# Bourton Meadow Academy

# Child Protection Policy

This policy was adopted on        January 2018

The policy is to be reviewed by     January 2019

# CONTENTS

# 1. Contacts

## 1.1 School contacts

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
  Lucy Brown (Acting Headteacher) 01280 823374

- Additional Designated Safeguarding Lead(s):
  Leigh Handley (Deputy Headteacher) 01280 823374
  Sarah Jones (Deputy Headteacher) 01280 823374
  Sharon Haslam (Inclusion Advisor) 01280 823374
  Andrea Thomas (Inclusion Advisor) 01280 823374
  Doreen Brinn (Nursery) 01280 823374

- Nominated Governor:
  Penny Croucher

- Chair of Governors:
  Penny Croucher

## 1.2 Contacts in County

- Education Safeguarding Advisory Service      01296 382912

- Education Safeguarding Advisor      01296 382732

- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):      01296 382070

- First Response Team ( including Early Help)

  08454 600 001

- Social Care, Out of Hours:      0800 999 7677

- Thames Valley Police      101(999 in case of emergency)

- Local Safeguarding Children Board      Bucks LSCB
  - for procedures, policies and practice guidelines

- Family Information Service      0845 688 4944

- SchoolsWeb      https://schoolsweb.buckscc.gov.uk/
  -school bulletin, Safeguarding links, A-Z guide to information and services

  - Buckinghamshire Grid for Learning e-Safety  Bucks CC e-Safety

1.3 Other contacts

|   |   |
|---|---|
| ▪ NSPCC | 0800 800 5000 |
| ▪ Childline | 0800 11 11 |
| ▪ Kidscape Bullying Helpline | 0845 1205 204 |
| • Female Genital Mutilation<br>Email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk | 08000283550 |
| ▪ Samaritans | 0845 790 9090 |
| ▪ CEOP<br>(Child Exploitation and Online Protection) | [CEOP](CEOP) |
| ▪ Foreign and Commonwealth Office<br>(Forced Marriages Section) | 0207 008 0151 |
| ▪ Crimestoppers | 0800 555 111 |
| ▪ Channel /Prevent/Protect<br>(Anti – Radicalisation) | 01494 421371 |

## 2. Introduction

2.1 This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; and in line with the following:

"Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015"

Buckinghamshire Multi-Agency Information Sharing for Children, Young People & Families – Code of Practice for sharing personal information, March 2015.

"Keeping Children Safe in Education"- statutory guidance for schools and further education colleges.  Sept 2018

Statutory Guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

2.2 The Governing Body takes seriously its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (section 157 for Independent schools) to safeguard[1] and promote the welfare of children; and to work

---

[1] Safeguarding (as defined in the Joint Inspector's Safeguarding report is taken to mean "All agencies working with children, young people and their families take all reasonable measures to ensure that the risk of harm to children's welfare are minimised" and

together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm or whose welfare may be in question. Governors will ensure all staff at the school have read and understood their responsibilities pertaining to part 1 and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2018

2.3 We recognise that all staff[2] and Governors have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm, and that the child's welfare is our paramount concern.

2.4 All staff believe that our school should provide a safe, caring, positive and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

2.5 The aims of this policy are:

2.5.1 To support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and resilience.

2.5.2 To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, feel confident and know how to approach adults if they are in difficulties.

2.5.3 To raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and staff's responsibilities in identifying and promptly reporting cases of abuse.

2.5.4 To provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure we, the school, contribute to assessments of need and support plans for those children.

2.5.5 To acknowledge the need for effective and appropriate communication between all members of staff in relation to safeguarding pupils.

2.5.6 To ensure the school has robust systems in place for ensuring that true and accurate records of events are kept and appropriately stored, and to ensure that any such records clearly differentiate between fact and opinion.

---

"where there are concerns about children and young people's welfare, all agencies take all appropriate actions to address those concerns, working to agree local policies and procedures in full partnership with other agencies"

[2] "Staff" covers ALL adult staff on site, including temporary, supply and ancillary staff, and volunteers working with children

2.5.7    To develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community in cases of suspected abuse.

2.5.8    To develop effective working relationships, guided by the Threshold document, with all other agencies, involved in safeguarding and promoting the needs of children at our school.

2.5.9    To ensure that all adults within our school who have access to children have been checked as to their suitability. This includes other community users of our facilities.

## 3. Responsibilities

3.1    All staff at our school understand that safeguarding children is **everyone's responsibility.** Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the school who receives a disclosure of abuse, an allegation or suspects that abuse may have occurred should report it immediately to the DSL (see contacts sheet) or, in their absence, to the Additional DSL (see contacts sheet) using the systems and processes our school has designed for this purpose. In the absence of either of the above, the matter should be brought to the attention of the most senior member of staff.

3.2    The Governing Body understands and fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities. It will:

3.2.1    Ensure that the school has a robust Child Protection Policy and that this is reviewed annually.

3.2.2    Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Protection Policy and be satisfied that it is being complied with.

3.2.3    Ensure there is a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who has the required level of authority to act to safeguard pupils at the school (ideally they and any additional DSLs should be members of the school's senior leadership team), together with a Nominated Governor for Child Protection. The roles and responsibilities of the DSL and additional DSL will be made explicit in those post-holders' job descriptions.

3.2.4    Recognise the importance of the role of the DSL and support him/her, ensuring the training necessary to be effective is undertaken.

3.2.5 Ensure cover is provided when needed and appreciate the additional duties taken on by the member of staff when carrying out this role especially when there are on-going child protection issues.

3.2.6 Recognise the contribution the school can make to helping children and young people keep safe through the teaching of self-protection skills and encouragement of responsible attitudes through the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum.

3.2.7 Ensure that there are safe and effective recruitment policies and disciplinary procedures in place, which adhere to *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) (Sept 2018)* and legislation referred to therein.

3.2.8 Ensure the safeguarding needs of pupils, their families and the school are fully understood and resources allocated to meet identified needs.

3.2.9 Work with the DSL to complete an annual safeguarding audit for the school to evidence how the school is meeting its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Ensure the findings of this audit are shared with the local authority.

3.2.10 Ensures there is an auditable system in place to evidence ALL staff have read, understood and agree to comply with their roles and responsibilities as laid out in KCSiE 2018

3.3 It will be the duty of the Chair of Governors to liaise with relevant agencies if any allegations are made against the Headteacher.

3.4 The Nominated Governor for Child Protection will be familiar with Buckinghamshire LSCB procedures, Local Authority procedures and guidance issued by the Department for Education.

3.5 The Nominated Governor will:

3.5.1 Work with the DSL to produce the Child Protection Policy.

3.5.2 Undertake the training available for Nominated Governors.

3.5.3 Ensure that child protection is, as a minimum, an annual agenda item for the Governing Body.

3.5.4 Meet regularly with the DSL to review and monitor schools delivery on its safeguarding responsibilities.

3.5.5 Share with County the school's annual report on the delivery of safeguarding over the previous academic year.

3.6 We have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is responsible for:

3.6.1 Referring a child if there are concerns about a child's care or welfare: abuse or neglect, to Social Care (First Response Team). Making a telephone referral in the first instance and following up with a written referral using the Multi-agency Referral Form which will be securely emailed to the team (secure-cypfirstresponse@buckscc.gcsx.gov.uk) within the same school day or, if this is impossible, within 24 hours.

3.6.2 Ensuring detailed and accurate written records of concerns about a child are kept even if there is no need to make an immediate referral and that any such records clearly differentiate between fact and opinion.

3.6.3 Ensuring all such records are kept confidentially and securely and are separate from pupil records, with a front sheet listing dates and brief entry to provide a chronology.

3.6.4 Ensuring an indication of additional and separate record-keeping is marked on the pupil records.

3.6.5 Creating a culture of safeguarding and vigilance within the school, beginning with ensuring all staff receive an appropriate level of induction and training to support them in their understanding.

3.6.6 Have in place a robust system for monitoring absences and addressing this quickly with parents and pupils to effect change. In addition this system should also support early identification of patterns of non-school attendance: these are seen under the banner of safeguarding in recognition of the NSPCC's comment on absenteeism being the single biggest indicator that something is going wrong for the child.

3.6.7 Acting as a focal point for staff concerns and liaising with other agencies and professionals, including staff concerns for conduct and behaviours of their peers

3.6.8 Ensuring all school staff are aware of the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures, and know how to recognise and refer any concerns.

3.6.9 Ensuring either they or another appropriately informed member of staff attends Child Protection Case Conferences, family support meetings, core groups, or other multi-agency planning meetings, contributes to the Framework for Assessments process, and provides a report which has been shared with the parents.

3.6.10 Ensuring any absence of two consecutive school days, without satisfactory explanation, of a pupil currently subject to a child protection plan is immediately referred to their social worker.

3.6.11 Ensuring that if a pupil, about whom there have been child protection concerns, leaves the school, concerns and school medical records are forwarded under confidential cover to the DSL at the pupil's new school as a matter of urgency. The original copy of significant documents will be retained at our school, and photocopies forwarded as above.

3.6.12 Providing, with the Headteacher, an annual report for the Governing Body, detailing any changes to the policy and procedures; training undertaken by the DSL, and by all staff and Governors; number and type of incidents/cases, and number of children referred to Children's Social Care and subject to Child Protection Plans (anonymised). The Governing Body will use this report to fulfil its responsibility to provide the LA with information about their Safeguarding policies and procedures.

3.6.13 Meet regularly (suggest once a term) with the Nominated Governor to share oversight of safeguarding provision within the school, monitor performance and develop plans to rectify any gaps in delivery noted.

3.6.14 Meet the statutory requirement to keep themselves up to date with knowledge, enabling them to fulfil their role, including attending relevant training, at least every two years, provided by the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board, or the Education Safeguarding Advisory Service.

3.6.15 Ensure that a referral is made to the Disclosure and Barring Service of all cases where a staff member has been dismissed, or left the school due to the risk/harm they pose to students.

3.6.16 Refer to the Police any cases where a criminal offence may have been committed

## 4. Procedures

Our school procedures for safeguarding children will be in line with Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures, "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015" and "Keeping Children Safe in Education" 2016 and statutory guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

4.1    We will ensure that:

4.1.1    We have a Designated Member of the Senior Leadership Team who has undertaken appropriate training for the role, as recommended by BSCB. Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be required to update their training every year (KCSiE 2018).

4.1.2    We have a member of staff *(Additional Safeguarding Lead)* who will act in the DSL's absence who has also received training for the role of DSL, and who will have been briefed in the role.  In the absence of an appropriately trained member of staff, the Headteacher will assume this role.

4.1.3    All adults (including supply teachers and volunteers) new to our school will be made aware of the school's policy and procedures for child protection, the name and contact details of the DSL, their role and responsibilities under Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 and the booklet "What to do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused", and have these explained, as part of their induction into the school.

4.1.4    All members of staff are provided with opportunities at least every three years to receive training arranged or delivered by the DSL in order to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse, how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse and the procedure to be followed in appropriately sharing a concern of possible abuse or a disclosure of abuse.

4.1.5    All parents/carers are made aware of the school's responsibilities in regard to child protection procedures through publication of the school's Child Protection Policy, and reference to it in our prospectus/brochure and home school agreement.

4.1.6    All staff, parents/carers and children are aware of the school's escalation process which can be activated in the event of concerns not being resolved after the first point of

contact. An individual's safeguarding responsibility does not end once they have informed the DSL of any concerns, although specific details of further actions may be appropriately withheld by the DSL as information will only be shared on a need to know basis.

4.1.7 Our lettings policy will seek to reflect the on-going responsibility the school has for safeguarding those using the site outside of normal school hours, ensuring the suitability of adults working with children on school sites at any time. This includes the purpose of the letting for religious or political reasons

4.1.8 Community users organising activities for children are aware of and understand the need for compliance with the school's child protection guidelines and procedures.

4.1.9 The school operates Safe Recruitment practices including ascertaining the suitability of employed staff and volunteers in regulated activities. Checks will be made through the Disclosure and Barring Service and the National Teachers Council's Prohibition List, as recommended by Buckinghamshire County Council and in line with current legislation.

4.1.10 Allegations against members of staff are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). There are procedures in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns or would have been had they not resigned. The school recognises that this is a legal duty and a failure to refer when the criteria are met is a criminal offence.

4.1.11 All staff working in a regulated activity are required to give an undertaking that they are not disqualified by association from working with children under the age of 8 yrs. Staff must inform the Head Teacher if events arise which may impact on their capacity to give this undertaking

4.1.12 Our procedures will be annually reviewed and updated.

4.1.13 The name of the DSL will be clearly shown in the school in appropriate locations including Reception and the staff room, with a statement explaining the school's role in referring and monitoring cases of suspected abuse.

**5. Prevention**

5.1.1 We recognise school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our pupils by providing students with effective lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection. We include within this the emotional wellbeing of our students and recognise the role school plays in recognising and preventing the political indoctrination of pupils either by self-radicalisation or through exposure to extremist views.

5.2 The school community will therefore:

5.2.1 Establish and maintain an ethos, which is understood by all staff, which enables children to feel secure and encourages them to talk, knowing that they will be listened to.

5.2.2 Receive focused training to support learning and understanding of the changing landscape of safeguarding which is underpinned by legislation and includes issues such as FGM, CSE and radicalisation. Support staff to be vigilant and able to recognise and act on assessed vulnerabilities.

5.2.3 Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.

5.2.4 Provide, across the curriculum, opportunities which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from both physical and emotional harm and to know to whom they should turn for help.

5.2.5 Ensure staff work effectively with partner agencies to seek advice support and guidance, drawing on multi agency expertise, knowledge and experience to support students at risk of harm including emotional and intellectual harm via social media and use of the internet

## 6. Supporting Children

6.1 We recognise that a child who is abused, witnesses violence, and lives in a violent environment may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame him/herself, and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth.

6.2 We recognise the young minds of our students can be vulnerable and may be exploited by others, therefore staff will be alert to the signs of vulnerability and/or susceptibilities to violent extremism or indoctrination.

6.3 We recognise that the school may provide the only stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

6.4 We accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.

6.5 Staff recognise the need for a culture of vigilance to be present in the school to support safeguarding. This includes awareness and sensitivity to attitudinal changes of student which may indicate they are at risk of radicalisation.

6.6 Our school will support all pupils by:

6.6.1 Encouraging the development of self-esteem, resilience and critical thinking in every aspect of school life including through the curriculum.

6.6.2 Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within the school.

6.6.3 Monitoring all absences from school and promptly addressing concerns about irregular attendance with the parent/carer. Any pupil absent for ten school days, where it has not been possible to make contact with a parent/carer, will be reported as a Child Missing in Education using the CME Protocol.

6.6.4 Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children and using the expertise and resources of colleagues in other service areas to promote the welfare of student

6.6.5 Ensuring staff work with Prevent officers and the Channel panel to support and safeguard if a student is thought to be vulnerable to or espousing radical political ideologies..

6.6.6 Liaising with the parent/carer, GP and/or school nurse to ensure that an appropriate care plan is in place if a pupil has medical needs.

6.6.7 Developing a good working knowledge of the Threshold Document and how it can be used to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of students, and informing the notification to Social Care (First Response) as soon as there is a significant concern.

6.6.8 Ensuring that a named teacher is designated for Looked After Children (LAC) and that an up to date list of

children who are subject to a Care Order or are accommodated by the County Council is regularly reviewed and updated. The Education of Children in Public Care (ECPC) Team must be made aware of all LAC in the school.

6.6.9 Notifying Social Care (First Response) when a child attending the school is privately fostered. This means when a child lives with someone other than their parent, step-parent, aunt, uncle or grandparent for a period of more than 28 days.

6.6.10 Seeking appropriate advice, support and guidance to enable us to critically evaluate safeguarding information and concerns, and to act on them appropriately.

6.6.11 Providing continuing support to a pupil (about whom there have been concerns) who leaves the school by ensuring that such concerns and school medical records are forwarded under confidential cover to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the pupil's new school as a matter of urgency/ within the first term. The original copy of significant documents will be retained at our school, and photocopies forwarded as above.

## 7. Confidentiality

7.1 We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.

7.2 The Headteacher or Designated Safeguarding Lead will disclose personal information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need to know basis only. This will be governed by BSCB Information Sharing Protocols.

7.3 However, all staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

7.4 Staff will not keep duplicate or personal records of child protection concerns. All information will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and securely stored only in the designated location within the school, separate from the pupil records.

7.5 Provision is in place for the information to be accessed in the absence of the DSL in an emergency.

7.6    All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or well-being or that of another.

7.7    We will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to Social Care  (First Response) with their parents /carers, unless to do
so could put the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation.  If in doubt, we will consult with the ESAS or Social Care on this point.


## 8. Supporting Staff

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

8.2    We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the DSL and to seek further support. This could be provided by the Headteacher or another trusted colleague, Occupational Health, and/or a representative of a professional body or trade union, as appropriate.

8.3    In consultation with all staff, we have adopted a Code of Conduct for staff at our school.  This forms part of staff induction and is in the staff handbook. We understand that staff should have access to advice on the boundaries of appropriate behaviour in order to define and underpin the safe working practices adhered to within our school.

8.4    We recognise that our DSL(s) should have access to support (as in 8.2 above) and appropriate workshops, courses or meetings


## 9. Allegations against staff

9.1    All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults. (See also 8.3 above)

9.2    Staff should be aware of the school's behaviour/discipline policy/Code of Conduct. This can be found on the Staff Share file on the school intranet.

9.3 We understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Headteacher/ DSL who will then liaise with the Headteacher or the most senior teacher if the Headteacher is not present.

9.4 The Headteacher/senior teacher on all such occasions should immediately discuss the content of the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The purpose of an initial discussion is for the LADO and the case manager to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action.

9.5 If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the Headteacher, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Chair of Governors who will consult the LADO (as in 9.4 above) without notifying the Headteacher first.

9.6 The school will follow the LA procedures for managing allegations against staff, a copy of which can be found on the Staff Share file on the school intranet.

9.7 Suspension of the member of staff against whom an allegation has been made needs careful consideration, and we will consult with LADO (as in 9.4 above) in making this decision, as well as being guided by HR.

9.8 If a suspension is made, following Local Authority procedures (as in 9.6 above) restrictions will apply to all staff regarding contact whilst suspended including the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

9.9 Our lettings agreement for other users requires that the organiser will follow LA procedures for managing allegations against staff and, where necessary, the suspension of adults from school premises.

## 10. Whistleblowing

10.1. We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

10.2 All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary, they should speak to the designated 'whistleblowing' Governor or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## 11. Physical intervention/Positive handling

11.1 Our policy on physical intervention/positive handling by staff is set out separately, as part of our Behaviour Policy. It complies with the Department for Education Guidance, 'The Use of Reasonable Force, Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' July 2013. Use of Reasonable Force, 2013. This policy states that staff may only use 'reasonable force', meaning no more force than is needed, to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. It is always unlawful to use force as a punishment.

11.2 Headteachers and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to conduct a search for the following 'prohibited items': knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, cigarettes and tobacco, fireworks, pornographic images, or any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage property.

11.3 If the use of force is necessary, reasonable adjustments for disabled children and children with special educational needs will be made.

11.4 Any use of force or restraint should be recorded and signed by a witness. The parent/carer will be informed of the incident.

11.5 Staff who are likely to need to use physical intervention must be appropriately trained.

11.6 We understand that physical intervention of a nature which causes injury or unnecessary distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.

## 12. Antibullying

12.1 Our policy on the prevention and management of bullying is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

## 13. Racist Incidents

13.1 Our policy on racist incidents is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that repeated racist incidents or a single serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

## 14. Health and Safety

14.1 Our Health & Safety policy, set out in a separate document, reflects the consideration we give to the protection of our children both physically within the school environment and, for example, in relation to internet use, and when away from the school when undertaking school trips and visits.

## 15. e-Safety

15.1 All staff should be aware of the school policy on e-Safety which sets out our expectations relating to:

- Creating a safer online environment.
- Giving everyone the skills, knowledge and understanding to help children and young people stay safe on line, question the information they are accessing and support the development of critical thinking.
- Inspiring safe and responsible use and behaviour.
- Use of mobile phones both within school and on school trips/outings.
- Use of camera equipment, including camera phones.
- What steps to take if you have concerns and where to go for help.
- Staff use of social media is set out in the Staff Code of Conduct.

## 17. Cultural Issues

As a school we are aware of the cultural diversity of the community around us and seek to work sensitively to address the unique culture of our students and their families as they relate to safeguarding. Our policy on:-
- Female genital mutilation

are set out in separate documents

## 17. Policy Review

17.1 The Governing Body of our school is responsible for ensuring the annual review of this policy, and for reporting back to the Local Authority. The date the next review is due is on the front cover

# Appendix One

**Child Protection**

Everyone who works with children has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. They should be aware of the signs and indicators of abuse and know what to do and to whom to speak if they become concerned about a child or if a child discloses to them.

The following is intended as a reference for school staff and parents/carers if they become concerned that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

The Children Act 1989 defines abuse as when a child is suffering or is likely to suffer 'significant harm'. Harm means ill treatment or the impairment of health or development. Four categories of abuse are identified –

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse

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

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment). If a child is observed scavenging for food at school, the possibility of inadequate feeding at home should be considered as a priority;
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate or inappropriate care-givers);
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

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

**Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children to feel frightened and in danger or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

*Domestic violence is very damaging to a child's emotional development; where a child is living with domestic violence, schools should consider making a referral to Social Care if the child shows any indicators of significant harm.*

**Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (e.g. masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing). They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images (including on-line images), watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
.

Although no culture sanctions extreme harm to a child, cultural variations in child rearing patterns do exist. A balanced assessment must incorporate a cultural perspective but guard against being over-sensitive to cultural issues at the expense of promoting the safety and well-being of the child.

*Fear of being accused of racism can stop people acting when they otherwise would. Fear of being thought unsympathetic to someone of the same race can change responses.*

*Every organisation concerned with the welfare and protection of children should have mechanisms in place to ensure equal access to services of the same quality, and that each child, irrespective of colour or background, should be treated as an individual requiring appropriate care.*

*Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report.*

Research also tells us that children with special needs are at an increased risk of abuse. There are fewer signs and indicators and more possible explanations. Children with communication difficulties may be especially vulnerable.

Some children and young people may be more vulnerable to abuse due to particular circumstances such as:

- Young women subject to honour based violence (where for instance they have transgressed the expectations of them as young women in their family and community).

- Young people whose cultural background are at odds with their behaviours such as homosexuality, under-age sex, relationships or life style choices

- Children at risk of harm from abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession on the part of their parent, carer or wider community.

- Girls at risk of genital mutilation (usually being taken back to their country of origin for this procedure to be carried out).

- Children being trafficked from abroad.

- Girls and/or boys at risk of being forced into marriage.