

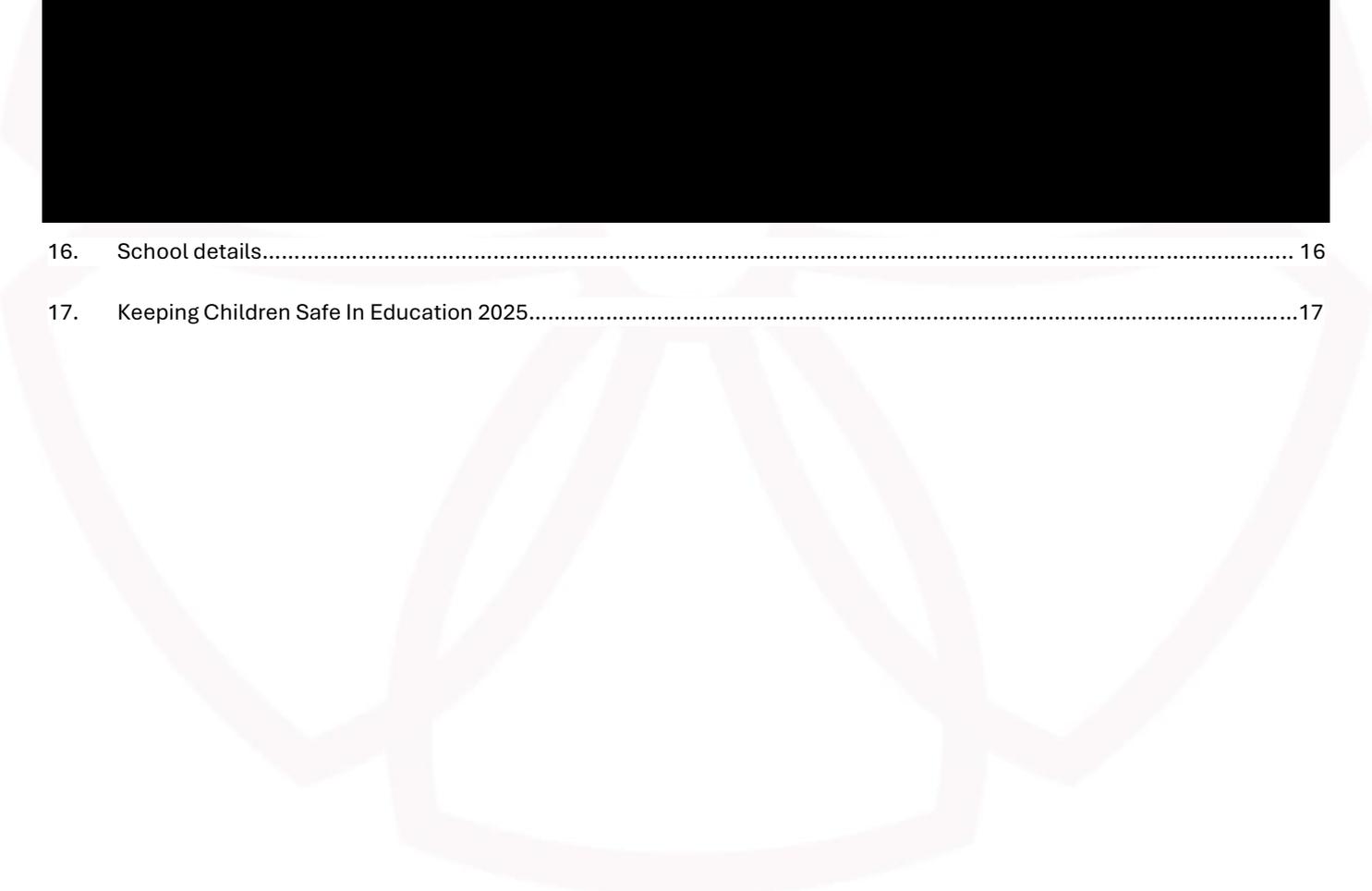
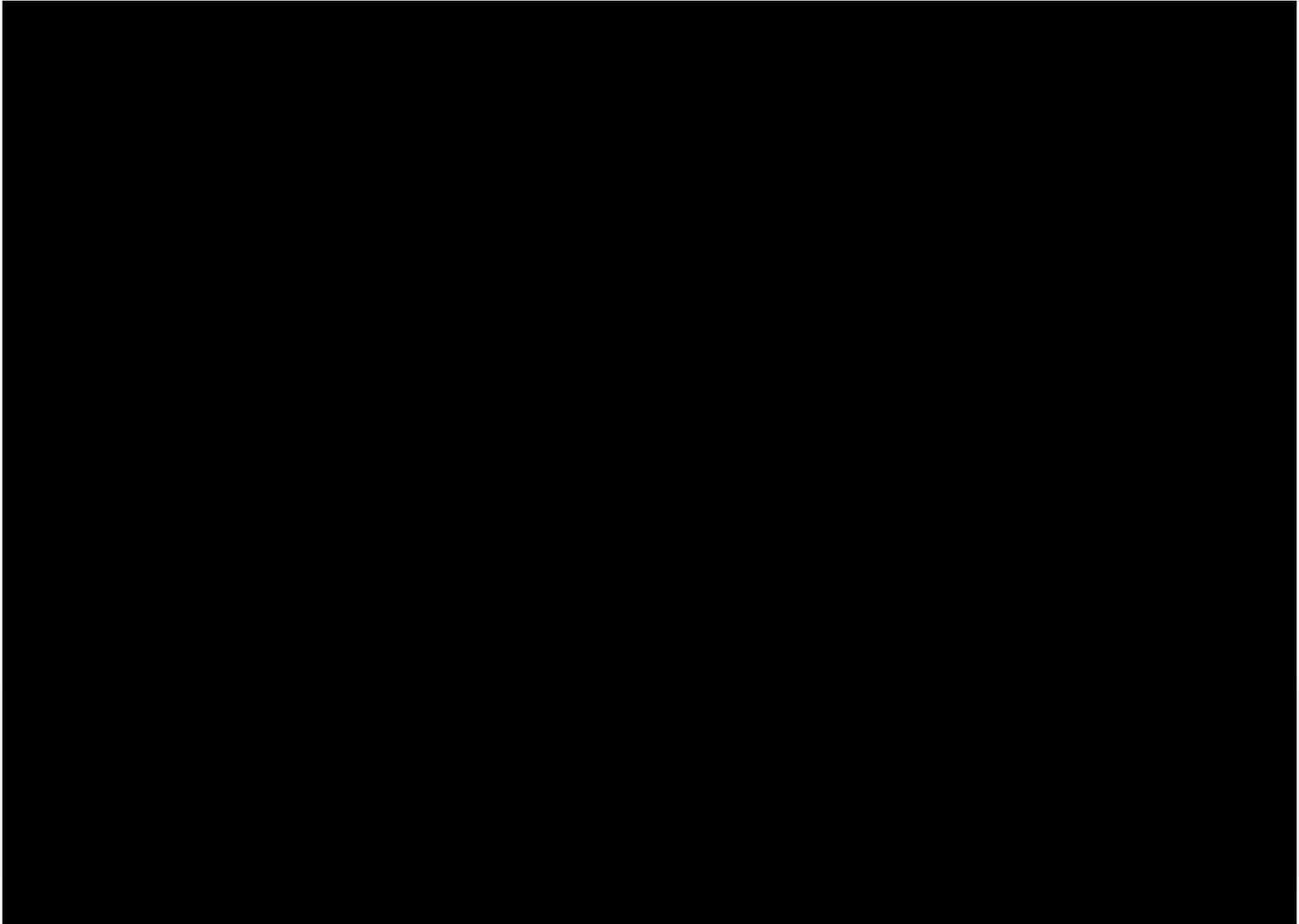
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Author	Trust Safeguarding Lead
Date of issue	09/2025
Date ratified	
Date for review	09/2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed every year. Should no substantive changes be required at that point, the policy will move to the next review cycle.

Version	Date	Reviewer	Changes
1.0	09/2024	N Miley A Robson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Trust-wide policy created to reflect national changes•
1.1	08/2025	A Robson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy updated to reflect national changes including:• 5.10.3.17 - updated to include attendance at all appropriate meetings.• 5.11.2 - added to ensure clarity around training• 9.1.7 - added a point around suspensions, exclusions and alternative provision being an alert for early help.• Added section 10 to include alternative provision guidance.• 14.1.2 - added to cover the four 'C's of online risk.



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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Mercia Learning Trust takes seriously its 'duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at each of their schools.' (Children Act 1989 and Education Act 2004). The welfare of the child is paramount and we adhere to all aspects of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).
- 1.2. Nothing is more important than children's welfare and we will always work in the best interests of the child. All children must have equal rights to protection. We fully understand and accept that child protection and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that involves preventing impairment to children's physical and mental health.
- 1.3. We are committed to having in place procedures that will support informed and sensitive management of safeguarding and child protection issues. Our Trust recognises that there are several inter-linking components which form an integrated framework to provide a protective and preventative service. These include:
 - 1.3.1. known operational policies and procedures for dealing with child protection issues.
 - 1.3.2. clear structures to support the child protection function (i.e. designated lead, named safeguarding advocate on the Local Governing Body, a Trust Board Lead and a clear policy).
 - 1.3.3. a Safer Recruitment policy and procedures (see policies).
 - 1.3.4. ensuring that staff understand the expected code of conduct for working with children (see Code of Conduct policy).
 - 1.3.5. clear structures to continue to safeguard pupils who are on roll at a Mercia Learning Trust school but based at an alternative provision, on a managed move to another school, have a part-time timetable, or where there is a persistent absence issue.
 - 1.3.6. ensuring that pupils are empowered and aware of issues related to their own welfare (particularly through the PSHE programme and assemblies).
- 1.4. Our Trust recognises the importance of being vigilant at all times in safeguarding all children and adults, both with regards to those we know and also those we do not, and in never believing that 'it could never happen here'. In relation to this, we recognise that it is possible for staff (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) to behave in a way that causes harm to children.
- 1.5. We take any allegation about safeguarding seriously and follow local arrangements for dealing with any allegation, following the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025. All staff understand that any concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- 1.6. This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by:
 - 1.6.1. Children Acts (1989) and (2004)
 - 1.6.2. Education Act (2002), and in line with government publications
 - 1.6.3. Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' (2000)
 - 1.6.4. What to do if you are worried a Child is Being Abused – Advice for Practitioners (2015)
 - 1.6.5. Disqualification under the Childcare Act (2006)
 - 1.6.6. Equality Act (2010)
 - 1.6.7. Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)
 - 1.6.8. Children and Social Work Act (2017)
 - 1.6.9. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
 - 1.6.10. Data Protection Act (2018)
 - 1.6.11. Positive Environments Where Children Can Flourish – Ofsted (2018)
 - 1.6.12. Teaching On-line Safety in Schools (June 2019)
 - 1.6.13. Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges (March 2023)
 - 1.6.14. Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)
- 1.7. Safeguarding pupils is a core function of our Trust and a whole-school approach is maintained in all our schools. As such, this policy relates to many other policies and in particular the following:
 - 1.7.1. Acceptable Use of Information Technology
 - 1.7.2. Behaviour
 - 1.7.3. Child Missing in Education

- 1.7.4. Code of conduct
 - 1.7.5. Educational Visits
 - 1.7.6. Health and Safety
 - 1.7.7. Looked After Children (Designated Person)
 - 1.7.8. Management of Allegations of Abuse against Staff
 - 1.7.9. Recruitment and Selection
 - 1.7.10. Relationships and Health Education (Primary)
 - 1.7.11. Relationship and Sex Education
 - 1.7.12. Whistleblowing
- 1.8. All staff (including Trustees, Governors, teachers, support staff, supply staff, volunteers and contractors) are made aware of and take seriously their responsibilities so that every precaution can be taken to minimise risk of harm to our pupils whilst they are in our schools, when being educated off-site, and in their lives outside of education.
- 1.9. This policy will be reviewed in light of any legislative or guidance changes, at least annually and through consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Leads across our Trust, headteachers and the leadership group of our Trust.

2. Scope and purpose

- 2.1.** Ensure that all staff understand their role as part of a wider safeguarding system for children, the `duty of care` placed on them and their role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils.
- 2.2. Ensure all staff understand that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and, in order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child. Staff must never assume that a colleague or other professional will take the action needed, and must share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.
- 2.3.** Ensure that all staff know that no single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and to understand the importance of taking concerns and disclosures seriously, taking prompt action, and sharing information appropriately.
- 2.4. Ensure that all staff understand the procedures in place when dealing with potential child protection issues.
- 2.5. Ensure that children with protected characteristics are not unlawfully discriminated against and that proportionate action is taken to address the disadvantages they face, in general and in safeguarding in particular.
- 2.6. Ensure that children continue to be safeguarded when being educated off-site for any reason, including non-attendance and remote learning arrangements.
- 2.7. Demonstrate our Trust's commitment and procedures with regards to child protection.
- 2.8. Contribute to the wider safeguarding portfolio of policies.
- 2.9. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of the guidance and this policy as:
- 2.9.1. providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
 - 2.9.2. protecting children from maltreatment whether that is in or outside the home or online.
 - 2.9.3. preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
 - 2.9.4. ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
 - 2.9.5. and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

3. Procedures and training

- 3.1. In order to minimise risk to pupils, the main elements to our safeguarding practice are as follows:
- 3.1.1. We practice safer recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers in every school and centrally to work with children (see Safer Recruitment Selection policy).
 - 3.1.2. We continually review all practices in order to establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop (see Health and Safety policy).
 - 3.1.3. We raise awareness of child protection issues with pupils and aim to equip them with the skills needed to keep them safe.

- 3.1.4. We ensure staff are aware of how to conduct themselves with pupils and give regular training on Child Protection and Safeguarding. All staff in school have read Part 1 (or, if they do not work directly with children, Annex A) of Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2025) and re-read it on an annual basis to ensure a common understanding that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- 3.1.5. Regular updates are provided to staff via emails, bulletins and/or staff meetings. Formal training is delivered at least annually and regular updates keep safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's thinking and practice.
- 3.1.6. All relevant staff are informed of the pupils with social workers and they understand that they have a particular responsibility for removing barriers to learning for this disadvantaged group.
- 3.1.7. All staff receive specific training about online safety, particularly in relation to the remote education of pupils and use of technology to support teaching and learning.
- 3.1.8. The Early Help ethos ensures that we provide support for our pupils as soon as a problem is identified. This applies to all pupils from Early Years to those in their teens. Staff discuss Early Help requirements with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and support other agencies undertaking an Early Help assessment.
- 3.1.9. We recognise that some children are more vulnerable than others and therefore may be more at risk from abuse (see section 8 below).
- 3.1.10. We carry out appropriate risk assessments in all schools for all school activities (e.g. educational visits) and also for individual children as necessary.
- 3.1.11. We have procedures in place to continue to safeguard pupils who, for a period of time, are educated in alternative provision, are on a managed move to another school, on part-time timetables, have persistent attendance issues, or who are being educated remotely.
- 3.1.12. We raise awareness with all pupils of the risks of technologies through teaching about online safety all our schools are 'mobile phone' free as we recognise the risks posed to children from mobile technology, including excessive use.
- 3.1.13. We use filtering and monitoring software so that concerns can be responded to, and all staff receive information on how this works and how it can support their practice
- 3.1.14. We encourage a positive atmosphere of openness and support where pupils are encouraged to have the confidence to talk to familiar adults with the understanding that they will be listened to. Time is dedicated in the pastoral curriculum to allow for teaching of all aspects of safeguarding.
- 3.1.15. We operate a 'zero-tolerance' approach to child-on-child abuse, including bullying, cyberbullying and prejudiced-based and discriminatory bullying.
- 3.1.16. We have a strong emphasis on pupil voice through the pupil council, subject reviews, policy reviews and the employment of key staff.
- 3.1.17. We have procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases of abuse and are ever vigilant to all concerns regarding any unhealthy opinions or behaviours a child may display.
- 3.1.18. We support pupils who have been abused in accordance with their agreed child protection plan and offer non-prejudicial support for those who make allegations.
- 3.1.19. We ensure all staff have training in child protection procedures at induction. These procedures follow the guidelines set out by Ofsted, Circular 10 / 95, Safeguarding Children in Education 2004 and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025). Staff will be updated annually to ensure everyone is trained in how to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns. Staff training is tailored to the role of the individual, this includes governors and Trustees.
- 3.1.20. We are committed to working with other agencies in order to safeguard children and setting up an interagency assessment as appropriate under the Early Help system (see Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023).
- 3.1.21. In all schools, we will consider the child's wishes or feelings when determining what action to take and what services to provide to ensure every child is safe but staff do not promise confidentiality at any point. We recognise that children may not feel ready, or not know how to disclose abuse, and this is something we seek to minimise through education and strong relationships. All staff are trained to ensure that pupils are reassured that they are being taken seriously, and that they are never made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by sharing information about their wellbeing and safety.
- 3.1.22. Each school has an identified Designated Safeguarding Lead, who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team, appropriately trained, and who has capacity to perform all aspects of the role.
- 3.1.23. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and any Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads undertake formal re-designation training every year with a recognised trainer from the Local Authority.

- 3.1.24. Our Trust commissions an external safeguarding review on a biennial basis.
- 3.1.25. All DSLs have access to internal safeguarding supervision.
- 3.1.26. This policy applies to every Trust school and our whole Trust community.

4. Trust commitment

- 4.1. We recognise that, for pupils, high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult promotes prevention. Schools in our Trust will therefore:
 - 4.1.1. work to establish and maintain an ethos where pupils feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
 - 4.1.2. ensure that pupils know there are adults in the school who they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
 - 4.1.3. include in the curriculum activities and opportunities for personal and social development which will equip pupils with the skills they need to recognise and be safe from abuse (see RSE policies and consult individual school websites for further information on their PSHE or equivalent curriculum). Pupils need to recognise behaviours which are unacceptable from peers and adults.
 - 4.1.4. ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents whilst always putting the needs of the child first.
 - 4.1.5. ensure that our approach to managing behaviour is positive and that staff understand how to behave when working with children.
 - 4.1.6. recognise their obligation to work with and co-operate with colleagues from other agencies (Education Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023).
 - 4.1.7. ensure all staff are aware of the school guidance for their use of mobile technology and have discussed issues around the use of mobile technologies and their associated risks.
 - 4.1.8. ensure that appropriate and effective filtering and monitoring software, currently Smoothwall (firewall) and Senso (monitoring), is in place and staff are able to use it effectively.
 - 4.1.9. ensure that staff are fully aware of the different types of child abuse and signs of abuse (see appendix)
 - 4.1.10. recognise that staff build up expertise in dealing with concerns and safeguarding issues over time. Therefore, our Trust will provide opportunities for staff to contribute to shaping the safeguarding arrangements and child protection policies.
 - 4.1.11. have the same high expectations for safeguarding in Alternative Provision and by any other partner organisation being used by any of our schools.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1. The Headteacher, supported by our Trust Board, Trust Leadership Team and Local Governing Bodies (LGBs), has overall responsibility for ensuring all aspects of child protection and safeguarding are paramount in their school. This duty cannot be delegated.
- 5.2. Each school also has a named Governor who is an advocate for child protection who is also trained on a regular basis and who has the responsibility to ensure that the school has an effective policy and structures in place to support the safeguarding of children.
- 5.3. Our Trust Board has a lead safeguarding link who has the responsibility to ensure that our Trust has an effective policy and structures in place to support the safeguarding of children.
- 5.4. Each school in our Trust has a 'Designated Safeguarding Lead' (DSL) who is a senior member of staff and has the responsibilities seen in Annex C in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025'.
- 5.5. Our Trust has a specific job description for both the DSL and named advocate which is available on request.
- 5.6. All staff need to be aware of the signs of child abuse and neglect; staff must inform the DSL in total confidence, and a sensitive, tactful and confidential investigation will then take place. If the signs are confirmed, one of the school's trained safeguarding team will manage any potential Child Protection issue.
- 5.7. All staff understand that child protection information is 'need to know' and confidential information about a child should not be freely shared but that neither the Data Protection Act (2018) nor UK GDPR prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of safeguarding children. The child's interests come first and their dignity must be protected.
- 5.8. The headteacher should ensure that:
 - 5.8.1. regular supervision meetings take place so that they are kept up to date with all matters, and also to formally check the welfare of all school safeguarding team members.

- 5.8.2. there is sufficient capacity, including having enough trained staff and that those staff are given enough time and resource, to meet the safeguarding demands of the school.
 - 5.8.3. there is sufficient capacity to continue to respond to concerns raised (either through CPOMS, online monitoring software, or direct contact by a child, family, staff member, external organisations including Children's Social Care, or a member of the public) outside of school hours.
 - 5.8.4. the requirements set out in the Safeguarding Supervision Policy are met.
- 5.9. The headteacher should make all referrals to the LADO for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member); Disclosure and Barring Service (cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk / harm to a child); and / or the police (cases where a crime may have been committed). If the concern is about the headteacher, the referral will be managed by the relevant member of our Trust leadership team. If the concern is about a member of our Trust leadership team, the referral will be managed by the chair of our Trust.

5.10. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- 5.10.1. On induction, all staff are advised of the names of their Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and wider safeguarding team (sometimes referred to as Deputy DSLs).
- 5.10.2. Schools ensure that the DSL and deputy DSLs have a high-profile among staff and pupils.

5.10.3. Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection:

- 5.10.3.1. Lead on all aspects of safeguarding and child protection including online safety and understand the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place. .
- 5.10.3.2. Liaise with the headteacher to inform them of issues, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.
- 5.10.3.3. Oversee staff referrals through the on-line platform (CPOMS).
- 5.10.3.4. Seek advice and guidance in line with the local safeguarding board's practice.
- 5.10.3.5. Make referrals to Children's Social Care if there is a concern that the child is suffering significant harm or is likely to do so, understanding that all referrals are child-centred and the needs of the child are paramount.
- 5.10.3.6. Make referrals to Channel if there is a concern regarding terrorism, radicalisation or extremism.
- 5.10.3.7. Ensure the voice of the child is heard and that the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context is communicated.
- 5.10.3.8. Make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism if there are any concerns that a child may be a potential victim of slavery or human trafficking.
- 5.10.3.9. Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, for example those with special educational needs and young carers.
- 5.10.3.10. Refer promptly all cases of suspected child abuse to the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub. In the case of a Social Worker attending a school to see the pupil following a referral, if the pupil's parent arrives to collect the pupil before the Social Worker it must be remembered that we have no right to prevent the removal of the pupil. However, if there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, the Police will be called.
- 5.10.3.11. Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- 5.10.3.12. Ensure written records of concerns about a child are kept even if there is no need to make an immediate referral and ensure these records are stored securely and separate to the pupil's curriculum file until the child's 25th birthday.
- 5.10.3.13. Work with the headteacher in informing the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member); Disclosure and Barring Service (cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk / harm to a child); and / or the police (cases where a crime may have been committed).
- 5.10.3.14. The headteacher should make all referrals to the LADO or, where appropriate, delegate to the DSL. If the concern is about the headteacher, the referral will be managed by the relevant member of our Trust leadership team. The CEO should be informed.
- 5.10.3.15. If the concern is about a member of our trust leadership team, the referral will be managed by the chair of our Trust.
- 5.10.3.16. Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of safety and safeguarding, and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies.

- 5.10.3.17. Attend all child protection multi-agency conferences and contribute to child protection plans. Understand the role of other child protection and safeguarding agencies. Attend strategy and inter-agency meetings and/or supporting other staff to do so and contributing to the assessment of children.
- 5.10.3.18. Co-ordinate annual statutory training as well as regular training and information updates for all staff to keep child protection and the welfare of children paramount.
- 5.10.3.19. Ensure all staff read and understand Part 1 of the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, this policy, and related policies and guidance as signposted by the DSL and senior leadership team.
- 5.10.3.20. Designated Safeguarding Leads (or deputies) should undergo the relevant Child Protection training, and ensure training is updated every year in order to act as a source of support and expertise for our learning community.
- 5.10.3.21. Ensure that new staff (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) receive safeguarding children induction in their first days of working at the schools in our Trust, ensuring that they have close supervision when they are around children until they have completed their training successfully.
- 5.10.3.22. Have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a Child Protection Case Conference and a Child Protection Review Conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- 5.10.3.23. Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses.
- 5.10.3.24. Understand the assessment process for providing early help and intervention, for example through locally agreed common and shared assessment processes such as Early Help assessments.
- 5.10.3.25. Encourage a culture of listening to children, including taking any concerns or disclosures seriously and ensuring children do not feel that they are causing a problem or inconvenience, feel reassured and not shamed, and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures the school may put in place to protect them.
- 5.10.3.26. Be clear that early help is the most effective way of promoting the welfare of children and understand how to work with other agencies to provide this for children and families in need and be alert to the potential need for early help for children with certain characteristics (see section 8 below).
- 5.10.3.27. Ensure all staff are aware of school processes and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- 5.10.3.28. Work with our Trust's leadership team in reviewing the Safeguarding Policy annually and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly.
- 5.10.3.29. Work with the governor advocates in reviewing procedures and producing training and updates including an annual written report.
- 5.10.3.30. Ensure the Safeguarding Policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- 5.10.3.31. Ensure that the school operates within the legislative framework and recommended guidance.
- 5.10.3.32. Make links with the Local Safeguarding Board to make sure staff are aware of training opportunities and the latest local policies on safeguarding.
- 5.10.3.33. Ensure the Designated Safeguarding Lead attends case conferences or nominates an appropriate member of staff to attend on their behalf.
- 5.10.3.34. Where children leave the school, ensure their Child Protection file is forwarded to any new school or college as soon as possible but transferred separately from the main pupil file.
- 5.10.3.35. Develop effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies to support the protection of children.

5.11. Local Governing Body:

- 5.11.1. The LGB has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard the children in their establishment. Each school will have a nominated advocate in respect to child protection. In particular, the LGB must ensure that:
 - 5.11.1.1. the Safeguarding Policy and procedures are in place, followed and reviewed annually.
 - 5.11.1.2. safer recruitment procedures are in place and followed.
 - 5.11.1.3. there is a Designated Safeguarding Lead who is a member of the school's leadership team.
 - 5.11.1.4. the school provides relevant safeguarding children training for school staff and volunteers.
 - 5.11.1.5. each school follows the process and procedure for dealing with allegations.

- 5.11.1.6. they work with the school to ensure that deficiencies or weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements are remedied without delay.
 - 5.11.1.7. they evaluate how children are being taught about safeguarding.
 - 5.11.1.8. they check that the SCR and DBSs are in place for all advocates and staff at least annually.
 - 5.11.1.9. they dedicate meeting time to consider child protection matters in including referrals (see annual agenda).
 - 5.11.1.10. the Chair is responsible in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against the headteacher.
 - 5.11.1.11. this policy is ratified by our Trust board and made public on the school's website.
- 5.11.2. All Local Governing Body members will receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and at regular intervals thereafter. This training will provide them with the knowledge and skills required to ensure all of the above.
- 5.12. Trust Board
- 5.12.1. Our Trust Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard the children in our Trust. In particular, the Trust board must ensure that:
 - 5.12.1.1. The Safeguarding Policy and procedures are in place, followed and reviewed annually.
 - 5.12.1.2. safer recruitment procedures are in place and followed.
 - 5.12.1.3. there is a Designated Safeguarding Lead Governor for each school.
 - 5.12.1.4. our Trust school provides relevant safeguarding children training for all staff and volunteers.
 - 5.12.1.5. all staff follow the process and procedure for dealing with allegations.
 - 5.12.1.6. they ensure reporting to the board on safeguarding matters is regular.
 - 5.12.1.7. a programme of quality assurance for safeguarding is followed across our Trust.
 - 5.12.1.8. the Chair is responsible in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against the CEO or trust leadership team.
 - 5.12.1.9. this policy is ratified and made public on each school's website.
- 5.13. All advocates will receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and at regular intervals thereafter. This training will provide them with the knowledge and skills required to ensure all of the above.

6. Prevention through education

- 6.1. Mercia Learning Trust recognises that taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes is a key part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and that providing a high quality education that is equitable and accessible to all learners is what underpins this. Schools in our Trust will therefore ensure that:
- 6.1.1. each pupil's provision enables them to achieve their best and become confident individuals living rewarding lives, fulfilling our Trust mission.
 - 6.1.2. all pupils are supported to make successful transition between phases and then into adulthood, whether into employment, further / higher education or training, and to enjoy and achieve throughout their time at our schools.
 - 6.1.3. sufficient time, including planning and opportunities for responsive intervention, will be dedicated to a carefully structured PSHE or equivalent curriculum, including RSE and RHE careers and specific age-appropriate teaching of child protection themes.
 - 6.1.4. wherever possible, curriculum links will be made explicit and maximised as opportunities for children to learn about different aspects of safeguarding and child protection in different contexts.
 - 6.1.5. opportunities to teach about safeguarding, including Online Safety, should be personalised and contextualised to take into account children's individual needs as well as making content appropriate for those who have pre-existing vulnerabilities including having been the victim of abuse.

7. Respond and report procedures

- 7.1. All staff should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect, understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their school, inside and outside of home, and online. Exercising professional curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.
- 7.2. All staff receive training on what to look out for at least annually, with regular updates throughout the year, as well as training to understand the particular dangers of extra-familial harms, online and technology based harms, and specific contextual factors that have been identified by individual schools.

- 7.3. All staff receive training on how and when to report a concern, including how to distinguish between general concerns and when a child is at immediate risk of harm, and specific details relating to their own school, including but not limited to:
- 7.3.1. who is the named Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - 7.3.2. who is on the wider safeguarding team
 - 7.3.3. how to access and use CPOMS
 - 7.3.4. contacts and resources specific to their locality.
- 7.4. All staff receive training on how to appropriately respond to a child making a disclosure, including but not limited to:
- 7.4.1. making listening to the child their priority
 - 7.4.2. not expressing their own views and feelings
 - 7.4.3. never offering to keep a secret
 - 7.4.4. reassuring them that they have done the right thing by sharing information
 - 7.4.5. never claiming that they can fix things
 - 7.4.6. explaining what will happen next to the child
- 7.5. All staff are responsible for being observant of the children, exercising professional curiosity at all times, and sharing information according to this policy and their school's procedures.
- 7.6. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and, when deputising for the DSL, members of the wider safeguarding team are responsible for making decisions about how to respond to all concerns raised, including when to refer to Children's Social Care (see KCSIE, Page 24 – Actions where there are concerns about a child flow chart)
- 7.7. The DSL is responsible for being responsive to Social Workers' requests, continuing to review the support and provision available within the school for children who have Social Worker involvement, and for keeping an accurate record of Social Worker contact, meetings and actions taken
- 7.8. The DSL is responsible for working with parents to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, including when there is a concern, unless communicating with parents is believed to bring an increased risk of harm to the child; in these cases, working with parent can be waived and the decision and reason for doing so recorded
- 7.9. The DSL is responsible for being vigilant to and responding appropriately when an external referral, such as to the Police or to Children's Social Care, is unsatisfactory. In the first instance, this is likely to be timely professional challenge directly to the decision maker and, if that is not sufficient, escalation through the relevant complaints procedure.

8. Children who are looked after by the Local Authority, including those previously looked after

- 8.1. LGBs must ensure that the headteacher has appointed a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are Looked After or were Looked After previously and to ensure that this person has appropriate training.
- 8.2. The most common reason for children becoming Looked After is as a result of abuse and / or neglect or increasingly because they are a refugee. Appropriate school staff will have the information they need in relation to a child's Looked After legal status (whether they are Looked After under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order) and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility; the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the Authority looking after them; details of the child's Social Worker and the name of the Virtual School Head in the Authority that looks after the child.
- 8.3. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that responsible staff are aware of the information they require in relation to the pupil's status, for example, access rights for birth parents or those with parental responsibility. We recognise that in some cases pupils will not be from the geographical Local Authority and will ensure that liaison takes place with the relevant professionals from the appropriate authority.

9. Children who are at greater risk of harm and children with increased potential need for Early Help

- 9.1. Any child may benefit from early help, but all staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child that falls into any of the categories listed below:
- 9.1.1. is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs.
 - 9.1.2. has special educational needs (whether or not they have an EHCP).
 - 9.1.3. has a mental health need.

- 9.1.4. is a young carer.
 - 9.1.5. is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines.
 - 9.1.6. is frequently missing / goes missing from care or from home.
 - 9.1.7. has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from school, is in Alternative Provision or in a Pupil Referral Unit.
 - 9.1.8. is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation.
 - 9.1.9. is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
 - 9.1.10. has a family member in (prison) custody, or is affected by parental offending.
 - 9.1.11. is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse.
 - 9.1.12. is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
 - 9.1.13. has returned home to their family from care.
 - 9.1.14. is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage.
 - 9.1.15. is a privately fostered child.
 - 9.1.16. is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.
- 9.2. For children who need a Social Worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans), the DSL should hold and use the information provided by the Local Authority and use this information to make decisions in the best interests of the child. This may be, for example, through an accelerated response to non-attendance or punctuality, or by prioritising them for pastoral and / or academic support.
 - 9.3. All staff should understand that children with protected characteristics may be more at risk of harm than their peers and take proportionate action to address the disadvantages they may face. This could be, for example, making reasonable adjustments for a child with a disability or providing extra support for girls if there is evidence they are being disproportionately affected by sexual violence and / or harassment.
 - 9.4. All staff should understand that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may be more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They may be more isolated from their peers and may find it difficult to express concern. No concern should be over-looked or passed off as a symptom of SEN or disability – staff must be hyper-vigilant and sensitive to their specific needs and potential communication barriers.
 - 9.5. The fact that a child may be lesbian, gay, bi or gender questioning is not in itself an inherent risk factor for concern, however, children who are (or perceived to be, whether this is accurate or not) can be targeted by other children. These risks are compounded if a child lacks a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that all staff endeavour to reduce the social barriers faced by these and create a culture where concerns can be shared.
 - 9.6. All staff need to be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that the child is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation and, in other cases, be a pre-vulnerability to abuse. All staff must be aware that diagnosis can only be made by trained professionals, however, we must all be aware of the signs and symptoms that would suggest that a child is developing or is experiencing mental health issues. Historic trauma, for example, adverse childhood experiences, can have a lasting impact and this can impact on the child's mental health and possibly vulnerability to safeguarding risks. Any indication of mental health issues should be referred to the DSL in the usual way. Mental Health issues may still carry a stigma for some families in the communities that we serve and therefore all communication must be extremely sensitively handled.
 - 9.7. Appropriate safeguarding responses to children who are absent from education settings are in place, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify any risk of abuse and neglect including (sexual abuse or exploitation) child sexual or criminal exploitation, particularly county lines and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future. All schools have staff dedicated to following up on children's absence and a system of early contact.
 - 9.8. Elective Home Education (EHE) can mean some children become less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs. For this reason, our Trust will never suggest or recommend EHE and, if suggested or recommended by a parent or other professional, will work proactively and supportively with them to consider all options for what is in the best interests of the child.
 - 9.9. Whilst all staff should speak to the DSL with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific legal duty on teachers that if, in the course of their work in the profession, they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police. Further information, resources, training and support can be found at: [https:// nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm/](https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm/)

10. Alternative Provision

- 10.1. When a school places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, they continue to be responsible for the safeguarding of that pupil and will need to be satisfied that the placement meets the pupil's needs. The school will ensure that any Alternative Provision (AP) used is approved by the LA and meets the required standards.
- 10.2. The school will obtain written information from the AP that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at their establishment. This includes written confirmation that the alternative provider will inform the commissioning school of any arrangements that may put the child at risk (i.e. staff changes) so the commissioning school can ensure that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on new staff.
- 10.3. The school will know where the child is based during school hours. The school will have a record of the address of the AP and any subcontracted provision or satellite sites the child may attend.
- 10.4. The school will review each placement at least half termly to ensure the child is attending regularly and the placement continues to be safe and meets the child's needs. If any safeguarding concerns should arise that are caused by the provider, the placement will be terminated immediately.

11. Contextual safeguarding

- 11.1. Designated Safeguarding Leads will be particularly mindful of contextual safeguarding (Firmin 2017). Young people's experiences and relationships beyond the family may mean that they are more or less likely to experience significant harm. This is particularly the case for adolescents who may have access to influences beyond the family, for example, on-line, peer-group, criminal subcultures. This influence occurs at a time when they are particularly vulnerable and suggestable to influence.
- 11.2. Peer relationships are increasingly influential and may undermine familial relationships. It is for this reason that schools must be safe spaces where staff are hyper-vigilant to negative peer influences including those that challenge school and social norms. Staff must be wary of potentially exploitative child to child relationships, particularly where there is an imbalance of power. Staff must never underestimate the weight of peer influence and must report this as a safeguarding concern where they witness it occurring.
- 11.3. Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation occur where an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity, often referred to as grooming. The abuse may take various forms, including enticement and or violence. The victim may believe that their involvement is consensual, however, by nature of the power imbalance, this is not the case. In the areas that we serve, CSE and CCE is a prevalent contextual safeguarding issue e.g. sexual exploitation and 'County Lines'. See Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education for more information.
- 11.4. All staff must be aware and trained on the indicators that young people are at risk of, or involved in, serious violent crime. As we know, the context in which our academies are based can mean that our children are vulnerable to being exploited by criminal networks or gangs.

12. Child-on-Child Abuse

- 12.1. All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children, this can happen both inside and outside of school, as well as online, and that no reports being made does not mean that child on child abuse is not taking place. In light of this, our Trust is committed to:
 - 12.1.1. ensuring all staff are able to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse and know how to identify and respond to it.
 - 12.1.2. ensure all staff are knowledgeable about the different forms of child-on-child abuse, which includes (but may not be limited to):
 - 12.1.2.1. bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
 - 12.1.2.2. abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
 - 12.1.2.3. physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an on-line element which facilitates, threatens and / or encourages physical abuse).
 - 12.1.2.4. sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an on-line element which facilitates, threatens and / or encourages physical abuse).
 - 12.1.2.5. sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
 - 12.1.2.6. causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.

- 12.1.2.7. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and / or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
- 12.1.2.8. up-skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- 12.1.2.9. initiation / hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an on-line element).
- 12.1.3. Ensuring we create a culture of safety by challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers and not downplaying or dismissing behaviour that is actually abusive in nature by saying things like "it's just banter", "just having a laugh", "part of growing up" or "boys will be boys".
- 12.1.4. By having a 'zero tolerance' approach to managing child on child abuse in any form.
- 12.1.5. By following the statutory guidance set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 regarding response to all reports and concerns of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- 12.1.6. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development and ability to learn.

13. Prevent duty

- 13.1. All schools are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015), in the exercise of functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty. As such, our Trust is committed to ensuring:
 - 13.1.1. all DSLs will also be trained in Prevent and related safeguarding issues.
 - 13.1.2. statutory training on the Prevent duty will be delivered in all schools at least annually.
 - 13.1.3. the DSL is responsible for making referrals to Channel where appropriate.
 - 13.1.4. PSHE or equivalent curriculum, as well as wider curriculum links where they can be made, will explore themes relating to the Prevent duty so that children are informed and equipped with the knowledge to recognise early signs of radicalisation and links to extremism.

14. Online safety (see Acceptable Use of Technology policy)

- 14.1. Our Trust recognises that it is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate material on-line. In response to this, they are committed to:
 - 14.1.1. ensuring a whole school approach to on-line safety that protects and educates both staff and pupils in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate concerns where possible
 - 14.1.2. ensuring awareness of the 'four Cs' of online risk – content, contact, conduct and commerce – amongst both staff and pupils and having policies and procedures in place to address all areas of risk.
 - 14.1.2.1. **Content** - being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content e.g. pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, extremism, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories.
 - 14.1.2.2. **Contact** - being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; e.g. peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
 - 14.1.2.3. **Conduct** - online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm e.g. making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images) and online bullying.
 - 14.1.2.4. **Commerce** - risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.
 - 14.1.3. where children are being asked to learn on-line at home, to have regard to the DfE advice regarding remote education as well as advice provided by the NSPCC and PSHE Association, as reflected on the Online Safety and Acceptable Use of Technology policy
 - 14.1.4. for each school to have appropriate filtering and monitoring technology on all devices used by staff and pupils in school, and for the effectiveness of this to be regularly reviewed by our Trust and fully understood by the school leadership teams. The system will consider any AI tools in use.

- 14.1.5. for each school to have appropriate levels of e-security / cybersecurity protection procedures in place for staff and pupils and for these to be regularly reviewed in order to keep up with changes in the sector.
- 14.1.6. for each school to communicate with families about the systems in place to filter and monitor their child(ren)s on-line use, what children are being asked to do on-line, and who from the school (if anyone) they will be interacting with on-line.
- 14.1.7. for all aspects of on-line safety to be regularly reviewed in order to keep up with the latest changes to technology, risk and potential harms in this rapidly evolving sector. The 360-degree safe website is a free on-line self-review resource that can support with this.

15. Record keeping

- 15.1. All concerns, discussion and decision made, and the reasons for those decision, are recorded in writing on CPOMS.
- 15.2. CPOMS provides a confidential and secure storage environment, with separate files for each child, that allows for tailored categorisation, reporting and, where appropriate, secure sharing of information.
- 15.3. All staff receive training on how to record a clear and comprehensive summary of their concern.
- 15.4. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and, when deputising for them, the wider safeguarding team, are responsible for ensuring there is a clear timeline of how each concern was followed up and resolved, including notes of any actions taken, decisions reached, and outcomes.
- 15.5. Timely and appropriate information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including in relation to their educational outcomes.
- 15.6. Information is shared with other agencies, including transferring a child's Safeguarding File if they move to another setting, proactively and as a matter of routine. Files are transferred within 5 days for an in-year transfer and within the first 5 days of the start of the new term for standard school transitions. Records are kept of files transferred, either in the CPOMS log history or, where a paper or other non-CPOMS file is shared, in the form of a receipt.
- 15.7. When a child leaves and there is no subsequent setting to receive a file transfer, a child's file will be stored securely for 25 years from their date of birth, and then securely disposed of.
- 15.8. All staff are informed at least annually that the Data Protect Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe, and that fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.
- 15.9. All personal information is stored and transferred fairly and securely, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

16. Allegations, concerns and whistleblowing

- 16.1. All staff are trained in how to respond if they have a concern or allegation about another member of staff, or about the safeguarding practices within the school or our Trust. This includes concerns or allegations that meet the harms threshold set out in Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 as well as low level concerns, both of which are always taken seriously, and lessons are learned regardless of the outcome (also see the Management of Allegations of Abuse Policy)
- 16.2. All staff and volunteers should be able to raise concerns should they consider there to be poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the safeguarding regime and know that concerns are taken seriously by the leadership team.
- 16.3. Whistleblowing procedures are in place across our Trust and are available on request or on school websites. The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who feel unable to raise concerns directly on 0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk (also see the Whistleblowing Policy).

Mercia School

Address	Carter Knowle Road, Sheffield, S7 2DY
Telephone	0114 5539080
Email	[REDACTED]

Role	Name	Email
Headteacher	Joshua Fisher	[REDACTED]
DSL	Emma Calcutt	[REDACTED]
Deputy DSL	Joshua Fisher Jodi Green Luke Berry	[REDACTED]
Senior Mental Health Lead	Joshua Fisher	[REDACTED]
Chair of Governors	Jackie Arundale	[REDACTED]
Safeguarding Governer	Jackie Arundale	[REDACTED]

LA Emergency Contact - Hub	Sheffield Safeguarding Hub: 0114 272 6575 (24 hours) Adult Social Care: 0114 273 4908 (9am – 5pm) Parent lifeline (Helpline for parents): 0114 272 6575
LA Website	[REDACTED]
National Helplines	Childline: 0800 1111 NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000
National advice websites	[REDACTED]

Please note, if you have an immediate and / or serious concern about the safety of a child, you should call 999