



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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All staff have access to this policy and have read, agreed, and will adhere to its contents.

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Introduction

The Old Priory School is an Independent School owned and operated by Ethelbert Children's Services. This parent organisation operates and runs children's residential homes and an Independent Fostering Agency. At this time, all children who attend the school are either placed in foster care and or residing in residential care. The named person for Designated Child Protection Concerns and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within The Old Priory School is the Head Teacher, Susan Howson. The Child Protection and Safeguarding Coordinator for Ethelbert Children's Services is Gordon Shaw. In Susan's absence the Deputy DSL is Charlotte Lucas. The Chair of Proprietor Body is Gordon Shaw. Gordon has completed DSL safeguard training as well as having an MA in Advanced Child Protection.

This policy aims to provide all members of staff (paid and unpaid), children and young people, and their families with a clear and secure framework for ensuring that all children in The Old Priory School are protected from harm, while at school and when off the school's premises.

Practitioners who work with children in The Old Priory School will read this policy within the framework of:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (2025).
- [Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership Arrangements](#) (2019).
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2023).
- [Information Sharing](#) (2024).
- Children Act [2004](#) and [1989](#).
- Education Act [2002](#) and [2011](#).
- [Use of Reasonable Force](#) Guidelines (2013).
- Part 1 of the schedule to the [Non-Maintained Special Schools Regulations](#) (2015)
- Safeguarding Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Staff Within Schools and Education Services (2015)
- Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021.
- [Statutory Guidance on FGM](#)
- [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act](#) (2026)
- [Prevent Duty](#) (2015)
- [The Equality Act](#) (2010)

Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. It is essential that all staff at The Old Priory School understand the significance and importance of their responsibility in developing and maintaining a safe school for the children to attend. Everyone who encounters the children, and their families has a role to play. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, always, what is in the best interests of the child. The Old Priory School believes in supporting all aspects of children and young people's development and learning and keeping children safe. We understand that emotional and social aspects of learning create a foundation for all academic learning.

If a child has not been supported to understand, express, and resolve their feelings, they may not have the ability to share with other children, resolve the small conflicts that arise in day-to-day classroom life, or concentrate on learning. Their frustrations may cause a range of antisocial, disruptive, overly compliant, or withdrawn behaviour.

All staff will work to ensure that:

- Children and young people feel listened to, valued and respected.
- Staff are aware of indicators of abuse and know how to share their concerns appropriately.

Education staff play a crucial role in helping to identify welfare concerns, and indicators of possible abuse or neglect, at an early stage. The Old Priory School is committed to referring those concerns via the DSL to the appropriate organisation, normally the Local Authority for the children's social care, contributing to the assessment of a child's needs and, where appropriate, to ongoing action to meet those needs.

To ensure children are adequately protected, we will ensure that:

- We have a DSL and DDSL who attend multi-agency training at least once every two years.
- All staff are regularly trained in basic Child Protection awareness and have completed training on Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025).
- All staff have been involved in devising and reviewing the Child Protection Policy and are aware of the indicators of child abuse and how to respond to concerns or disclosures of abuse by children.
- The Child Protection Policy is reviewed by the Head Teacher and the DSL on an annual basis or in cases of changes to legislation or standards (which ever the sooner).
- Understand that all staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

All staff will:

- Read and understand part 1 and annex B of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, and review this guidance at least annually
- Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g. sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- Provide a safe space for students to speak out and share their concerns

The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding in the school. This includes online safety and understanding our filtering and monitoring processes on school devices and school networks to keep pupils safe online.

During term time, the DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL is available outside school hours by phone and email.

When the DSL is absent, the DDSL will act as cover.

If the DSL and DDSL are not available, the Chair of the Proprietor Body will act as cover.

The DSL will:

- Provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters

- Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so
- Contribute to the assessment of children
- Refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly
- Have a good understanding of harmful sexual behaviour
- Have a good understanding of the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place at our school
- Make sure that staff have appropriate Prevent training and induction
- Keep the headteacher informed of any issues
- Liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate
- Be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment, and be confident as to how to access this support
- Be aware that children must have an 'appropriate adult' to support and help them in the case of a police investigation or search

The headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:
 - Are informed of our systems that support safeguarding, including this policy, as part of their induction
 - Understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect
- Communicating this policy to parents/carers when their child joins the school and via the school website
- Ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent
- Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns

We know that timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding and understand 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
- The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe
- If staff need to share 'special category personal data', the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; or if to gain consent would place a child at risk
- Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the child's best interests
- If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment:

- There's no definitive answer, because even if a victim doesn't consent to sharing information, staff may still lawfully share it if there's another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies
- The DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children
- The DSL should consider that:
 - Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
 - The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care
 - Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains

Regarding anonymity, all staff will:

- Be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system
- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment – for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved
- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities

Recognising abuse and taking action

In the 1989 and 2004 Children Act's, a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online.
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

All staff are expected to be able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and shall be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Has a disability

- Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education health and care (EHC) plan)
- Is a young carer
- Is bereaved
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from education, care or home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Is viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol
- Is suffering from mental ill health
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is at risk of so-called 'honour'-based abuse such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or forced marriage
- Is a privately fostered child
- Has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending
- Is missing education, or persistently absent from school, or not in receipt of full-time education
- Has experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

The children who attend The Old Priory School have Special Educational Needs and Difficulties (SEND) including Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. They are often removed from their family home and residing in foster or residential care. This makes them more vulnerable and possibly at a higher level of risk to abuse. Children who are removed from their family homes are more susceptible to exploitation and possibly more likely to be recruited into gangs and associated gang criminal activity (Ofsted Publication 2017 County Lines).

If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger

Make a referral to local authority children's social care and/or the police immediately if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm or is in immediate danger. Anyone can make a referral, but this would normally be done by the DSL.

Tell the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

If a child makes a disclosure to you

If a child discloses a safeguarding issue to you, you should:

- Listen to and believe them. Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions
- Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset
- Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner
- Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret

- Write up your conversation as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it
- Sign and date the write-up and pass it on to the DSL. Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to local authority children's social care and/or the police directly, and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so. Aside from these people, do not disclose the information to anyone else unless told to do so by a relevant authority involved in the safeguarding process

Bear in mind that some children may:

- Not feel ready, or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected
- Not recognise their experiences as harmful
- Feel embarrassed, humiliated or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation and/or language barriers

None of this should stop you from having a 'professional curiosity' and speaking to the DSL if you have concerns about a child.

If you discover that FGM has taken place or a pupil is at risk of FGM

Keeping Children Safe in Education explains that FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs".

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting' 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Any teacher who either:

- Is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- Observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

Must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve local authority children's social care as appropriate.

Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a pupil under 18 must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for teachers mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is at risk of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Any member of staff who suspects a pupil is at risk of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

If you have concerns about extremism

If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to the Chair of the Proprietor Body or an ECS Area Manager.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include the police or Channel, the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

If you have a concern about mental health

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.

Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If you have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, take immediate action by following the normal reporting steps as set out above.

If you have a mental health concern that is not also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL to agree a course of action.

Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor

If you have concerns about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) posing a risk of harm to children, speak to the headteacher as soon as possible. If the concerns/allegations are about the headteacher, speak to the Chair of the Proprietor Body.

Where you believe there is a conflict of interest in reporting a concern or allegation about a member of staff (including a supply teacher, volunteer or contractor) to the headteacher, report it directly to the Chair of the Proprietor Body or follow the Whistle Blowing policy.

Allegations Against Staff

Allegations of abuse can be made by children and young people; they can be made by other concerned adults. All allegations against staff or volunteers should be immediately brought to the attention of the DSL or in their absence the Deputy DSL. If an allegation is made against the DSL, this should be brought to the attention of The Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-Ordinator or the Operations Director. In all cases, the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer), who is one of the Child Protection Advisers, should be notified.

The DSL should take the following actions:

- Ensure that the child reporting the allegation is safe and away from the member of staff against whom the allegation is made.
- Make a referral to the Children's Services where the child resides, if appropriate.
- Contact the Child Protection and Safeguarding who will contact the Kent LADO immediately.
- Contact the Parents/Carers of the child, following advice from the Child Protection and Safeguarding Co-Ordinator Child and LADO.
- Consider suspending the member of staff or review his/her working arrangements, pending the investigation, following advice from the LADO.
- Attend strategy meetings convened by the LADO and act upon the decisions made at these meetings.

Suspension should be considered when:

- There is a cause to suspect the child is at risk of harm.
- The allegation warrants investigation by the Police.
- The allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal (Kent Child Protection Procedures Section 15.02.13).

Any disciplinary investigation should be carried out once the child protection investigation has been completed.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations:

- **Substantiated** - there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.
- **Malicious** - there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive.
- **False**: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated**: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded**: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

The Old Priory School has a legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- The harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual.
- The individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or if there is reason to believe that the individual has committed a listed relevant offence.
- The individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity or would have been removed had they not left.

Staff Conduct

To protect children, young people, and members of staff, we outline to staff our professional Code of Conduct Policy which covers:

- Being alone with the child/young person.
- Physical contact/restraint.
- Appropriate dress.
- Social contact outside setting/appropriate boundaries.
- Gifts & favouritism.
- Safe use of technology. (Security / Internet / mobile phones / digital images of children, etc).
- Appropriate use of social networking sites.

Allegations of abuse made against other pupils

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”, as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for pupils.

All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy, but this child protection and safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- Could put pupils in the school at risk
- Is violent
- Involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- Involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes)

Procedures for dealing with allegations of child-on-child abuse

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- You must record the allegation and tell the DSL, but do not investigate it
- The DSL will contact the local authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence
- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed. This will include considering school transport as a potentially vulnerable place for a victim or alleged perpetrator(s)
- The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

If the incident is a criminal offence and there are delays in the criminal process, the DSL will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator.

Creating a supportive environment in school and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse

We recognise the importance of taking proactive action to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse, and of creating a supportive environment where victims feel confident in reporting incidents.

To achieve this, we will:

- Challenge any form of derogatory or sexualised language or inappropriate behaviour between peers, including requesting or sending sexual images
- Be vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing-type violence with respect to boys
- Ensure our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent
- Ensure pupils are able to easily and confidently report abuse using our reporting systems
- Ensure staff reassure victims that they are being taken seriously
- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners

- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence, especially rape or assault by penetration. We will do all we can to make sure the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed
- Consider intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings, including children who share residential or foster placements, following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment
- Ensure staff are trained to understand:
 - How to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
 - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse in school, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”
 - That if they have any concerns about a child’s welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
 - Children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to
 - A friend may make a report
 - A member of staff may overhear a conversation
 - A child’s behaviour might indicate that something is wrong
 - That certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
 - That a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
 - The important role they have to play in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it
 - That they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns
 - That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s) and friends from either side

The DSL will take the lead role in any disciplining of the alleged perpetrator(s). We will provide support at the same time as taking any disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action can be taken while other investigations are going on, e.g. by the police. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident doesn’t (in itself) prevent our school from coming to its own conclusion about what happened and imposing a penalty accordingly. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis, taking into account whether:

- Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the police and/or local authority children’s social care to determine this
- There are circumstances that make it unreasonable or irrational for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

Strategies to Prevent Child on Child Abuse

The strategies we use to prevent child on child abuse are:

- We manage the risks and share information with all staff.

- We have an open environment in which children feel safe to share information about anything that is upsetting or worrying them with structured opportunities to talk to staff.
- We follow a strong and positive PHSE curriculum that tackles such issues as prejudiced behaviour and gives children an open forum to talk things through rather than look for opportunities to be harmful to one another.
- There is a high level of supervision and support with children closely monitored.
- There is additional pastoral support provided due to the pupil's vulnerabilities.
- The whole staff team are confident to talk about issues and challenge perceptions of young people, including use of inappropriate language and behaviour towards one another.
- Staff do not dismiss issues as 'banter' or 'growing up' and consider each issue and each individual in their own right before acting.
- We signpost the support that is always available through the mentoring program and access to the DSL.
- There are opportunities for pro-active pupil voice and issues and concerns are followed up by action.
- Some of the children at The Old Priory School travel independently so bring mobile phones into school, on arrival they hand them into the school office, where they are kept safe until the end of the school day.

Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes ('sexting')

If you are made aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images/videos, including pseudo-images, which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video (also known as 'sexting' or 'youth produced sexual imagery'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must not:

- View, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a pupil to share or download it (if you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL)
- Delete the imagery or ask the pupil to delete it
- Ask the pupil(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery (this is the DSL's responsibility)
- Share information about the incident with other members of staff, the pupil(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers
- Say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved

You should explain that you need to report the incident and reassure the pupil(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

Following a report of an incident, the DSL will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff – this may include the staff member who reported the incident. This meeting will consider the initial evidence and aim to determine:

- Whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)
- If a referral needs to be made to the police and/or children's social care
- If it is necessary to view the image(s) in order to safeguard the young person (in most cases, images or videos should not be viewed)

- What further information is required to decide on the best response
- Whether the image(s) has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)
- Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images or videos from devices or online services
- Any relevant facts about the pupils involved which would influence risk assessment
- If there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents/carers should be involved)

The DSL will make an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care if:

- The incident involves an adult. Where an adult poses as a child to groom or exploit a child or young person, the incident may first present as a child-on-child incident. See appendix 4 for more information on assessing adult-involved incidents
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to their SEN)
- What the DSL knows about the images or videos suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the images or videos is under 13
- The DSL has reason to believe a pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming)

If none of the above apply then the DSL, in consultation with the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate, may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. The decision will be made and recorded in line with the procedures set out in this policy.

If at the initial review stage a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or children's social care, the DSL will conduct a further review to establish the facts and assess the risks.

They will hold interviews with the pupils involved (if appropriate).

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a pupil has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

The DSL will inform parents/carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

If it is necessary and appropriate, the incident will be referred to the police by the headteacher.

Online safety and the use of mobile technology

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, our school aims to:

- Have robust processes, including filtering and monitoring systems, in place to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers and governors

- Protect and educate the whole school community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole school community
- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

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

To meet our aims and address the risks above, we will:

- Educate pupils about online safety as part of our curriculum. For example:
 - The safe use of social media, the internet and technology
 - Keeping personal information private
 - How to recognise unacceptable behaviour online
 - How to report any incidents of cyber-bullying, ensuring pupils are encouraged to do so, including where they're a witness rather than a victim
- Train staff, as part of their induction, on safe internet use and online safeguarding issues including cyber-bullying, the risks of online radicalisation, and the expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring. All staff members will receive refresher training as required and at least once each academic year
- Make sure staff are aware of any restrictions placed on them with regards to the use of their mobile phone and cameras, for example:
 - Staff are allowed to bring their personal phones to school for their own use, but will limit such use to non-contact time when pupils are not present
 - Staff will not take pictures or recordings of pupils on their personal phones or cameras
- Make all pupils, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and visitors aware that they are expected to adhere to the acceptable use of the internet in school, use of the school's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- Explain the sanctions we will use if a pupil is in breach of our policies on the acceptable use of the internet and mobile phones
- Make sure all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware that staff have the power to search pupils' phones, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation
- Put in place robust filtering and monitoring systems to limit children's exposure to the 4 key categories of risk (described above) from the school's IT systems

- Carry out an annual review of our approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks faced by our school community
- Provide regular safeguarding and children protection updates including online safety to all staff, at least annually, in order to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard effectively
- Review the child protection and safeguarding policy, including online safety, annually and ensure the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly

Artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini.

We recognise that AI has many uses, including enhancing teaching and learning, and in helping to protect and safeguard pupils. However, AI may also have the potential to facilitate abuse (e.g. bullying and grooming) and/or expose pupils to harmful content. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

We will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully pupils in line with this policy and our Anti-bullying and Behaviour policies.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools while they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the school. Our school's requirements for filtering and monitoring also apply to the use of AI, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

Notifying parents or carers

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents or carers. The DSL will normally do this in the event of a suspicion or disclosure.

Other staff will only talk to parents or carers about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents or carers would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

The DSL will, along with any relevant agencies (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis):

- Meet with the victim's parents or carers, with the victim, to discuss what's being put in place to safeguard them, and understand their wishes in terms of what support they may need and how the report will be progressed
- Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss support for them, and what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g. moving them out of classes with the victim, and the reason(s) behind any decision(s)

Looked-after and previously looked-after children

We will ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked-after children and previously looked-after children safe. In particular, we will ensure that:

- Appropriate staff have relevant information about children's looked after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, and care arrangements
- The DSL has details of children's social workers and relevant virtual school heads

We have appointed an appropriately trained teacher as Designated Teacher to take the lead on promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children. As part of their role, they will:

- Work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Work with virtual school heads to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children

Safer Recruitment

At least one member of staff on every recruitment panel has undertaken training in Safer Recruitment.

Safer Recruitment processes aim to:

- Deter potential abusers by setting high standards of practice and recruitment.
- Reject inappropriate candidates at the application and interview stages.
- Prevent abuse to children by developing robust policies and agreeing on safe practice.
- Ensure that a robust process of gaining references from previous employment is implemented with thorough and enhanced checks completed.

The Old Priory School keeps a single central register of all staff who work in the school and or have management responsibility for the school. All checks undertaken prior to and during employment are detailed within the single central register. The Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021 and adds guidance on the use of birth certificates to check candidate's names and this information is requested as best practice before working in the school. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, the online checks will be undertaken as part of their due diligence on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that have happened and are publicly available online which the school/college might want to explore with applicants at interview.

All new staff are provided with an induction pack, this induction pack contains the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct Policy, DSL details, school Behaviour Policy and responses to children missing from education.

School Provision

Many other aspects of The Old Priory School support the aims of this policy, schools play an extremely important role in making children and young people aware both of behaviour towards them that is and is not acceptable, also, how they can help keep themselves safe.

The non-statutory framework for Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) provides opportunities for children and young people to learn about keeping safe.

PSHE curriculum materials provide resources that enable schools to tackle issues regarding healthy relationships, including domestic violence, bullying and abuse. Discussions about personal safety and keeping safe can reinforce the message that any kind of violence is unacceptable, let children and young people know that it is acceptable to talk about their own problems, and signpost sources of help.

Other aspects of provision that support this policy are:

- Citizenship Curriculum.
- Relationship and Sex Education.
- SMSC Calendar, activities, initiatives, and assemblies.

Developing a strong culture of listening to children and ensuring that what they say about safeguarding issues is taken seriously. The curriculum is used to help children understand and manage the risks around keeping themselves safe.

Use of Force, Restraint and Positive Handling

The law forbids a teacher or other members of staff from using any degree of physical contact that is deliberately intended to punish a student, or that is primarily intended to cause pain, injury, or humiliation. Staff at The Old Priory School can use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils under certain circumstances. In some circumstances, Teachers and authorised members of staff can restrain pupils to protect them and others (see: The Old Priory School's Restraint Policy).

The policy is in line with the Use [Reasonable Force Guidelines](#) (2013). The use of restraint is the last resort and alternatives to physical holds are to be adopted in line with the positive behaviour support of the school. All staff are trained in de-escalation and the use of physical intervention by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI).

Staff members undertake an initial course on starting at the school, annual refreshers, and half termly twilight sessions. The course is certificated and accredited by the British Institute of Learning Difficulties (BILD). Any concerns or allegations that a member of staff may have acted inappropriately should be brought to the attention of the DSL immediately.

Missing Children

If a student goes missing from the school premises or from an offsite activity, the following protocol must be followed:

- Staff to immediately inform the school office.
- Office staff to inform the Head Teacher and Home Manager or Area Manager of the missing episode immediately.
- Staff to follow the student and keep them in sight at all times.
- Staff to keep the office informed with phone calls every 10 minutes.
- Staff to use training to engage the student in conversation and encourage back to the school.

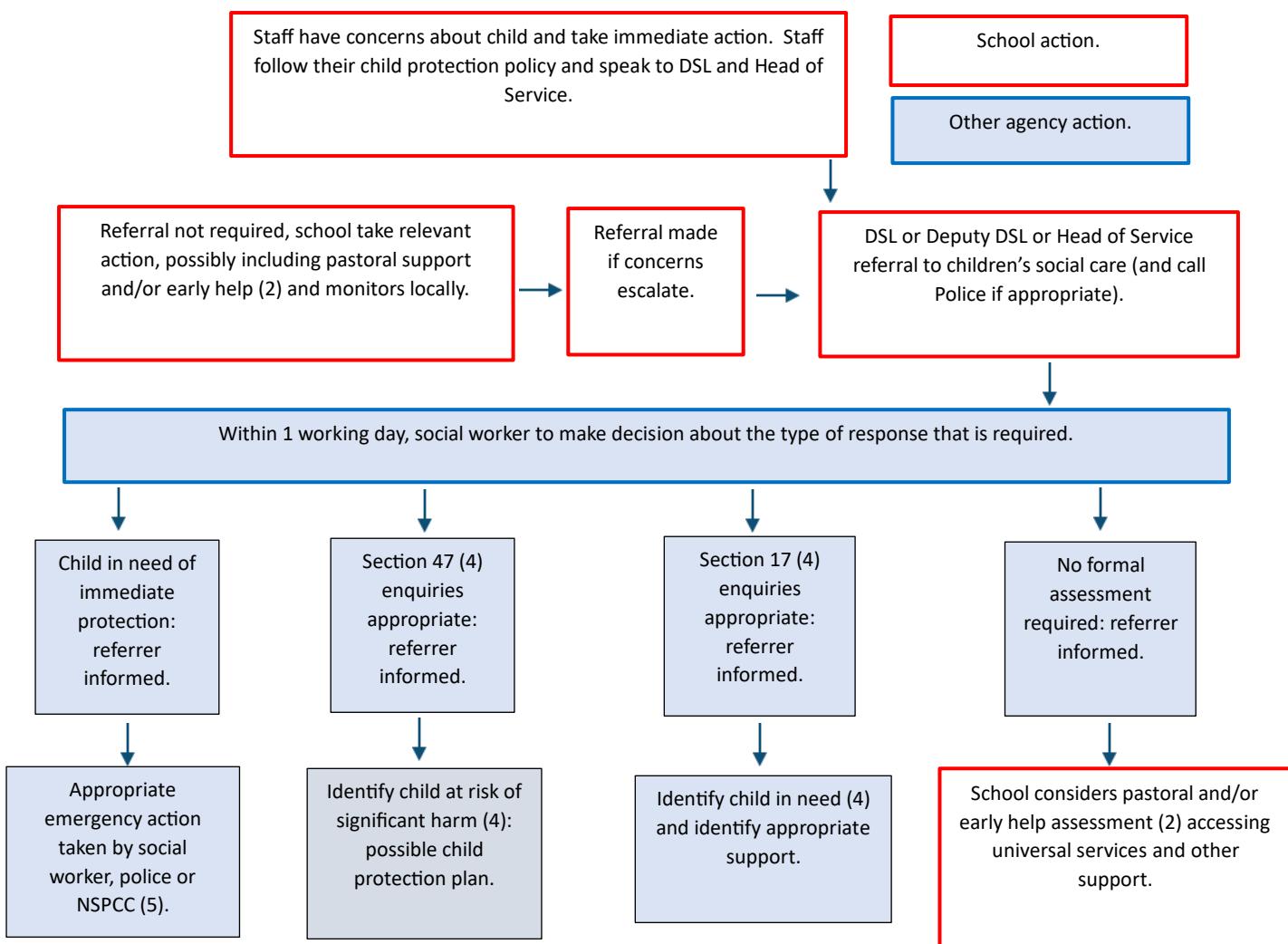
- If the member of staff loses sight of the student, the following risk factors will be considered in conversation with Head of Services before a decision to report missing to the Police is made:
 - Pupil (previous history of missing episodes)
 - Emotional state (precipitating factors)
 - Push / Pull factors (perceived to be running away from or to something)
 - Weather
 - Time of day
 - Clothing
- If the staff member loses sight of the pupil, they must remain looking for the pupil and report any sightings.
- Additional staff are to use the school car to search the local area until the pupil has been located. If this is out of school hours, then information is to be shared with the parents / carers of the child as to what areas have been searched.
- The school is to start a missing person's report. The parents / person with parental responsibility is to be informed if not aware already. If they are not found and located at the end of the day this is to be handed over to the parents / carers with the CAD reference number shared.
- All relevant parties are to be informed when a pupil returns to the school premises.
- The missing person's report to detail where and how the child was found and returned.
- An Independent Return Interview may be completed with the pupil within 72 hours to capture their views as to why they went missing.

An evaluation of the incident must take place with appropriate steps identified and actioned to prevent recurrence.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and DSL. At every review, it will be approved by the Chair of the Proprietor Body.

Actions Where There Are Concerns About a Child



Staff should do everything they can to support social workers.

At all stages, staff should keep the child's circumstances under review (involving the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputies) as required), and re-refer if appropriate, to ensure the child's circumstances improve – the child's best interests must always come first.

- (1) In cases which also involve a concern or an allegation of abuse against a staff member, see part 4 of [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)
- (2) Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from co-ordinated early help, an early help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Part 1 of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides detailed on the early help process.
- (3) Referrals should follow the process set out in the local threshold document and local protocol for assessment. See part 1 of [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#).
- (4) Under the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Under Section 47 of the Children Action 1989, where a Local Authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make enquiries to decide whether to take action to safeguard to promote the child's welfare. Full details are in part 1 of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#).
- (5) This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO).

Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Lead - Head Teacher

Name: Susan Howson

Telephone Number: 01843 599322

Head of Service

Name: Gordon Shaw

Telephone Number: 01843 823762

Mobile Number: 07799115059

Whistleblowing:

Name: Andy Marshall

Telephone Number: 01843 823762

Mobile Number: 07714659637

Kent Local Area Designated Officer (LADO):

Contact Number: 0300 041 0888

Kent Child Protection Central Referral Unit:

Contact Number: 0300 041 111

Urgent Child Protection Issues Outside Office Hours:

Call the Central Duty Team Out of Hours Number: 0845762671