

42. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Pear Tree is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.

To ensure continuity of care, this policy applies to Pear Tree School and Residential homes. The policy is available upon request from the office.

Other policies that relate to Safeguarding and Child Protection include staff recruitment, internet use, staff code of conduct, whistleblowing, bullying and complaints policy. We have no volunteers / agency staff. It will be reviewed and updated as needed and at least annually so that it is kept up to date with safeguarding issues as they emerge and evolve, including lessons learnt.

Pear Tree uses definitions of the term 'safeguarding' from statutory guidance. 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
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

Children and young people attending Pear Tree should be afforded, along with all children and young people, the right to live and grow in a caring and sympathetic environment where they are free from abuse from adults, other children/young people or "systems".

KCSIE 2025 section 172 etc reminds all schools that some groups of children are potentially at greater risk of harm than others, both online and offline. It identifies those who need a social worker, are absent from education, home educated, require mental health support, are Looked After or previously Looked After, care leavers, have special educational needs, disabilities or health issues, are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or gender questioning.

Staff at Pear Tree recognise that our children/young people may have suffered abuse whilst living at home before admission or they may be subject to further abuse when on home or other leave, whilst absent, or even whilst at the Home. Such abuse may come from parents, staff, strangers, other adults the child knows, or from other children.

Contact Details

Pear Tree School

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

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Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) -

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Pear Tree Residential homes

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

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LADO Details:

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Durham
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CYPSSLADOSecure@durham.gov.uk

Darlington
Switchboard 01325 405319
designatedofficer@darlington.gov.uk

Prevent – National Prevent Helpline – 0800 011 3764

Emergency Contacts for children:

Pear Tree School has 2 emergency contacts for every child in the school in case of emergencies.

Definition of a child

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023). Working Together to Safeguard Children also emphasised that if a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, this does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.

This document is written in accordance with Darlington Borough Council guidance. It has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) (KCSIE)
- KCSIE incorporates the additional statutory guidance, Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 (amended 2018)
- KCSIE incorporates the DfE guidance Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

- Information Sharing, Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers (May 2024)
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (July 2025)
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales (March 2024) (Prevent).
- The Prevent duty: an introduction for those with safeguarding responsibilities (Updated 7 September 2023)

Staff should always be alert to signs of abuse.

When abuse is alleged or suspected, our child protection procedures will be invoked, and the Local Authority Child Protection Team will investigate such allegations or suspicions of abuse. It is not the responsibility of Pear Tree to investigate such allegations or suspicions.

The welfare of the child is paramount during any investigation, and should the abuse occur/be alleged at the home or school, it may be necessary to remove a member of staff or child from direct contact with children during that period. Appropriate support will be given.

Staff should seek appropriate guidance from Senior Staff regarding any aspect of child protection and be committed to developing their own practice through individual learning, supervision, and staff training. In addition, all staff should familiarise themselves with Pear Tree's guidance and procedures on "Care and Control" and be committed to providing an environment and quality of care within the home and school that minimises the risk invoking child protection procedures.

Main categories and specific types of abuse

To ensure that our children and young people are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

KCSIE 2025, paras 25-28, identifies four main categories of abuse:

1. Physical abuse

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

Indicators of Physical Abuse:

1. Bite marks
2. Ligature (cord, string, rope etc.) marks
3. Burns and scalds
4. Cigarette Burns
5. Poisoning
6. Fractures

7. Internal injuries
8. Shaking injuries
9. Bruising

2. Emotional abuse

- Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.
- It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.
- These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse:

1. Degradation
2. Terrorising
3. Isolation
4. Corruption
5. Exploiting
6. Denying
7. Rejection
8. Bullying
9. Mocking
10. Name Calling
11. Teasing
12. Using sarcasm
13. Humiliation
14. Criticising

3. Sexual abuse

- Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (eg rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative activities such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

- Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it and of our policy and procedures for dealing with it.

Indicators of sexual abuse:

1. Physical Signs - Fingertip bruising on inside of thigh, itching, soreness, repeated urinary tract infections, bleeding or injury in genital area.
2. Behavioural and Emotional Signs - Withdrawn, wetting or soiling, sexual knowledge inappropriate to age, excessive masturbation, seductive behaviour, kissing inappropriately, hints at sexual behaviour in words/drawing, self - destructive behaviour, running away.

4. Neglect and failure to thrive

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators of Neglect:

1. Impairment of growth
2. Pot belly, thin buttocks
3. Mottled hands and feet
4. Poor clothing, neglected appearance
5. Abnormally voracious appetite
6. Dry sparse hair
7. Lack of supervision
8. Failure to seek medical advice
9. Failure to attend school
10. Lack of stimulation
11. Unhygienic home conditions
12. 'Frozen watchfulness'

Specific Types of Abuse –

KCSIE 2025 Annex B contains additional information about specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues, which Pear Tree reviews in relation to its students each year - **see appendix 2**

KCSIE 2025 section 158 etc, and the NMS, identify that boarding schools must consider additional safeguarding factors. Although Pear Tree is not a boarding school, its links with its residential homes means that it also addresses this responsibility carefully.

Child on Child abuse:

- We have a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse, which is never passed off as 'just banter' or 'Just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys'; such an approach would risk creating a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.
- It is crucial that all staff challenge all abusive behaviours between peers and report any concerns to the DSL.
- Pear Tree operates procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and there are systems in place for children to report abuse, in which they have confidence, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.
- Allegations of child-on-child abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with in accordance with our established safeguarding procedures. This will include support for victims, perpetrators and any other children affected.
- The lesson of "Everyone's Invited" was that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. At Pear Tree, we recognise this and are eternally vigilant. Whilst we recognise that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boy's perpetrators, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously

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

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element, which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Abuse in intimate relationships between peers
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, which could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group, and may also include an online element.

All staff are aware that children can abuse other children, this can happen both inside and outside of the school/home. If staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy.

We continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental well-being.

Procedure when abuse is suspected, reported or disclosed:

The following procedures must be followed in all cases where a member of staff is concerned that any child/young person at the home shows signs of suffering abuse, however this has occurred. This includes suspicions or allegations against members of staff or against other children or young people.

1. Any member of staff suspecting child abuse or notified of child abuse must immediately report this verbally and in writing to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. This includes situations where the allegations or suspicions involve colleagues, other members of staff, visitors to the Home / school, or others the young person may have had contact with whilst at or away from the home in any capacity. Allegations or suspicion against any member of staff, must make the Designated Safeguarding Lead aware.
2. Any allegation against the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be notified to the LADO immediately.
3. The member of staff should take any action necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the child, which includes ensuring the child, is safe from further abuse. This should be done in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, if time permits and is appropriate, i.e. when that staff member is not the alleged perpetrator.
4. Whilst staff are advised to discuss concerns with the DSL, it is important to note that **anyone** can make a referral, and that referrals to statutory agencies do not require parental consent.
5. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then immediately refer the case to the Children's Social Care Local Authority Child Protection Team for the area in which the child is resident and simultaneously to the Team Manager for the Social Worker of the child/children in question. If relevant the police will be notified. Telephone calls must be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and sent to Local Authority Child Protection Team. All homes have the relevant EDT / Duty Social Worker contact details for the child/children in question.
6. A written record on an Important Information Form must be made at the earliest opportunity, of all observations, suspicions, and discussions, which gave rise to the concern. Furthermore, the written record should include the following:
 - Names and relationship of all present.
 - Any injuries or signs of abuse observed or reported.
 - Any history given by the child, parents, staff, or others.
 - The behaviour of all those present.

7. A copy of this record should be forwarded to the Local Authority Child Protection Team for the area in which the child is resident and the Team Manager of the placing authority.
8. Where a Strategy Discussion is arranged, all relevant and appropriate information needs to be presented. It may be necessary to prepare a further detailed report for future meetings.
9. Allegations against any member of staff must be notified to the headteacher/head of service, if they are not available then the LADO should be notified.
10. In some serious cases it may be necessary to give serious consideration to the suspension of staff pending the outcome of any preliminary investigation or Strategy Discussion. In these cases, the member of staff is advised to seek legal representation. Formal suspension from duties is a mandatory requirement for any issue referred to outside agencies.
11. Additionally, members of staff and associates must be aware of, and follow, these guidelines without exception.
12. In the event of an allegation against a member of staff, management will endeavour to keep that member of staff appropriately informed as to the progress of any subsequent investigation and will be contacted immediately if there is any information to be forwarded. Members of staff should also be aware that Pear Tree acknowledges the stress that can occur during such an investigation, and it wishes to support members of staff completely during this process. Line managers will always make themselves available to provide support during the length of this process without compromising any investigation.

Supporting staff, staff training and safer recruitment practices:

We recognise that staff working within the homes and school who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and to seek further support as appropriate and circulate regular safeguarding and child protection updates.

Pear Tree recognises that safe recruitment practices are an essential part of creating a safe environment for children and young people. Consequently, we will ensure that staff working in our homes and at our school are suitable to do so and therefore do not pose any kind of risk to our children. All members of the interview panel are trained in 'Safer Recruitment.'

All staff have access to our Employee Assistance Programme where they can receive confidential personal support for any practical or emotional challenge they may be facing.

Training

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all members of staff, and all staff should know what to do to raise a concern. It is therefore important that all staff have training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a

concern. Guidance is provided to staff to help them recognise the additional vulnerability of some children because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.

KCSIE 2025 para 125 reminds schools that staff build expertise by managing safeguarding concerns, and that they should therefore contribute to and shape safeguarding arrangements and the child protection policy. At Pear Tree we have a day-to-day familiarity with operating safeguarding procedures and always play a part in assessing the suitability and effectiveness of the school's approach.

All staff are provided extra Safeguarding Training specific to Residential Care and Education covering the following:

- The start of the process, referral and assessment
- Group Dynamics, impact risk assessment for the home, school and community
- Managing groups in contact with other groups
- Supervising against the risk
- Support systems
- Dealing with disclosures
- Managing the process

As part of their induction programme all newly appointed staff, including part-time staff receive training in safeguarding issues. This includes reading, understanding and following:

- this policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) Part 1 or Annex A – and Annex B for school leaders and those who work directly with children.
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Low level concerns
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour management policy
- Safeguarding response to children who go missing from education/home.
- The role of the DSL and DDSs and their identities
- Online safety and acceptable use of technology

Staff are expected to sign to note they have read, understand and will follow the relevant sections of KCSIE; this policy; the Code of Conduct for Staff; the Behaviour Management policy; and the Whistleblowing policy. The training for all staff will cover a number of aspects, including but not limited to:

- Part 1 or Annex A of KCSIE (and Annex B for adults working directly with children), this policy and the Code of Conduct for Staff
- contact details if they have a concern about the safety or welfare of a child, or a concern about the behaviour of an adult
- the signs that a child may be in need of early help or additional support, at risk of harm or suffering from harm
- indicators of abuse and neglect and specific safeguarding issues

- what to do if a child discloses abuse, including that confidentiality should never be promised and to avoid asking leading questions
- how to escalate concerns about a child and allegations of abuse
- inter-agency working, including in the context of a referral made to Darlington's Children's First Response, Children's Social Services and / or the LADO, the statutory assessment process and that the staff member may be asked to contribute to a child protection strategy meeting
- early help
- child-on-child abuse and how to manage a report of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment
- online safety
- information sharing
- boundaries and appropriate behaviour, to ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil (for example, in one-to-one tuition, sports coaching, engaging in inappropriate electronic communication with a pupil, and so on)
- the existence and whereabouts of this policy, other relevant policies and safeguarding documentation including local authority procedures.

All staff should re-read and understand at least KCSIE Part 1 (and Annex B) for adults working directly with children) each time it is updated by the DfE and are told of updates by the DSL and Deputy DSL. Mechanisms to assist colleagues in understanding KCSIE include regular updates during education meetings and staff meetings.

They are also reminded of the:

- school's overarching safeguarding procedures
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct,
- E-Safety Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Acceptable Use of ICT
- Behaviour management Policy
- Bullying including cyber bullying

This is on top of mandatory online safeguarding training and training provided by Darlington Safeguarding Board / Educare / High Speed Training.

DSLs and DDSLs refresh their training every 2 years.

Staff training will also include alerting staff to the risks of radicalisation and extremism as set out in the Prevent Duty. Training in the Prevent Duty will include channel and knowing how to identify children and young people at risk. This training will be updated on a regular basis in line with recommendations from the local authority.

The school pays full regard to the 'Position of Trust' offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003). We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the

school who is likely to be perceived by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult. We do this by:

- Operating safe recruitment practices; including highlighting the importance we place on safeguarding children in our recruitment adverts and interview questions, appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and reference checks, verifying identity, academic and vocational qualifications, on-line checks, obtaining practitioner references, checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews, overseas checks where relevant and checking the Children's Barred List and right to work in England checks in accordance with DBS and Department for Education procedures
- Ensuring that all staff adhere to a published code of conduct and other professional standards at all times, including after school activities. Staff are aware of social media/ on-line conduct- see Staff Handbook and Code of Conduct Policy.
- Ensuring that all staff and other adults on site are aware of the need for maintaining appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationship with pupils and parents, following our Code of Conduct
- Requiring all staff to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Disqualification under the Child Care Act 2006 (amended following the 2018 Regulations)
- Requiring all staff to disclose any convictions/concerns regarding immediate family members.
- Maintaining an accurate, complete, up to date Single Central Register

Listening to children

Children are given the opportunity to speak up and talk to a member of staff should they have any worries or concerns.

All children are aware of who the DSL and DDSs are, teachers, instructors and residential staff remind children regularly of this information. Telephone numbers/websites/information regarding helplines and services specifically for children are displayed in all classrooms/utility areas.

We have a system of 'You said, we did'. This is specifically designed to provide children with an opportunity to request something they enjoy or would like to do and for staff to respond to the child. This highlights that children are listened to.

Talking to children

Any member of staff within the school or home who notices possible signs of abuse or who is approached should make it possible for the child to explain an injury, speak of personal experiences, which concern them or make a disclosure in a non-threatening environment. They should be reassured that they are believed and be told that further action may be taken, and the reasons given. Care must also be taken to reassure the young person that they are right to report the matter and that they are not to blame.

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

Within education children are in small groups and are supported by a carer from our residential homes.

Mental health

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, and education. Public Health England has produced a range of resources to support secondary school teachers to promote positive health, wellbeing and resilience among children. See Every Mind Matters for links to all materials and lesson plans.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the procedures in this policy and speaking to the DSL.

For further information please see our separate mental health and wellbeing policy No 83- Guidance and Good Practice.

Curriculum

Pear Tree School is committed to ensuring that pupils are aware of behaviour towards them that is not acceptable, how they can keep themselves safe, how to share a concern and complain. All students are informed that we have a Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead with responsibility for child protection and who this is. We inform pupils of whom they might talk to, both in and out of school, their right to be listened to and heard and what steps can be taken to protect them from harm. Information on how to access this support is clearly shown across the school, as described earlier in the policy.

The school is committed to ensuring there are opportunities in the school curriculum, for pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help. Learning opportunities can be found in a range of subjects including ICT, English, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Sessions (SMSC); Geography, Maths, Science and Land Based Studies. Aspects of learning include:

- developing healthy relationships and awareness of domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, bullying, prejudice-based bullying and violence based on a person's sexual orientation, gender, faith or race, hate crime, relationship abuse, and other abuse.

- recognising and managing risks including online, cyber bullying, online grooming for sexual exploitation and radicalisation enabling pupils to become safe and responsible users of technologies and the impact of new technologies on sexual behaviour, for example sexting and accessing pornography.
- enabling students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with the promotion of British values.
- recognising how pressure from others can affect their behaviour, including the risks of radicalisation to extremist behaviour.
- ensuring students have the opportunity to discuss controversial issues and develop tolerance and respect for others.
- raising awareness of female genital mutilation, honour killings and forced marriage.
- Finances including financial abuse.

Additional aspects of safeguarding included in the curriculum are risks associated with:

- substance misuse
- gangs and youth violence
- mental health
- water, fire, roads and railways

Learning opportunities follow the revised Statutory guidance published by the DfE in July 2025 for implementation in September 2026: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education. Learning is evidenced through curriculum forms, pupils' books, classroom displays and class discussions.

Mobile and Smart Technology

Online safety is a paramount throughout the school and homes. A number of steps are taken to ensure a balance between children being safeguarded from online dangers and pupils learning the skills and knowledge to safeguard themselves in the future:

- Filtering systems are used (Clean Browsing) to ensure pupils are protected from and are unable to access inappropriate material.
- A filtering and monitoring log is completed and monitored by school leaders and the DSL.
- Pupils are supervised whilst using laptops and I pads and computer history is monitored by the school e-safety lead.
- Safeguarding filtering and monitoring meetings are held regularly.
- Pupils are prohibited from having their own devices at school including mobile phones.
- Pupils are encouraged to help create and sign a technology agreement to promote their responsibility (Copy available from the school e-safety lead). Pupils make reference to this throughout the year, this is also used to ensure pupils understand that they may be unable to use the devices available if they are not being responsible, safe or respectful whilst on devices.
- Online safety is taught at the beginning of each term to imbed learning and dispel any misconceptions.

Further information can be found in the Pear Tree Digital Technology document.

If remote learning should occur, pupils will be guided to follow the same advice and protocols that are embedded within school, including the technology agreement. Open communication with house managers and residential social care workers will ensure that pupils are accessing websites and documents provided by the teaching staff and not using the computers for anything else. Where possible, teaching staff will ensure any remote learning is accessible both online and in hard copy to guarantee pupils can access the learning if they are unable to follow the protocols and technology agreement set out and have therefore been stopped from accessing technology.

The school has updated the curriculum aspects of related policies to ensure that they are aligned to our child protection policy. This includes the school's online safety, relationships and sex education, substance misuse, smoke-free, equalities and anti-bullying policies.

Early Help Assessment

Any child may benefit from early help, but all school staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

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

We recognise that pupils who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of pupils at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. All staff should be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are

creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse and/or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Vulnerable pupils

Some children will have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm, and some children will need support from one or more agencies. In accordance with Darlington local procedures and reporting thresholds, the former should be reported to Children's Social care immediately; the latter should lead to early help, inter-agency assessment and intervention using local processes, including use of the 'Common Assessment Framework' (CAF) and 'Team around the Child' (TAC) approaches. If early help is appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.

Children requiring mental health support can face additional safeguarding challenges. In some cases, mental health problems can be an indicator that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Our Pear Tree policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

1. Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
2. the fact that these children are more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
3. the potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing and signs; and
4. communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

When working with children with disabilities, staff need to be aware that additional possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect may also include:

1. A bruise in a site that might not be of concern on an ambulant child such as the shin, might be of concern on a non-mobile child;
2. Not getting enough help with feeding leading to malnourishment;
3. Poor toileting arrangements;
4. Lack of stimulation;
5. Unjustified and/or excessive use of restraint;

6. Rough handling, extreme behaviour modification such as deprivation of medication, food or clothing, disabling wheelchair batteries;
7. Unwillingness to try to learn a child's means of communication;
8. Ill-fitting equipment. for example callipers, sleep boards, inappropriate splinting;
9. Misappropriation of a child's finances; or
10. Inappropriate invasive procedures

There is a concern sometimes that, for children with SEN and disabilities, that their SEN or disability needs are seen first, and the potential for abuse a second. If children are behaving in particular ways or they are distressed or their behaviour or demeanour is different from in the past, staff should think about that as being a sign of the potential for abuse, and not simply see it as part of their disability or their special educational needs. Children with SEND have a higher risk of being left out, or being isolated from their peers, and they are disproportionately affected by bullying. Our pastoral system makes sure that children with SEN and disabilities have got a greater availability of mentoring and support.

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning and Asexual (LGBTQIA+)

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBTQIA+ is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBTQIA+ can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBTQIA+ (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBTQIA+

Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBTQIA+ lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

LGBTQIA+ inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum and we have a range of support available to help our homes and school counter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and abuse.

Allegations against staff:

Levels of threshold - KCSIE identifies two levels of allegation/concern: those that may meet the harms threshold and those that do not ('low level concerns').

Allegations that may meet the harms threshold:

These are allegations that might indicate that a person will pose a risk of harm if they continue to work in their present position, or in any capacity with children in our homes and school. If it has been alleged that any member of staff including supply teachers, and contractors has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child and/or;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or;

- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children: and/or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (including because of transferable risk- i.e. behaviour that has happened outside of school.)
- If we identify:
 - that a child has been harmed,
 - that there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child, or
 - if the situation is an emergency,

Concerns and allegations that meet the harms test should be addressed as below (see KCSIE 2025 para 70, and 359 etc):

- Any allegations against staff, DSL, supply staff or volunteers **must** be referred to the Head, who will do no more than basic enquiries in line with local procedures before referral to the LADO.
- Pear Tree School has a sole proprietor Head and in line with KCSIE, any allegations against a sole proprietor Head must be referred directly to the LADO (without informing the Head).
- Similarly, where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the Head, any such allegation **must** be referred directly to the LADO (without informing the Head).

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold ('low-level concerns')

Along with the staff code of conduct and whistleblowing policy, this policy makes clear the importance of sharing ANY concerns that staff may have. These may arise from a variety of sources, including suspicion, complaint, a disclosure (by child or adult) or during vetting checks.

KCSIE 2025 describes it as critical that a culture is created in which all concerns about adults are shared responsibly and with the right person, recorded and dealt with appropriately. This should enable an open and transparent culture, enable the early identification of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, minimise the risk of abuse, ensure that adults working in schools are clear about and act within professional boundaries in accordance with the values and ethos of the institution, and protect those working in or on behalf of schools from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

A low-level concern is 'any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate contact outside of work, and
- does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.'
- These behaviours can exist on a wide spectrum, from inadvertent to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. They include, for example:
- being over friendly with children;

- having favourites;
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;
- engaging with children on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.

Low-level concerns about a member of staff should be reported to the Head. Staff should feel confident to self-refer where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards. Low-level concerns about someone employed by a supply agency or contractor should be shared with the head, the concern recorded, and their employer notified so that potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Where a third party has raised the concern, the head should collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern (if known);
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

The headteacher should record all low-level concerns in writing. This should include: details of the concern;

- the context in which it arose;
- evidence collected by the DSL where the concern has been raised via a third party;
- the decision categorising the type of behaviour;
- action taken;
- the rationale for decisions and action taken; the name of the individual sharing the concerns (respecting any wish to remain anonymous as far as possible)

Safeguarding children and whistleblowing:

A member of staff who has concerns about the behaviour of another member of staff towards a child can be confident that such concerns will be thoroughly investigated. All staff working within our school and homes must report any potential safeguarding concerns about an individual behaviour towards children immediately. No member of staff should have any hesitation about making any such report in good faith.

Record keeping in relation to allegations against staff:

It is important that employers keep a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made, details of how the allegations were followed up and resolved, and any action taken, and decisions reached.

These should be kept in a person's confidential personal file, and a copy should be given to the individual. Such information should be retained on file, including for people who leave the organisation, at least until the person reaches the normal retirement age, or for 10 years if that is longer. The following information must be kept on the file of the person accused:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation;

- details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved;
- a note of any action taken, and decisions reached and (new) whether the outcome was substantiated, unsubstantiated or unfounded;
- a copy provided to the person concerned, where agreed by children's social care or the police
- a declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference

Substantiated allegations should from September 2021 be included in references, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions.

All Pear Tree Homes and Pear Tree School have a Safeguarding Log for incidents relevant to the home / school. This includes when a safeguarding concern is suspected in relation to children or staff. Pear Tree Head Office will maintain a central log of all additional or corporate concerns.

The purpose of the record is to enable accurate information to be given in response to any future request for a reference. It will provide clarification in cases where a future DBS reveals information from the police that an allegation was made but did not result in a prosecution or a conviction.

The records must be kept confidential, held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. They should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where such a pattern is identified, the school/home should either take action through its disciplinary procedures or, if it meets the harms threshold, refer to the LADO. KCSIE specifies that, 'Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.' It is recommended that schools retain this information at least until the individual leaves their employment. Detailed guidance is provided in KCSIE as to when a low-level concern should be referred to in a reference.

More detailed guidance and case studies on low-level concerns are available in Developing and implementing a low-level concerns policy (farrer.co.uk).

For further information please see - GDPR policy No. 71 - Guidance and Good Practice for Homes and Schools.

Further Guidance in respect of Allegations made against Staff:

This guidance has been developed as a response to "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023" and "Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025" which set out as

statutory guidance the responsibility placed on all employers and other organisations who provide services to children. It outlines what steps to take when allegations of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour toward a child are made against someone in that organisation or contractors/visitors. It also outlines the process that will then be undertaken both within the organisation and by outside agencies that are involved. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities of key figures within the process.

The aims of the child protection procedures are to:

- Prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people.
- Promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe practice.
- Identify instances in which there are grounds for concern about a child's welfare and to take appropriate action to keep them safe.
- Contribute effective partnership working between all those involved with providing services for children.

A framework for dealing with allegations made against a person who works with children, Working Together 2023 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, should be applied when there is an allegation that a person who works with children has:

- 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 s/he is unsuitable to work with children

Also in connection with his/her employment or voluntary activity, or where:

- Concerns arise about the person's behaviour with regard to his/her own children.
- Concerns arise about the behaviour in the private or community life of a partner, member of the family or other household member.

Recognising and Responding to an Allegation

There are a number of sources from which a complaint or an allegation might arise, including from:

- A child or an adult.
- A parent.
- A member of the public.
- A disciplinary investigation.

An allegation may also require consideration arising from.

- Child protection enquiries by Children's Social Care.
- A Criminal investigation by the Police.
- A Staff disciplinary procedure
- A Complaints procedure
- Or if an allegation relating to a child is made about a person who undertakes paid or unpaid care of vulnerable adults, consideration should be given to the possible need to alert those who manage her/him in that role.

- Or these procedures can also be applied if a complaint or an allegation is made against a person in relation to his/her work with adult service users, which causes concern about the welfare of an adult service user's children.

How to Respond to a Complaint or an Allegation:

The person to whom an allegation or concern is reported should not question the child or investigate the matter further, however they should:

- Treat the matter seriously.
- Avoid asking leading questions and keep an open mind.
- Communicate with the child (if the complainant) in a way that is appropriate to the child's age, understanding and preferred language or communication style.
- Make a written record of the information (where possible in the child's own words), including:
 1. When the alleged incident took place (time and date).
 2. Who was present?
 3. What was said to have happened.
 4. Sign and date the written record.
- Report the matter immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or in their absence the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).
- Forward the written record to the office within 24hrs.

Initial Action:

Inform placing authority and Ofsted at the earliest opportunity. (Residential homes)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should not investigate the matter by interviewing the accused person, the child or potential witnesses. However, they should:

- Maintain detailed records (chronology) with dates and times.
- Obtain written details of the allegation, signed and dated by the person receiving the complaint, or allegation (not the child/person making the allegation).
- Countersign and date the written details.
- Record any other information about times dates and location of incident(s) and names of any potential witnesses.
- Record any discussions regarding the incident, any decisions made and reasons for those decisions.
- The police must be informed about any case in which a criminal offence involving a child may have been committed.
- If the allegation meets any of the criteria below the Designated Safeguarding Lead should report it to the LADO within 1 working day.
 1. The person has behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
 2. There is a possibility that the person has committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
 3. They have behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children
 4. Or in connection with his/her employment or voluntary activity, or where:

- Concerns arise about the person's behaviour with regard to his/her own children.
- Concerns arise about the behaviour in the private or community life of a partner, member of the family or other household member.

Referral should not be delayed in order to gather information.

If a concern or an allegation requiring immediate attention is received outside normal office hours the Designated Safeguarding Lead should contact Children's Services Social Care Emergency Duty Team or local police and ensure that the LADO is informed the next working day.

What happens next?

The LADO (in consultation with appropriate others) should:

- Establish that the allegation is within the scope of their procedures.
- Verify whether there is evidence or information that enables an outcome of the allegation.
- Consider whether further details are needed.

If the allegation is not patently false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm the LADO should immediately refer to Children's Services Social Care and ask them to initiate a child protection strategy discussion straight away.

If the significant harm threshold is not reached, but a police investigation might be needed, the LADO should tell the police immediately and initiate an initial evaluation discussion with the police, employer and other agencies involved with the child to evaluate the complaint or allegation and decide how it should be dealt with.

An allegations strategy discussion or initial evaluation should normally take the form of a face-to-face meeting with a dedicated minute taker wherever practicable. In an emergency it can be conducted by way of a series of telephone calls. The timescale from referral to strategy discussion is 2 working days.

A skilled, experienced Registered Manager / DDSL will normally chair the meeting, and the participants should be sufficiently senior to contribute all relevant available information about the allegation child and accused person and make decisions on behalf of their agencies.

The participants may include:

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Relevant social worker and his/her manager.
- Supervising social worker and his/her manager when an allegation is made against foster carer.
- Police representatives.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead for Pear Tree.
- Human Resources representatives as appropriate.

- A medical practitioner with an appropriate area of specialist knowledge, i.e., LAC nurse
- Where a child is placed by or resident in the area of another local authority, a representative of that authority.

The strategy discussion or initial evaluation, as appropriate, should also consider:

- Child protection enquiries by Children's Social Care.
- Criminal investigation by the Police.
- Review any previous concerns or allegations about conduct of the accused person.
- Decide whether there should be a S47 (Children Act 1989) enquiry and/or police investigation and consider the implications.
- Consider whether any parallel disciplinary process should take place.
- Consider whether a complex abuse investigation is applicable.
- Scope and plan enquiries.
- Allocate tasks and set time-scales.
- Decide what information can be shared, with whom and when.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to protect the child/ren involved and any other child/ren affected, including taking emergency action where needed.
- Consider what support should be provided to all children who may have been affected directly and indirectly.
- Consider what support should be provided to the person against whom the complaint or allegation has been made and others who might have been affected.
- Ensure that investigations are sufficiently independent.
- Make arrangements to inform the child's parents and consider how to provide them with support and information during enquiries.
- Make recommendations where appropriate regarding suspension, or alternatives to suspension, of the subject of the complaint or allegation.
- Identify a lead contact manager within each agency.
- Agree protocols for reviewing investigations and monitoring progress by the LADO, noting the target timescales.
- Agree dates for future strategy or evaluation discussions or meetings.
- Consider obtaining consent from the individuals concerned by the police and children's social care to share the statements and evidence they obtain with the employer and/or regulatory body for disciplinary purposes. We have a duty of care to share information with relevant bodies.

If the allegation is about physical contact, the strategy discussion or initial evaluation should take account of any entitlement by staff in certain professions to use reasonable force to control or restrain children in certain circumstances e.g. Section 550A Education Act 1996 in respect of teachers and authorised school staff.

A final strategy or evaluation discussion should be held at the end of enquiries to ensure that all tasks have been completed and where appropriate to agree an action plan for learning lessons in.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

Resignation

The fact that a person tenders his or her resignation will not prevent an allegation from being followed up in accordance with Local child protection procedures or criminal investigation and a conclusion reached.

Wherever possible the person should be given a full opportunity to answer the allegation and make representations about the allegation. The investigation should continue to a conclusion even if that person has resigned or the person refuses to cooperate.

Disciplinary Process

The LADO should discuss with named person and agree what action is appropriate in all cases where:

- It is clear at the outset or decided by a strategy discussion or initial evaluation that investigations by the police or enquiries by children's social care are not necessary.
- The employer and LADO is informed by the police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that a criminal investigation and any subsequent trial is complete or that an investigation is to be closed without charge or a prosecution discontinued.

The discussion should consider any potential misconduct or gross misconduct on the part of a staff member and take into account:

- Information provided by the police and/or children's social care.
- The result of any investigation or trial and the different standard of proof in disciplinary and criminal proceedings.

The options could range from no further action to not using the person's services in future. The nature and circumstances of the allegation and the evidence and information available determine which of the range of possible options is most appropriate. In line with disciplinary procedures.

Where the initial evaluation decides that the allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence it will be dealt with by the employer who should institute appropriate action within 3 working days.

If a disciplinary hearing is required and it can be held without further investigation, the hearing should be held within 15 working days.

Where further investigation is needed to decide upon disciplinary action, the employer and the LADO should discuss who should undertake that.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the disciplinary investigation to be conducted by a person who is independent of the employer or person's line management to ensure objectivity.

In any case the investigating officer should aim to provide a report within 10 working days.

On receipt of the report, the employer should decide within 2 working days whether a disciplinary hearing is needed and if so it should be held within 15 working days.

Action In Respect of Unsubstantiated Allegations

Where there is insufficient evidence to substantiate an allegation, the employer should consider what further action, if any, should be taken.

Action In Respect of False Allegations

If an allegation is false, the employer, in consultation with the LADO, should refer the matter to Children's Services social care to determine whether the child is in need of services, or might have been abused by someone else.

If an allegation has been deliberately invented or malicious, the police should be asked to consider whether any action might be appropriate against the person responsible.

Referral to Disclosure and Barring Service

If the allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or the employer ceases to use the person's services, or the person resigns or otherwise ceases to provide his/her services, the LADO should discuss with the employer whether a referral should be made for consideration as to the individual being barred from, or have conditions imposed in respect of, working with children.

If it is agreed that a referral is required or desirable, the LADO should advise on the form and content of such a referral and whether it should be made to the DBS.

Referral to the Teaching Regulation Agency

The LADO may also advise whether it is appropriate to make a referral to a professional body or regulator e.g. the General Social Care Council, the Teaching Regulation Agency and the General Medical Council.

Where Pear Tree dismisses or ceases to use the services of a teacher because of serious misconduct or might have dismissed them or ceased to use their services had they not left first, the school will consider whether to refer the case to the Secretary of State (via the Teaching Regulation Agency).

Sharing Information for Disciplinary Purposes

Consideration should be given at the beginning of enquiries by the police and Children's Services social care to gain consent from those involved, to use the statements obtained and information gathered for any subsequent disciplinary purposes. This should be done as the investigation proceeds rather than after it is concluded to enable the sharing of relevant information without delay.

This will enable Children's Services social care, the police and CPS to share relevant information at the conclusion of their investigation or any court case.

If the person is convicted, the police should inform the employer straight away so that appropriate action can be taken.



If the police or CPS decide not to charge or decide to administer a caution, or the person is acquitted, the police should pass all relevant information to the employer without delay.

Appendix 1

Management of safeguarding & oversight

The designated lead ("the DSL") is a member of the school's senior leadership team. Their Job Description is outlined in KCSIE Annex C. They are responsible for the implementation of this and all related policies and procedures, ensuring that the outcomes are monitored. They will:

- meet regularly with the DDSLs and keep minutes of these meetings.
- ensure that the DDSLs have appropriate time, funding, training, and resources to fulfil all of their functions and ensure adequate cover in the event that the DSL isn't available.
- ensure staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- create an environment where staff feel supported in their safeguarding role and able to raise concerns;
- ensure 'practitioners' (such as those who work directly with children) have regular reviews of their own practice so that they have knowledge, skills and experience which improve over time.
- ensure that everyone connected to the homes and school is aware of this policy including safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- ensure that all staff are vigilant to harm and abuse, are able to identify those students for whom there are child protection concerns, and can make appropriate referrals, including to early help services.
- communicate clearly to visitors, parents, and students so everyone understands the school's safeguarding policy and procedures.
- appoint DDSLs considering the range of responsibilities undertaken, e.g. the need to have the flexibility to act immediately on a referral that requires an urgent response and time to attend lengthy meetings or case conferences.
- ensure that contact and role details of the DSL and DDSLs are clearly displayed in staff areas.
- ensure safe recruitment practice is followed when recruiting for posts, and ensure appropriate action is taken when an allegation is made against a member of staff.
- ensure the homes and school offers a safe environment via a robust health and safety policy and procedure to meet the statutory responsibilities for the safety of students and staff.
- ensure the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable

DSL and all DDSLs are responsible for:

- Being available for all staff to discuss any safeguarding issues or concerns.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the DSL and DDSLs contact details.
- Ensuring that all cases of suspected or actual problems associated with child protection or safeguarding concerns (including cases where the early help process may be appropriate) are referred to the appropriate agencies in line with procedures set out in this policy, keeping the Head Teacher appraised

- Ensuring the school's safeguarding policy and practice is relevant and consistent with the most recent statutory guidance outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Being aware of the latest national and local guidance and requirements and keeping the Head Teacher and staff informed as appropriate.
- Attending accredited, enhanced training, as required to fulfil the role.
- Ensuring that appropriate training for staff (including periodic updates via e-bulletins, email, or as part of staff meetings) is organised according to the agreed programme with the Head Teacher and renewed through ongoing professional development.
- Ensuring families are fully aware of the school policies and procedures and kept informed and involved.
- Ensuring that effective communication and liaison take place between the school and the Local Authority or partner agencies, and any other relevant agencies, where there is a Safeguarding concern in relation to a child.
- Ensuring that all staff have an understanding of specific safeguarding issues
- Maintaining details of any looked after child's social worker.
- Dealing with allegations of abuse, including assessments for early help, in accordance with local and statutory procedures.
- Supporting the staff member in liaising with other agencies and setting up an interagency assessment as appropriate if early help is appropriate.
- Ensuring that adequate reporting and recording systems are in place.
- Ensuring relevant records (and further information not contained in the child's child protection file) are passed on appropriately when students transfer to other schools or are being educated at alternative provision or off-site education.
- Referring suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly.
- Contributing and helping other staff to contribute to early help assessments.
- Meeting regularly with the Head Teacher to discuss safeguarding issues including outcomes and implementation of actions relating to case conferences and core groups and all current case work. Other key staff will be invited as appropriate. Safeguarding matters arising will be discussed routinely at each corporate/staff/education meetings.
- Ensuring staff are trained in on-line safety and how to deal with a report of child-on child- abuse
- Preparing an annual review and report to the proprietor.

Appendix 2

Specific Types of Abuse – as listed in KCSIE Annex B

Child abduction and community safety incidents:

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends, and acquaintances); and by strangers. Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a school can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation. As children get older and are granted more independence it is important, they are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe. Within our homes and school, we focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about strangers. Further information is available at: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):

We know that different forms of harm often overlap, and that perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation. In some cases, the exploitation or abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants (for example, money, gifts or affection), and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage, such as increased status, of the perpetrator or facilitator. Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child perpetrator is also recognised as a victim. Whilst the age of the child may be a contributing factor for an imbalance of power, there are a range of other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, including, sexual identity, cognitive ability, learning difficulties, communication ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. Some of the following can be indicators of both child criminal and sexual exploitation where children:

- appear with unexplained gifts, money or new possessions
 - associate with other children involved in exploitation
 - suffer from changes in emotional well-being
 - misuse alcohol and other drugs
 - go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late, and
 - regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education. Children who have been exploited will need additional support to help keep them in education.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Some additional specific indicators that may be present in CSE are children who:
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends; and
 - suffer from sexually transmitted infections, display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development or become pregnant.

Further information on signs of a child's involvement in sexual exploitation is available in Home Office guidance: Child sexual exploitation: guide for practitioners

County lines:

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store, and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of schools (including special schools), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children's homes and care homes. Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home
- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office and The Children's Society County Lines Toolkit for Professionals.

Children and the court system

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age-appropriate guides to support children 5-11-year-olds and 12-17-year-olds. The guides explain each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children.

In the event a child/young person is required to attend criminal court Pear Tree appropriate adults who would accompany them. See 'A guide to act as an appropriate adult'.

Children absent or missing from education

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child 143 criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of their school's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.

Children with family members in prison

Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders, NICCO provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer). Cyber-dependent crimes include:

- unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a school's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded
- 'Denial of Service' (Dos or DDoS) attacks or 'booting'. These are attempts to make a computer, network or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources, and,
- making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above.

Children with particular skills and interest in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime.

If there are concerns about a child in this area, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), should consider referring into the Cyber Choices programme. This is a nationwide police programme supported by the Home Office and led by the National Crime Agency, working with regional and local policing. It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low-level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests. Note that Cyber Choices does not currently cover 'cyber-enabled' crime such as fraud, purchasing of illegal drugs on-line and child sexual abuse and exploitation, nor other areas of concern such as on-line bullying or general on-line safety. Additional advice can be found at: Cyber Choices, 'NPCC- When to call the Police' and National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.GOV.UK.

Domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act introduces the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members. The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be “personally connected” (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act).

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. The government will issue statutory guidance to provide further information for those working with domestic abuse victims and perpetrators, including the impact on children.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as ‘teenage relationship abuse’. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of ‘domestic abuse’ (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child’s welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into local authority children’s social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new

place to live. The following factsheets usefully summarise the new duties: Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets. The new duties shift the focus to early intervention and encourages those at risk to seek support as soon as possible, before they are facing a homelessness crisis.

In most cases school and college staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year-olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Local authority children's social care will be the lead agency for these children and the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have published joint statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.

Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs. Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the NRM is available in Statutory Guidance. Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims - GOV.UK

Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation is when someone starts to believe or support extreme views. They could be pressured to do things illegal by someone else. Or they might change their behaviour and beliefs.

Some children are at risk of being radicalised: adopting beliefs and engaging in activities which are harmful, criminal or dangerous.

People who have certain beliefs about politics or religions which are hateful, dangerous or against the law are often known as extremists. This harmful behaviour is called extremism.

All staff receive training to help to identify signs of extremism. Opportunities are provided in the Pear Tree School curriculum to enable children and young people to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture and the school follows the DfE advice Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural education) in Schools (2014)

Pear Tree is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its children. We recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation is no different from safeguarding against any other vulnerability. All staff are expected to uphold and promote the fundamental principles of British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. See No 43 Prevent Radicalisation Policy

The Prevent duty

All schools and colleges are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter- Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism”. This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

The DSL and DDSLs are familiar with the revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales, especially paragraphs 141-210, which are specifically concerned with education and are aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

Channel

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals are assessed and may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are at risk of being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the school may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual will be required to provide their consent before any support delivered through the programme is provided.

The DSL will consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with a new school in advance of a child leaving Pear Tree. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse or those who are currently receiving support through the ‘Channel’ programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary to secondary stage and into colleges. It can also occur online. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. Detailed advice is available in the ‘Child-on-child abuse’ policy.

KCSIE 2025 para 474 recommends that, if possible, managing report of sexual violence or harassment with two members of staff present, preferably inc the DSL or a DDSL.

Serious Violence

There are a number of indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include:

increased absence from school

- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- a significant decline in performance
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as:

- being male
- having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

A fuller list of risk factors can be found in the Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy. Professionals should also be aware that violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils are travelling to and from school. These times can be particularly risky for young people involved in serious violence.

Advice for schools is provided in the Home Office's Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Toolkit sets out the evidence for what works in preventing young people from becoming involved in violence.

Home Office funded Violence Reduction Units (VRU) operate in the 20 police force areas across England and Wales that have the highest volumes of serious violence, as measured by hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object. A list of these locations can be found [here](#). As the strategic co-ordinators for local violence prevention, each VRU is mandated to include at least one local education representative within their Core Membership group, which is responsible for setting the direction for VRU activity. Schools and educational partners within these areas are encouraged to reach out to their local VRU, either directly or via their education Core Member, to better ingrain partnership working to tackle serious violence across local areas and ensure a joined up approach to young people across the risk spectrum.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act have introduced early in 2023 a new duty on a range of specified authorities, such as the police, local government, youth offending teams, health and probation services, to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities. Educational authorities and prisons/youth custody authorities will be under a separate duty to co-operate with core duty holders when asked, and there will be a requirement for the partnership to consult with all such institutions in their area.

The Duty is not intended to replace or duplicate existing safeguarding duties. Local partners may choose to meet the requirements of the Duty through existing multi-agency structures, such as multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, providing the correct set of partners are involved.

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (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. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

If staff have a concern regarding a child who might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the DSL. As appropriate, the DSL will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with the police and local authority children's social care.

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

FGM mandatory reporting duty for teachers

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases may face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining pupils or students, but the same definition of what is meant by "to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out" is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies. Information on when and how to make a report can be found at: [Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation procedural information](#).

Teachers must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the teacher has good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the DSL and involve local authority children's social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures. The following is a useful summary of the FGM mandatory reporting duty: [FGM Fact Sheet](#). Further information can be found in the [Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation](#) and the [FGM resource pack](#) particularly section 13.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices to coerce a person into marriage.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has created guidelines on handling cases of forced marriage (chapter 8 relates to schools) and dealing with forced marriage, which can both be found at [The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage -GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/the-right-to-choose-government-guidance-on-forced-marriage) . School staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: 02070080151 or email fm@fcdo.gov.uk.

In addition, since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

The following are other policies that relate to Safeguarding and Child Protection in Guidance and Good Practice for homes and school:

No 83 Mental health and well being

No 35-38 Behaviour management policy

No 43 Prevent radicalisation

No 48 Whistleblowing

No 45 Anti Bullying policy

Pear Tree Digital Technology (e-safety) document