

**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy  
September 2024**



**Mission Statement**

"St. Mary's School is a happy place, where we follow Jesus by living, loving, learning and working together."

**School motto**

"Being the Best We Can Be."

**Core Values**

Respect, Nurturing, Creativity, Passion, Integrity

The school recognises its obligation under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to promote and safeguard the welfare of all its pupils and sees its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy as fulfilling a key part of this duty. St. Mary's believes that all children, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, family circumstances and ability, have the right to be protected. We believe that every child has the right to be happy, healthy and safe. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023 "protecting children from maltreatment, 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; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes". (p6 point 4)

### Introduction

St. Mary's fully recognises the contribution it makes to safeguarding children and all members of staff and the governing body understand that safeguarding is **everyone's** responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children has an important role to play.

There are three main elements to our policy:

1. Prevention through teaching, pastoral support and strong and authentic relationships with pupils and families.
2. Procedures for identifying and reporting cases or suspected cases of abuse. Because of our day-to-day contact with children, school staff are well placed to identify and act upon signs and indications of abuse.
3. Support to pupils who may have been subject to abuse and working with families and additional agencies in order to address and prevent any safeguarding issues and achieve positive outcomes.

Our policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school, community education staff and governors. Teaching Assistants, Mid-day Assistants, Office staff, as well as teachers can be the first point of disclosure for a child. Concerned parents, carers or members of the community may also contact school governors, the Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher if they are concerned about a child.

**Please note that if you are ever concerned about the welfare of a child or family you must contact Social Care on 01744 676600 or the out of hours number on 0845 0500 148**

### Types and definitions of abuse

Abuse can take many different forms. St. Mary's staff receive training to understand the different forms of abuse and their signs and symptoms. Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect.

Definitions and examples of the different forms of abuse can be found in Appendix 1

The four main categories of abuse are:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

All staff should be also be aware that child sexual and child criminal exploitation are also forms of child abuse.

In relation to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023', St Mary's also recognise additional forms of abuse which children may be at risk of.

These include:

- Female Genital Mutilation or FGM
- Radicalisation and Extremism.
- Forced Marriage
- Child Sexual Exploitation or CSE and Child Criminal Exploitation CCE
- Private Fostering
- Child Missing in Education
- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Upskirting
- Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines
- Children with family members in prison
- Cyber/online abuse

## Prevention

St. Mary's recognises high self-esteem, supportive friends and positive relationships with trusted adults support prevention and early intervention when it comes to safeguarding children.

The school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, encouraged to talk and are listened to;
- Ensure children know that there are adults in school whom they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty;
- Embed skills throughout school that help children to keep themselves safe. This includes throughout the curriculum, whole school initiatives and bespoke interventions.
- Include in the curriculum, materials which will help children develop a realistic perspective and appropriate attitude to the responsibilities of adult life and the treatment of children.

## Procedures

St. Mary's follows the procedures set out by the St. Helens Safeguarding Children Board. These are available at [www.sthelensscb.org.uk](http://www.sthelensscb.org.uk) and St. Mary's also has clear internal procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues; these are adopted and followed by all staff members and volunteers.

The school will:

1. Ensure it has two Designated Senior Leads who are responsible for dealing with safeguarding issues within school. Both staff will have undertaken then training course provided by the Local Authority as minimum and will stay up to date by attending relevant courses.
2. Recognise the key role of the Designated Senior Lead and arrange all necessary support and training.
3. Receive additional training in order to best support children and their families and achieve positive outcomes regardless of individual circumstances or challenges.
4. Ensure every member of staff and every governor know the name of the Designated Senior Leads and their roles. They are:

**Mrs Ruth Martin - Headteacher**  
**Mrs Jane Talbot-Davies - Deputy Headteacher**

The name of the Governor responsible for safeguarding is:

**Mr Wayne Leatherbarrow**

5. Ensure that all members of staff and volunteers are aware of the need to be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse and know how to effectively respond to a child who makes a disclosure.
6. Ensure that parents and carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff to safeguard children in accordance with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024)** and **Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)**.

*It is essential that **everybody** working in a school or college understands their safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. All practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.*

7. Provide refresher training for all staff every year and a Safeguarding Induction (including issuing the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy) for new staff and volunteers so that they know:
  - i. their personal responsibilities,
  - ii. the local policy and procedures,
  - iii. the need to be vigilant in identifying cases of abuse,
  - iv. the appropriate way to take action and support a child who makes a disclosure.
8. Notify the local Social Care team if:
  - a) There are concerns regarding a child's welfare or safety
  - b) It should have to exclude a pupil on a Child Protection Plan or who has involvement with social care, either for a fixed term or permanently.
  - c) There is an unexplained absence of a pupil on a Child Protection Plan or who has involvement with social care.
9. Work to develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters including attendance at initial case conferences, core group meetings and child protection review conferences.
10. Keep written records of concerns about children (noting the date, event and action taken) even when there is no need to refer the matter to Social Care. These records are kept on the school's safeguarding system - CPOMS
11. Ensure that current records are kept securely. All archived files of children who have left the school will be kept securely and stored for 18 years.
12. Adhere to the procedures set out by the St. Helens Safeguarding Children Board and their Safeguarding Procedures when an allegation is made against a member of staff. All allegations will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Staff, parents, carers and members of the public may make a referral to the LADO. Referral forms can be found on the St Helens Safeguarding Children website <https://sthelenssafeguarding.org.uk>

**Tel: 01744 671252**

13. Employ robust and secure safer recruitment procedures which are always mindful of protecting children from unsuitable people. Staff trained in 'Safer Recruitment' ensure that all our practice is family centred and puts the voice of the child first.
14. Seek guidance from the Education Safeguarding Team
15. Seek guidance from the Governing Body.

### **Early Help**

*All staff should be aware of their local early help process and understand their role in it.*

*Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024 Pg 9*

*Detailed information on early help can be found in Chapter 1 of  
**Working together to Safeguard Children 2018***

St. Mary's recognises that early intervention can have a positive impact for our families and can prevent children from significant harm. Any child may benefit from early help, but all school staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

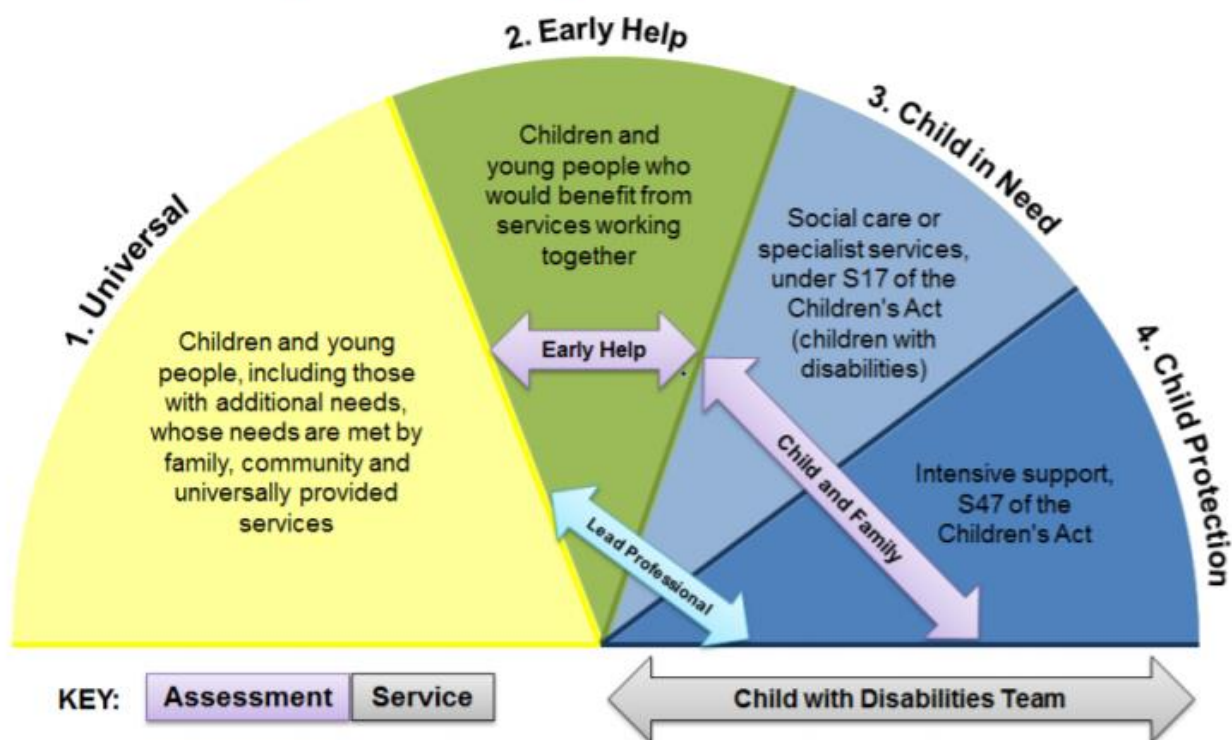
- Is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs.
- Has special educational needs – regardless of whether they have an EHCP or not
- Has a mental health need
- Is a young carer
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour including organised crime and county lines
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation. Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- Has a family member in prison or is affected by a parent offending
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse

- Is misusing alcohol or drugs themselves
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is at risk of honour based abused such as FGM or forced marriage
- Is privately fostered
- Is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

Therefore St. Mary's promotes an Early Help Offer which is a graduated structure aimed at providing support at the appropriate and earliest level. This is in accordance with St. Helens Borough Council's Description of Need Document.

Level of Need	Intervention	Agencies who may be involved
<p><b>Level 1 - Universal</b> Children and young people whose needs are met by family, community and universally provided services</p>	<p>Whole school initiatives Informal contact with children, parents and carers to resolve low level issues.</p>	<p>The child and their family School staff Universal services like school nurse</p>
<p><b>Level 2 – Early Help</b> Children may have low levels of need or be susceptible to poor outcomes and would benefit from additional support and services to help them overcome difficulties.</p>	<p>School Support Meetings Informal meetings with parents and carers to resolve low level issues. These may require a referral to an additional agency and will be reviewed. At this level, the assessment is the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT) Think Family/Family Action Meetings to take place. Parental consent needed for agencies to share information (unless exceptional circumstances)</p>	<p>The child and their family School staff External Agencies e.g. family intervention worker, school nurse</p>
<p><b>Level 3 – Child in Need</b> Children and young people who have complex needs and who may require co-ordinated support in order to improve outcomes</p>	<p>Children at this level meet the legal level (threshold) for a Child in Need Assessment (Section 17) and should be referred to Contact Cares using a service request form to <a href="mailto:adultandchildrenteam@sthelens.gov.uk">adultandchildrenteam@sthelens.gov.uk</a> Parental consent needed before completing referral form. MASH Team screen form and a decision is made as to whether to progress the concern to Duty Team for assessment Contact Cares Team should only be alerted via telephone if concerns relate to level 4</p>	<p>The child and their family School staff Multiple external agencies including Health, Family Support Workers, CAMHS, housing, GP, dentist. This also extends to more targeted services such as counselling services, NSPCC or agencies associated with a particular condition. Social Workers will always attend CIN meetings and is usually the lead professional</p>
<p><b>Level 4 – Child Protection</b> Children and young people who are experiencing very serious or complex needs that are having a major impact on their achievement and expected outcomes. Their Needs will be such that they require intensive support from specialist services</p>	<p>Child Protection Children at this level meet the statutory level for Child Protection (Section 47) and should be referred to Contact Cares 01744 676767. Concerns should be followed up in writing within 24 hours Screening completed by MASH Team – information is sent to statutory services for a Strategy Meeting to determine if Section 47 level is met. Children and Families Assessment completed by a Social Worker Where possible consent should always be gained from parent unless informing the parent or person with parental responsibility would put child/young person at further risk</p>	<p>The child (where appropriate) and their family School staff Multiple external agencies including Health, Family Support Workers, CAMHS, housing, GP, dentist. This also extends to more targeted services such as counselling services, NSPCC or agencies associated with a particular condition. Social Care would always attend Child in Need and Child Protection conferences. Social Worker is always lead professional</p>

**Diagram 1: Summary of the four levels of need**



**What to do if you have a safeguarding concern**

All staff have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. If any member of the school community has a safeguarding concern regarding a child, they should contact the Senior Designated Person without delay. Staff and governors should not investigate possible abuse or neglect themselves.

The Senior Designated Person will consider the information they have received and will determine what action should be taken by the school. They must record the outcome of this decision-making process.

If the Senior Designated Person is unsure as to whether the presenting concern reaches the threshold for referral to Children's Social Care, they should contact the Duty Social Worker in the First Response Team for advice. (01744 676600)

If the Senior Designated Person feels that the concern should be addressed via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or Think Family processes, then they should contact the child's parent(s) to request consent to proceed. If the parent(s) refuses to give consent, the Senior Designated Person should consider how to proceed, including if refusal increases the risk of harm to the child.

Where the Senior Designated Person feels that the information indicates that a child is in need of protection, they should still contact the parent(s) to inform them that they are making a referral to Children's Social Care First Response Team, unless to do so would place the child at increased risk of harm; for example:

- where sexual abuse is suspected or disclosed
- where fabricated or induced illness is suspected
- where to do so would impede an existing criminal investigation

All referrals must be followed up in writing within 24 hours. If the school does not receive a written response of the outcome to the referral from Children's Social Care within three working days, the Senior Designated Person should contact the Duty Social Worker immediately.

## **Process to follow if a child makes a disclosure to you that may relate to abuse or possible abuse.**

If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to you: You should:

- Listen and keep calm. Do not interrupt.
- You MUST NOT promise the child that you will keep the matter confidential. Explain to the child who you will need to tell and why.
- Observe visible bruises and marks but do not ask a child to remove or adjust their clothing to observe them.
- Keep questions to a minimum as your role is not to investigate. If you need to ask questions in order to ascertain whether this is a safeguarding concern, ensure they are open questions. For example, if the child says that they have been hurt, ask "how did you get hurt?" rather than "did someone hit you?"
- Write down what has been said immediately afterwards in words used by the child and yourself to the best of your memory.
- Note anything about the child which is connected i.e. any visible injuries including the position and description, the demeanour of the child i.e. crying, withdrawn etc.
- Clearly indicate whether fact, opinion or third party information
- The matter should be immediately reported to the Senior Designated Person, and all records taken should be handed over at this time.
- If in doubt seek advice from the Senior Designated Person.

## **Recording**

All safeguarding concerns should be shared with the DSL and recorded on CPOMS. Access to such records should be on a need-to-know basis only. Records should include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

When/if a child transfers between schools the Senior Designated Person will be responsible for transferring the child's Child Protection File to the new school. The Senior Designated Person will speak to their counterpart in the school to which the child is transferring in order to ensure that they are aware that the file is to be transferred. The file should be signed upon receipt, and delivered by hand wherever possible. The original file will be kept in school until D.O.B. plus 25 years.

## **Role and responsibilities of senior designated person**

- Provide support, advice and guidance to colleagues
- Share good practice
- Recognise signs / indicators of abuse and decide when referrals to Children's Social Care / other relevant agencies are appropriate
- Ensure there is always cover for the SDP role by having a named deputy or team of deputies
- Liaise with relevant agencies (where appropriate) to inform the decision on whether to make a referral to Children's Social Care (First Response, Safeguarding Unit, etc.)
- Attend and effectively contribute to Think Family meetings, Case Conference, Core Groups, Child Looked After reviews and any other meetings requested by other agencies. Provide written reports at such meetings. If unable to attend, send apologies and submit a comprehensive written report
- Ensure the organisation's child protection and safeguarding related policies are up to date and reviewed annually. Work with the governing body / named governor regarding this

- Ensure every member of staff has access to and understands the school's child protection and safeguarding related policies (including whistleblowing, etc.)
- Ensure that parents have access to and have seen the Child Protection policy which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role the establishment has in this to avoid possible future conflict
- Keep detailed, accurate and secure written records of referrals and concerns.
- Monitor and track students who are subject to Children's Social Care intervention
- Provide an annual report for the governing body that includes as a minimum: anonymised information on the number and type of incidents/cases, numbers of referrals to Children's Social Care and numbers of children subject to a protection plan; detailing any changes to safeguarding related policy and procedures; training undertaken by the Senior Designated Person, their deputy and by all staff and governors.
- When pupils leave the school, ensure their child protection file is copied and transferred as soon as possible, but separately to the main school file. Ensure that this file is hand delivered and signed for where possible. Keep the original file in school.
- Ensure all staff have safeguarding training as part of their induction and attend subsequent training appropriate to their role, at least every 3 years.
- Attend training appropriate to the role of SDP at least every two years

### **Role and responsibilities of governing body and nominated governor**

Governing bodies are responsible for ensuring the school's policies and procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements. The Senior Designated Person should liaise with the Nominated Governor for Safeguarding so that the Nominated Governor can report to the governing body about safeguarding issues. Reports to the governing body should not be about specific child protection cases but should review the safeguarding policies and procedures. It is good practice for the Nominated Governor and the Senior Designated Person to present the report together. All governors have a responsibility to ensure the school's safeguarding measures meet statutory requirements and all should know what to do if they have concerns about a child.

### **Role and responsibilities of staff**

Through regular contact with children, staff across the school community are well placed to identify concerns and have individual responsibility for reporting such concerns to the designated child protection staff without delay.

- Staff will ensure that they are able to recognise possible indicators of abuse and neglect and know who to report their concerns to.
- Staff will report any safeguarding concerns to the Senior Designated Person without delay.
- Staff will co-operate with safeguarding enquiries made by Children's Social Care in relation to our pupils.
- Staff will develop effective links with other agencies in the interests of child welfare.
- Staff will ensure that they attend safeguarding training appropriate to their role at least every three years.

### **Supporting the pupil at risk**

We recognise that children who are subject to abuse in whatever form may experience a significant effect on their social and emotional wellbeing as well as their academic attainment.

St. Mary's recognises that school is a stable and secure environment in the lives of our pupils. Therefore, we strive to create a safe and consistent environment.



In accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2021, St Mary's recognises that some children may be considered more vulnerable than others.

These include a child who:

- Is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs.
- Has special educational needs – regardless of whether they have an EHCP or not
- Has a mental health need
- Is a young carer
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour including organised crime and county lines
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation. Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- Has a family member in prison or is affected by a parent offending
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Is misusing alcohol or drugs themselves
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is at risk of honour based abused such as FGM or forced marriage
- Is privately fostered
- Is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day

**The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:**

- a) Our prevention procedures
- b) The school's behaviour policy is aimed at supporting all pupils in our school especially those who are identified as being vulnerable. All staff will adopt a consistent approach which focuses on the offence committed by the child but does not damage the pupil's sense of self-worth. St. Mary's recognises that all behaviour is a form of communication, and we aim to address any underlying issues through pastoral intervention.
- c) St. Mary's is committed to working with the appropriate agencies that best support our children and their families.
- d) St. Mary's will continue to refer for children who are already open to Social Care and will exercise the St. Helens Local Authority's escalation policy when deemed necessary.
- e) When any vulnerable pupil leaves our school, all information will be photocopied and transferred to the new school immediately and Social Care would be informed where necessary.

### **Safeguarding and Attendance**

The Safeguarding Policy links directly to the schools Attendance Policy.

If a child is absent who is deemed to be vulnerable and contact is not made with the school regarding their absence, then the headteacher or another member of staff may call to the family home to ensure the child's safety.

If a child is absent who is on a Child Protection Plan and contact is not made with the school regarding their absence, then the headteacher or another member of staff will inform Children's Social Care.

When a child is continually missing education, St. Mary's will follow Local Authority procedures and will work with the appropriate agencies, including Education Welfare.

St. Mary's Primary School will always strive to put the correct interventions into place to ensure that Persistent Absentees improve their attendance.

If a pupil goes missing from the school site during the school day, the parent or carer and the Police will be informed immediately; it may also be appropriate to notice Children's Social Care.

Once a child has left the school premises, it is the responsibility of the Police and not staff to try and secure the child. St. Mary's recognises that it may be more dangerous for both staff and the child, if staff were to try and secure the individual.

## **Managing Child-on-Child Abuse Allegations** (Please refer to the Appendix for additional policy and procedures around 'sexting')

At St. Mary's, we have a zero-tolerance approach to child on child abuse and we put in place safeguards to reduce the likelihood of child-on child abuse allegations. There is an established ethos of respect, friendship, courtesy and kindness with a clear, high profile Behaviour Policy which sets out our expectations, rewards and consequences for unacceptable behaviour together with visible staff presence. However, all staff should be aware that children can abuse other children and that it can happen both inside and outside of school, college or online.

All staff should understand, that even if there are no reports in the school it does not mean it is not happening - it may be the case that it is just not being reported. It is essential that staff understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers – that are actually abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for e.g. dismissing sexual harassment as 'just banter' can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, 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 most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying – including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm – this may also include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse
- 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 nude and semi-nude images and/or videos
- Upskirting – 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
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

## **Mental Health**

Staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indication that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

## **Contextual Safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding can be considered, in simple terms, as safeguarding on the outside. As children grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. It is the wider footprint around the child - e.g. CSE, gangs, peer on peer abuse, online safety, mental health, risky behaviours, serious violence. It is about considering wider safeguarding issues around the child – influences/issues that are away from school and their homes.

## Online Safety

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into 4 areas of risk:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content e.g. pornography, fake news, racism, self-harm, suicide, radicalisation, extremism
- **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
- **Conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; e.g. making, sending and receiving explicit images – consensual and non-consensual, online bullying
- **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, financial scams

At St. Mary's all children undertake E-Safety activities at the start of every term. A week of focused E-Safety work also takes place annually to coincide with National E-Safety Week. St. Mary's also subscribes to eAware which is a digital safeguarding scheme of work for schools.

Children in Y6, who are walking home alone, are the only children permitted to have mobile phones in school. These phones are handed in to the class teacher at the start of the school day and must be switched off. They will be given back to the children at the end of the day and can be switched back on once the children are off the school premises.

Staff are permitted to have mobile phones, but they must remain in bags or stock cupboards until break or lunchtime. In exceptional circumstances, staff are permitted to have phones out on desks e.g. a member of their family is extremely unwell, they are awaiting an urgent call for medical purposes

IPads and computers used in school are set up by the school's IT support team and firewalls are in place to protect the children as much as possible. All breaches of the firewall are reported to the IT support team and additional safety measures are put in place. Parents are made aware of any firewall breaches. Children know the procedure to follow if the firewall is breached and inappropriate content displayed. Monitors are turned off and breaches are shared with SLT, DSL and parents.

Filtering and monitoring of content is done via Smooth Wall. Daily breaches are shared with the headteacher (DSL) along with weekly summary statements.

Monitoring/filtering breaches are shared with the governing body termly in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee Meeting

School regularly updates parents of new concerns regarding online dangers via the school's newsletter, via email or via information sheets attached to the school's website.

## Remote Learning

Remote Learning has become an essential way of learning as a result of the pandemic. School has its own Remote Learning Policy which can be found on the website.

**To be agreed and adopted by Governors: Autumn 2024**

**To be reviewed on: September 2025**

## Appendix

### Categories and Definitions of Abuse

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts. Types of physical abuse include:

- Hitting or smacking
- Shaking
- Throwing
- Poisoning
- Burning and scalding
- Drowning
- Suffocating
- Fabricating or Inducing Symptoms of illness in a child
- Any other way of causing physical harm.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. This may involve:

- Conveying they are worthless, unloved, inadequate or only valued insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Not giving a child opportunity to express their views, 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Inappropriate expectations for their age or development – including overprotection.
- Seeing or hearing the ill treatment of other such as domestic violence or abuse.
- Serious bullying and causing the child to feel frightened or in danger.
- Exploitation or corruption of children.
- All types of ill-treatment of a child. Even if a child is subject to another abuse from another category, they will still experience a level of emotional abuse.

#### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, developmental and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. This can also occur during pregnancy as a result of parental substance misuse. This includes when a parent or carer fails to provide:

- Adequate food clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home and abandonment).
- Protection from physical and emotional harm and danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision.
- Access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Meeting the child's basic emotional needs.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes:

- Physical contact including penetrative and non-penetrative acts.
- Involving children looking at or in the production of sexual images.
- Watching sexual activities
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways
- Grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

#### **Female Genital Mutilation or FGM**

Female Genital Mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It occurs mainly in Africa and to a lesser extent, in the Middle East and Asia; however children living in the United Kingdom are still at risk of this form of abuse. Although it is believed by many to be a religious issue, it is in fact a cultural practice. There are no health benefits to Female Genital Mutilation. Communities particularly affected by FGM in the UK include girls from: Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea, Yemen, Indonesia and Afghanistan. In the UK, FGM tends to occur in areas with larger populations of communities who practice FGM, such as first generation immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

#### Key Points:

- It is NOT a religious practice
- Occurs mostly to girls aged 5-8 years old; but up to around 15.
- It has been a criminal offence in the United Kingdom since 1985.
- Offence since 2003 to take girls abroad
- Criminal penalties include up to 14 years in prison.
- Legal obligation on staff to report to police.

#### Reasons for this cultural practice include:

- Cultural identity – an initiation into womanhood.
- Gender identity – moving from a girl to a woman – enhancing femininity
- Sexual control – reduce the woman's desire for sex
- Hygiene/cleanliness – uncut women are regarded as unclean.

#### Risk Factors include:

- Low level integration into UK society
- Mother or sister who has undergone FGM
- Girls who are withdrawn from PSHE
- A visiting female elder from the country of origin
- Being taken on a long holiday to the family's country of origin
- Talk about a 'special' event or procedure to 'become a woman' High Risk Time

This procedure often takes place in the summer, as the recovery period for FGM can be 6 to 9 weeks. Schools should be alert to the possibility of FGM as a reason why a girl in a high risk group is absent from school or where the family request an 'authorised absence' for just before or just after the summer school holidays.

Although it is difficult to identify girls before FGM takes place, where girls from these high risk groups return from a long periods of absence with symptoms of FGM, advice should be sought from the police or social services.

**It is a mandatory reporting duty under section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) there is a statutory duty upon school staff to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18.**

#### Post FGM symptoms include:

- Difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- Spend longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet
- Unusual behaviour after a lengthy absence
- Reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- Asking for help but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.
- 

#### Longer term problems include:

- Difficulties urinating or incontinence
- Frequent or chronic vaginal, pelvic or urinary infections
- Menstrual problems
- Kidney damage and possible failure
- Cysts and abscesses
- Pain when having sex
- Infertility
- Complications during pregnancy and childbirth
- Emotional and mental health problems

## Forced Marriage

There is a clear difference between 'forced marriage' and 'arranged marriage'. Arranged marriages have worked well in society for many years. An arranged marriage is when families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

A forced marriage is when one or both parties do not consent to the marriage, and people are forced into marriage against their will. Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights. Both physical and emotional abuse may be used to coerce people into the marriage.

In law both parties to a marriage must validly consent to the marriage, the minimum age a person is able to consent to a marriage is 16. A Force Marriage Protection Order can be obtained from a Family Court in order to protect victim, both adults and children from a potential forced marriage or people who are already in a forced marriage.

Potential warning signs or indicators that a child is at risk of Forced Marriage

- Absence and persistent absence
- Request for extended leave of absence and failure to return from visits to country of origin
- Fear about forthcoming school holidays
- Surveillance by siblings or cousins at school
- Decline in behaviour, engagement, performance.
- Poor exam results
- Being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility
- Removal from a day centre of a person with a physical or learning disability
- Not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities
- Sudden announcement of engagement to a stranger
- Prevented from going on to further/higher education

St. Mary's acknowledges that persistent absence from school or requests for leave of absence can be an indicator of a potential safeguarding risk. The issues surrounding Forced Marriage link directly to the school attendance policy; any absences from school will be followed up in accordance with this policy. This is to ensure that we make every effort to know a child's whereabouts and make sure they are safe to the best of our ability.

What to do if you have a concern regarding Forced Marriage?

Forced Marriage is an offence and if this is happening to a child under the age of 18 it is considered to be child abuse. If you suspect that a child or young person is being forced to marry then you must share your concerns with the Designated Senior Lead (DSL) who will make appropriate contact with Children's Social Care or the Police.

The Forced Marriage unit can be contacted for advice and help in making the referral. Telephone **020 70080151**

## Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and/or extremism leading to terrorism.

Extremism is defined by the Government in the Prevent Strategy (2010) 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. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.*

Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as:

*The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:*

- *Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;*
- *Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;*
- *Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or*
- *Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK*

Indicators of vulnerability include:

- Identity crisis – the pupil is distanced from their cultural / religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society
- Personal crisis – the pupil may be experiencing family tensions, a sense of isolation; and low self-esteem; they may have dissociated from their existing friendship groups and become involved with a new and different group of friends; they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging.
- Personal Circumstances – migration; local community tensions; and events affecting a pupil's country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy.
- Unmet Aspirations – the pupil may have perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life
- Experiences of criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment and poor resettlement/reintegration
- Special Educational Needs – the pupil may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motives of others

(This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it mean that all young people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism).

St. Mary's work reflects the government **PREVENT** strategy (July 2015) in their approach to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are required to read elements of the prevent strategy relating to school and education and have completed online training. Any concerns regarding radicalisation or extremism in children and young people should be passed onto the school's single point of contact or SPOC.

The SPOC will then refer on to the local PREVENT officer, Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

The PREVENT single point of contact (SPOC) in school is the Designated Senior Lead, Ruth Martin.

The PREVENT development officer for St. Helens is **Georgia Lee**      [georgialee@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:georgialee@sthelens.gov.uk) **07920710809**

## Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation is sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18. It involves situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/ mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/ economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

### Warning Signs and Symptoms of Child Sexual Exploitation

- Can be difficult to identify and can be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour
- Be involved in abusive relationships
- Hang out with groups of older people, anti-social groups or with other vulnerable peers
- Associates with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- Get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang memberships
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Spend time at places of concern such as hotels or known brothels
- Not know where they are because they have been moved around the country
- Go missing from home, care or education
- Have expensive items such as mobile phones that they can't or won't explain.
- Be very secretive about what they are doing online
- Have access to drugs or alcohol.

How do we manage suspected cases of Child Sexual Exploitation? St. Mary's will respond to suspected cases of Child Sexual Exploitation in relation to St. Helens safeguarding procedures.

St. Helens Safeguarding Children's Board has its own subgroup dedicated to CSE known as Multi Agency Child Sexual Exploitation group (MACSE)

If a child or young person is at risk or suspected of being sexually exploited, concerns should be passed on to the Designated Senior Lead, Ruth Martin, immediately. That child or young person will then be referred onto the Police and contact may also be made with Children's Social Care.

Referral forms can be found on St. Helens Safeguarding Children's Board website within the Merseyside Multi Agency Protocol Child Sexual Exploitation or a copy can be requested from the Designated Senior Lead within School.

## **Private Fostering**

Private Fostering is where a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) goes to live with someone who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. It is a private agreement between a parent and another adult.

A close relative includes a parent, step-parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether blood related or through marriage). Private foster carers may be from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt, a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child or someone previously unknown to the child's family.

Examples of private fostering could include:

- Children or young people who are sent to this country for education or health care by their parents from overseas.
- Teenagers living with a friend's family because they do not get on with their own family.
- Children living with a friend's family because their parents study or work involves unsociable hours, which makes it difficult to use ordinary day care or after school care.
- Children staying with another family because there has been bereavement, serious illness or their parents have divorced or separated.
- A child from overseas staying with a host family while attending school or overseas students at boarding school who do not stay with a host family during the holidays.

Education and other professionals have a duty to notify the Local Authority and Children's social care when they believe there is a private fostering arrangement and they are not satisfied that the Local Authority has been or will be notified by the parent or carer.

Private Foster carers also have a responsibility to notify the Local Authority.

If a member of staff or any individual believes that a child is being privately fostered, they should contact Children's Social Care or inform the Designate Senior Lead who will make the referral.

## **Children with Family Members in Prison**

Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health.

## **Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines**

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation 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. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. It should also be noted that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.



## Upskirting

Upskirting typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

**It is a criminal offence.** Anyone of any sex can be a victim.

## Whistleblowing

**If you're a professional with concerns over how child protection issues are being handled in our school or another organisation, you can talk anonymously to:**

**NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline: 0800 028 0285**

The Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

## E-Safety

ICT in the 21st Century is an essential resource to support learning and teaching, as well as playing an important role in the everyday lives of children, young people and adults. Consequently, at St. Mary's we need to build in the use of these technologies to arm our young people with the skills to access life-long learning and employment. E-safety involves pupils, staff, governors and parents making best use of technology, information, training and the E-Safety policy has been created to maintain a safe online and ICT environment. At St. Mary's, we ensure children are taught about safeguarding including online, through teaching and learning opportunities as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum with PSHE and SRE.

**Please read this policy in conjunction with the E-safety policy**

"As in any other area of life, children and young people are vulnerable and may expose themselves to danger - knowingly or unknowingly - when using the Internet and other digital technologies. Indeed, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal. "To ignore e-safety issues when implementing the requirements of Every Child Matters could ultimately lead to significant gaps in child protection policies, leaving children and young people vulnerable."  
Safeguarding Children in a Digital World. BECTA 2006

**Sexting Policy** Our school recognises that children are vulnerable to and capable of abusing their peers. We take such abuse as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Peer on peer abuse will not be tolerated or passed off as part of "banter" or "growing up"

In cases where peer on peer abuse is identified we will follow our child protection procedures, recognising that both the victim and perpetrator will require support.

We recognise that peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sexting or youth produced digital imagery
- Bullying
- Radicalisation
- Abuse in intimate relationships
- Children who display sexually harmful behaviour
- Gang association and serious violence
- Technology can be used by for bullying and other abusive behaviour

There are a number of factors that make children more vulnerable to peer on peer abuse: experience of abuse within their family; living with domestic violence young people in care; children who go missing; children with additional needs (SEN and/or disabilities).

Research tells us girls are more frequently identified as being abused by their peers, girls are more likely to experience unwanted sexual touching in schools. Boys are less likely to report intimate relationship abuse. Boys report high levels of victimisation in areas where they are affected by gangs. There is an increasing evidence base emerging on the sexual exploitation of boys (both by adults and peers). We recognise that both boys and girls experience peer on peer abuse but they do so in gendered ways.

## Sexting

The school recognises that 'sexting' is a growing concern amongst professionals and parents as it can expose children to risks, particularly if the imagery is shared further. It can lead to embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Producing and sharing images of under-18's is also illegal.

There is no clear definition of what is 'sexting' and indeed many professionals, young people and parents have different interpretations ranging from sending flirty messages to sending nude or semi-nude photographs via mobiles or over the internet.

This guidance is based on the UKCCIS Sexting in Schools and Colleges guidance 2016. The full guidance is located at UKCCIS 2016 Guidance. This guidance covers:

- A person under the age of 18 creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- A person under the age of 18 shares sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or an adult
- A person under the age of 18 is in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18

It does not cover:

- The sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police and CSC.
- Young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which don't contain imagery.

The term youth produced sexual imagery has been adopted to provide some clarity and to distinguish it from imagery where there are adults involved in some manner.

The purpose of this guidance is to make expectations clear to pupils and their parents and carers as well as to be clear to staff about the school's policy and procedure in responding to incidents.

This policy forms part of our school's safeguarding arrangements and our response to concerns about 'sexting' will be guided by the principle of proportionality and our primary concern at all times is the welfare and protection of the children and young people involved.

The school recognises that it is an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children (a child being under 18 year) but it does not define what is indecent.

However the police accept that the law which criminalised indecent images of children was created before the technological advances of today and it originally sought to protect children from adults. It was not intended to criminalise children. Despite this children who share sexual imagery of themselves or peers are breaking the law and therefore we will seek to manage this type of case appropriately.

All professionals including the National Police Chiefs Council agree that incidents involving youth produced imagery should primarily be treated as a safeguarding issue. It is agreed that we should not unnecessarily criminalise children as the consequence of this can be significant in terms of their life chances in adulthood. Where children do share images it is often as a result of natural curiosity and exploring relationships and in the context of the digital world we live in.

The school is therefore empowered to deal with the majority of these incidents without involving the police.

## **Handling Incidents**

The school may become aware of the issue in a variety of ways i.e. from the child direct, a friend of parent or a member of staff.

We recognise that the child is likely to be very embarrassed and worried about what might happen. We also recognise the pressure that is on a child can be under to take part in sharing such imagery but we will reassure them they are not on their own and will help and support them. We will also help them to understand what has happened and the context for the concerns. We will also discuss issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships.

All incidents will be followed in line with our safeguarding and child protection policy. Where an incident comes to our attention:

- The incident will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.
- An initial meeting with the appropriate school staff will be held to:
- Establish if there is immediate risk & what further information is needed, whether or not the imagery has been shared
- Consider facts about the children involved which could influence a risk assessment.
- A meeting with the young person will be held (if appropriate)
- Parents will generally be informed at an early stage

An immediate referral to children's social care and/or the police should be made if at the initial stage:

- The incident involves an adult
- The child has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed or if there are concerns about capacity to consent
- If the sexual acts are unusual for the developmental age or violent
- Children under 13 years are involved
- The child is at immediate risk e.g. suicidal or self-harming

Where the above do not apply then the school will generally deal with this matter without involving the police or children's social care although this will be subject to review.

This decision is made where we are confident that we have sufficient information to assess and manage any risks within our pastoral support and disciplinary framework. The decision will be made by the DSL and others as appropriate and will be recording.

**Named staff/personnel with designated responsibility for Safeguarding Academic Year: 2024/2025**

Headteacher: Mrs Ruth Martin  
Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Jane Talbot-Davies  
SENDCo: Mrs Sarah Naylor  
Nominated Governor: Mr Wayne Leatherbarrow