



Highfield School

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

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Key Contacts

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IMMEDIATE DANGER: If a child is in immediate danger, refer immediately to Children's Social Care and/or the Police (999). Anyone can make a referral. The DSL should be informed as soon as possible.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Miriam Williams, Donna Tomlinson, Vic Williams Tel: 0330 222 6450 LADO@westsussex.gov.uk
West Sussex Children's Services / MASH (Integrated Front Door)	Tel: 01403 229900 Out of hours (urgent CP matters only): 0330 222 6664 WSChildrenServices@westsussex.gov.uk
West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP)	Tel: 0330 222 7799 WSSCP@westsussex.gov.uk www.westsussexscp.org.uk

Statement of Safeguarding Principles

Highfield School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with Child Protection and Safeguarding issues, in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).

This policy applies to the entire setting, including the EYFS and after school and holiday clubs, all staff (including supply and peripatetic staff), regular volunteers (i.e. those who come into school once a week or more, or 4 times in a 30 day period), pupils, Directors, anyone working on behalf of the school and visitors to the school.

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

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that the school meets their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and that all policies and procedures are in place and effective. It is a requirement of the Independent Schools' Standards Regulations (ISSRs) and is also a West Sussex Safeguarding Standard that the Directors receive an annual report from the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and Nominated Safeguarding Director in order to help monitor compliance with statutory responsibilities. This annual report takes place once a year, minimum, at the Directors' Meeting, and is included in the minutes thereof.

This policy and its associated procedures address the Independent Schools' Standards Requirements (ISSRs) Part 3, and are in accordance with locally agreed inter-agency procedures. The welfare of boarders while accommodated at Highfield School is ensured by having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It is reviewed and updated annually, minimum, and any changes in guidance or any deficiencies identified in the Policy and/or procedure will be rectified immediately.

Terminology

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined 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 the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection refers to the processes undertaken to protect children who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering significant harm.

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

DSL refers to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the school.

Child includes everyone under the age of 18.

Our Core Safeguarding Principles

- The school's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection
- At Highfield School, we are committed to safeguarding children and we expect everyone who works in our school to share this commitment.
- Adults in our school take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage children and young people to talk to us about anything that worries them
- Key staff and directors will be involved in policy development and review
- Policies will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- Pupils and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support
- The best interests of the child are at the heart of what we do

Policy Aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their child protection responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice
- To demonstrate the school's commitment with regard to child protection to pupils, parents and other partners
- To promote a culture which makes the school a safe place to learn and live.

Safeguarding Legislation and Guidance

The following safeguarding legislation and guidance has been considered when drafting this policy:

- [Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- [Children Acts \(1989 & 2004\)](#)
- [Section 175 of the Education Act \(2002\)](#)
- [Sexual Offences Act \(2003\)](#)
- [Female Genital Mutilation Act \(2003\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act \(2006\)](#)
- [The Equality Act \(2010\)](#)
- [The Teacher Standards \(2012 — updated 2021\)](#)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Counter Terrorism Act (2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 [KCSIE September 2026](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(last amended 2026\)](#)
- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(August 2024\)](#)
- [What To Do If You Are Worried A Child Is Being Abused \(March 2015\)](#)
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges [\[now incorporated into KCSIE 2025, Part Five and KCSIE 2026 Part Five\]](#)
- [Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales \(2023\)](#)
- ISBA guidance (www.theisba.org.uk)
- Advice from the West Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Partnership
- [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(September 2024\)](#)
- [The Independent School Standards and Guidance for Independent Schools \(April 2019\)](#)
- [Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006 \(August 2018\)](#)
- [Statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education \(RSHE\) Guidance \(2025, effective September 2026\)](#)
- [The Use of Social Media for Online Radicalisation \(July 2015\)](#)
- [Out-of-school Settings: Safeguarding Guidance for Providers \(October 2020\)](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Act \(2021\)](#)
- [Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 \(Operation Encompass statutory duty\)](#)
- [Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: How to Respond to an Incident \(2024\)](#)
- [Relationships, Sex and Health Education \(RSHE\) statutory guidance \(2025, effective September 2026\)](#)
- [Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners \(DfE 2024\)](#)
- [Data \(Use and Access\) Act 2025](#)



Key Updates for 2026

The following summarises the key changes arising from the KCSIE 2026 and reflects how this policy has been updated accordingly. Staff should read this section alongside their annual review of the full policy.

Part One: Safeguarding Information for All Staff

- **2026 removed:** All staff — whether or not they work directly with children — are now required to read Part One of KCSIE in full. 2026 (the condensed summary previously available for non-teaching staff) has been removed.
- **Nude and semi-nude imagery terminology updated:** The term 'sexting' and 'nude and semi-nude images' is replaced with 'consensual and non-consensual self-generated intimate images and/or videos, including those generated using AI (e.g. deepfakes)'. This policy uses this updated language throughout.
- **Misogyny and harmful sexual behaviour:** KCSIE 2026 explicitly links misogyny to harmful sexual behaviour. Staff are alert to misogynistic attitudes and online content — including from online influencers — as a safeguarding concern. This is reflected in the Preventative Education section.
- **Family Help indicators expanded:** Children who have been repeatedly removed from the classroom, or who are on a part-time timetable, are now specifically recognised as potentially requiring a family help assessment.
- **Child Sexual Exploitation — criminalisation of victims:** Updated guidance acknowledges that some victims of CSE are criminalised for actions taken under coercion. Staff should remain professionally curious when a child is involved in the criminal justice system.
- **Legal definition of rape clarified:** KCSIE 2026 clarifies that rape includes non-consensual oral penetration by a penis. References to 'rape or oral sex' have been removed from guidance to avoid confusion about what constitutes rape in law.
- **Serious violence between children:** Violence between children — including physical assault and threats with weapons — is explicitly recognised as a safeguarding issue. Both the child harmed and the child who caused harm may require safeguarding support.
- **Financial exploitation:** Additional references to financial exploitation, including fraud, scams, and financially-motivated sexual extortion (FMSE), as forms of child exploitation.
- **LADO referrals:** Clearer guidance that the Headteacher should consider whether a LADO referral is appropriate at an earlier stage when a safeguarding concern or allegation is made against a member of staff.

Part Two: Management of Safeguarding

- **DSL skills and experience:** Governing bodies and proprietors must ensure the DSL has not only the appropriate status and authority but also the skills and experience to fulfil the role.
- **DSL cover:** Robust cover arrangements must be in place. This school uses a confidential shared safeguarding mailbox accessible to all DSLs and DDSLs.
- **Mental health and safeguarding:** A clearer connection is drawn between mental health concerns and safeguarding duties, particularly where risks include self-harm, eating disorders, or suicidal ideation.

- **Gender-questioning pupils — new statutory guidance in KCSIE 2026:** The long-awaited guidance on gender-questioning children has been incorporated directly into KCSIE 2026 as statutory guidance, replacing the previous non-statutory draft. Informed by the Cass Review, the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland* (April 2025), and the EHRC interim update, the guidance establishes that: biological sex must be accurately recorded; single-sex spaces (toilets, changing rooms, showers, dormitories) must not be available to children of the opposite sex; single-sex sport may be provided where safety or fairness concerns apply; and social transition decisions require individual assessment with parental involvement. The policy has been updated in full to reflect these requirements.
- **Mobile phones — phone-free by default:** KCSIE 2026 confirms that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default. Highfield School's existing mobile phone policy is consistent with this requirement.
- **Artificial intelligence — generative AI guidance:** Two new paragraphs in KCSIE 2026 address the safety considerations and legal responsibilities when schools use generative AI tools. Staff must not input personally identifiable pupil data into AI systems.
- **Filtering and monitoring — annual review:** Systems must be reviewed at least once every academic year to ensure effectiveness on all relevant devices, in line with DfE Filtering and Monitoring Standards.
- **Preventive education expanded:** RSE/RSHE programmes should now address derogatory behaviour, other forms of physical violence and conflict, online harms including deepfakes, pornography and misogynistic influencers, and guidance on when and where to seek help.
- **Cyber security as a safeguarding concern:** Cyber attacks compromising children's sensitive data are recognised as a safeguarding risk. The school's IT team works with the DSL on any such incidents.
- **Information sharing on transfer:** Where a child moves settings, the DSL may consider sharing information beyond the child protection file if it indicates the pupil may be a risk to themselves or others. Serious violence and harmful sexual behaviour histories are explicitly included in what must be transferred.
- **SEND — expanded barriers:** The list of barriers to recognising abuse in children with SEND now includes that these children are more likely to be dependent on adults for care, increasing their vulnerability.

Part Three: Safer Recruitment

- **Single Central Record:** KCSIE 2026 includes an example SCR template. The school's SCR will be reviewed against this template on publication of the final guidance.
- **Work experience DBS checks:** Updated requirements clarify when DBS checks are required for adults supervising children on work experience.

Part Four: Allegations Against Staff

- **Trainee teachers:** KCSIE 2026 explicitly names trainee teachers as subject to the same allegations procedures as other staff. This is reflected in the Concerns Regarding an Adult's Behaviour section.

Part Five: Child-on-Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

- **Part Five reordered:** The section now presents a clearer continuum of behaviours, beginning with early indicators of harmful sexual behaviour and progressing to sexual violence, to support earlier identification and intervention.
- **Honour-, faith- or belief-based abuse:** Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 expands the category of so-called 'honour'-based abuse to explicitly include faith- or belief-based abuse, such as abuse framed around allegations of demonic possession or spiritual harm. All references in this policy have been updated to reflect this combined category: so-called 'honour'-, faith- or belief-based abuse.
- **Operation Encompass — now statutory:** Under Section 49A of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (amended by the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024), police forces now have a legal duty to notify schools of domestic abuse incidents before the next school day. Highfield School is a participating Operation Encompass school. A dedicated section has been added to this policy.
- **Stalking added to domestic abuse definition:** Working Together 2026 explicitly lists stalking as a form of domestic abuse alongside harassment and reproductive coercion. The domestic abuse section of this policy has been updated accordingly. Staff should be alert to stalking behaviours in pupils' peer and intimate relationships.
- **Controlling or coercive behaviour — teenage relationships:** Working Together 2026 confirms that controlling or coercive behaviour can occur in teenage relationships as well as adult ones. Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (in force April 2023) also removed the living-together requirement. The policy's domestic abuse section reflects both developments.

Further Information (Annex)

- **Cybercrime:** Recognised as one of the most significant and rapidly evolving threats in the UK crime landscape. Young people may participate in cybercrime without understanding the implications.
- **Online safety — new resources:** KCSIE 2026 links to updated guidance on AI-generated child sexual abuse material and financially-motivated sexual extortion (FMSE).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Has the status, authority and the skills and experience within the school (SMT) to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources and supporting and directing other staff
- Is appropriately trained every two years, with regular updates
- Acts as a source of support and expertise to the school community
- Keeps detailed written records of all concerns, actions, discussions and decisions and the rationale for those decisions, including instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency, such as children's social care or the Prevent programme. Ensures that such records are stored securely and flagged on, but kept separate from, the pupil's general file
- Refers cases of suspected abuse to children's services or the Police as appropriate
- Ensures that when a pupil leaves the school, their child protection file is passed to the new school (separately from the main pupil file and ensuring secure transit) and confirmation of receipt is

obtained. Where a pupil's file includes information relating to serious violence, harmful sexual behaviour or exploitation, this will be included in the transfer and the receiving school will be advised accordingly

- Considers the sharing of safeguarding information with a child's new setting ahead of the transfer if it enables a smoother transition
- Has overall responsibility for Online Safety in the school and filtering and monitoring systems (Filtering and Monitoring Lead) and processes in place and works with the IT department and Safeguarding Team to ensure this is maintained and acted upon if necessary
- Attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences
- Coordinates the school's contribution to child protection plans
- Develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including the LADO and MASH teams and will share information with these as early as possible in response to concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils
- Ensures that the Child Protection policy and procedures are reviewed and updated annually
- Liaises with the nominated director and Headteacher as appropriate
- Makes the Safeguarding policy available publicly, on the school's website or by other means
- Understands the processes, procedures and responsibilities of multi-agency working, particularly children's social care
- Manages referrals from school staff or any others from outside the school
- Promotes educational outcomes by sharing information about welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues with teachers and school leadership staff
- Is aware of pupils who have a social worker

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs)

All DDSLs are trained to the same level as the DSL (updating training every two years) and work together with the DSL to carry out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of pupils. In the event of the long-term absence of the DSL, the deputy will assume all of the functions above. To ensure continuity of safeguarding communication, the school maintains a confidential shared safeguarding email inbox, accessible to the DSL and all DDSLs, so that no concern is missed during periods of absence or transition.

Staff Responsibilities

We understand that no single individual at Highfield School can have a complete picture of a child's needs and circumstances. For this reason, we encourage all members of staff to identify and share any concerns they may have, taking prompt action where necessary. This is emphasised through the safeguarding training, which is a part of every member of staff or volunteer's induction training. Should staff have any concerns about a child, they should raise their concerns with the DSL or DDSL.

ALL staff are required to read this policy in its entirety annually, including the associated appendices, and to confirm they have done so by completing an acknowledgement form. **All staff whether they work directly with children or not are required to read Part One of KCSIE 2026.** School leaders and staff who work directly with children should also read and understand Annex B of KCSIE 2026.

All staff should be aware of systems within the school which support safeguarding. These will be explained to them as part of staff induction and should include:

- The Child Protection Policy and Procedures, including the policy and procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse
- The Behaviour Policy including measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
- The Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding response to children who go missing from education
- The role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the DSL and any deputies)

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) at induction. The training is regularly updated. In addition, **all** staff receive safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) updates via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings, as required, and at least annually.

All staff must know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused, exploited, or neglected. Staff should know how to manage the requirement to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving those who need to be involved, such as the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) and local authority children's social care. Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of any form of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.

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 or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Induction

As part of their safeguarding induction, all members of staff are required to read and understand:

- Part 1 and Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
- This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Highfield School Behaviour Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

New staff also meet with a member of the Safeguarding Team who covers online safety, and the role and identity of the DSL and DDSs.

Good Practice Guidelines and Staff Code of Conduct

Good practice includes:

- Treating all pupils with respect
- Setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- Involving pupils in decisions that affect them

- Encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among pupils
- Being a good listener
- Being alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- Reading and understanding the school's Safeguarding policy, Staff Code of Conduct and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues
- Being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some pupils lead to an increased risk of abuse
- Referring all concerns about a pupil's safety and welfare to the DSL, or, if necessary directly to police or children's social care

All school staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards pupils is unacceptable and that their conduct towards pupils must be beyond reproach. The School's Staff Code of Conduct sets out our expectations of staff and is signed by all staff members at induction.

Corporal Punishment

The School does not use corporal punishment. Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of appropriate restraint. There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a pupil physically to prevent them from inflicting injury to others, self-injury, damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases, only the minimum force necessary may be used. If a member of staff takes action physically to restrain a pupil a written report is made, as soon as practical, and sent to the Head. Please refer to the school's Staff Code of Conduct and the Policy on Physical Restraint.

Concerns Regarding an Adult's Behaviour

Highfield School has an open and transparent culture where concerns about adults working with children are dealt with promptly and appropriately. If you have any concern regarding an adult's behaviour towards a child, a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' about an adult working at Highfield School, or see behaviour that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work:

- Do not ignore it — any concerns will be taken very seriously
- Discuss your concerns about any colleagues with the Headteacher, who will support you in liaising with the statutory agencies should any child protection issues arise
- If the allegation/concern is about the Head, contact the Chairman of Directors (Mr Bill Mills, bill@explorellearning.co.uk) or the LADO.
- If the concern is about a member of supply staff, a contractor, or a trainee teacher on placement, their employers or training provider should be notified so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is: 0808 800 5000

Low Level Concerns (Neutral Notifications)

It may be possible that a member of staff acts in a way that does not cause risk to children, but is however inappropriate. A 'low level concern' is one that does not meet the harm threshold set out in Part 4 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026). A member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff should inform the Head Teacher about their concern using the Neutral Notification Process.

The aim is for Highfield School to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working at, or on behalf of Highfield School are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the school.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating children

The Headteacher will maintain written records of low level concerns, with details of the concern, the context in which it arose and the action taken. These records are reviewed and where a pattern of behaviour meets the thresholds set out, they will refer to the LADO.

Staff should be encouraged to self-refer where they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, or where on reflection they believe they have behaved in a way that falls below the expected professional standard.

Digital Conduct, AI, and Online Safety

Staff must use technology responsibly and in line with the Acceptable Use Policy. They should avoid contacting pupils or parents via personal devices, email, or social media. Ensure all communication with pupils occurs via school-approved platforms. Exercise caution when using AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini). Never input personally identifiable pupil data. Ensure any AI-assisted content aligns with safeguarding and GDPR. Report any incidents of online bullying, inappropriate content, or digital safeguarding concerns to the DSL.

In line with KCSIE 2026, the school recognises that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) creates both opportunities and risks for children. Online harms include misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, deepfakes, and other AI-generated content which may be used for bullying, exploitation, or abuse. Staff must not input personally identifiable pupil data into AI tools. The school's approach to AI follows the [DfE Generative AI in Education guidance \(June 2025\)](#) and the [Generative AI: product safety expectations](#). The Designated Safeguarding Leads, senior leaders, IT staff, and directors are jointly responsible for overseeing the safe use of AI tools, maintaining effective monitoring, and evidencing compliance. Pupils are taught digital literacy skills to recognise and respond to AI-related risks, while staff and parents receive training and guidance to support children's safe use of AI at school and at home.

Online Safety at Highfield School

The school's approach to online safety is set out in detail in the Acceptable Use Policy. The following summarises the key arrangements in place to keep pupils safe online.

With children having access to computers, personal devices and surfaces from Year 6, there is an even greater need to ensure that children remain safe whilst online. At Highfield School, we manage these risks by ensuring that when children use the school's network to access the internet, they are protected from inappropriate content and there are monitoring systems in place.

We also ensure that their personal devices have monitoring software installed so that we can monitor their use outside of school. These are reviewed at least once every academic year to ensure they are working effectively on all relevant devices, in line with DfE Filtering and Monitoring Standards. Should a child type anything into their laptop that is of concern, it is flagged by the monitoring software and the Safeguarding Team receives a daily email with any searches or key words of concern. If there is a serious concern, the DSL receives an immediate alert to both email and work mobile phone.

All staff and volunteers should be alert to the potential risks children may be exposed to, with specific reference to:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism.
- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example child to child pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children with the intention to groom or exploit them.
- **Conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, and online bullying.
- **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and financial scams.

Use of Mobile Phones

In line with KCSIE 2026, all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default. In the Prep, personal mobile devices can only be used if absolutely necessary, to respond to the Pastoral SOS or Prep messaging group. They should not be used during lesson times. When in the Pre-Prep and Nursery building or when working with this age group, personal mobile phones and internet enabled devices are not used by staff during working hours. This does not include breaks where personal mobiles may be used in a safe place such as the staff room.

All mobile phones, personal iPads or other personal devices must be securely put away and may only be used in a room where there is no child present. In an emergency, personal mobile phones may be used in the privacy of the office with permission of the manager or the deputy manager.

School devices may be used by teachers where there are children present, but any images captured must be erased from the device if a teacher leaves the school site with this device, unless this is for the purposes of an educational school trip.

Pupils' Mobile Devices: Highfield School does not allow the use of mobile phones on school site for children. The only exception is for international pupils who need mobile devices to contact home. In this case, children's phones should be free of any social media and only have apps necessary for contacting home such as WhatsApp or WeChat.

Children Who May Be Particularly Vulnerable

Some children may have an increased risk of abuse and may benefit from family help. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur. To ensure that all of our pupils receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to children who are:

- Disabled or have special educational needs (SEND) or certain health conditions
- Have a mental health need (whether or not they have a statutory EHCP)
- Young carers
- In a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Asylum seekers
- Living away from home
- Affected by parental offending or have a parent or carer in custody
- Vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying (including prejudice-based bullying)
- Living in temporary accommodation
- Living transient lifestyles
- Frequently missing from education, home or care
- Living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
- At risk of being excluded from school or who have received multiple suspensions
- Struggling with their own mental health
- Vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
- At risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- Do not have English as a first language
- At risk of so-called 'honour'-, faith- or belief-based abuse, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and abuse framed around allegations of demonic possession or spiritual harm
- At risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Have communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges

This list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive.

Children Missing in Education

Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. A child going missing from education shows safeguarding vulnerability and is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual

abuse and sexual exploitation. The DSLs and Attendance Champions will monitor unauthorised absence, persistent or unexplainable absence and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day. Staff must be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. The school will also hold at least one emergency contact number for each child on register. For further information, please refer to the School's Attendance Policy.

Staff Training

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

New staff and Directors will receive this during their induction, which includes reading policies including the Highfield School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, KCSIE (2026) and Staff Code of Conduct. New staff also meet with a member of the Safeguarding Team to explain reporting and recording arrangements and they confirm that they have read all the necessary Safeguarding policies by signing a declaration in their Induction Form.

All staff, and relevant directors, will receive annual training, including Prevent and Online Safety. There is termly safeguarding training for all staff during INSET. The DSLs and DDSs receive two-yearly training. A full training log is kept to monitor this.

All staff will also receive safeguarding and child protection updates via email, the staff portal and staff meetings throughout the year.

Safer Recruitment

Highfield School complies with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) by carrying out the required checks and verifying the applicant's identity, qualifications and work history.

The school's Recruitment Policy and Procedures set out the process in full. Safer Recruitment training is required for relevant staff and directors who are involved in the recruitment process. At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.

All relevant staff (involved in Early Years settings and/or before or after school care for children under eight) are required to disclose if they have personally been disqualified from working in childcare.

The School obtains written confirmation from supply agencies or third party organisations that agency staff or other individuals who may work in the school have been appropriately checked.

Trainee teachers will be checked either by the school or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained.

The school maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken. For further details, please see the school's Safer Recruitment Policy.

Child Protection Procedures

Recognising Abuse

To ensure that our pupils are protected from harm, all staff should be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people (commonly referred to as child-on-child abuse).

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) refers to four categories of abuse. These are set out in Appendix B, along with indicators of abuse.

Taking Action

Any child, in any family, in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Key points for staff to remember are:

- Stop and listen to what the child is telling you straight away
- Make notes there and then or immediately after the disclosure if more appropriate
- Do not guarantee confidentiality — tell the child you may need to tell someone to get them the right help
- Do not ask leading questions
- In an emergency, take the action necessary to help the child, if necessary call 999
- Report your concern as soon as possible to the DSL, definitely by the end of the day
- Do not start your own investigation
- Share information on a need-to-know basis only — do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
- Complete a record of concern
- Seek support for yourself if you are distressed

If You Are Concerned About a Pupil's Welfare

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a pupil may be at risk. The pupil's behaviour may have changed, their artwork could be bizarre, they may write stories or poetry that reveal confusion or distress, or physical signs may have been noticed. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the pupil the opportunity to talk.

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 may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated or are 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. It is also important that staff build trusted relationships which facilitate communication with children and young people.

Staff should share any concerns with the DSL immediately and without delay.

Gender-questioning Pupils: The Cass review identified that caution is necessary for children questioning their gender as there are still unknowns around the impact of social transition, and that children may have wider vulnerability, such as complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases, autism spectrum disorder and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For guidance on supporting gender-questioning pupils, including considerations around boarding, residential accommodation and changing facilities, see the section 'Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or gender questioning (LGBT)' below.

Record Keeping

Staff should record any concerns they have about pupils in CPOMS and/or speak to the DSL, Vivienne Liddell, DSL for EYFS Georgie Hunter, or DDSL Andy Baker, or any member of the Safeguarding Team.

Information added to CPOMS is kept confidentially on a secure site. All records should include: a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern; details of how the concern was followed up and resolved; and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

If a Pupil Discloses to You

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. If a pupil talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, the staff member will, at the appropriate time, let the pupil know that in order to help them they must pass the information on to the DSL. During their conversations with the pupil, staff will:

- Stop and listen
- Allow them to speak freely
- Remain calm and do not overreact
- Give reassuring nods or words of comfort — 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'
- Do not be afraid of silences
- Under no circumstances ask investigative questions
- At an appropriate time, tell the pupil that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on and explain to whom and why
- Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort
- Tell the pupil what will happen next
- Seek support if they feel distressed
- Act immediately and report verbally to the DSL even if the child has promised to do it by themselves
- Follow this up by completing an incident on CPOMS alerting the DSL as soon as possible

Notifying Parents

The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a pupil with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure. If the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from children's social care and/or the police before parents are contacted.

Confidentiality and Sharing Information

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the pupil and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with the Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or if the concern is about a member of the staff body. The person contacted will then decide who else needs to have the information and this will be disseminated on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR). The safety of children is paramount and takes precedence over data protection policies. Information sharing decisions also take into account the December 2023 update to Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE).

Information sharing is guided by the following principles — the information is: necessary and proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, and secure.

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act (2018).

Referral to Children's Social Care

The DSL will make a referral to children's social care if it is believed that a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The pupil (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child.

Any member of staff may make a direct referral to children's social care if they genuinely believe independent action is necessary to protect a child.

Safeguarding Issues

SEND

All staff need to be alert to the specific needs of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including young carers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. Those with SEND may have difficulties in communication about abuse

or neglect, may be more prone to peer group isolation or bullying, and may be more likely to be dependent on adults for care, increasing their vulnerability. Staff will support such pupils in expressing any concerns they may have and will be particularly vigilant to any signs or indicators of abuse.

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

Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in criminal or sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and the victim may identify as being part of this group. CCE and CSE can affect children, both male and female, and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation. This may constitute modern slavery. In accordance with the Modern Slavery statutory guidance, a relevant child protection and modern slavery referral should be completed where a potential victim of CCE or CSE is identified.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening and/or committing serious violence to others. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can occur through the use of technology.

Indicators of CCE include:

- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- Children who regularly miss school or education

Children can become trapped by CCE, as perpetrators can threaten victims and their families with violence, or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives, or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection. Children who are criminally exploited should have their vulnerabilities recognised and should be treated as victims. It is not possible for a child to give informed consent to engage in criminal or other exploitative activity, and they cannot consent to be exploited, abused or trafficked.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however staff should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. Both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge, for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex. This can be committed by an individual or an organised network, and most sexual abuse is committed by those previously known to the victim. Some children do not realise they are being exploited and may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship. As with CCE, victims are not always recognised and can be criminalised for actions they take whilst under coercion. Staff should remain professionally curious when a child is involved in the criminal justice system.

Indicators of CSE include:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones, etc. without plausible explanation; financial exploitation including fraud, scams, or financially-motivated sexual extortion (FMSE)
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections
- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups
- Concerning use of internet or other social media
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as including: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; and psychological, emotional or other abuse (including harassment, stalking, reproductive coercion, and faith- or belief-based abuse) — occurring between people over the age of 16 who are personally connected. Section 68 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (in force April 2023) removed the living-together requirement, meaning controlling or coercive behaviour now applies to partners, ex-partners and family members regardless of whether they live together.

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).

Controlling or coercive behaviour can occur in teenage relationships as well as adult ones. Where there are concerns about a child in such a relationship, safeguarding procedures apply regardless of whether the relationship meets the statutory definition of domestic abuse. Both the young victim and the young perpetrator should be offered support.

Stalking is explicitly recognised as a form of domestic abuse under Working Together 2026. Staff should be alert to indicators of stalking in peer or intimate relationships, including repeated unwanted contact, monitoring of movements or communications, and threats. Any such concerns should be reported to the DSL immediately.

The National Domestic Abuse helpline can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247.

Operation Encompass

Highfield School is part of [Operation Encompass](#). Under the [Home Office statutory guidance \(November 2025\)](#), this is a police and education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people who experience domestic abuse.

Under Section 49A of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (as amended by Section 20 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024), all 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales have a statutory duty to notify a child's school before the start of the next school day after attending a domestic abuse incident in that child's home. This duty covers all children from reception age (4–5) up to age 17.

When a notification is received, the DSL (Key Adult) will:

- Ensure the information is received securely and recorded confidentially alongside other safeguarding records
- Use the information to contextualise any changes in the child's behaviour, presentation or wellbeing
- Put in place appropriate support before the child arrives at school, which may include speaking to the child sensitively, alerting relevant staff, or liaising with the school counsellor
- Consider whether a referral to Children's Social Care is also required — an Operation Encompass notification does not replace a safeguarding referral where one is warranted
- Ensure the information is shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis only
- Ensure parents are aware that the school participates in Operation Encompass

All DSLs and DDSLs at Highfield School have completed Operation Encompass online training. The school uses the Operation Encompass Toolkit to ensure all appropriate actions are taken following a notification. Free professional advice for staff on supporting individual children is available from the Operation Encompass Professionals' National Advice and Guidance Line on 0204 513 9990 (Monday–Friday, 8am–1pm).

So-Called 'Honour'-, Faith- or Belief-Based Abuse (including FGM and Forced Marriage)

FGM is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. If you suspect a girl is at

risk or has been a victim of FGM, you have a legal duty to report it to the police by calling 101 (or 999 in immediate danger).

Risk factors for FGM include: low level of integration into UK society; a mother or sister who has undergone FGM; girls who are withdrawn from PSHE; visiting female elder from the country of origin; being taken on a long holiday to the country of origin; talk about a 'special' procedure to become a woman.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 expands this category to include faith- or belief-based abuse, such as abuse framed around allegations of demonic possession or spiritual harm. Staff should be alert to children who are accused of being 'possessed' or 'bewitched', or who are subject to practices intended to 'exorcise' them. Any such concerns should be reported to the DSL immediately.

Radicalisation and Extremism

The government defines extremism as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Radicalisation is the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence.

School staff receive training to help identify signs of extremism. Opportunities are provided in the curriculum to enable pupils to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture. Staff should use their professional judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately. Should a child be assessed to be at risk, a referral should be made to the appropriate agency (Channel or Children's Social Care).

Safeguarding Issues: Overlapping Risk Indicators

All staff should have an awareness that the following safeguarding issues often overlap and can put children at risk of harm. The following behaviours and indicators can be signs that children are at risk:

- Drug taking and/or alcohol misuse
- Unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education
- Serious violence, criminal exploitation (including that linked to county lines), and radicalisation
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of self-generated intimate images including those generated using AI (e.g. deepfakes) and/or videos

Additional information on these and other safeguarding issues is included in the sections below and in 2026 of KCSIE 2026.

Child-on-Child Abuse

Highfield School recognises that all children are capable of abusing their peers and all staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse. This can happen inside and outside of school as well as online, and even when there are no reports, it does not mean it is not happening. Highfield School has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Staff should also be alert

to when children might be at highest risk around the school day, for example immediately after school.

It is essential that all staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours — for example, dismissing sexual harassment as ‘just banter’, ‘just having a laugh’, ‘part of growing up’ or ‘boys being boys’ — can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, misogyny, an unsafe environment for children, and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for both the victim and the alleged perpetrator. Timely, evidence-based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence.

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

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (teenage relationship abuse — including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, stalking, and controlling or coercive behaviour)
- 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)
- Serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon
- Sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- 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
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of self-generated intimate images and/or videos, including those created or altered using AI (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Nudes and Semi-Nudes

The sharing of self-generated intimate imagery/videos can be viewed as a form of sexual harassment and is defined as the production and/or sharing of consensual and non-consensual self-generated intimate images and/or videos of and by young people who are under the age of 18. This includes nude or nearly nude images and/or sexual acts, and also includes AI-generated intimate images (deepfakes) featuring real children.

What to do if an incident involving intimate imagery comes to your attention:

- Report it to the DSL immediately
- Never view, download or share the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download — this is illegal
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident, report this to the DSL
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it

- Do not ask the young person(s) to disclose information regarding the imagery — this is the responsibility of the DSL
- Do not share information about the incident with other members of staff
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved

Children Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bi, or Gender Questioning (LGBT)

The fact that a child or young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. At Highfield School, we endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced by providing opportunities for any pupil to speak to teachers, tutors, anyone from the safeguarding team or the School Counsellor.

When a child is gender questioning, the Cass Review (2024) identified that caution is needed as there are still unknowns around the impact of social transition, and that children may have wider vulnerability, such as complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases, autism spectrum disorder and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The school will encourage families to seek clinical help and advice when making decisions about support for a gender questioning child.

KCSIE 2026 introduces statutory guidance on gender-questioning children for the first time, embedded directly within the safeguarding framework. The school's approach follows this guidance, which is informed by the Cass Review, the Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland* (April 2025), and the EHRC interim update. Key principles include:

- Schools must know, record and use each child's biological sex accurately in all records
- Single-sex spaces (toilets, changing rooms, showers and dormitories/boarding accommodation) must not be made available to children of the opposite sex
- Single-sex sports may be provided where there are safety or fairness concerns about mixed-sex provision
- Social transition decisions require individual assessment, involving parents (unless this would create a safeguarding risk), and support from clinical professionals where appropriate
- Primary-aged children: the guidance states the school would expect support for full social transition to be agreed very rarely
- Schools should be alert to gender-questioning children who are at risk of bullying or harassment and ensure any such behaviour is appropriately sanctioned

Any decisions about supporting a gender-questioning pupil will be made on an individual basis, with appropriate records kept, and in consultation with parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals. The DSL is the lead professional for any gender-questioning case that engages safeguarding considerations.

Preventative Education

Highfield School plays a crucial role in preventative education and has a whole-school approach which prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Staff are alert to the influence of misogynistic and harmful online content, including from online influencers, which can shape attitudes towards gender,

relationships and sexual behaviour. This is treated as a safeguarding concern and addressed through curriculum, pastoral intervention and where necessary, referral to the DSL.

Highfield School has a culture of zero tolerance of: sexism, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, and sexual violence/harassment.

The RSE programme tackles, at an age-appropriate stage, issues including:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- How to recognise an abusive relationship, including coercive and controlling behaviour, stalking, and harassment — and that these can occur in teenage relationships
- The concepts of, and laws relating to: sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called 'honour'-, faith- or belief-based abuse such as forced marriage and FGM, and how to access support
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these are always unacceptable; derogatory behaviour and other forms of physical violence and conflict; online harms such as sharing images, the prevalence of deepfakes, pornography and misogynistic influencers and when and where to seek help

Other Potential Safeguarding Issues

School is aware that other issues may affect the wellbeing of pupils, and should be particularly alert to the potential need for family help for a child who:

- Has experienced Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement
- Is within the court system
- Has family members in prison
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation. Where staff suspect a child may be a victim of modern slavery, they should report this to the DSL immediately. The DSL will consider whether to make a referral through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is the formal process for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- Is involved in Cybercrime. The school also recognises that cyber security incidents are a safeguarding concern: if sensitive pupil data is compromised by a cyber attack, this may put a child's safety and wellbeing at risk. Any such incidents are reported to the DSL alongside IT leadership.

Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken by adding an incident on CPOMS or speaking to the DSL.

Serious Violence

Children can be at risk from or be involved with serious violent crime. Risk factors include being male, increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, having experienced child maltreatment, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or 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.

Looked After Children

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. The school ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep looked after children and previously looked after children safe. Appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after legal status and care arrangements.

Boarding School

Research has shown that children can be particularly vulnerable in residential settings. All boarding schools comply with the National Minimum Standards. All boarding staff should be aware that:

- Staff should maintain professional standards of behaviour and appropriate boundaries at all times in relationships between themselves and the pupils
- Boarding staff should be aware of the potential for abuse of children within the boarding environment and should remain vigilant to any indicators of harm, reporting all concerns to the DSL without delay
- The procedure for reporting concerns is the same as for non-boarding pupils

The Role of Directors

Directors provide strategic challenge, scrutinise safeguarding practice, monitor safer recruitment, oversee filtering and monitoring arrangements and seek assurance that safeguarding systems are effective.

In accordance with Part 2 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026), the governing board:

- Will ensure that all directors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction, regularly updated
- Has a nominated Safeguarding Director to oversee the safeguarding policy and procedures at Highfield School
- Meets with the key members of the Child Protection Team termly (at the very least the DSL) to discuss safeguarding matters
- Is presented with an annual audit of safeguarding at Highfield School, delivered by the DSL at a full governing body meeting

- Reviews any policy changes and signs off the safeguarding policy annually

Policy Review and Update Record

Date	Review / Update
December 2015	Fully Updated — Phillip Evitt, Headteacher, Highfield; Sophie Baber, Headteacher, Brookham
September 2018	Reviewed and updated — P. Evitt, S. Baber, A. Kingsbury, E. Graham, W. Mills
September 2019	Reviewed and updated — A. Kingsbury, E. Graham
September 2020	Reviewed and updated — A. Kingsbury, E. Graham
April 2021	Reviewed and updated — A. Kingsbury, E. Graham
September 2021	Reviewed and updated — P. Evitt, S. Baber, C. Lumsden, A. Baker, G. Hunter
May 2022	Reviewed and updated — A. Baker, following external audit
September 2022	Reviewed and updated — S. Cryer, S. Baber, C. Lumsden, A. Baker, G. Hunter
September 2023	Reviewed and updated — M. van den Berg, A. Baker, S. Cryer
September 2024	Reviewed and updated — M. van den Berg, S. Cryer, C. Lumsden
January 2025	Reviewed — M. van den Berg, Anne Marie McAteer (external audit)
September 2025	Fully Updated following external audit — M. van den Berg, S. Cryer, C. Lumsden, A. Baker, G. Hunter
April 2026	Provisional update with new KCSIE guidelines and adjustments- M. van den Berg, S. Cryer, C. Lumsden, A. Baker, G. Hunter, V. Liddell
September 2026	Reviewed and updated — M. van den Berg, V. Liddell, S. Cryer, C. Lumsden. School renamed to Highfield School; DSL updated to V. Liddell;

Appendix A: Detailed Responsibilities for All Staff

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. We will endeavour to safeguard children, young people and adults by:

- Acting at all times according to what is in the best interests of the child
- Valuing children, listening to and respecting them and involving them in decisions which affect them
- Keeping an open mind at all times, and adopting an 'it could happen here' approach
- Never tolerating bullying, homophobic behaviour, racism, sexism or any other forms of discrimination
- Ensuring the curriculum affords opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe, particularly when using technology, in emotional and physical relationships and, where appropriate, in respect of radicalisation and extremist behaviour
- Exercising our duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 by ensuring all staff attend 'Prevent' training
- Keeping up to date with changes in government guidance, and in changes and evolutions in the risks that can put children at risk of harm
- Supporting attendance and taking action if a child is missing school regularly
- Holding more than one emergency contact number for each pupil via the school's Schoolbase system
- Appointing a senior member of staff as the Designated Safeguarding Lead and creating a team of DDSLs across the school
- Making sure all staff and volunteers are aware of and committed to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Identifying any concerns early and providing appropriate help to prevent them from escalating
- Sharing information about concerns with relevant agencies, and involving children and their parents/carers appropriately
- Acknowledging and actively promoting that multi-agency working is often the best way to support children and their families
- Taking the right action, in accordance with West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP) multi-agency safeguarding procedures, if a child discloses or there are indicators of abuse
- Keeping clear, accurate and contemporaneous safeguarding and child protection records, ensuring they are kept securely and are transferred immediately and securely when a child leaves
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made in accordance with statutory guidance and legal requirements
- Adopting a Code of Conduct for all staff and volunteers which includes staff/pupil relationships and communications, including the use of social media
- Ensuring staff and volunteers understand about 'whistleblowing'
- Dealing appropriately with any allegations/concerns about the behaviour of staff, including supply staff and volunteers
- Providing guidance on the safe use of electronic equipment, including access to the internet
- Encouraging a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings
- Developing positive partnerships and nurturing a commitment to open and honest relationships with parents and carers

Appendix B: Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial context by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse.

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

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as 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. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter; protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision; or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Indicators of Abuse

A child who is being abused, neglected or exploited may:

- Have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- Show signs of pain or discomfort
- Keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- Be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- Look unkempt and uncared for
- Change their eating habits
- Have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- Appear fearful
- Be reckless with regard to their own or others' safety
- Self-harm
- Frequently miss school, arrive late or leave the school for part of the day
- Show signs of not wanting to go home
- Display a change in behaviour — from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- Challenge authority
- Become disinterested in their school work
- Be constantly tired or preoccupied
- Be wary of physical contact
- Be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- Display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age
- Acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the DSL to decide how to proceed.

Appendix C: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

Staff working with children must maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

The designated safeguarding lead or a deputy will always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the DSL (or deputy) is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Staff should speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from local children's social care. Any action taken should be shared with the DSL as soon as is practically possible.

Fears about sharing information and GDPR concerns must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

[Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners \(DfE 2024\)](#) provides advice and guidance on this matter.

Family Help

Effective use of family help is the most effective way of promoting the welfare of children and reducing the risk of problems escalating. All staff must be aware of children who are at increased risk and where family help may be required. This includes children who:

- Are disabled or have certain health conditions and have specific additional needs
- Have special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory EHC Plan)
- Have a mental health need
- Are young carers
- Have unexplained or frequent absences from school; have been repeatedly removed from the classroom; or are on a part-time timetable
- Are in danger of exclusion from school
- Are showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- Are frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation
- Are at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Have a family member in prison, or are affected by parental offending
- Are in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Are misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Have returned home to their family from care
- Are at risk of so-called 'honour'-, faith- or belief-based abuse such as FGM, forced marriage, or abuse related to allegations of demonic possession
- Are a privately fostered child
- Are persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

Where the school assesses that family help might be necessary, contact will be made with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership in order to seek further guidance and for a family help assessment to be carried out.

Helpful Responses When a Child Discloses

- Remain calm, approachable and receptive; make it clear that you are taking them seriously; avoid showing shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully to what is said, without interrupting
- Ask questions for the purposes of clarification only, and avoid asking leading questions or pressing for more information (remember TED: Tell me, Explain, Describe)
- Reassure them that they are right to tell you and that they should not feel guilty
- Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others — do not promise confidentiality

What Not to Do

- Do not make assumptions
- Do not make negative comments about the alleged perpetrator
- Do not make any promises you cannot keep including keeping the information secret
- Do not share concerns with the parents; if appropriate, this will be done by the DSL after a discussion with Children's Services

What to Do Next

- **Ensure the child is safe;** if you feel that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, contact social services and/or the Police immediately.
- Make an immediate, careful record of what was said using the child's words, in handwritten format, or directly on CPOMS. Record facts not opinions, noting the date, time, any names mentioned, and to whom the information was given.
- **Report the disclosure or indicators of abuse to the DSL or DDSL immediately and without delay,** who will then contact social services or other external agencies.