Safeguarding Children Policy
(Including Child Protection)

Walkwood Church of England Middle School

September 2026 – August 2027

This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust's Safeguarding Lead and the Trustees.

This policy was provided by Worcestershire County Council. It has also been shared with Brightcore, the Trust's Safeguarding provider for compliance checking.

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Section 1: Safeguarding Leads and Key Contacts

Role:	Name/Details:	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead of Staff / Headteacher / Head of School	Gemma Mckenna	gmckenna@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Caroline Lowe Simon West	clowe@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk swest@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Nominated Governor for Safeguarding	Brian Allbut	ballbut@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Headteacher	Caroline Lowe	clowe@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Chair of Governors	Brian Allbut	ballbut@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Designated Teacher for Children who are In Care	Simon West	swest@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Online Safety Lead	Louise Cull	lcull@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Prevent Lead	Gemma Mckenna	gmckenna@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Child Exploitation GET SAFE Lead	Name	Insert email address
Senior Mental Health Lead	Gemma Mckenna	gmckenna@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
SENDCO	Louise Thurston	LThurston@walkwoodms.worcs.sch.uk
Safeguarding in Ed Adviser, WCF	Denise Hannibal	01905 844436
Local Authority Designated Officer/ Position of Trust		01905 846221
Senior Public Health Practitioner at Worcestershire County Council.	Paul Kinsella	0800 0113764
Family Front Door	Initial contact and referral team for Worcestershire	**01905 822666** (core working hours) Out of hours or at weekends: **01905 768020**

Section 2: Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

This section should be read alongside Annex 2: Recognising and Responding to Abuse and Neglect.

2.1 Our Commitment to Safeguarding

Walkwood Church of England Middle School, affiliated with the Spire Learning Trust, recognises the important role it plays in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all pupils are protected and supported through the creation of an honest, open, caring, and supportive environment where children feel safe, valued, included, and able to achieve their full potential.

Our Christian vision and values are central to our safeguarding culture and support our commitment to ensuring that every child is known, valued and protected.

The welfare of children is of paramount importance. This policy must be followed at all times and in all circumstances where the safeguarding or welfare of a pupil may be at risk.

In accordance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)*, this policy sets out our procedures for safeguarding and child protection. It applies to everyone working within Walkwood Church of England Middle School, including permanent and temporary staff, supply and agency staff, contractors, governors, and volunteers.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Every adult who works with, supports, or comes into contact with children has a role to play in protecting them from harm.

2.2 What Safeguarding Means

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 this occurs within or outside the home, including online.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best possible outcomes.
- **Child protection** is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.
- **Abuse** is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 2 explains the different forms of abuse.
- **Neglect** is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Appendix 2 provides further information about neglect.
- **Making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes** means the creation, sending or posting of nude or semi-nude visual content by children under the age of 18. This includes photographs, videos and livestreams and may be self-generated, taken by another person, digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence (AI), including deepfakes and "deep nude" imagery. All incidents require a safeguarding response, whether the activity is consensual or non-consensual.
- **Children** includes all individuals under the age of 18.
- **Data protection laws** refers to the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.
- **The three safeguarding partners** are defined in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, and are responsible for working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. They are:
- The Local Authority (LA)
- Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)

- The Chief Officer of Police
- **Victim** is a widely recognised term. However, we recognise that not everyone who has experienced abuse, harm or exploitation identifies themselves as a victim or wishes to be described in this way. When supporting children, we will use terminology that they feel most comfortable with wherever appropriate.
- **Alleged perpetrator** and **perpetrator** are also widely recognised terms. However, we will carefully consider the language we use, particularly when speaking with children and young people, recognising that some children who display harmful behaviour may themselves require safeguarding support. Appropriate terminology will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Safeguarding extends beyond child protection and includes all aspects of school life that contribute to children's safety, health, wellbeing, and development. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Staff conduct and professional behaviour.
- Health and safety.
- Bullying and cyberbullying.
- Child-on-child abuse.
- Sexually harmful behaviour.
- Provision of intimate care.
- Building security.
- Alcohol, drugs, and substance misuse.
- Positive behaviour management.
- Physical intervention and restraint (reasonable force).
- Online safety, including filtering and monitoring arrangements.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School, is committed to creating an inclusive environment where everyone contributes, feels valued, and is supported to reach their full potential. Our ethos reflects our values and underpins our approach to safeguarding.

2.3 Safeguarding Culture and Professional Responsibility

Safeguarding and child protection is everyone's responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, governors, trustees, contractors and visitors working in or on behalf of the school and is consistent with the procedures of the three safeguarding partners. Our safeguarding policy and procedures also apply to extended school activities, educational visits, wraparound provision and off-site activities.

The school plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is most effective within a whole-school approach that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, racism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, biphobia, sexual violence and harassment, derogatory behaviour, discrimination and all forms of violence and abuse.

Our approach is inclusive, evidence-based, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate, including for children with SEND and other vulnerabilities, and is underpinned by our:

- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Pastoral support systems; and
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) programme, which is delivered regularly and includes:
- healthy and respectful relationships;
- boundaries and consent;
- stereotyping, prejudice and equality;
- body confidence and self-esteem;
- recognising abusive relationships, including coercive and controlling behaviour;

- understanding the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), and how to access support; and
- understanding what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why these behaviours are always unacceptable.

All adults working with or on behalf of children must understand that they have a responsibility to safeguard and promote children's welfare. Staff are expected to maintain an attitude of:

"It could happen here"

and to demonstrate professional curiosity by thinking beyond the obvious when concerns arise.

All staff must be alert to signs that children may be at risk of harm and must report concerns promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Staff should always act in the best interests of the child.

Staff recognise that children may not always feel able or ready to disclose abuse, exploitation, or neglect. Children may not recognise their experiences as harmful or may feel embarrassed, ashamed, frightened, or threatened. Additional barriers may exist for children due to factors such as vulnerability, disability, communication needs, language barriers, or other individual circumstances.

These challenges must not prevent staff from exercising professional curiosity. Staff must develop trusted relationships with children that encourage them to share concerns and seek support.

Where a child makes a disclosure, staff must:

- Listen carefully and reassure the child that they are being taken seriously.
- Avoid promising confidentiality.
- Share information only with those who need to know, including the DSL/DDSL and external agencies where appropriate.
- Record and report concerns in line with school procedures.

2.4 Contextual Safeguarding and Child Protection

The school recognises that safeguarding children requires consideration of the full range of environments and contexts in which children live, learn and socialise. Children may experience abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm both within and outside the home. Safeguarding risks can arise from family circumstances, peer groups, school environments, online activity and the wider community.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School is a middle school within Redditch with over 600 pupils within its cohort, the area is of a mixed demographic and local policing data 2026 tells us that the main presenting issues in terms of local crime and policing priorities are antisocial behaviour, speeding and vehicle crime. The setting is located within the Headless Cross and Walkwood area of Redditch, Worcestershire, a predominantly residential suburban community characterised by high levels of home ownership, low levels of social housing, and a relatively stable population. The area is largely White British in ethnicity, with many residents identifying as Christian, and is home to a significant proportion of families and middle-aged adults. Households are typically owner-occupied, reflecting a settled community with strong local ties and established support networks. The locality experiences relatively low levels of crime and deprivation compared with many urban areas, although West Mercia Police have identified anti-social behaviour, vehicle crime and road safety concerns as ongoing neighbourhood policing priorities. As a community with a substantial number of children, young people and families, safeguarding arrangements should recognise both the strengths of a supportive suburban environment and the need to remain vigilant to risks that may be less visible, including domestic abuse, neglect,

exploitation, mental health concerns, online harm and anti-social behaviour. Effective safeguarding practice relies on strong partnership working between education providers, local services, health agencies, police and the wider community to promote the welfare and safety of all children and vulnerable adults.

The school recognises the importance of identifying both familial harm and extra-familial harm, including situations where children may be affected by risks beyond the direct influence of their family or school. These risks may be influenced by local, social and environmental factors and may change over time.

The school will seek to understand the specific safeguarding risks affecting its community by working with the Local Authority, safeguarding partners, the Police, other relevant agencies, staff, pupils and families. Information about local and emerging risks will inform safeguarding briefings, staff training, curriculum planning, risk assessments and preventative education.

As part of our contextual safeguarding approach, the school will regularly consider:

- What are we protecting our children from?
- What risks may exist within our local community?
- What experiences, concerns or information are children and families sharing with us?
- Are there emerging patterns, trends or changes in behaviour that require a safeguarding response?
- Are there particular groups of children who may be at increased risk or require additional support?

Children may experience a range of harms, including:

- Physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Neglect.
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- County Lines activity.
- Serious youth violence.
- Online abuse and exploitation.
- Harmful peer influences and child-on-child abuse.
- Modern slavery and trafficking.
- Other forms of exploitation or abuse.

All staff are expected to understand the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation and recognise that harm may occur in a range of settings, including online spaces and within peer relationships. Staff will receive regular safeguarding updates and briefings to ensure they are aware of local safeguarding concerns, emerging risks and factors that may affect children's safety and wellbeing.

The school recognises that some children may have increased vulnerabilities and may require enhanced safeguarding support. This includes, but is not limited to, children with Special Educational Needs and

Disabilities (SEND), children with a social worker, looked after and previously looked after children, young carers, children experiencing mental health difficulties, and children who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). The school will ensure that appropriate pastoral support, reasonable adjustments and communication support are provided where required.

Contextual safeguarding information will inform the school's wider safeguarding practice, including preventative education through PSHE, RSHE, online safety education and work to develop children's understanding of healthy relationships, risks and help-seeking behaviours.

Everyone working within the school is expected to have a responsibility to remain alert to signs that a child may be experiencing harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Any concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) in accordance with this policy.

Early identification, effective information sharing and timely intervention are essential to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The school will work collaboratively with external agencies to ensure that children receive appropriate support and that safeguarding risks are identified, assessed and responded to effectively.

2.5 Recognising Risks and Indicators of Harm

All staff receive safeguarding training and understand that safeguarding concerns can overlap and may place children at risk of harm.

Staff are aware that children may be particularly vulnerable where they experience, including but not limited to:

- Drug and/or alcohol misuse.
- Unexplained or persistent absence from education.
- Serious violence.
- Criminal exploitation, including county lines.
- Radicalisation.
- The consensual or non-consensual creation or sharing of nude or semi-nude images.
- Abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm occurring inside or outside the home, including online.

Staff understand that concerns may arise from a single incident or may develop over time through a pattern of behaviour, changes, or indicators. Accurate, timely recording of concerns is essential. Staff must not rely on memory alone, as failure to record concerns appropriately may prevent effective safeguarding action.

2.6 Vulnerable Children

Our school recognises that some children may experience circumstances that increase their vulnerability to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination or poorer outcomes. These children may require additional support, monitoring or safeguarding intervention to ensure their needs are identified and met at the earliest opportunity.

All staff are expected to identify and recognise indicators of abuse, neglect, exploitation and modern slavery. Staff understand that risks may occur inside or outside the home and school, and online; may

overlap; and may include extra-familial harm, teenage relationship abuse (including physical, sexual and emotional abuse and stalking), financial exploitation, serious violence and child-to-parent or caregiver abuse. Staff will remain alert to children who may benefit from universal services, community-based early help, targeted Family Help or statutory intervention.

Additional consideration may be required for children who:

• Are disabled or have certain health conditions and have specific additional needs.
• Have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), whether or not they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.
• Have a social worker or require Family Help support.
• Have a mental health need, including concerns relating to self-harm, eating disorders, suicidal ideation or suicide risk.
• Are young carers.
• Are pregnant and/or are parents.
• Are bereaved.
• Are homeless or living in temporary accommodation.
• Are looked after, previously looked after, or have returned home from care.
• Have been repeatedly removed from the classroom, experienced multiple suspensions, are on a part-time timetable, are at risk of permanent exclusion, or attend alternative provision or a pupil referral unit.
• Are showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gangs, county lines activity, organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime.
• Are frequently missing, have gone missing from education, care or home.
• Are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual exploitation and/or criminal exploitation.
• Are at risk of radicalisation or other forms of exploitation.
• Are viewing problematic, harmful or inappropriate online content, including content linked to violence, or are developing inappropriate or unsafe online relationships.
• Are experiencing family circumstances that present challenges, including domestic abuse, parental mental ill health, substance misuse or parental offending.
• Are misusing drugs or alcohol.
• Are at risk of so-called honour-based abuse, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or forced marriage.
• Are privately fostered.
• Have a parent or carer in custody or are affected by parental offending.
• Are missing education, persistently absent from school, or are not in receipt of full-time education.
• Have medical conditions, disabilities or allergies that may increase their vulnerability.
• Identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), recognising that being LGB is not, in itself, a safeguarding concern, although some children may be more vulnerable to bullying, discrimination or abuse.
• May be questioning their gender and require additional safeguarding consideration based on their individual circumstances.

Some children may require support through universal services, Family Help, targeted interventions, or statutory services. The school will work with children, families and partner agencies to ensure that support is provided at the right time and in the most appropriate way.

Young carers may face additional challenges which can affect their wellbeing, attendance, progress and ability to access education. Appropriate support will be provided, and staff will remain alert to the impact that caring responsibilities may have on a child's safety and welfare.

Privately fostered children can be particularly vulnerable. Staff who become aware of a private fostering arrangement will report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will ensure that the Local Authority is notified in accordance with statutory requirements.

Children with medical conditions, disabilities or allergies may also face additional safeguarding challenges. Staff will remain alert to concerns relating to unmet medical needs, lack of access to essential medication, repeated failures to follow medical advice, or situations where the management of a child's medical condition may place them at risk of harm.

Some children and young people may question their gender, gender expression, or how they relate to societal expectations associated with sex and gender. We will respond with sensitivity, respect, professional curiosity and a child-centred approach, taking time to understand the child's views, experiences and individual circumstances whilst considering any safeguarding, welfare or wellbeing concerns. These may include mental health needs, family relationships, peer interactions, bullying, discrimination, social isolation or other vulnerabilities.

We recognise that children may express themselves in ways that do not conform to gender stereotypes and that this alone does not indicate a particular gender identity. Staff will avoid making assumptions and will consider each child's circumstances individually.

The school will not initiate discussions or actions relating to social transition. Any request for support relating to social transition, or concerns relating to a child questioning their gender, will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of:

- The child's welfare, wishes and best interests.
- The views of parents or carers, except in the rare circumstances where involving parents/cares may place a child at risk of harm.
- Any relevant safeguarding, medical, psychological or educational information.
- The safety, welfare, privacy and dignity of all children.
- Relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

The school will maintain accurate pupil records in accordance with statutory requirements and data protection legislation. Decisions relating to support arrangements will be documented, risk assessed where appropriate, and reviewed regularly. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be involved where there are safeguarding or welfare considerations.

Safeguarding Requirements for Sport and School Premises

Sport: Where participation in sport is separated by sex for reasons of safety or fairness in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, participation will be organised by biological sex. Where there are no safety concerns and a child requests an alternative arrangement, the school will consider the request on an individual basis, taking account of the child's welfare, the interests of other children, and the need to maintain safe and fair participation.

Toilets: The school will provide toilet facilities in accordance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance. Children will not be permitted to use toilets designated for the opposite biological sex. Separate toilet facilities will be provided for boys and girls aged eight and over unless individual self-contained facilities are available. Alternative individual arrangements may be considered where appropriate, provided they do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child.

Changing Rooms and Showers: A child aged 11 or over at the start of the school year must not undress in front of a child of the opposite biological sex and must not use changing or shower facilities designated for the opposite sex. Alternative private arrangements or access at alternative times may be considered where appropriate, provided they do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child. Arrangements will be risk assessed, documented and reviewed regularly.

Residential Visits and Overnight Accommodation: Where residential visits or overnight accommodation are provided, children will not share accommodation designated for or shared with children of the opposite biological sex. Alternative arrangements will be considered where appropriate, ensuring that the safety, welfare, privacy and dignity of all children are maintained.

2.7 Safeguarding Systems and Staff Awareness

All staff are aware of the safeguarding systems in place within Walkwood Church of England Middle School. These systems are explained during induction and reinforced through regular safeguarding training, updates and briefings.

All staff are aware of:

- The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- The Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- The Staff Code of Conduct.
- The Low-Level Concerns Policy.
- The Whistleblowing Policy.
- The Acceptable Use Policy.
- Procedures for children absent from education, missing from education, home, or care.
- Online safety procedures, including filtering and monitoring responsibilities.
- The requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)*, including Part 1 and relevant annexes.

All staff are expected to remain alert to safeguarding concerns and to act immediately where they have concerns about a child's welfare. Safeguarding concerns are recorded and managed using the school's safeguarding recording system Walkwood Church of England Middle School and must be reported without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL. Recording a concern does not replace the need to speak directly with the DSL where there is an immediate safeguarding concern.

Staff are made aware of the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, how to contact them, and the arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns when they are unavailable.

All staff working within Walkwood Church of England Middle School will read and understand Part 1: *Safeguarding Information for All Staff* within *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)*.

School leaders and staff who work directly with children will also read the relevant annexes to *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)*, which provide further information about specific forms of abuse, exploitation and safeguarding issues.

The governing body will ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and will read Part 2 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* relating to the management of safeguarding.

2.8 Training and Updates

Appropriate safeguarding and child protection training is essential to ensure that everyone working within Walkwood Church of England Middle School understands their safeguarding responsibilities and is equipped to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively. The school benefits from the support of Brightcore, which provides specialist safeguarding advice, training, updates, compliance support and quality assurance to help ensure safeguarding arrangements remain effective and reflect current statutory guidance and best practice.

School Staff

All staff employed by the school, including temporary staff employed directly by the school, will:

- Complete safeguarding and child protection training as part of their induction.
- Receive safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, at least annually.
- Receive regular safeguarding updates throughout the year, for example through staff meetings, briefings, emails, newsletters or other communications, to ensure their knowledge and skills remain current and reflect local and national safeguarding developments.
- Receive training appropriate to their role on online safety, including an understanding of the school's filtering and monitoring arrangements and their responsibilities in identifying, responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Receive training and updates on emerging technologies and associated safeguarding risks, including artificial intelligence-generated images, deep fakes, online manipulation, impersonation, fraud and technology-facilitated abuse. Safeguarding responses will be proportionate to risk and informed by current statutory guidance and national best practice.

Agency Staff

Agency staff will receive an appropriate safeguarding induction to Walkwood Church of England Middle School including information about the school's safeguarding procedures, the identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, how to report safeguarding concerns, and any local safeguarding arrangements relevant to their role. The school will seek assurance that agency staff have received appropriate safeguarding and child protection training through their employing agency.

Governors, Volunteers and Contractors

Governors, volunteers, contractors and other adults working within the school will receive safeguarding information, instruction and training appropriate to their role and responsibilities, including how to recognise safeguarding concerns, report concerns promptly and comply with the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads will undertake training appropriate to their roles, which will be updated in accordance with the requirements of Keeping

Children Safe in Education (2026) to ensure they maintain the knowledge, skills and understanding required to carry out their responsibilities effectively. The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team. Our DSL is Mrs Gemma Mckenna. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding in the school. This includes online safety and understanding our filtering and monitoring processes on school devices and networks to keep pupils safe online.

A Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will always be available during school hours to provide advice and support to staff regarding safeguarding and child protection concerns. Wherever possible, this will be in person; however, in exceptional circumstances, support may be provided through secure telephone or video communication. The school will maintain robust safeguarding continuity arrangements, including designated deputy cover and secure communication systems, to ensure safeguarding concerns can be reported, received and acted upon without delay. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements will also be in place for educational visits, residential visits, extended services and activities taking place outside normal school hours or during school holidays. When the DSL is absent, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads – Mrs Caroline Lowe and Mr Simon West – will act as cover.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads will:

- Participate in safeguarding training and continuing professional development appropriate to their roles.
- Attend Local Authority and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements training, briefings and meetings where appropriate.
- Attend local authority safeguarding network meetings and other relevant professional forums to remain up to date with local safeguarding procedures, emerging risks and national developments.
- Attend Spire Learning Trust Designated Safeguarding Lead network meetings to share good practice, strengthen safeguarding arrangements across the Trust and receive updates on local and national safeguarding developments.
- Complete Brightcore safeguarding training and participate in Brightcore safeguarding updates to ensure safeguarding knowledge remains current and reflects changes in legislation, statutory guidance and emerging safeguarding issues.
- Share relevant safeguarding updates, local contextual safeguarding information, learning from safeguarding practice reviews, and changes to legislation or statutory guidance with staff through regular briefings, meetings and other communications.
- Contribute to child protection conferences, strategy discussions, child in need meetings, core groups and other multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, preparing reports and sharing information as required to promote the welfare and safety of children.

The school will ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to maintain safeguarding leadership and operational safeguarding oversight during any absence of the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff will always be informed of how to access safeguarding advice, report concerns and escalate urgent safeguarding matters without delay.

The school maintains accurate records of safeguarding training to ensure all staff and relevant adults receive the level of training, information and support appropriate to their role and responsibilities, helping to promote a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school.

The full responsibilities of the DSL and deputy DSLs are set out in the role-holder's job description as set out by the DfE in Annex B of the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education. The school will review the job description regularly and update it whenever required.

2.9 Supporting Children and Families Who May Need Additional Help

All staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who works with or comes into contact with children has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information appropriately, and taking prompt action to ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time.

All staff are aware of the local arrangements for supporting children and families who may need additional help and understand their role in identifying children who may benefit from support through Family Help. Staff recognise that providing help and support when problems emerge is an important part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School recognises that some children and families may experience difficulties that require additional support to improve outcomes and prevent concerns from escalating. Staff will work in partnership with children, parents and carers, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, and relevant external agencies to ensure appropriate support is identified and provided.

Effective support for children and families relies on agencies working collaboratively to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from additional help and support.
- Understand and assess the needs of children and families.
- Provide appropriate support and interventions that improve outcomes for children.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School follows the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Levels of Need (Thresholds) - Worcestershire Safeguarding Boards guidance when identifying children and families who may require additional support, accessing Family Help, and making referrals to children's social care where appropriate.

The Levels of Need guidance supports professionals in making informed decisions about the level of support required for children and families. It is not intended to replace professional judgement, and every child and family's circumstances must be considered individually.

All staff understand that they must remain professionally curious and act where they have concerns about a child's welfare. Staff should discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will consider the most appropriate response, including whether additional support, Family Help, or a referral to children's social care is required.

All staff understand that children and families may experience barriers to seeking support. These may include fear, stigma, communication difficulties, vulnerability, disability, or other individual circumstances. Staff will continue to build trusted relationships with children and young people that encourage them to share concerns and access support when needed.

Where a pupil attends Alternative Provision, Walkwood Church of England Middle School retains overall responsibility for safeguarding and promoting their welfare. The school will work closely with Alternative Provision providers to ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place and that pupils are safe, supported and able to access suitable education that meets their individual needs.

The school will seek assurance that appropriate safeguarding and safer recruitment checks have been completed for adults working with pupils in Alternative Provision settings. Attendance, welfare, safeguarding concerns and the suitability of placements will be reviewed regularly.

The school will maintain effective communication with Alternative Provision providers, parents/carers and relevant agencies to ensure safeguarding information is shared appropriately and that any concerns are identified, assessed and acted upon promptly.

Temporary Accommodation

Where the school becomes aware that a child has been placed in temporary accommodation outside the local authority area, relevant safeguarding information will be shared promptly and appropriately with partner agencies in accordance with statutory guidance and local procedures. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will consider the impact that temporary accommodation may have on attendance, access to education, health services, welfare and safeguarding risks, and will work with families and agencies to provide appropriate support.

3.0 Raising Concerns

All staff are encouraged to report safeguarding concerns, including concerns about colleagues. Staff must use the school's safeguarding procedures and whistleblowing arrangements where appropriate.

Concerns regarding the Headteacher/Head of School should be raised with the Chair of the Governing Body.

Everyone working within Walkwood Church of England Middle School has a responsibility to safeguard children. By working together, maintaining vigilance, and acting promptly when concerns arise, we ensure that children receive the support and protection they need to thrive.

Section 3: Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

At Walkwood Church of England Middle School, we recognise that all staff and volunteers are well placed to identify concerns about a child's welfare through their day-to-day contact with pupils. We understand that children may not always recognise abuse, neglect or exploitation, or feel ready to disclose their experiences. Some children, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, may face additional barriers to recognising abuse or communicating their concerns. We are committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment where children feel valued, are listened to, taken seriously and receive the right help at the right time.

Our Commitment

- We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children by:
- Creating and maintaining a strong safeguarding culture where children feel safe, know who they can speak to, and concerns are recognised, shared appropriately and acted upon promptly.
- Promoting a culture where child-on-child abuse is never tolerated or dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up" or "just having a laugh", recognising that abuse can occur both inside and outside school, including online.

- Promoting equality, inclusion and respect, and challenging all forms of discrimination, bullying, harassment and prejudice.
- Delivering an age-appropriate curriculum, including Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), that enables pupils to recognise risk, develop healthy relationships, stay safe online and offline, build resilience and know where and how to seek help.
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and relevant agencies to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Supporting Staff

We support our staff by:

- Providing safeguarding and child protection training, induction and continuing professional development appropriate to each person's role and responsibilities.
- Ensuring staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including how to identify concerns, maintain professional curiosity, record concerns accurately and report them without delay.
- Supporting effective partnership working with other agencies, sharing information appropriately and making timely referrals where children require additional support or protection.
- Maintaining accurate, factual and contemporaneous safeguarding records, including the nature of the concern, actions taken, decisions made and outcomes.
- Complying with statutory safeguarding duties, including mandatory reporting requirements where applicable.
- Ensuring all appointments are made in accordance with safer recruitment requirements.
- Maintaining clear procedures for reporting low-level concerns, allegations and concerns about adults working with children.

Supporting Pupils

We recognise that children who experience abuse, neglect, exploitation or other adverse experiences may display behaviours that indicate unmet safeguarding needs. Staff will respond with compassion, professional curiosity and appropriate support, recognising that every child has the right to feel safe, valued and supported.

Children are supported through:

- Positive relationships with trusted adults who listen to their views and act in their best interests.
- An inclusive, safe and respectful learning environment.
- A curriculum that promotes safeguarding awareness, emotional wellbeing, resilience and healthy relationships.
- Appropriate pastoral support and effective partnership working with parents, carers and relevant agencies to ensure children receive coordinated support that meets their individual needs.
- Wherever reasonably possible, the school will hold at least two emergency contact numbers for every pupil. This provides additional options for contacting a responsible adult where a child is absent from school and there are welfare or safeguarding concerns.

Section 4: Child-on-Child Abuse (including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment)

At Walkwood Church of England Middle School, we recognise that children and young people can abuse their peers. Child-on-child abuse can happen in person or online and can affect any child. It includes, but is not limited to, physical abuse, bullying, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, sharing of nude or semi-nude images, initiation/hazing, and other forms of abuse or exploitation.

Incidents and allegations of child-on-child abuse will also be managed in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy and Online Safety Policy where applicable. These policies should be read alongside this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and set out the school's procedures for preventing, identifying, reporting, recording and responding to concerns.

All staff understand that child-on-child abuse is abuse and must never be dismissed as “banter”, “part of growing up” or “just having a laugh”. We maintain an “it could happen here” approach and ensure that all concerns are taken seriously, assessed individually and responded to appropriately.

We recognise that some groups of children may be more vulnerable to experiencing child-on-child abuse. Evidence indicates that girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and sexual harassment, while boys are more likely to be identified as perpetrators. However, all children can be affected, and all concerns will be considered on an individual basis without making assumptions.

Child-on-child abuse can happen both inside and outside school, including online. Staff understand that sexual violence and sexual harassment can have a significant impact on a child’s emotional wellbeing, mental health, attendance, behaviour, relationships and educational progress.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can violate a person's dignity, make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, or create a hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment can include, but is not limited to:

- Sexual comments, remarks, jokes or taunting.
- Sexualised comments about appearance, clothing or someone’s body.
- Sexualised name-calling.
- Unwanted physical behaviour, including deliberately brushing against someone or interfering with clothing.
- Displaying or sharing sexual images, pictures or drawings.
- Upskirting (which is a criminal offence).
- Online sexual harassment, including sharing, requesting or creating sexual content.
- Staff will consider the impact of any behaviour on the child experiencing it and recognise that behaviour which may be minimised by others can still cause harm.
- Sexual Violence, Consent and Sexual Offences
- Sexual violence refers to sexual offences as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault.

Staff understand that:

- Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose whether to take part in sexual activity.
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

- Consent must be present each time sexual activity takes place.
- Consent to one type of activity does not mean consent to another.
- A child under the age of 13 cannot consent to sexual activity.
- The legal age of consent is 16.
- Sexual activity without consent may constitute a criminal offence.

Sharing of Nude and Semi-Nude Images (including AI-Generated Images)

The consensual and non-consensual making, sharing or possession of nude and semi-nude images or videos involving children (sometimes referred to as youth-produced sexual imagery) is a safeguarding concern and will always be taken seriously.

This includes photographs, videos and livestreams that may be self-generated, taken by another person, digitally altered or wholly generated using Artificial Intelligence (AI), including deepfakes and "deep nude" imagery.

At **Walkwood Church of England Middle School**, we follow guidance from the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) and relevant statutory safeguarding guidance when responding to incidents involving the making or sharing of nude or semi-nude imagery.

Staff Responsibilities When Responding to an Incident

If any member of staff becomes aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images, videos or livestreams, including content which has been digitally altered or wholly generated using AI, they must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Every incident requires a safeguarding response.

Staff must not:

• View, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery.

• Ask a child to download, send, forward or show the imagery.

• Delete the imagery or ask a child to delete it.

• Ask children involved to disclose detailed information regarding the imagery beyond what is necessary to make an immediate safeguarding referral.

• Share information about the incident with other staff, pupils, parents or carers outside of safeguarding procedures.

• Conduct their own investigation into the incident.

• Say or do anything that could blame, shame or stigmatise any child involved.

Staff should reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking to an adult, explain that the information cannot be kept confidential and must be shared with safeguarding staff, and ensure the child receives appropriate support and protection.

Initial Review Meeting

Following a report, the DSL/DDSL will hold an initial review of the incident with appropriate staff. This may include the staff member who reported the concern and members of the safeguarding or leadership team.

The review will consider:

• Whether there is an immediate risk to any child.

• Whether a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

• Whether it is necessary to view the imagery in order to safeguard a child, noting that in most cases images should not be viewed.

• What further information is required to determine the most appropriate response.

• Whether the imagery has been shared more widely and through which platforms or services.

• Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images from devices or online platforms.

• The safeguarding needs of all children involved.

• Whether another school, setting or agency needs to be informed.

• Whether parents or carers should be contacted.

The DSL/DDSL will make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police where:

• An adult is involved.

• There are concerns about coercion, exploitation, blackmail, abuse or grooming.

• There are concerns about a child's capacity to consent.

• The imagery depicts sexual acts or content that is unusual for the child's developmental stage or is violent in nature.

• The imagery involves sexual activity and any child involved is under 13 years of age.

• A child is believed to be at immediate risk of harm, including self-harm, suicidal ideation or significant emotional distress.

Where statutory agency involvement is not required, the DSL/DDSL, in consultation with the Headteacher where appropriate, will determine the most suitable safeguarding response and ensure that decisions are recorded.

Further Review by the DSL/DDSL

Where a referral to Children's Social Care or the Police is not initially required, the DSL/DDSL will undertake a further review to establish the facts and assess ongoing risks.

This may include:

• Speaking with children involved where appropriate.

• Reviewing safeguarding records and contextual information.

• Assessing the impact on all children involved.

• Considering whether further support, intervention or referrals are required.

If at any point there are concerns that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, an immediate referral will be made to Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

Informing Parents and Carers

The DSL/DDSL will inform parents and carers at an early stage and keep them appropriately involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that doing so would place a child at increased risk of harm.

Decisions regarding parental involvement will be recorded and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Referring to the Police

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the Police, this will be done through:

PC James Cambell or 101

The school will work closely with Police and other agencies where criminal offences may have occurred.

Recording Incidents

All incidents involving nude or semi-nude imagery, including AI-generated imagery, together with decisions made, actions taken, support offered, referrals completed and outcomes achieved, will be recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Records will be maintained securely and reviewed regularly by the DSL/DDSL.

Supporting Children

At **Walkwood Church of England Middle School**, the welfare of children involved will always be the primary consideration.

We recognise that incidents involving nude or semi-nude imagery can be highly distressing and may have a significant impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, mental health, relationships, attendance, behaviour and educational progress.

The school will:

• Listen to and take seriously all concerns raised by children.

• Ensure children are not made to feel that reporting abuse or harmful behaviour is creating a problem.

• Take all reports seriously and ensure children are listened to, supported and protected.

• Consider the needs of all children involved, including children who have experienced harm, children who have displayed harmful behaviour, and children who may have been falsely accused.

• Provide appropriate pastoral, emotional, educational and safeguarding support.

• Consider whether additional intervention, safety planning or specialist support is required.

• Work with parents, carers and partner agencies where appropriate.

• Monitor and review support arrangements to ensure children remain safe, supported and able to access education.

The school may provide support through its safeguarding team, pastoral staff, mental health and wellbeing provision, Early Help processes, counselling services and external specialist agencies as appropriate.

Curriculum Coverage

At **Walkwood Church of England Middle School**, pupils are taught about the issues surrounding the making and sharing of nude and semi-nude images in an age-appropriate way through our:

Teaching includes:

• What nude and semi-nude image sharing is.

• How it is most likely to be encountered.

• Consent, healthy relationships and respectful behaviour.

• The consequences of requesting, possessing, forwarding or sharing images.

• Online sexual harassment.

• The legal implications of sharing sexual imagery.

• The potential impact on wellbeing, reputation and relationships.

• AI-generated imagery, deepfakes and digitally manipulated content.

• Strategies for responding to pressure to share images.

• How to seek help and report concerns.

This section will be shared with pupils in an age-appropriate way so that they understand how the school will respond should concerns arise.

Teaching follows best practice in delivering safe and effective safeguarding education by:

• Putting safeguarding first.

• Approaching issues from the perspective of the child.

• Promoting dialogue and understanding.

• Empowering children and young people.

• Avoiding fear-based or alarmist approaches.

• Challenging victim-blaming attitudes.

Section 5: Emotional Health, Wellbeing and Mental Health Support

Mental health and emotional wellbeing are central to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Staff understand that mental health concerns may, in some cases, indicate that a child has experienced or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns.

Children may experience a range of challenges that affect their emotional wellbeing, including adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, family difficulties, bullying, exploitation, abuse or other significant life events. These experiences can have a lasting impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationships, learning and development.

All staff are expected to maintain professional curiosity and consider whether changes in a child's presentation may indicate an unmet safeguarding need. Where concerns are identified, staff will follow safeguarding procedures and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead or appropriate members of staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) will consider whether informing parents or carers would support the child's wellbeing and whether doing so may place the child at additional risk. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and recorded appropriately.

If staff believe a child is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical intervention, they must call 999 or arrange for the child to attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) immediately with a parent/carer or another suitable responsible adult. Where urgent mental health support is required but the situation is not an emergency, staff should use NHS 111 Online or telephone 111 and select the mental health option.

Where a member of staff has a concern about a child's mental health or wellbeing, they must report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures. Whilst not all mental health concerns will constitute a safeguarding issue, the DSL will consider the concern and liaise with the Designated Senior Mental Health Lead, where appropriate, to ensure the child receives

appropriate support. Mental health and wellbeing concerns should also be recorded in accordance with school procedures using CPOMS

Identifying Concerns

The school has clear systems and processes in place to identify, support and respond to children experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties.

Staff understand that indicators of emotional wellbeing or mental health concerns may include:

- Changes in behaviour, mood or presentation.
- Withdrawal from friends, family or usual activities.
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- A decline in attendance, engagement or academic progress.
- Expressions of hopelessness, worthlessness or feelings of failure.
- Talk about self-harm, suicide or risk-taking behaviours.
- Substance misuse or other concerning behaviours.

These indicators may have a range of causes and should always be considered alongside the child's individual circumstances. Staff will listen to children, take concerns seriously and report safeguarding concerns promptly.

Supporting Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing

Children will be supported through:

- A safe, inclusive and supportive environment where children feel able to share worries, feelings and experiences.
- A curriculum, including Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), that develops emotional literacy, resilience, healthy relationships and an understanding of how to seek help.
- Positive relationships with trusted adults who children can approach for support.
- Appropriate pastoral support and intervention where concerns are identified.
- Effective partnership working with parents, carers and relevant agencies to ensure children receive the right help at the right time.
- Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates to understand how experiences such as abuse, neglect, exploitation, trauma and adversity can affect a child's mental health, behaviour and education.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead works with relevant staff, including those responsible for mental health and wellbeing provision, to ensure that children's needs are identified, supported and reviewed appropriately.
- Where a child's mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern, staff will take immediate action in accordance with this policy and seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Working with Parents and Carers

The school recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers to support children's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Where appropriate, parents and carers will be involved in discussions about support, next steps and available services. However, information will not be shared where doing so may place the child at increased risk of harm.

Safeguarding and support discussions, including agreed actions and outcomes, will be recorded securely in accordance with school procedures.

Section 6: Opportunities to Teach Safeguarding

Children are taught about safeguarding through a planned, age-appropriate curriculum and wider school activities. Preventative education is a key part of our safeguarding approach and is most effective when it is embedded within a whole-school culture that promotes respect, inclusion, equality and positive relationships.

Through the curriculum, including Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), alongside assemblies, collective worship, pastoral support, enrichment activities and wider school initiatives, pupils are supported to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to recognise risk, make safe choices, understand healthy relationships and know how to seek help.

Individual schools may enhance safeguarding education through specific programmes, curriculum resources, pastoral approaches, external agencies, collective worship, pupil leadership opportunities or other initiatives that reflect the needs of their pupils and community.

Our curriculum promotes:

- Respectful behaviour, equality and inclusion.
- Healthy relationships, consent and boundaries.
- Understanding and challenging bullying, discrimination, prejudice and harmful stereotypes, including sexism, misogyny, misandry and hate-related behaviour.
- Online safety, including responsible use of technology, social media, mobile devices and awareness of online risks.
- Understanding different forms of abuse, exploitation and harmful behaviour, including child-on-child abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Personal safety, including risks associated with drugs, alcohol, substance misuse, road safety, fire safety and water safety.
- Awareness of domestic abuse and its impact on children.
- Understanding risks linked to child exploitation, including criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation.
- Awareness of safeguarding risks associated with forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other forms of so-called honour-based abuse.
- Understanding extremism and radicalisation and the importance of fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect.

Curriculum content is designed to be appropriate to pupils' age, stage of development and individual needs. Consideration is given to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and other vulnerabilities to ensure that all pupils can access safeguarding education and understand how to seek support.

Safeguarding education is reinforced through the wider curriculum, assemblies, pastoral support, enrichment activities and responses to current issues affecting pupils and the wider community.

The school recognises that preventative education should not only provide information but should empower children to recognise concerns, develop resilience, respect others and understand that safeguarding measures are designed to protect and support them.

Section 7: Online Safety, Filtering and Monitoring

Online safety is an integral part of safeguarding. The school recognises that children can be exposed to risks through technology, online platforms, digital communication and mobile devices. These risks may include online abuse, exploitation, cybercrime, inappropriate content, harmful online interactions and the misuse of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI).

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place to protect children from harmful and inappropriate online content and activity when using the school's IT systems.

The effectiveness of filtering and monitoring arrangements is regularly reviewed, taking account of the school's context, including the age range of pupils, the number of users, the frequency of access to technology and the online risks faced by children. Decisions regarding filtering and monitoring are proportionate and balance safeguarding requirements with effective use of resources.

The school maintains appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to safeguard pupils when using school technology and networks. These arrangements are monitored and reviewed to ensure they remain effective and responsive to emerging risks.

Online risks are considered within four broad categories:

• **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, including pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories.

• **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this. This may include peer pressure, commercial advertising, grooming and exploitation by individuals posing as children or young adults for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

• **Conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. This may include making, sending or receiving explicit images, including AI-generated imagery, online bullying, harassment and other harmful online behaviours.

• **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, financial scams and other forms of online exploitation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has lead responsibility for online safety and understands the school's filtering and monitoring arrangements. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding and online safety training and updates to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities, including how to identify, report and respond to online safeguarding concerns.

The school considers online safety when developing policies and procedures, planning the curriculum, providing staff training and working with parents and carers to support children's safe use of technology.

Online safety is embedded throughout the curriculum and wider school life. Pupils are taught how to use technology safely, responsibly and respectfully, including how to recognise online risks, protect themselves and others, and seek help when they have concerns.

Technology and online risks continue to evolve rapidly. The school regularly reviews its approach to online safety and considers emerging safeguarding risks, including cybercrime, artificial intelligence (AI), online manipulation, impersonation, fraud, deep fakes and the creation or sharing of AI-generated nude or semi-nude images.

Any concerns involving online harm, including AI-generated or manipulated images, will be treated as safeguarding concerns and responded to in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school follows relevant Department for Education guidance and recognised standards relating to filtering, monitoring and cybersecurity to ensure appropriate protections are in place.

Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

The expectations for the use of mobile phones and personal devices are communicated clearly to pupils, parents, staff and visitors and are supported through the school's Acceptable Use and Online Safety procedures. Further information can be found in the school's **Mobile Phone Policy.**

The school recognises that emerging technologies may present additional safeguarding risks. The use of wearable technology and recording devices, including smart watches, Meta glasses, body-worn recording devices and other devices capable of capturing images, audio or video, is subject to school procedures and expectations for staff, pupils and visitors. Any misuse of such devices, including unauthorised recording, photographing, filming or sharing of images, will be treated seriously and managed in accordance with safeguarding, behaviour, data protection and staff conduct procedures.

Filtering and Monitoring

The effectiveness of filtering and monitoring arrangements is reviewed at least annually, taking account of the school's context, including the age range of pupils, access to technology and the online risks faced by children. Decisions regarding filtering and monitoring are proportionate and balance safeguarding requirements with effective use of resources.

The leadership team and relevant staff understand the filtering and monitoring systems in place, how they support safeguarding and how to escalate concerns when identified. Staff receive appropriate training and updates to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities and follow agreed procedures.

At Walkwood Church of England Middle School , online safeguarding is supported through the use of Smoothwall filtering and monitoring systems. Concerns identified through these systems are reviewed by designated safeguarding staff and escalated in accordance with school safeguarding procedures.

The school follows Department for Education filtering and monitoring standards to ensure that:

- Harmful and inappropriate content is blocked without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- Effective monitoring systems are in place to meet safeguarding needs.
- Concerns identified through filtering and monitoring systems are acted upon appropriately.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead works with relevant staff, including IT providers where appropriate, to review arrangements and ensure online safeguarding concerns are responded to effectively.

All staff understand their responsibility to promote safe use of technology, report concerns and follow online safety procedures.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

Our school has regard to DfE guidance on generative artificial intelligence in education and the DfE's published generative AI product safety expectations. Any teacher-facing or pupil-facing use is risk assessed for safeguarding, ethics, data protection, intellectual property, age-appropriateness, accuracy and bias. Filtering and monitoring arrangements apply to generative AI use.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini.

At Walkwood Church of England Middle School we recognise that AI has many uses, including enhancing teaching and learning, and in helping to protect and safeguard pupils. However, AI may also have the potential to facilitate abuse (e.g. bullying and grooming) and/or expose pupils to harmful content. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

We will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or to bully pupils in line with this policy and our anti-bullying policy.

Where nudes or semi-nudes have been digitally altered or wholly generated using AI, the school will follow UKCIS guidance on making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes and will treat every incident as requiring a safeguarding response.

Section 8: Child Exploitation, Serious Violence and Other Exploitation Risks

This section should be read alongside Annex B of this policy, *Recognising and Responding to Abuse and Neglect*, and relevant local safeguarding guidance.

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

The school recognises that children can be vulnerable to exploitation and that those who are exploited should be viewed as victims of harm, not perpetrators. Children may be manipulated, groomed or coerced into situations where they are exploited and may not recognise that they are being abused.

Child Criminal Exploitation is a broad term which includes, but is not limited to:

- County Lines exploitation;
- trafficking and modern slavery;
- financial exploitation; and
- other forms of criminal exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation involves situations, contexts or relationships where a child receives, or believes they receive, something of value in return for engaging in sexual activity. This may include money, gifts, accommodation, substances, status, protection or affection. CSE can affect any child, including boys and girls, and can occur both online and offline.

Children aged 16 and 17 can still be victims of sexual exploitation, even though they are legally able to consent to sexual activity. The presence of apparent consent does not remove the possibility of exploitation, coercion or abuse.

Staff recognise that children who are being exploited may not identify themselves as victims and may feel they are in a genuine relationship or friendship. They may also be criminalised for actions they have taken as a result of coercion or exploitation.

All staff remain alert to indicators of exploitation, including:

- unexplained gifts, money, clothing or possessions;
- changes in behaviour, friendship groups or relationships;
- increased secrecy, missing episodes or unexplained absences;
- association with older individuals or groups;
- concerns relating to drugs, weapons or criminal activity;
- signs of coercion, control or grooming.

Any concerns that a child may be at risk of exploitation must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where concerns relate to exploitation, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the appropriate response using Worcestershire safeguarding procedures, including the Levels of Need guidance and referral pathways. Where appropriate, the school will complete a Get Safe risk assessment and share information with relevant partner agencies, including the police.

County Lines

The school recognises that County Lines exploitation involves criminal networks using children and vulnerable adults to transport drugs, money or other commodities. Children may be recruited, groomed, threatened or coerced into involvement.

County Lines activity may involve the exploitation of a child's home address, sometimes referred to as "cuckooing", where a vulnerable person's home is taken over for criminal purposes.

Staff will remain alert to indicators that a child may be at risk of County Lines exploitation and will report concerns immediately in line with safeguarding procedures.

Serious Violence

The school recognises that serious violence is a safeguarding concern which may be linked to peer conflict, bullying, exploitation, gangs, county lines activity or other vulnerabilities.

Indicators that a child may be at risk of involvement in serious violence may include:

- unexplained injuries;
- changes in behaviour, attendance or friendships;
- decline in educational engagement;
- carrying or having access to weapons;
- involvement in criminal activity; or
- signs of exploitation or coercion.

Children experiencing disrupted education, including those who have experienced suspension, exclusion or placement in alternative provision, may be at increased risk.

Any concerns relating to weapons, threats of violence or involvement in serious violence must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The school will work with parents, carers and partner agencies to provide appropriate support, reduce risk and promote positive outcomes for children.

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

The school recognises that children can be victims of trafficking and modern slavery and that exploitation may occur both within the United Kingdom and internationally.

Staff will remain alert to indicators that a child may be at risk of trafficking, modern slavery or exploitation and will follow safeguarding procedures where concerns are identified. The school will seek advice and support through local safeguarding arrangements, including Worcestershire's exploitation services where appropriate.

There are a number of indicators which may suggest that a child has been trafficked into the UK and may still be controlled by traffickers or other adults. These may include:

• Signs of physical or sexual abuse.

• A sexually transmitted infection or an unexplained pregnancy.

• A history of going missing or unexplained moves.

• Being required to earn money or work in multiple locations.

• Limited freedom of movement.

• Periods of unexplained absence.

• Begging for money.

• Being cared for by adults who are not their parents where the relationship appears inappropriate or concerning.

• Being one of several unrelated children living at the same address.

• Not being registered with, or attending, a GP surgery.

• Excessive fear of deportation or authorities.

Indicators that a child may be experiencing trafficking or exploitation within the UK may include:

• Physical injuries or evidence of physical or sexual assault.

• Concerns relating to sexual exploitation.

• Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse.

• Clothing, possessions or lifestyles that are unusual for the child's age or circumstances.

• Relationships with significantly older individuals.

• Unexplained money, gifts, mobile phones or expensive possessions.

• Persistently going missing, staying out overnight or returning late without explanation.

• Returning from missing episodes appearing well cared for despite not being at home.

• Possession of keys to properties unknown to parents, carers or professionals.

• Low self-esteem, self-harm, eating disorders or other indicators of emotional distress.

• Poor attendance, truancy or disengagement from education.

• Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults.

• Going missing and being found in locations where the child has no known connection.

• Inappropriate use of the internet or developing concerning online relationships, particularly with adults.

These indicators do not automatically mean that a child is being trafficked or exploited; however, they should be considered within the wider safeguarding context and may indicate the need for further assessment and intervention.

Where staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be a victim of trafficking or modern slavery, they must report their concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

The DSL will make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care and, where appropriate, the Police. Schools are not ordinarily authorised First Responder organisations under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM); therefore, the DSL will work with Children's Social Care, the Police or another authorised First Responder organisation to ensure that an NRM referral is considered and made where appropriate.

Staff must not delay action while attempting to determine whether the legal definition of trafficking or modern slavery has been met. The child's immediate safety and welfare, and any need for emergency police action, must always take priority.

The DSL will maintain accurate records of concerns, decisions, referrals and outcomes and will follow up and escalate concerns in accordance with local safeguarding procedures where an appropriate response is not received.

Children Missing Education (CME)

The school recognises that children missing education, particularly repeatedly or for prolonged periods, are at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, involvement in criminal activity and poor educational outcomes.

The school will monitor attendance carefully and work with parents, carers, the Local Authority and relevant agencies to identify and address barriers to attendance. Unexplained and persistent absence will be followed up in accordance with statutory guidance and local procedures.

The school will notify the Local Authority when pupils are removed from roll in accordance with legal requirements and will take all reasonable steps to identify, locate and support children who may be missing education.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

The school recognises that parents have the right to educate their children at home where this is a suitable and informed choice.

Where parents express an interest in Elective Home Education, the school will work with families to ensure they have access to appropriate information and understand the implications of this decision.

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), is subject to a child protection plan, is a child in need or is otherwise considered vulnerable, additional safeguarding considerations may apply.

The school will follow Local Authority procedures when a child is removed from roll for Elective Home Education and will share relevant safeguarding information where appropriate to support the child's welfare and safety.

Violence Against Women and Girls, Honour-Based Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

The school recognises the links between violence against women and girls, misogyny, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, online abuse and controlling behaviour.

Where Honour-Based Abuse affects a child or young person, it is a safeguarding and child protection concern. Children may experience physical, emotional, psychological or sexual harm, neglect, forced marriage or, in extreme cases, risk of serious injury or death.

Honour-Based Abuse may be associated with attempts to control:

- relationships and sexuality;
- perceived family honour;
- behaviour, appearance or lifestyle choices;
- friendships or use of technology; or
- decisions relating to marriage.

Staff understand that these concerns require a sensitive and professional response and that assumptions should not be made about a child's family, culture or beliefs.

Where concerns are identified, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will seek advice and make appropriate referrals to children's social care, the police or other specialist agencies.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. It is illegal and involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Teachers and other professionals understand their statutory responsibilities regarding FGM. Where a teacher discovers that FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18, or receives a disclosure that it has occurred, they must follow the mandatory reporting requirements and report directly to the police.

All staff must report any concerns relating to FGM to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Forced Marriage

The school recognises that forced marriage is a form of abuse and a safeguarding concern. A child cannot consent to marriage where they are pressured, coerced or forced.

Staff understand the importance of early identification and will report concerns where a child may be at risk of forced marriage. The school will seek advice and support from appropriate agencies, including the Forced Marriage Unit where required.

The school recognises that since February 2023 it is a criminal offence to carry out any conduct intended to cause a child to marry before the age of 18, including where threats, violence or coercion are not used.

Our Commitment

The school will ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates to recognise exploitation, serious violence and other vulnerabilities.

We will work collaboratively with children, parents/carers and partner agencies to identify concerns early, reduce risk and ensure children receive appropriate support.

Children affected by exploitation or violence will be supported through trusted relationships, pastoral support, safeguarding interventions and coordinated multi-agency working.

Section 9: Domestic Abuse

The school recognises that domestic abuse can have a significant and lasting impact on children and young people. Domestic abuse can include physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic abuse, as well as coercive and controlling behaviour.

Children who see, hear, experience or are otherwise affected by domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right. Exposure to domestic abuse can have an impact on a child's physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing, development, attendance and educational outcomes.

Staff are aware that domestic abuse can occur within families, between intimate partners, through teenage relationship abuse, and through child-to-parent or caregiver abuse. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, socio-economic background or personal circumstances, and can occur both inside and outside the home.

The school will remain alert to indicators that a child may be affected by domestic abuse and will respond to concerns in line with safeguarding procedures. Where concerns are identified, staff will report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

The school recognises that young people may experience abusive behaviours within their own relationships. This is sometimes referred to as teenage relationship abuse. Where concerns relate to any child under the age of 18, safeguarding procedures will be followed and appropriate support will be offered to those affected.

The school will work collaboratively with parents/carers, safeguarding partners and relevant agencies to provide timely support and intervention for children affected by domestic abuse. Information will be shared appropriately, proportionately and securely in accordance with safeguarding responsibilities and data protection requirements.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises children as victims where they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse. The definition includes physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse, as well as coercive and controlling behaviour, and applies where those involved are aged 16 or over and are personally connected as defined within the legislation.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Where the school identifies that a child or family is affected by high-risk domestic abuse, consideration will be given to whether a referral to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is appropriate.

MARAC provides a framework for agencies to share information, assess risk and develop coordinated safety plans to support victims and reduce harm. A MARAC referral does not replace a referral to children's social care where safeguarding concerns meet the threshold for statutory intervention.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will coordinate safeguarding responses and ensure appropriate information sharing and support arrangements are considered.

Operation Encompass

The school participates in Operation Encompass and recognises the statutory duty placed on police forces to notify education settings when a child may have experienced domestic abuse.

Duty on police forces in England and Wales to notify education establishments of domestic abuse incidents: Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass enables information about domestic abuse incidents attended by the police to be shared with the child's school in a timely manner. This allows appropriate support to be put in place at the earliest opportunity.

Where the school receives an Operation Encompass notification, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that relevant staff are appropriately informed and that the child's wellbeing is monitored. Staff will remain alert to any changes in presentation, behaviour, attendance or emotional wellbeing and will record and report any concerns through safeguarding procedures.

The school recognises the value of early information sharing and partnership working in helping children feel safe, supported and able to access appropriate help following experiences of domestic abuse.

Section 10: Safeguarding Pupils at Risk of Extremism and Radicalisation

The school is committed to protecting children from the risks of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism as part of its wider safeguarding responsibilities.

The Prevent strategy aims to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Although it is rare for children to become involved in terrorist activity, children and young people can be exposed to extremist influences, harmful ideologies or prejudiced views, including through online and offline environments.

Early identification and intervention are important in preventing children from being drawn into extremist activity. The school works with the local authority, safeguarding partners, families and communities to support children and keep them safe.

For the purposes of safeguarding:

- **Extremism** is the 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 by which a person comes to support terrorism or extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

- **Terrorism** involves actions that endanger or cause serious violence to people, cause serious damage to property, or seriously interfere with electronic systems, where the purpose is to influence government or intimidate the public in pursuit of a political, religious or ideological cause.

There is no single way to identify whether a child may be vulnerable to extremist influences. Vulnerability may arise from a range of factors, including personal circumstances, experiences, relationships, family influences, online activity or exposure to extremist narratives.

Staff remain alert to changes in a child's behaviour, presentation, attitudes, relationships or circumstances that may indicate they require support or protection. Concerns may include increased intolerance, expression of extremist views, exposure to extremist material, attempts to access harmful content or significant changes in behaviour.

Any concerns that a child may be at risk of radicalisation or involvement in terrorism should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and recorded through the school's safeguarding procedures.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will assess concerns using professional judgement and local safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, this may include seeking advice from the local authority Prevent lead or making a referral to the Channel process.

Further guidance can be found here:

Channel guidance

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputies will ensure they understand local Prevent procedures and receive appropriate training. Relevant updates will be shared with staff through safeguarding briefings and training to ensure they understand the risks and their responsibilities.

The school recognises that radicalisation can occur through a variety of methods, including online platforms and social media. Staff promote critical thinking, respect, equality and tolerance through the curriculum and wider school culture, supporting pupils to understand and challenge harmful narratives.

Where concerns are identified, the school will work with appropriate agencies to ensure children receive proportionate support and intervention.

Section 11: Allegations Against Staff Members, Supply Teachers, Trainee Teachers, Volunteers, Contractors and Low-Level Concerns

All adults working in or on behalf of the school have a responsibility to maintain high standards of professional conduct and to raise concerns where they have them about the behaviour, attitude or actions of colleagues.

Concerns about adults working with children must always be taken seriously and reported in accordance with the appropriate procedure.

Where a concern or allegation is made that a member of staff, supply teacher, trainee teacher, volunteer, contractor or any other person working on behalf of the school has harmed, or may pose a risk of harm to, a child, this must be reported immediately to the Headteacher/Head of School.

The Headteacher will follow the procedures set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and will seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where the concern meets, or may meet, the harm threshold.

Details of the local LADO arrangements can be found here:

Refer to Children's Social Care | Worcestershire County Council

Where concerns relate to the Headteacher, these should be reported to the Chair of Trustees. Where the Headteacher is also the sole proprietor, concerns should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

All staff are aware of their responsibility to raise concerns about colleagues through the school's Whistleblowing Policy where appropriate.

For allegations involving supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors, the school will work collaboratively with the relevant employer, training provider, agency or organisation whilst ensuring that safeguarding concerns are managed in accordance with statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures.

Low-Level Concerns

The term 'low-level concern' does not mean that the concern is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern, however small, that an adult working in or on behalf of the school may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, but does not meet the threshold for an allegation requiring referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Low-level concerns may include situations where an adult's behaviour causes a sense of unease, uncertainty or a 'nagging doubt' about whether professional boundaries have been maintained.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- being over-friendly with children;
- having favourites or developing inappropriate relationships with pupils;
- using personal devices to photograph children contrary to school procedures;
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door without appropriate justification; or
- using language or behaviour that humiliates, intimidates or undermines children.

Such behaviour may range from unintentional or thoughtless actions, through to behaviours that may indicate a risk of harm. All low-level concerns will be recorded, reviewed and managed in accordance with the school's Low-Level Concerns Policy.

The school promotes a culture where concerns about adults working with children can be raised openly and are responded to appropriately. This supports safer working practices and helps to identify patterns of behaviour that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Section 12: Safer Recruitment and Single Central Record

Safer recruitment is a fundamental part of our safeguarding arrangements. We are committed to ensuring that all adults who work with, or have access to, children are suitable to do so and that robust recruitment procedures are followed to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with pupils.

Our recruitment processes are undertaken in accordance with statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, and include appropriate pre-employment checks before an individual begins work. These checks may include:

- verification of identity, right to work and qualifications;
- appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, including barred list checks where the role meets the criteria for regulated activity;
- obtaining references and undertaking other relevant suitability checks;
- completing online searches for shortlisted candidates where required;
- assessing the suitability of volunteers, contractors and agency workers through appropriate checks and risk assessments.

No individual who is barred from working with children will undertake regulated activity. Where volunteers are involved, the school will assess their role carefully to determine the appropriate level of safeguarding checks required. Volunteers undertaking regulated activity will require an enhanced DBS check with barred list information, where eligible.

Contractors, agency staff and other individuals working in or visiting the school will be subject to appropriate safeguarding checks and arrangements to ensure children are protected. Individuals will not be permitted unsupervised access to pupils unless the required safeguarding checks have been completed.

Single Central Record (SCR)

The school maintains a Single Central Record (SCR) as part of its commitment to safer recruitment and safeguarding. The SCR records the completion of required pre-employment checks for staff, volunteers and other relevant individuals and is regularly reviewed and audited to ensure compliance.

All visitors, contractors and other adults accessing the school site must follow the school's visitor procedures. This includes:

- reporting to reception on arrival;
- providing identification where required;
- signing in and wearing an appropriate visitor badge or lanyard;
- being made aware of safeguarding, health and safety arrangements;
- being appropriately supervised where safeguarding checks have not been completed.

Visitors who have not completed the required safeguarding checks will not be permitted unsupervised access to children.

The school ensures that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and that recruitment and induction processes reinforce the expectation that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Section 13: Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Record Keeping

Effective safeguarding relies on the timely sharing of information. All staff, volunteers and contractors have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns promptly and share relevant information with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher/Head of School. Concerns must never be ignored or delayed because of uncertainty about confidentiality or information sharing.

Information sharing decisions will be made in accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance, UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and data protection legislation. Data protection does not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information where there is a safeguarding concern and sharing information is necessary to protect a child.

If a child shares information that indicates they may be at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation, staff will listen carefully, reassure the child that they have done the right thing in speaking out, and explain that the information cannot be kept secret. Staff must not promise confidentiality and should only share information with those who need to know, such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead or appropriate external agencies.

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded accurately, factually and promptly using the school's safeguarding recording system. Records should include:

- the nature of the concern;
- details of what was observed or disclosed;
- dates, times and individuals involved;
- actions taken and decisions made; and
- any follow-up or outcomes.

Safeguarding and child protection records will be stored securely and separately from a child's main educational record. Access to safeguarding information will be restricted to appropriate individuals where it is necessary to safeguard and support the child.

External organisations, contractors and professionals working with the school must follow the school's safeguarding procedures and report any concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or appropriate member of the safeguarding team.

Confidentiality

All matters relating to safeguarding and child protection will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation and shared on a need-to-know basis. Information sharing is essential to identifying, assessing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, modern slavery and other safeguarding concerns, and to promoting children's welfare.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School will have regard to the Department for Education's *Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners*, including the seven golden rules of information sharing, and will support staff to exercise professional judgement when making decisions about sharing information.

The school ensures compliance with UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and relevant data protection legislation through adherence to the **Data Protection Policy**.

The school expects that:

• Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding.

• Staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible where concerns arise.

• Information shared will be relevant to the safeguarding concern, necessary for the recipient to know, clearly presented, appropriately contextualised, focused and proportionate.

• Information will not be omitted where it may be relevant to understanding, assessing or managing risk.

• Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of promoting the welfare of, and protecting the safety of, children.

• The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of safeguarding children.

• Where staff need to share special category personal data for safeguarding purposes, they will do so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, relevant safeguarding legislation and current guidance.

• Where appropriate, the school will apply the serious harm test and seek legal advice where there is uncertainty about withholding or sharing information.

• Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm, as this may not be in the child's best interests.

If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about sexual violence or sexual harassment, there is no definitive answer, as information may still need to be shared lawfully where there is a safeguarding concern or another lawful basis under UK GDPR applies.

In such circumstances, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will carefully balance the wishes of the victim against the school's duty to protect the child and other children from harm.

When making decisions regarding information sharing, the DSL will consider that:

• Parents or carers should normally be informed unless doing so would place the child at greater risk of harm.

• If a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care.

• Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are criminal offences. Where reports of these offences are received, the starting principle will be that the matter should be referred to the Police in accordance with statutory guidance.

• Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is 10, the starting principle of Police involvement remains where serious sexual offences are alleged.

The school will do all it reasonably can to protect the anonymity, dignity and privacy of children involved in reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Staff will:

• Be aware of issues relating to anonymity, witness support and the criminal justice process where allegations of sexual violence or sexual harassment progress through formal procedures.

• Carefully consider which staff need to know about a report and what support is required for those involved.

• Consider the potential impact of social media, rumours and online communication on the wellbeing and privacy of those involved.

If staff are in any doubt about whether information should be shared, they should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) without delay.

Working with Parents and Carers

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers to support children's welfare. Where appropriate, we will involve parents and carers in safeguarding decisions and provide advice, guidance and signposting to services that can support children and families.

There may be occasions where sharing information with parents or carers, or seeking their consent before making a referral, would place a child at increased risk of harm. In these circumstances, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will seek appropriate advice and take action in the best interests of the child.

The school will ensure safeguarding policies are available to parents and carers and that appropriate procedures are in place for responding to concerns or complaints.

Transfer of Safeguarding Information

When a child moves to another education setting, safeguarding and child protection information will be shared securely and promptly with the receiving school to ensure continuity of support and protection.

The receiving school will be asked to confirm receipt of the safeguarding records, and transfer arrangements will be recorded in accordance with statutory guidance and the Trust's information retention procedures.

The school manages safeguarding records in line with current data protection guidance:

Data protection in schools - Guidance - GOV.UK

Section 15: Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility across the whole school community. All staff, volunteers, governors, trustees, contractors and visitors have a role in maintaining a culture where children are protected from harm and where concerns are identified, reported and acted upon promptly.

All Staff

All staff are expected to:

- Follow the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and Staff Code of Conduct.
- Complete safeguarding training and updates appropriate to their role.
- Recognise and report concerns about a child's welfare, including concerns relating to abuse, neglect, exploitation, child-on-child abuse, online harm and other safeguarding risks.
- Record concerns accurately and promptly using the school's safeguarding recording system.

- Report concerns about adults working with children through the appropriate safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.
- Maintain professional curiosity and act on concerns, recognising that safeguarding issues can happen in any setting.

Where staff are concerned about a child's welfare, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. If they are unavailable, staff should follow the alternative safeguarding arrangements in place.

Governance Responsibilities

The Trust Board are responsible for ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and that safeguarding remains a priority within school leadership and practice.

They will ensure:

- safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and reflect statutory guidance;
- appropriate safeguarding training and support are provided to staff;
- safer recruitment arrangements are followed;
- safeguarding practice is monitored and challenged appropriately; and
- arrangements are in place for managing allegations, low-level concerns and safeguarding risks.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Responsibilities

The Designated Safeguarding Lead has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the school.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- provide advice and support to staff regarding safeguarding concerns;
- ensure concerns are assessed, recorded and acted upon appropriately;
- make referrals to external agencies where required;
- maintain effective safeguarding records and ensure information is transferred securely when children move schools;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates;
- maintain oversight of vulnerable children and work with relevant agencies to support their welfare;
- promote a culture where children's wishes and feelings are considered;
- oversee online safeguarding arrangements, including filtering and monitoring responsibilities; and
- ensure safeguarding arrangements remain effective when they are unavailable by ensuring appropriate deputy cover is in place.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads support the Designated Safeguarding Lead and provide safeguarding capacity to ensure concerns can be responded to promptly.

Section 16: Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)*. It should be read alongside *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for Practitioners* and, where applicable, Section 3 of the *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework*.

Walkwood Church of England Middle School will have regard to this guidance, comply with its legal duties and follow the arrangements agreed and published by the three safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

- The Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, referred to collectively in this policy as "data protection laws".
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- The Crime and Policing Act 2026, which removes the supervision exemption from regulated activity for relevant volunteer activity.
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which places a duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, which set out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirement for at least 1 person conducting an interview to be trained in safer recruitment techniques
- Part 3 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school
- The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children.
- Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18
- Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children
- Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children
- Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, which explains schools' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism
- The Human Rights Act 1998, which explains that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to individuals under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people regarding particular protected characteristics (including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race). This means our Governing Board and Headteacher/Head of School should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils with regard to these characteristics. The Act allows our school to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils (where we can show it's proportionate). This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. For example, it could include taking positive action to support girls where there's evidence that they're being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or harassment
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which explains that we must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The PSED helps us to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil outcomes. Some pupils may be more at risk of harm from issues such as sexual violence; homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying; or racial discrimination

- SCHOOLS WITH PRIMARY AGE ONLY (SECONDARIES PLEASE DELETE): The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (referred to in this policy as the "2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations") and Childcare Act 2006, which set out who is disqualified from working with children

Statutory Guidance

- Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026)
- Working together to safeguard children 2026
- Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales (2023)
- Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006
- Working together to improve school attendance 2026
- Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation
- Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people susceptible to radicalisation
- Multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage

Other Relevant Guidance

- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused
- Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners
- Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners
- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people
- Teachers' Standards
- Recruit teachers from overseas
- Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Appendix 1: Child-on-Child Abuse (including Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment)

1. Purpose

This appendix should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Online Safety Policy, Child-on-Child Abuse Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.

The school recognises that children can abuse other children (child-on-child abuse) and that this can happen both inside and outside of school, online and offline. All staff should maintain the attitude that "it could happen here".

Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding concern and must never be dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up", "just a joke", "harmless fun" or "boys being boys". The school adopts a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, prejudice, discrimination, sexual violence and sexual harassment.

2. Definition

Child-on-child abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional or online abuse, exploitation, coercion, harmful behaviour or violence carried out by one child towards another.

This can include, but is not limited to:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based bullying
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Abuse within intimate personal relationships
- Sexual violence
- Sexual harassment
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Sharing of nude or semi-nude images, including non-consensual sharing
- Upskirting
- Initiation, hazing or ritual-type violence
- Child criminal exploitation
- Child sexual exploitation
- Online abuse
- AI-generated sexual imagery
- Image-based abuse and sextortion

3. Whole-School Approach

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The school will:

- Create a culture where abuse is not tolerated
- Ensure children know how to report concerns and access support
- Take all reports seriously and respond appropriately
- Support children who experience harm and those displaying harmful behaviours
- Challenge inappropriate language, attitudes and behaviours
- Deliver effective safeguarding and RSHE education

• Work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies where appropriate
• Use safeguarding information, pupil voice and incident data to identify emerging risks and strengthen preventative practice

4. Prevention

The school recognises the importance of preventative education in reducing child-on-child abuse.

Preventative approaches include:

• Teaching children about healthy relationships, consent, boundaries and respectful behaviour through an age-appropriate curriculum
• Providing education around sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, online safety, image sharing, sextortion and AI-generated sexual imagery
• Challenging sexism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, biphobia, prejudice and discriminatory behaviours
• Ensuring children understand how and where to report concerns
• Providing regular safeguarding training for staff
• Working with families and external agencies to promote children's safety and wellbeing

5. Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can happen between children of any age and sex. It can occur:

• Face-to-face or online
• Between individuals or groups
• Between children who know each other or who do not know each other

Sexual violence includes sexual offences as defined under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, including:

• Rape
• Assault by penetration
• Sexual assault
• Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent

Sexual harassment may include:

• Sexual comments or jokes
• Sexualised remarks
• Displaying sexual images
• Sexualised online communication
• Unwanted sexual touching
• Sharing sexual images without consent

All incidents will be taken seriously. Victims will be listened to, supported and protected.

6. Harmful Sexual Behaviour and the Hackett Continuum

The school recognises that children develop and explore relationships in different ways and that not all sexual behaviour is harmful.

The DSL may use the Hackett Continuum of Sexual Behaviour and other recognised assessment tools to support professional judgement.

Behaviours may include:

- **Normal behaviour**

Developmentally expected behaviour that is age appropriate, consensual, mutual and exploratory.

This may require education, guidance and ongoing monitoring.

- **Inappropriate behaviour**

Behaviour that falls outside developmental expectations but is generally isolated and does not involve coercion, intimidation or exploitation.

This may require:

• Education
• Restorative work
• Behaviour support
• Monitoring

- **Problematic behaviour**

Behaviour that causes concern due to repetition, distress caused to others, lack of response to intervention or emerging power imbalance.

The DSL should be informed and a safeguarding assessment completed.

- **Abusive behaviour**

Behaviour involving coercion, threats, force, exploitation, significant power imbalance or lack of consent.

This requires safeguarding intervention and may require referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police.

Professional safeguarding judgement will always take precedence.

7. Responding to Reports

All reports of child-on-child abuse will be:

• Taken seriously
• Recorded accurately
• Managed sensitively
• Referred to the DSL without delay

When responding to reports, staff should:

• Listen carefully and remain non-judgemental
• Reassure the child that they are being taken seriously
• Avoid promising confidentiality
• Avoid leading questions and only ask open questions where necessary
• Record the facts accurately
• Inform the DSL as soon as possible

Where possible, reports should be managed by two members of staff, including the DSL or deputy DSL where available.

The school will consider:

• The wishes and feelings of the child
• The safety and welfare of all children involved
• The nature and seriousness of the incident
• The ages and developmental stages of those involved
• Any power imbalance
• Any ongoing risks
• Advice from Children's Social Care, Police and other agencies

8. Risk Assessment and Management

Following a report of sexual violence or significant sexual harassment, the DSL will complete an appropriate risk assessment .

This will consider:

• The safety and support needs of the victim
• Whether other children may be at risk
• The needs and safeguarding of the child displaying harmful behaviour
• Any necessary actions to reduce risk

Risk assessments will be recorded, reviewed and updated as required.

The school will take appropriate steps to protect children while ensuring decisions are fair, proportionate and based on safeguarding principles.

9. Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes

The school will respond to incidents involving nude or semi-nude images in line with national guidance.

Staff must not:

• Print images
• Copy images
• Share images
• Forward images
• Save images onto personal devices

Staff must report concerns immediately to the DSL.

The welfare and safety of children will remain the primary consideration.

10. AI-Generated Sexual Imagery

The school recognises the increasing safeguarding risks associated with artificial intelligence, including:

- Deepfake imagery
- Nudify applications
- AI-generated sexual content
- AI-enabled sextortion
- AI-generated child sexual abuse material

Any incidents involving AI-generated sexual imagery of children will be treated as a serious safeguarding concern.

The DSL will consider:

- The nature of the incident
- The level of harm
- Consent and coercion
- Distribution of material
- Ongoing risks

Appropriate safeguarding actions and referrals will be made where necessary.

11. Supporting Victims

Children who experience child-on-child abuse may find reporting difficult and distressing.

Victims will be:

- Listened to and believed
- Reassured that they are not responsible for the abuse
- Protected from further harm
- Offered appropriate pastoral and specialist support
- Kept informed where appropriate

The school will work to maintain the child's education and sense of safety while providing appropriate support.

12. Supporting Children Displaying Harmful Behaviour

Children displaying harmful sexual behaviour may also have experienced vulnerability, abuse or unmet needs. The school will balance:

- Protecting victims and other children
- Supporting the child displaying harmful behaviour
- Providing education and intervention
- Applying appropriate consequences where required

Support and accountability are not mutually exclusive.

13. Recording, Monitoring and Review

The DSL will ensure that:

- Incidents are accurately recorded
- Safeguarding records are maintained securely
- Risk assessments are completed where required
- Actions and outcomes are monitored
- Patterns and trends are identified
- Preventative actions are implemented

Governors will receive safeguarding updates and assurance that arrangements remain effective.

14. Partnership with Parents and Carers

The school recognises the importance of working with parents and carers.

Where appropriate, parents and carers will be involved in supporting children affected by child-on-child abuse, while considering confidentiality, safeguarding responsibilities and advice from external agencies.

The school will:

- Provide information about healthy relationships, consent and online safety
- Raise awareness of emerging risks including sextortion and AI-generated imagery
- Encourage early reporting of concerns
- Signpost families to appropriate support services

The welfare and best interests of the child will always remain the school's primary consideration.

Useful Resources

- Lucy Faithfull Foundation – Harmful Sexual Behaviour resources
- Anti-Bullying Alliance – Support for children and families affected by bullying
- Rape Crisis England & Wales – Support following sexual violence
- The Survivors Trust – Support for survivors of sexual abuse
- Victim Support – Support for children and young people affected by crime

Appendix 2: Recognising and Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

1. Purpose

All staff have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Staff must be alert to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and understand that children may experience harm both inside and outside the home, online and offline.

Any concern about a child's welfare must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. Safeguarding concerns must never be ignored or dismissed.

A child may:

• Disclose abuse directly.
• Show physical signs of abuse.
• Demonstrate changes in behaviour, emotional wellbeing or presentation.
• Communicate concerns indirectly through their behaviour, work, relationships or interactions with others.

Staff must always act in the best interests of the child and follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

2. Responding to Concerns and Disclosures

If a child discloses abuse, staff should:

Do

• Remain calm and listen carefully.
• Take the child seriously.
• Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
• Explain sensitively that information may need to be shared with appropriate people who can help keep them safe.
• Record the disclosure accurately, using the child's own words wherever possible.
• Report the concern immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Do Not

• Promise confidentiality.
• Ask leading questions.
• Investigate the concern yourself.
• Interrupt, pressure or question the child unnecessarily.
• Confront an alleged perpetrator.

Immediate Risk

If a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, staff should contact Children's Social Care and/or the Police without delay and inform the DSL as soon as possible.

3. Categories of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child.

Possible indicators include:

- Unexplained injuries.
- Injuries inconsistent with explanations provided.
- Frequent injuries or repeated accidents.
- Reluctance to change clothes or participate in physical activities.
- Fear of physical contact.
- Aggressive behaviour or extreme withdrawal.
- Changes in behaviour or emotional presentation.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which causes severe and adverse effects on their emotional development.

It may involve:

- Constant criticism, humiliation, rejection, belittling or name-calling.
- Threats, intimidation or controlling behaviour.
- Preventing a child from developing appropriate relationships.
- Exposure to domestic abuse.
- Age-inappropriate expectations being placed on a child.

Possible indicators include:

- Excessive withdrawal.
- Low self-esteem.
- Self-harm.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Delayed emotional development.
- Extreme compliance or attention-seeking behaviour.
- Difficulty forming relationships.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. This can occur online or offline and may not always involve physical contact.

Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adults or by other children and young people. It may involve coercion, manipulation, exploitation, abuse of power or a lack of consent.

Sexual abuse may include:

- Sexual touching or sexual assault.
- Rape or assault by penetration.
- Coercing or forcing a child to engage in sexual activity.
- Child sexual exploitation.
- Sharing or creating sexual images without consent.
- Online sexual abuse, grooming or exploitation.

Possible indicators include:

- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour.
- Knowledge of sexual matters beyond expected developmental levels.
- Sudden changes in behaviour or emotional wellbeing.
- Reluctance to be with certain individuals.
- Self-harm.
- Unexplained gifts, money or possessions.
- Sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy.
- Changes in relationships, attendance or engagement with education.

Staff should be aware that children may communicate concerns through their behaviour and that a child may not always disclose abuse directly.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of their health or development.

Neglect may include failure to provide:

- Adequate food, clothing or shelter.
- Appropriate supervision.
- Medical care or treatment.
- Emotional support and protection.
- Access to education.
- Protection from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- A safe and stable home environment.
- Appropriate care and support where a child has been excluded from the family home or abandoned.

Possible indicators include:

- Poor hygiene.
- Inadequate clothing.
- Frequent hunger.
- Untreated medical needs.
- Poor attendance or frequent lateness.
- Tiredness or lethargy.
- Developmental delay.
- A child taking excessive responsibility for caring for themselves or others.

Exploitation

Children may be vulnerable to exploitation, including child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation.

Exploitation occurs when a child or young person is manipulated, coerced or controlled for another person's benefit.

Possible indicators include:

- Missing episodes or unexplained absences.
- Having unexplained money, gifts or possessions.
- Association with older individuals or groups.
- Changes in friendships or behaviour.
- Increased secrecy or online activity.
- Involvement in criminal activity.
- Signs of coercion, threats or control.

4. Staff Responsibilities

Staff must not attempt to diagnose abuse or investigate concerns. Their role is to:

- Recognise possible signs of harm.
- Listen and respond appropriately to children.
- Record concerns accurately.
- Report concerns promptly to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Any concern, no matter how small it may appear, should be shared so that appropriate support and protection can be considered.

The DSL will determine the appropriate safeguarding response, including whether advice, early help, Children's Social Care or Police involvement is required.