parents and victims to make complaints to the Police directly but MEF will also speak to the Police in order to ensure effective action is taken to safeguard other young people as well as the victim. If a child has suffered significant harm, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care via the MASH in order to ensure that the needs of both the victim and perpetrator are the subject of professional risk assessments by social workers. Similarly, any instance of sexual activity between students will always be referred to Children's Social Care.

Responses to all incidents of both sexual violence and sexual harassment will be underpinned by the principles of:

- zero tolerance of sexual violence and sexual harassment
 - support for both the victim and alleged perpetrator/s, particularly pending the outcome of investigations
 - exclusion will be avoided unless that is the only realistic option to keep one or more parties safe
 - In principle, there are four possible responses to an allegation or concern about sexual violence or harassment on the part of a student.
1. In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, we may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour policy and anti-bullying procedures, speaking to the child and her/his parents, making expectations of future behaviour clear (in writing where appropriate) and by providing support. Careful consideration will be given to the need to separate the victim and alleged perpetrator/s in lessons (as with sexual assaults) pending investigation would also be undertaken.
 2. We may decide that the child/ren involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help, which can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. A safeguarding record will be maintained of all concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions for all responses as in 1. and 2.
 3. Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to Children's Social Care via the MASH. All instances of sexual activity between students on our premises will be referred to Children's Social Care. All instances of sexual violence perpetrated by a child under ten years of age will be referred to Children's Social Care via the MASH. This will facilitate a consultation about the role of the Police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, the starting principle of reporting to the Police via the MASH remains. The Police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach. We will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (i.e. if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk or create undue delay).

Any such decision should be made with the support of Children's Social Care. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of co-ordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support. However, we will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the school/college. The DSL (or a deputy) will work closely with Children's Social Care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the school/college takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment as above will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator, any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report and all children at the school or college should be immediate. In some cases, Children's Social Care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. MEF (generally led by the DSL or a deputy) will refer again if we believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the DSL (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

4. **Reporting to the Police** Any report to the Police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care (as above). Where we receive a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the starting point is this should be passed on to the Police. It is the prerogative of victims and their parents/carers to make direct complaints to the Police. However, we should also be very clear with victims and parents/carers that MEF has a duty to ensure the Police are informed when an alleged crime has been committed in order to safeguard other young people. Where a serious crime is reported, we can report directly to the local Police station. However, in most circumstances, we will consult with the MASH in the first instance in order to ensure that both the Police and Children's Social Care are informed.

Where a report has been made to the Police, MEF should consult the Police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity. In some cases, it may become clear very quickly, that the Police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that we continue to engage with specialist support for the victim as required.

We are committed to participating in plans both to provide students who are at risk from other children and those students who may present a risk to other children with appropriate services to address any concerns and, wherever possible, to facilitate ongoing access to education in school for all children concerned, subject to appropriate risk assessments and risk management plans.

Subsequent considerations

The needs and wishes of the victim should continue to be paramount (along with protecting the child) as the case progresses. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that MEF is a safe space for them.

Similarly, the alleged perpetrator/s has an ongoing right to an education and should be able to continue in their normal routine subject to the ongoing risk assessment and the needs of the victim. Where a student is subject of bail conditions, we will work with Children's Social Care and the Police to manage any implications and safeguard all pupils/students concerned without jeopardising the Police investigation.

If a student is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, we will update our risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all students and consider any suitable action in light of the behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains at MEF along with the victim, we will meet with the school, student and her/his parents/carers to revisit and reiterate in writing expectations of the perpetrator in terms of future behaviour and complying with any restrictions and arrangements put in place to safeguard the victim and other students.

In the light of possible publicity, speculation and interest within the student and parent body, the school will consider any other measures necessary to safeguard both the victim and perpetrator, especially from any bullying or harassment. In respect of a not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with a criminal prosecution, MEF recognises that this will likely be traumatic for the victim and will continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience. Support will be tailored on a case-by-case basis. Support can include emotional and practical support for victims from Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors in the specialist sexual violence sector; provision of a designated trusted adult in the school/college of the student's choice to talk to about their needs.

MEF will provide a physical space for the victim to withdraw. Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, MEF will consider any suitable sanctions in light of the behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault will constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain at MEF would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other students).

Aggravated incidents of sexting will usually be referred to Warwickshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for advice about whether or not a response by the Police and/or Children's Social Care is required. This will facilitate consideration of whether:

- there are any offences that warrant a Police investigation
- child protection procedures need to be invoked
- parents/carers require support in order to safeguard their children
- a multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meeting is required
- any of the perpetrators and/or victims require additional support. This may require the initiation of a CAF and the offer of early help services

Serious violence

All staff are made aware of indicators that children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime; and are trained to record and report any concern about children at risk of or involved in perpetrating serious violence as with any other safeguarding concern. Indicators may include increased absence, 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 could also indicate that children have been approached by or are involved with individuals associated with criminal gangs.

Contextual safeguarding

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside MEF and/or can occur between children outside MEF. The DSL, deputy DSLs and all staff will consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. Contextual safeguarding means that

assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors which are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Staff will listen to children and be vigilant about any signs or indicators that would suggest children may be at risk in the community and will share intelligence with the Police in order to prevent children suffering harm. MEF will provide as much information as possible when asked to do so as part of a police investigation and/or when making referrals to Children's Social Care, thus allowing any investigation or assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. **Child criminal exploitation (CCE)** is a form of child abuse. Both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual and/or criminal activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants; and/or
- (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- (c) a child committing crimes on behalf of or at the behest of others because they, their friends or relatives have been threatened, deceived or manipulated
- (d) a child being forced to commit crime in order to settle actual or fabricated debts gang membership, which may lead to the child being exploited to do something illegal or dangerous in return for kudos/status in the gang
- (e) a child being encouraged or manipulated to commit crime via social media
a child receiving food, money, kudos or status in return for storing a weapon or drugs for others.
acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones, etc. without plausible explanation gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks
- (f) children being exposed to or perpetrating serious levels of violence; and/or being manipulated or forced into excessive violence towards others by somebody who is exploiting them (for further information see

So-called 'honour based' violence So-called 'honour-based' violence (HBV) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of a family and/or community. Such crimes include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. Staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBV or already having suffered HBV. All forms of so called HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and staff will record and report any concerns about a child who might be at risk of HBV to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as with any other safeguarding concern. The DSL will consider the need to make a referral to the Police, and/or Children's Social Care as with any other child protection concern; and may also contact the Forced Marriage Unit for advice as necessary.

Female genital mutilation Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse. It is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons or other injury to the female genital organs. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways. The practice, which is most commonly carried out without anaesthetic, can cause intense pain and distress and long-term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth. FGM is carried out on girls of any age, from young babies to older teenagers and adult women, so school staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators. Many such procedures are carried out abroad and staff should be particularly alert to

suspensions or concerns expressed by female pupils about going on a long holiday during the summer vacation period. Staff in that situation will record their concerns and inform the DSL, who will support the teacher in making a direct report to the Police.

Forced Marriage A forced marriage is a marriage in which a female (and sometimes a male) does not consent to the marriage but is coerced into it. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. It may also involve physical or sexual violence and abuse. A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, which is common in several cultures, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. Children may be married at a very young age, and well below the age of consent in England. Staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns raised by a pupil about being taken abroad and not being allowed to return to England. Since June 2014 forcing someone to marry has become a criminal offence in England and Wales under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. (See <https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage> for further information).

Protecting Children from Radicalisation and Extremism All schools and colleges are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This duty is known as the Prevent duty. Some children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of the school's wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse. As such, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for the school's strategy for protecting children from those risks. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces. Even very young children have been exposed, in rare circumstances, to extremism at home and elsewhere including online.

During the process of radicalisation it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised. MEF is committed to preventing students from being radicalised and drawn into any form of extremism or terrorism. We promote the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs by providing students with opportunities through the curriculum to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture and learn how to discuss and debate points of view; and by ensuring that all students are valued and listened to.

We recognise the importance of providing a safe space for children to discuss controversial issues; and building their resilience and the critical thinking skills they need in order to challenge extremist perspectives. However, the DSL (or deputy) will make appropriate referrals to the Police PREVENT team and Channel programme in respect of any student whose behaviour or comments suggest that they are vulnerable to being radicalised and drawn into extremism and terrorism in order to ensure that children receive appropriate support.

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. It provides a mechanism for schools to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

We will discuss any concerns about possible radicalisation identified in MEF with a child's parents/carers as with any other safeguarding or child protection issue unless there is reason to believe that doing so would place the child at risk; and will also support parents/carers who raise concerns about

their children being vulnerable to radicalisation. Subject to consultation with the Police PREVENT team and in the interests of making proportionate responses, MEF may offer support to children and their families through the provision of early help as appropriate.

Children who are looked after or were previously looked after

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. Children who were previously looked after potentially remain vulnerable. MEF ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep children who are looked after and children who were previously looked after safe and ensures that appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after status and care arrangements.

Private fostering arrangements

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16, or under 18 if the child is disabled. Children looked after by the local authority or who are placed in a residential school, children's home or hospital are not considered to be privately fostered. Private fostering occurs in all cultures, including British culture and children may be privately fostered at any age.

Most privately fostered children remain safe and well but safeguarding concerns have been raised in some cases so it is important that schools are alert to possible safeguarding issues, including the possibility that a child has been trafficked into the country

By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify Children's Social Care as soon as possible. When the school becomes aware of a private fostering arrangement for a pupil that has not been notified to Children's Social Care, the school will encourage parents and private foster carers to notify Children's Social Care and will share information with Children's Social Care as appropriate.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life. All concerns about children being affected by domestic abuse will be reported to the DSL as with any other safeguarding concern. The DSL will respond to the report by consulting Children's Social Care in order to establish whether a referral is required or the situation should be managed by discussion with parents/carers and possibly the offer of early help.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The DSL (and any deputies) refer any concerns to the *Local Housing Authority* so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into Children's Social Care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. In most cases staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised that in some cases 16 and 17 year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the DSL (or a deputy) will ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances

Children with family members in prison

Approximately 200,000 children have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. We will seek to support pupils/students in this position through pastoral care, early help and discussions with parents/carers and other family members as appropriate.

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