

# The Bromfords School



## SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

Schools and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

*(Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE, 2023)*

This Child Protection policy is for all staff, parents, governors, volunteers and the wider school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- ☐ Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2023)
- ☐ the Behaviour policy;
- ☐ Staff Code of Conduct
- ☐ the safeguarding response to children missing from education
- ☐ the role of the designated safeguarding lead (Annex C of KCSIE)

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- ☐ Protecting children from maltreatment
- ☐ 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

Our school has a whole-school approach to safeguarding, which ensures that keeping children safe is at the heart of everything we do, and underpins all systems, processes and policies. It is important that our values are understood and shared by all children, staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider school community. Only by working in partnership, can we truly keep children safe.

## 2. Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in [Working Together \(DfE, 2018\)](#) on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Police and Health) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#) (ESCB). In Essex, the statutory partners are Essex County Council, Essex Police and three NHS Integrated Care Boards covering the county.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the school.

In Essex, all professionals must work in accordance with the [SET Procedures](#). Our school also works in accordance with the following legislation and guidance (*this is not an exhaustive list*):

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(DfE 2023\)](#)
- [Working Together \(DfE, 2018\)](#)
- Education Act (2002)
- [Essex Effective Support](#) (2021)
- [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act \(HMG, 2015\)](#)
- [Serious Crime Act 2015](#) (Home Office, 2015)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- [Children Missing Education - statutory guidance for local authorities \(DfE, 2016\)](#)
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006
- [Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners \(HMG, 2018\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act \(2018\)](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused](#) (HMG, 2015)
- Children Act (1989)
- Children Act (2004)
- [Preventing and Tackling Bullying \(DfE, 2017\)](#)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (S. 74 - Serious Crime Act 2015)
- [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement \(Home Office, 2015\)](#)
- [Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adult - county lines guidance \(Home Office, 2018\)](#)
- [Teaching on-line safety in schools \(DfE, 2019\)](#)
- [Education Access Team CME / Home Education policy and practice \(ECC, 2018\)](#)
- [Behaviour in Schools \(DfE 2022\)](#)
- [Suspension and permanent exclusion in schools, academies and PRUs, including pupil movement \(DfE 2022\)](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation \(DfE 2022\)](#)
- [Let's talk: reducing the risk of suicide \(ESCB 2022\)](#)
- [Understanding and Supporting Behaviour - good practice for schools \(ECC, 2021\)](#)
- [Filtering and Monitoring Standards \(DfE\)](#)

### **3. Roles and responsibilities**

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within schools, the Local Authority and other agencies who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names of those in our school with these specific responsibilities (the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead) are shown on the cover sheet of this document. However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play.

## **The governing body**

The governing body ensures that the policies, procedures and training in our school are effective and comply with the law at all times. It ensures that all required policies relating to safeguarding are in place, that the child protection policy reflects statutory and local guidance and is reviewed at least annually.

The governor for safeguarding arrangements is named on the front cover of this document. This governor takes strategic responsibility at governing body level for safeguarding arrangements in our school. The governing body ensures there is a named designated safeguarding lead and at least one deputy safeguarding lead in place (also named on the front cover).

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

The governing body ensures that all adults in our school who work with children undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction as appropriate and that it is regularly updated. All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe.

The governing body ensures our pupils are taught about safeguarding (including online safety) through teaching and learning opportunities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. We work in accordance with government regulations which make the subjects of Relationships Education (for primary age pupils) and Relationships and Sex Education (for secondary age pupils) and Health Education (for all pupils in state-funded schools) mandatory.

The governing body and school leadership team are responsible for:

- ensuring we have in place safer recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children;
- ensuring we meet statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children and have recruitment and selection procedures in place (see the school's 'Safer Recruitment' policy for further information);
- ensuring volunteers are appropriately supervised in school;
- online safety (including strategic oversight of filtering and monitoring systems to support this).

## **The Headteacher**

The Teachers' Standards 2012 state that teachers (which includes headteachers) should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. Our Headteacher works in accordance with all statutory requirements for safeguarding and is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures adopted by the governing body are followed by all staff.

### **The Designated Safeguarding Lead (and Deputy / Deputies)**

The designated safeguarding lead in school has ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection. Their role includes managing child protection referrals, working with other agencies, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained, leading on online safety (including filtering and monitoring standards) and raising awareness of all safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. They ensure that everyone in school (including temporary staff, volunteers and contractors) is aware of these procedures and that they are followed at all times. They act as a source of advice and support for other staff (on child protection matters) and ensure that any referrals to Essex Children's Social Care (Children and Families Hub) are made in a timely way and in accordance with current SET procedures. They work with the local authority and the ESCB as required and ensure that information is shared appropriately.

The deputy designated safeguarding lead/leads is/are trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead. If for any reason the designated safeguarding lead is unavailable, the deputy designated safeguarding lead/leads will act in their absence.

### **All school staff**

Everyone in our school has a responsibility to provide a safe learning environment where our children can learn. All staff are aware of the types of abuse and safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm, so we are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. We understand that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, missing education and consensual/non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images can be signs that children are at risk. In addition, we recognise that any child may benefit from additional help and all staff members are aware of the local early help process and our role in it.

All staff members are aware of and follow school safeguarding (as set out in this policy) and are aware of how to make a referral to Social Care, if there is a need to do so. Staff understand that, if they have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) – we do not assume that others have taken action.

Our staff understand that children may not always feel able or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. This may be because they are embarrassed, scared or do not recognise they are experiencing abuse, either at home or out in the community. We understand there are many factors which may impact on our children's welfare and safety and we also understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We recognise that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues rarely occur in isolation and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Our staff will always reassure children who report abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

#### **4. Types of abuse / specific safeguarding issues**

Keeping Children Safe in Education describes abuse as ‘a form of maltreatment of a child’. It sets out that:

*“Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. 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 an adult or adults or another child or children”*

The guidance refers to four main categories of abuse:

- ☐ **Physical:** a form of abuse causing physical harm to a child – this includes where an adult fabricates or deliberately induces illness in a child
- ☐ **Emotional:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child’s emotional development
- ☐ **Sexual:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities (through actual physical or online contact)
- ☐ **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

In addition, Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education contains important information about specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues. Some of these, and our approach to them, are explained here:

#### **Child criminal exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child abuse, which can happen to boys and girls from any background or community. It may occur over time or be a one-off occurrence. In Essex, the definition of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) from the Department of Education (DfE, 2017) has been adopted:

*"Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when 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 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. The victim may have*

*been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology".*

It is understood that a significant number of children who are victims of CSE go missing from home, care and education at some point. Our school is alert to the signs and indicators of a child becoming at risk of, or subject to, CSE and will take appropriate action to respond to any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead will lead on these issues and work with other agencies as appropriate.

## **Child on Child abuse**

### **Child on Child abuse (including sexualised behaviours)**

Child on child abuse can manifest itself in many ways. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, harmful sexual behaviours, gender-related abuse, 'up-skirting', 'sexting' or initiation / hazing type violence and rituals. We do not tolerate harmful behaviour of any kind in school and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs, challenging inappropriate behaviours when they occur. We do not normalise abuse, and it is not tolerated in our setting. Our culture is very much one of kindness, compassion, hope, connection and belonging.

Any incidents of child-on-child abuse will be managed in the same way as any other child protection concern and we will follow the same procedures. We will seek advice and support from other agencies as necessary and ensure that appropriate agencies are involved when required.

Our school recognises that some children may abuse other children and that this may happen in school, or outside of it. We understand there are many factors which may lead a child to display abusive behaviours towards other children, and that these matters are sensitive and often complex. We recognise our school may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of some children, particularly those who have experienced harm and trauma. We have a duty to safeguard all children and, whilst inappropriate behaviours will be challenged and addressed, it is in the context of providing appropriate support to all children in our school where harmful behaviour has occurred. We will, at all times, take a balanced and proportionate approach to risky or harmful behaviour.

We understand the barriers which may prevent a child from reporting abuse and work actively to remove these. We use lessons and assemblies to teach children about healthy, positive relationships, how to report concerns, and to help them understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is. We aim to provide children with the language to report abuse and to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor that they are creating a problem by doing so. We never assume, if abuse is not being reported, that it is not occurring in our school – we are vigilant to signs of abuse and promote a culture of safety and understanding.

This should be considered alongside other related policies in school: Behaviour and Attitudes policy, Anti-bullying policy, RSE policy, Mental health and well-being policy



### **Children missing from education**

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have, are entitled to a full-time education. Our school recognises that a child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect and we follow the procedures for unauthorised absence and for children missing education. It is also recognised that, when not in school, children may be vulnerable to or exposed to other risks, so we work with parents/carers and other partners to keep children in school whenever possible. Parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school, to enable us to communicate with someone if we need to.

Parents should always inform us of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency ([Education Access Team](#), Social Care or Police). Our school must inform the local authority of any pupil who has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

We work in accordance with the Essex Protocol for children who go missing during the school day (see Appendix C), to ensure that there is an appropriate response to children who go missing.

### **Contextual safeguarding**

We understand that safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside our school. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding and we are therefore mindful of whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and / or welfare. We always consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and will share it with other agencies when appropriate to support better understanding of a child and their family. This is to ensure that our children and families receive the right help at the right time.

### **Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse can involve a wide range of behaviours and can include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. We understand that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, and that it can take place inside or outside of the home.

Our school recognises that exposure to domestic abuse (either by witnessing or experiencing it) can have a serious, long-term emotional and psychological impact on children. We work with other key partners and we receive / share relevant information where there are concerns that domestic abuse may be an issue for a child or family or be placing a child at risk of harm.

### **Harmful sexual behaviour**

We understand that children's sexual behaviours exist on a continuum, ranging from age-appropriate / developmental to inappropriate / problematic / abusive. We also understand that harmful sexual behaviour and child on child abuse can occur between children of any age and gender, either in person or online. We recognise that children who display harmful sexual behaviour may have experienced their own abuse and trauma, and we will support them accordingly.

Our school has a 'zero-tolerance' approach to harmful sexual behaviour of any kind, and any inappropriate behaviour is challenged and addressed. We work in accordance with all statutory guidance in relation to such behaviours and with other agencies as appropriate.

We seek to teach our pupils about healthy and respectful relationships, boundaries and consent, equality, the law and how to keep themselves safe (on and offline).

This should be considered alongside other related policies in school: Behaviour and Attitudes policy, Anti-bullying policy, RSE policy, Mental health and well-being policy

## **Mental health**

Positive mental health is the concern of the whole community and we recognise that our school plays a key part in this. Our school aims to develop the emotional wellbeing and resilience of all pupils and staff, as well as provide specific support for those with additional needs. We understand that there are risk factors which increase someone's vulnerability and protective factors that can promote or strengthen resiliency. The more risk factors present in an individual's life, the more protective factors or supportive interventions are required to counter-balance and promote further growth of resilience.

Our staff are aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. We understand that, where children have suffered abuse or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. Where we have concerns, this may impact on mental health, we will seek advice and work with other agencies as appropriate to support a child and ensure they receive the help they need.

It is vital that we work in partnership with parents/carers to support the wellbeing of our pupils. We expect parents/carers, if they have any concerns about the wellbeing of their child, to share this with us, so we can ensure that appropriate support and interventions can be identified and implemented.

## **Online safety**

We recognise that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives on and offline. Whilst this presents many positive and exciting opportunities, we recognise it also presents challenges and risks, in the form of:

- ☐ **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example, pornography, fake news, suicide, racist or radical and extremist views;
- ☐ **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example, peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as 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; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying
- ☐ **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and / or financial scams

All staff in our school are aware of the risks to children online. We understand any child can be vulnerable online, and that their vulnerability can vary according to age, developmental stage and personal circumstances. We aim to equip all our pupils with the knowledge they need to use the internet and technology safely, and we want to work with parents to support them to keep their children safe online.

We have systems in school to filter information and block internet access to harmful sites and inappropriate content. These systems are monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure they are effective, and all staff are trained in online safety and how to report concerns.

### **Prevention of radicalisation**

As of July 2015, the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act \(HMG, 2015\)](#) placed a new duty on schools and other education providers. Under section 26 of the Act, schools are required, 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.

The Prevent Duty requires schools to:

- ☐ teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life and must promote community cohesion
- ☐ be safe spaces in which children / young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and the extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology, and learn how to challenge these ideas
- ☐ be mindful of their existing duties to forbid political indoctrination and secure a balanced presentation of political issues

Channel is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. If a child on roll at our school is referred to the Channel Panel, a representative from the school may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with an assessment and support plan.

Our school operates in accordance with local procedures for PREVENT and with other agencies, sharing information and concerns as appropriate. Where we have concerns about extremism or radicalisation, we will seek advice from appropriate agencies and, if necessary, the police, refer to Social Care and/or the Channel Panel.

### **Serious violence**

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

### **So-called ‘honour-based violence’ (including Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage)**

So-called ‘honour’-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. We understand that this form of abuse often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

*Female Genital Mutilation* (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse.

As of October 2015, the Serious Crime Act 2015 (Home Office, 2015) introduced a duty on teachers (and other professionals) to notify the police of known cases of FGM where it appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18. Our school operates in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to this issue, and in line with local safeguarding procedures.

A *forced marriage* is one entered into without the full consent of one or both parties. It is where violence, threats or other forms of coercion is used and is a crime. Our staff understand how to report concerns where this may be an issue.

## **5. Children potentially at risk of greater harm**

We recognise that some children may potentially be at risk of greater harm and require additional help and support. These may be children with a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, those in Care or previously in Care or those requiring mental health support. We work with Social Care and other appropriate agencies to ensure there is a joined-up approach to planning for these children and that they receive the right help at the right time.

Our school understands that children with special educational needs (SEN) and / or disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- ☐ Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability, without further exploration
- ☐ That they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others
- ☐ The potential to be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs
- ☐ Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers

## **6. Procedures**

Our school works with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and contributing to inter-agency plans which provide additional support (through a Child in Need or a Child Protection plan).

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected / actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred, **must** report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (or, in their absence, the deputy designated safeguarding lead).

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- ☐ Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2022)
- ☐ [Essex Effective Support](#)
- ☐ Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2023)
- ☐ Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018)
- ☐ 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB)
- ☐ PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Any staff member or visitor to the school must refer any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or deputy designated safeguarding lead. Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and / or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via [Essex Effective Support](#). We may also seek advice from Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern if we are unsure how to respond to it. Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to another agency, with parents or carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place a child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. If it is necessary for an external agency to meet with a child in school, we will always seek to inform parents or carers, unless we are advised not to by that agency. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and / or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents / carers.

All staff understand that, if they continue to have concerns about a child, feel a concern is not being addressed or that a situation does not appear to be improving for a child, they should raise this with the designated safeguarding lead.

Where an immediate response is required, and if for any reason the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is not immediately available, this will not delay any appropriate action being taken. Safeguarding contact details are displayed in the school to ensure that all staff members have access to urgent safeguarding support, should it be required. Any individual may refer to Social Care where there is suspected or actual risk of harm to a child.

When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our school they are informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the designated safeguarding lead (and deputy/deputies) and how to share concerns with them. We also provide information on safeguarding to any visitor to our school, so they understand how to report a concern if they have one.

## **7. Training**

In line with statutory requirements, the designated safeguarding lead (and deputy/deputies) undertake Level 3 child protection training at least every two years. The Headteacher, all staff members and governors receive appropriate child protection training which is regularly updated and in line with advice from the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB). In addition, all staff members and other adults working with children in our school receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Records of any safeguarding training undertaken are kept for all staff and governors.

The school ensures that the designated safeguarding lead (and deputy) also undertakes training in inter-agency working and other matters as appropriate.

## **8. Information sharing and confidentiality**

Sharing information is a key part of safeguarding work and decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have a profound impact on a child's life. Our school is signed up to the Wider Eastern Information Stakeholder Forum (WEISF), which enables us to share and receive information in a legal, safe and secure way, to support our work in keeping children safe.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information, where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life, would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot (and will not) stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. Generic data flows related to child protection are recorded in our Records of Processing Activity and are regularly reviewed; and our online school privacy notices accurately reflect our use of data for child protection purposes.

A member of staff will never guarantee confidentiality to anyone (including parents/carers or pupils) about a safeguarding concern, nor promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities.

In some cases, it may be necessary for the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) to share information on individual child protection cases with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

Information sharing can help to ensure that a child receives the right help at the right time and can prevent a concern from becoming more serious and difficult to address.

## **9. Child Protection records**

Well-kept records are an essential aspect of effective child protection practice. Our school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse, will record it on My Concern as soon as possible, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time and location. This then automatically generates a notification email to the designated safeguarding leads who will decide on appropriate action and

record this accordingly. Staff will also inform the DSL verbally that they have a concern in a timely fashion and that it has been recorded.

Any paper records relating to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to the pupil file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially and will be retained for 25 years after the pupil's date of birth, or until they transfer to another school / educational setting.

In line with statutory guidance, where a pupil transfers from our school to another school / educational setting (including colleges), their child protection records will be forwarded to the new setting. These will be marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the receiving school's designated safeguarding lead, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to us if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new school and then destroy any copies held in our school. Where appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead may also make contact with the new setting in advance of the child's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the child arrives.

Where a pupil joins our school, we will request child protection records from the previous educational establishment (if none are received).

## **10. Interagency working**

It is important that agencies work together to keep children safe, and there is a legal requirement to do so.

We work with other relevant agencies, including where a child on roll (or previously known to us) has a Child in Need, Child Protection or Care Plan. Where this is the case, it is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure our school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with the parent(s) / carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the school has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions.

If a child is subject to a Care, Child Protection or a Child in Need plan, the designated safeguarding lead will have oversight of their school attendance, emotional well-being, academic progress, welfare and presentation. Where the school is part of the core group, the designated safeguarding lead will ensure we are represented, provide appropriate information and contribute to the plan at these meetings. We will report on the child's progress in school, and any concerns about them will be shared at the meeting, unless to do so would place them at risk of harm. In this case the designated safeguarding lead would speak with the child's key-worker outside of the meeting, and as soon as there is a concern.

## **11. Allegations about members of the workforce**

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in the Staff Behaviour policy / Code of Conduct. Our school works in accordance with statutory guidance and the SET procedures (ESCB, 2022) in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity).

The school has processes in place for reporting any concerns about a member of staff (or any adult working with children). Any concerns about the conduct of a member of staff must be referred to the Headteacher (or the Deputy Headteacher in their absence), as they have responsibility for managing employment issues. Where the allegation concerns an agency member of staff, the Headteacher (or Deputy) will liaise with the agency, while following due process.

Where the concern involves the headteacher, it should be reported direct to the Chair of Governors.

The SET procedures (ESCB, 2022) require that, where an allegation against a member of staff is received, the Headteacher, senior named person or the Chair of Governors must inform the duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on **03330 139 797** within one working day. However, wherever possible, contact with the LADO will be made immediately so that we can seek advice on how to proceed and whether the matter requires Police involvement. This will include advice on speaking to pupils, parents and HR. The school does not carry out any investigation before speaking to the LADO.

Staffing matters are confidential and the school operates within a statutory framework around Data Protection.

## **12. Behaviour, use of physical intervention and reasonable force**

Our Behaviour Policy sets out our approach to behaviour for all children and also for those with more difficult or harmful behaviour. We recognise there are some children who have needs that require additional support and a more personalised approach and we always consider all behaviour, and our response to it, in the context of safeguarding.

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with children and young people for a variety of reasons, this may include:

- to comfort a child or young person in distress (*appropriate to their age and individual specific needs identified through a risk assessment*);
- to direct a child or young person;
- for curricular reasons (*for example in PE, Music, Drama etc*);
- in an emergency, to avert danger to the child or young person or others;

The guidance produced by the Department for Education [Use of Reasonable Force \(DfE, 2013\)](#) states that:

*“Schools **should not** have a ‘no contact’ policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a child or young person or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a child or young person causing harm.”*

The term ‘reasonable force’ covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people, such as guiding a child to safety or breaking up a fight. ‘Reasonable’ means using no more force than is needed. Our school works in accordance with statutory and local guidance on the use of reasonable force (*see section 2*) and



recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context.

### **13. Whistleblowing/ Managing allegations against adults**

- all concerns and allegations against adults will be taken seriously;
- all concerns and allegations against adults will be dealt with appropriately and in liaison with relevant parties, even where they relate to a person who is not an employee;
- all concerns and allegations against adults will be dealt with quickly, and in a fair and consistent manner that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time, supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

#### **Scope**

This Procedure applies when there is a concern or allegation in relation to employees (including the Headteacher/CEO), supply and agency staff, volunteers, contractors and governors.

The school expects full co-operation and participation by third-party employers/agencies in the operation of this Procedure. The school will ensure that all third-party employers/agencies are notified of this procedure before allowing any individuals employed by them to start work at the school.

The procedures do not apply where they relate to any such person who is no longer working at the school. Allegations against such persons, and historical allegations will be referred to the Police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The school will co-operate fully with relevant agencies in any investigations into these matters.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard children and everyone has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, taking prompt action and fully co-operating with this Procedure.

**If anyone has any concerns about the conduct of an adult working at the school, they must report these immediately, to the headteacher, or other senior leader or the Designated Safeguarding Lead ("DSL") or Deputy DSL if the headteacher is unavailable, or where concerns relate to the headteacher or a governor, to the Chair of Governors, or where concerns relate to the chair of governor, to the Vice Chair or where unavailable the safeguarding governor.**

Where at any point an individual feels unable to raise an issue with the appropriate person set out above, for example due to the sensitivity of the issue, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they may refer to the Whistleblowing Policy. This policy sets out the framework for how issues can be raised confidentially internally, and/or if necessary, outside the management structure of the school to a prescribed body. For safeguarding and child protection allegations, individuals can refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer for child protection (LADO) 03330 139 797 / [LADO@essex.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@essex.gov.uk) or the NSPCC who have a dedicated helpline 0800 028 0285. The line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).

## Procedures

In some cases, an allegation will have been reported to, or discovered by, Social Care, the Police or the Local Authority Designated Officer (“LADO”), who will in turn inform the school (and where appropriate the third-party employer) and will initially lead and direct the investigation. In such cases the school, and where appropriate the third-party employer, will follow the advice and directions of these agencies as set out in Section 6.

Where a concern or allegation is initially reported to the school, the matter will be taken seriously and considered with an open mind. In rare cases, where it appears a person may be an immediate risk to children, or there is suggestion of a possible criminal offence, the matter must be reported to the Police by the school. This should usually be done via the headteacher or where unavailable another senior leader or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (“DSL”) or Deputy DSL and advice should also be taken from the LADO. In such cases the school will wait for advice from the Police/LADO before taking any further action.

### **Initial investigation**

The headteacher or Chair of Governors where the allegation relates to the headteacher, will themselves, or arrange for an appropriate person to, be the case manager. The case manager will obtain advice and support as necessary; for example, from their human resources provider. In certain circumstances, such as the lack of appropriate resources within the school or, given the nature or complexity of the allegation, the school may engage an independent investigator to be the case manager.

#### Third-party/Agency workers

Where a concern or allegation relates to a person employed by a third party/agency, the case manager will inform, and liaise with the employer/agency. The school will usually take the lead on the investigation but will invite the employer/agency’s human resource representative or equivalent person to relevant meetings and keep them informed.

The case manager will carry out a brief initial investigation to gather enough information to establish whether the allegation has foundation and whether the information indicates that a person has met the “harm test”, which is that they have:

- 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 he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

This “harm test” is explained on the Disclosure and Barring service website [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

The initial investigation will be carried out immediately and will entail:

- making a detailed written, signed and dated record of the information reported;
- asking the person reporting the concern to immediately provide a written statement which should be signed and dated;
- fact checking to establish that the incident could have happened e.g., was the accused person and child in the place mentioned and making a written and dated record.

Parents will be informed immediately if the child is injured or needs medical treatment.

The case manager will not:

- investigate in great depth or ask leading questions;
- interview the accused, children or any witnesses;
- make assumptions or offer alternative explanations;
- promise confidentiality, although may give assurance that the information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

If the case manager considers the harm test to have been met, Section 6. of these procedures will then apply.

In many cases, the harm test will not be met, and internal procedures will be followed as set out in Section 7. of these procedures.

### **Suspension and alternatives**

On the basis of the facts available at each stage of these procedures, it may be considered appropriate to remove the accused person from certain roles or contexts or from the school entirely where:

- there is cause to suspect a child or other children at the school are at risk of harm;
- the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal;
- allowing the employee to remain at work could hinder the investigatory process; or
- there is a restriction in place such as bail conditions or an interim prohibition order.

The LADO may advise on this matter, but the decision will be made by the school.

#### **Employees**

The case manager will undertake a detailed risk assessment and explore all options to avoid suspension such as redeployment or reallocation of duties will be considered. If suspension is considered necessary, the rationale and justification will be recorded in the risk assessment in addition to the alternatives to suspension that were considered and why they were considered not to be appropriate in the circumstances.

The employee will receive written confirmation of their suspension, including written reasons for the suspension, within one working day. They will also be notified of the support available (see section 9. below).

#### **Volunteers**

The case manager will make a judgement, based on the nature of the concern or allegation and the evidence available, about whether it is appropriate to stop the volunteer attending school while the investigation is carried out.

#### **Third Party/Agency Workers**

The case manager will liaise with the third-party employer/agency to determine whether it is appropriate to redeploy or suspend the supply teacher/contractor, during the investigation. The school will not decide to cease to use the worker entirely until the investigation is complete and an outcome reached.

#### **Governors**

Where appropriate, a governor may be asked to absent themselves from some or all aspects of their functions, or in the most serious cases, and where regulations allow, may be suspended, during an investigation.

All arrangements will be discussed with the person concerned, confirmed in writing and kept under regular review.

### Referrals

A referral will be made the DBS, when an individual is removed from work that is regulated activity where the harm test is satisfied in respect of an individual and there is sufficient evidence to meet the referral criteria: [gov.uk - dbs referrals guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/db-referrals).

### Procedures where the harm test is met

The case manager will report the allegation to the LADO within one working day. Failure to report an allegation or concern in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

The LADO will liaise with other agencies such as the Police or Children's Social Care as appropriate, to determine next steps and the school will follow the directions of these agencies.

This may include:

- what, if any, information can be shared with parents and the accused person and at what point;
- provision of further information about child/ren or adults; and
- attendance at a strategy or management planning meeting to share relevant information and plan next steps.

The LADO will advise the school when the agencies involvement is concluded and the matter is handed back to be dealt with through internal procedures, as set out in Section 6.

### Criminal cases

In most cases, internal procedures cannot be applied until the conclusion of police processes. The police should inform the employer and designated officer(s) immediately when a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete, or if it is decided to close an investigation without charge, or not to continue to prosecute the case after the person has been charged. In those circumstances, the designated officer(s) should discuss with the case manager whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed. The information provided by the police and/or children's social care services should inform that decision. Where the police are involved, wherever possible the employer should ask the police to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the employer disciplinary process.

### Internal Procedures

Internal procedures will be followed where the harm test is not met and where LADO, Social Care and/or Police involvement is concluded and/or it is agreed that the school can follow its internal procedures.

If, at any stage, new information emerges that requires a referral as set out in Section 6, the internal procedures should be held in abeyance and only resumed if agreed with the LADO, children's social care and the Police. Consideration or a review of suspension/alternate arrangements should be also undertaken.

### **Employees**

Where the concern or allegations relates to an employee, the Disciplinary Procedure will be applied. The outcome will be determined and communicated to the employee, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

## **Volunteers**

Where a concern or allegation relates to a volunteer, the case manager will arrange for an investigation to be carried out. This will involve gathering relevant information and evidence, including speaking to the volunteer.

At the end of the investigation, the outcome will be determined and communicated to the volunteer, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

Having reached a determination, the case manager will decide whether it is appropriate to allow the individual to continue to volunteer, and if so whether there are any conditions or considerations, such as additional training or supervision.

## **Third party workers, including agency supply teachers and other workers**

In the case of workers who are not employees of the school, their employer is responsible for applying their internal procedures. However, where necessary the school will lead in carrying out investigations, as agencies will not have access to children and other staff to collect facts. In any case, the school will fully co-operate with and provide support as required, to the third-party employer and other agencies. Subject to the outcome of the investigation, the school may decide to cease to engage the worker.

## **Governors**

Where a concern or allegation relates to a governor, the Complaints against Governors Procedure will be applied. The outcome will be determined and communicated to the governor, and recorded in the child protection records, as set out in Section 8.

## **Conclusion of safeguarding cases**

Investigations into allegations will be completed and the outcome recorded, regardless of whether the person involved resigns or otherwise ceases their engagement at the school prior to the conclusion of the investigation or criminal or internal procedures. The individual will be invited to participate in internal procedures at all stages, but they will proceed even if the person declines to co-operate.

Settlement agreements will **not be used** to resolve employee relations matters relating to safeguarding.

The following definitions will be used when determining and recording the outcome of 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.

## **Records and References**

Allegations which are found to be malicious will be removed from personnel records. In all other cases, a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation, details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a note of any actions taken and decisions reached will be recorded and retained on the personnel file of the accused and a copy provided to the individual.

The school has a duty to report relevant safeguarding allegations in employment/volunteer references in respect of relevant employment/engagement and will do so. Allegations proven to be false, unsubstantiated or malicious will not be included in any references.

The school has an obligation to preserve records which contain information about allegations of sexual abuse for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), for the term of the inquiry. All other records will be retained at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer. Full details can be found in the school's record retention schedule.

#### Referrals

A referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and where appropriate the Teacher Regulation Agency, will be made on the conclusion of case where the individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.

#### Return to work

Where it is decided on the conclusion of a case that a person who has been suspended or placed on alternate duties, can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

Consideration will be given, in consultation with the person, about what help and support should be given. This may include a phased return or a short-term mentor for support and consideration of how the person's contact with the child or children to whom the allegation related can best be managed if they are still a pupil or student.

#### Reflections and further action

If an allegation is determined to be false or malicious, the school will liaise with relevant agencies to determine what, if any, further interventions or action may be necessary in respect of the accuser. In other cases, the school will reflect on its practice and procedures to determine whether there are any improvements to be made.

### **Support for those involved**

The school will act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process.

- Allegations will be dealt with expeditiously, fairly and thoroughly;
- Individuals will be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action, and updates on progress, unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the police;
- Employees should contact their trade union representative and have the right of representation by a trade unions representative or work colleague at any formal disciplinary meeting.
- Other individuals should seek appropriate support e.g., citizens advice, their professional body;
- Individuals will be given access to welfare counselling or medical advice where this is appropriate and available. In case of third-party workers, this will be the responsibility of their employer; and
- All individuals subject to alternate work arrangement/suspension will be given a named contact to provide relevant updates regarding events in the workplace and to act as a conduit for information/communication as appropriate. In the case of third-party workers, this will be the responsibility of their employer.
- Parents will be told the outcome subject to any restrictions within the Data Protection Act and where relevant, the Human Rights Act.

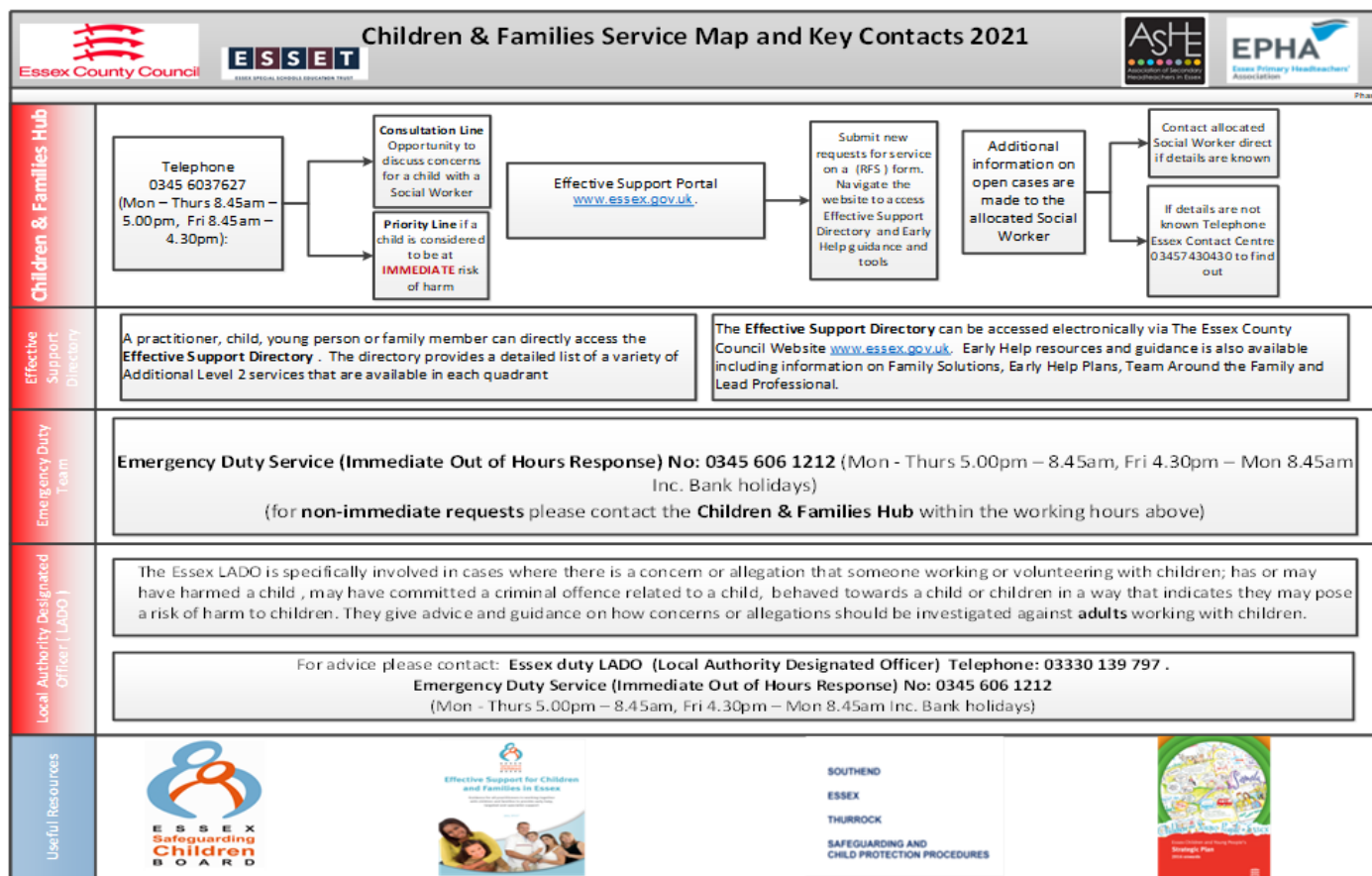
## **Confidentiality**

It is essential that strict confidentiality is maintained at all time, by all parties.

It is however a statutory requirement for schools and where applicable their staff, to share relevant information in relation to safeguarding matters and as such the school will share information with the LADO, police, children's social care, other agencies such as the DBS and the Teaching Regulation Agency, and individuals such as parents/carers, as required and in accordance with its obligations and any regulations, including the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.

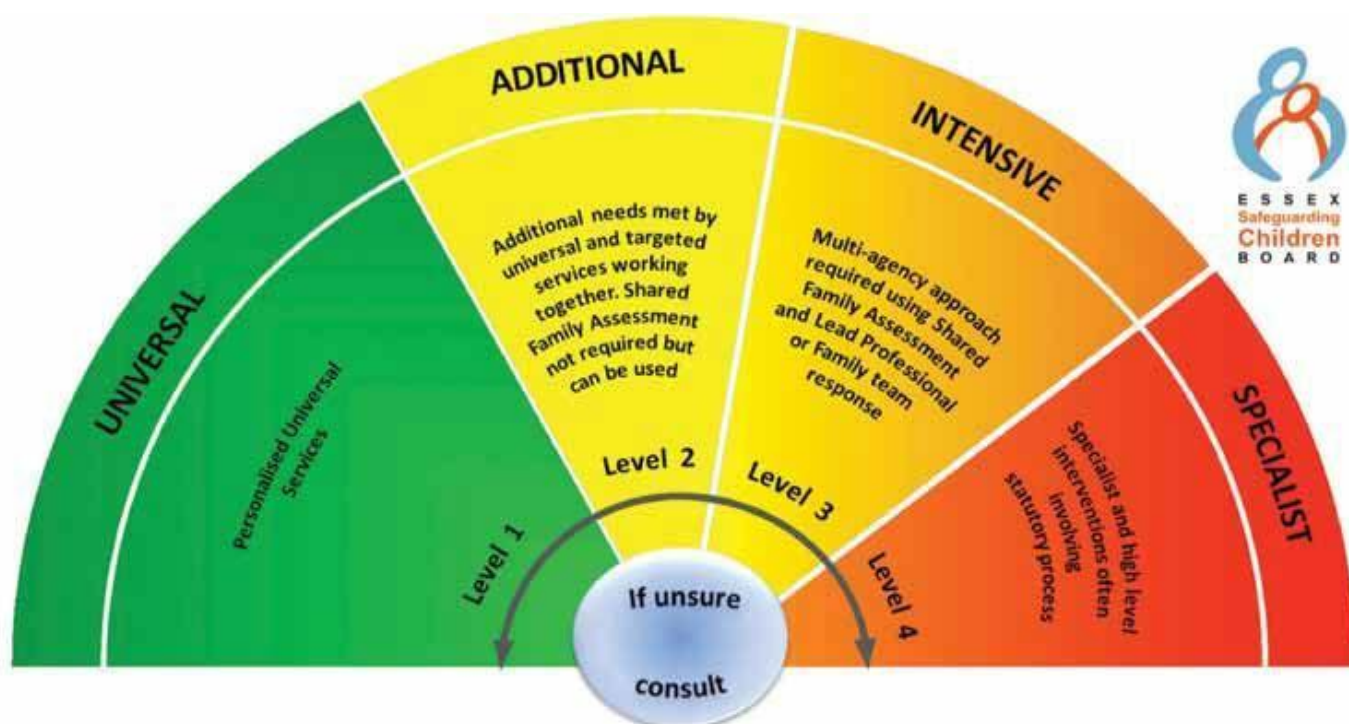
The Education Act 2002 introduced reporting restrictions preventing the publication of any material that may lead to the identification of a teacher in a school who has been accused by, or on behalf of, a pupil from the same school (where that identification would identify the teacher as the subject of the allegation). The reporting restrictions apply to everybody until the point that the accused person is charged with an offence, or until the Secretary of State publishes information about an investigation or decision in a disciplinary case arising from the allegation. The reporting restrictions are disapplied if the individual to whom the restrictions apply effectively waives their right to anonymity by going public themselves or by giving their written consent for another to do so or if a judge lifts restrictions in response to a request to do so.

## Appendix A: Children and Families Service Map and Key Contacts





## Appendix B: Essex Windscreen of Need and levels of intervention



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Children with **Additional** needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as Family Hubs or schools, organising additional support with local partners as needed. When an agency is supporting these children, an Early Help Plan and a Lead Professional are helpful to share information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family.

For children whose needs are **Intensive**, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, involving either an Early Help Plan or a Shared Family Assessment (SFA), with a Lead Professional to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require. Examples of intensive services are children's mental health services and Family Solutions.

**Specialist** services are where the needs of the child are so great that statutory and/or specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. Examples of specialist services are Children's Social Care or Youth Offending Service. By working together effectively with children that have additional needs and by providing coordinated multi-disciplinary/agency support and services for those with intensive needs, we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

## Appendix C: Missing Child Protocol

### Arrangements for children who go missing during the school day

#### Definition of Missing

*The definition of missing used in Essex is 'anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and his or her well-being confirmed'.*

(College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice Guidance)

#### 1. Introduction

This guidance sets out the procedures to follow when children go missing from schools and other educational settings, hereafter referred to as educational settings.

Missing children are among the most vulnerable in our community. Sometimes children go missing from educational settings; when this occurs, it is important that action is taken quickly to address this, and in line with local procedures.

This document should be read in conjunction with the educational setting's Child Protection Policy, and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures (SET Procedures).

- [Essex Schools Infolink](#) – for the model Child Protection Policy and other resources
- [Essex Safeguarding Children Board](#) – for the SET Procedures and other resources

A child going missing could be a 'one-off' incident that, following investigation, does not need further work. However, a child going missing frequently could be an indicator of underlying exploitation or other forms of child abuse.

Educational settings should consider missing episodes like any other child protection concern and take action as appropriate, for example, by contacting parents/carers, the Children & Families Hub consultation line, and in an emergency, the priority line or the police. It may be appropriate to use the Early Help Procedures (including holding a Team Around the Family meeting) to address the issues and prevent escalation. Advice should be sought and concerns should be escalated if there is no improvement.

Where children missing frequently are open to Children's Social Care, a Missing Prevention Plan may be in place. Where this is the case, the educational setting may be set actions as part of the Missing Prevention Plan and should receive a copy if consent has been provided.

#### 2. When a child goes missing

When it is suspected that a child is missing from an educational setting this must be addressed immediately. Active steps to locate the child should be taken, for example, searching the premises and surrounding areas, contacting the child by phone, text and social media, and contacting their parents/carers. If none of these actions locate the child, then they must be reported missing to the Police by dialling 101, **or 999 if there is a belief that the child is immediately suffering significant harm**. It is important that the police are informed of any checks already completed as it may save time and prevent duplication of tasks set by the police to locate a child.

Staff at the educational setting must inform the child's parents/carers that the child has been reported missing. Where there is a Social Worker allocated to the child, they should also be informed.

After a child has been reported missing, any further information should be communicated to the police by telephoning 101 and quoting the incident number that the police would have provided following the initial report. Further information must be passed to the police as soon as possible, as officers will continue to search for the child until informed of their return.

### **3. When the child is found**

If the child is found by educational setting staff, or if the child returns to the premises of their own accord, the police must be notified immediately by dialling 101 or 999 if the matter is an emergency. It is important that this action is prioritised, as the child will remain classified as a missing person until seen by the police.

### **4. Essex Police**

On receiving a report of a missing child, Essex Police will classify the child as missing and will respond based on the level of risk involved.

Essex Police will conduct a vulnerability interview for all children who have been missing and have returned. It may be that the child refuses to engage or speak with police. On these occasions the parents/carers can assist by reporting to officers their observations on the child's return, e.g. did the child shower, have gifts, appear unwell or under the influence of any substance etc. The setting may also be able to contribute to this process and should provide the police with any relevant information or observations.

Each child that returns from missing will be offered a 'missing chat' (an independent return from missing interview) by a person not involved in their care. This will be facilitated by the Local Authority with responsibility for the child. Missing chats are offered to all children from Essex who go missing.

### **Useful contacts:**

Shane Thomson, ECC Missing Co-ordinator: [shane.thomson@essex.gov.uk](mailto:shane.thomson@essex.gov.uk)

Lucy Stovell, ECC Missing Chats: [lucy.stovell@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.stovell@essex.gov.uk)