



# The Meadows Montessori School

## Child Protection Policy

### **Applies to:**

The whole school including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), out of school care, the after-school clubs and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours.

All staff (teaching and support staff), any students, the Proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

### **Availability**

This policy is made available to parents, staff, and pupils on our website and by request from the Head of School or school office.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, and audit by the Head of School.

The Proprietor (who is also the Head of School) undertakes an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Approved Date – September 2024	Sam Sims
Review Date – September 2025	Head of school

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## Important contacts

Printed copies of the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership procedures are available from the school office. The LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) can be contacted as follows:

LADO central telephone number: 0300 123 2044

If you would like to discuss whether or not a referral is required, please call the Professional Consultation Line on 03456 061 499 to speak with a MASH social worker.

The Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) must be completed and submitted using the new secure Suffolk Children and Young People's Portal:

Access the Secure Suffolk Children and Young People's

Portal <<https://earlyhelpportal.suffolk.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/marf>>

Website: <http://suffolksp.org.uk> Email: [LADO@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@suffolk.gov.uk)

**Our School's Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and the Deputy DSLs, have lead responsibility for child protection and are also the Prevent Office and the Deputy Prevent Officer responsible for the prevention of radicalisation, extremism and being drawn into terrorism. Their contact details are prominently displayed in the school.**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead and Prevent Officer for Primary including EYFS.**

Mrs Faye Metcalfe

Telephone number for school hours: 01473 233782 Out of School hours: 07738783092

Email address: [faye@themedowsmontessori.com](mailto:faye@themedowsmontessori.com)



**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Prevent Officer for Primary including EYFS**

Mrs Kristie Manser

Telephone number for school hours: 01473 233782 Out of School hours: 07738783092

Email address: [kristie@themedowsmontessori.com](mailto:kristie@themedowsmontessori.com)



**Designated Safeguarding Lead and Prevent Officer for High School**

Mr Matt Sims

Telephone number for school hours: 01473 233782 Out of School hours: 07738783092

Email address: [matt@themedowsmontessori.com](mailto:matt@themedowsmontessori.com)



**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Prevent Officer for High School**

Mr David Green

Telephone number for school hours: 01473 233782 Out of School hours: 07738783092

Email address: [david@themedowsmontessori.com](mailto:david@themedowsmontessori.com)



**Safeguarding Lead Advisory Board Member for whole school**

Mrs Judy Boosey

Telephone number for school hours: 01473 233782 Out of School hours: 07738783092

Email address: [booseyjudy@gmail.com](mailto:booseyjudy@gmail.com)

## 1.Aims

At The Meadows Montessori School we are committed to the protection and safety of the children. We maintain rigorous procedures for child protection, and we expect everyone working within the setting to take responsibility for following these procedures. The purpose of this policy is to provide staff, volunteers, and Proprietor with the guidance they need and to inform parents and guardians how we will safeguard their children whilst they are in our care. This policy applies to all on, and off-site activities undertaken by pupils whilst they are the responsibility of The Meadows Montessori School. The physical and mental health, safety, and welfare of all our children are of paramount importance to all the adults who work or volunteer in our school. These include The Meadows Montessori School's reporting arrangements whereby contact with the appropriate welfare agency is made immediately and never later than 24 hours of a disclosure or suspicion of abuse. Safeguarding children describes the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. We believe that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play. We are committed to continuing to develop our knowledge and skills in safeguarding and protecting children. Staff have access to training to identify and respond early to abuse and neglect. The Meadows Montessori School recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation.

These procedures apply to all employees, the Proprietors/Proprietor, visitors, and volunteers at The Meadows Montessori School. The aim of our procedures is to prevent children being abused and to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at this school in the following ways: -

- Raise awareness of child protection and safeguarding roles and responsibilities with Staff, Proprietors/Proprietor and Volunteers.
- Develop, implement, and review procedures in our school that enable all staff and volunteers to identify and report cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Support pupils who have been abused in accordance with their agreed child protection plan.
- Support children with additional needs, e.g., through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
- Ensure the practice of safe recruitment in checking and recording the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- Ensure that allegations or concerns against staff are dealt with in accordance with the Department of Education (DFE). The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and the Suffolk County Council.
- Establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- Identify children who may benefit from early help. This means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life.

The Common Assessment Framework (Children's Act 2004) identifies our duty to promote with children the following five outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic wellbeing.

## 2. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2024\)](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2023\)](#), and the [Governance Handbook](#). We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners (see section 3).

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

- 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 Counterterrorism 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 governors and headteacher 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.
- 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
- This policy also meets requirements relating to safeguarding and welfare in the [statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#)
- The Meadows Montessori School Policy on child protection is in accordance with the Suffolk County Council Children’s Services and The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership, whose contact details are MASH Professional Consultation line – 0345 6061499 Customer First Freephone No: 08088004005. Emergency Duty Service – 08088004005. Suffolk police: 01473 613500

### 3. Definitions

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children** means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home
- Preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.

All staff are aware that abuse, neglect, exploitation and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-a-lone events.

**Child protection** is part of this definition 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 1 explains the different types 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 1 defines neglect in more detail.

**Exploitation** is the deliberate manipulation or abuse of power used to have control over another person usually for some form of gain. This can be for a range of reasons including personal, financial or sexual.

**Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes** (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery) is where children share nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams. This also included pseudo-images that are computer generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video.

**Children** includes everyone under the age of 18.

The following 3 **safeguarding partners** are identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education (and defined in the Children Act 2004, as amended by chapter 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017). They will make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs:

- The local authority (LA)
- Integrated care boards (previously known as clinical commissioning groups) for an area within the LA.
- The chief officer of police for a police area in the LA area

**Victim** is a widely understood and recognised term, but we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will be prepared to use any term that the child involved feels most comfortable with.

**Alleged perpetrator(s)** and **perpetrator(s)** are widely used and recognised terms. However, we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what's appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by-case basis.

## 4. Equality Statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or health conditions (see section 10)
- Are young carers.
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language.
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence.
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation.
- Are asylum seekers.
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs.
- Are looked after or previously looked after (see section 12)
- Are missing or absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeat occasions.
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from school to be home educated.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and governors in the school and is consistent with the procedures of the 3 safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

The Meadows Montessori School plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-school approach to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by our:

- Behaviour policy
- Pastoral support system
- Planned programme of relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- How to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
- The concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and FGM and how to access support.
- What constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

## 5.1 All staff

All staff will:

- Read and understand part 1 and annex B of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), and review this guidance at least annually
- Sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the guidance.
- Reinforce the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g., sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- Provide a safe space for pupils who are LGBTQ+ to speak out and share their concerns.

All staff will be aware of:

- Our systems which support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct, behaviour management policy, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding leads (DSL) and deputies, online safety which includes the expectations, applicable roles, and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring, and the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education.
- The early help assessment process (sometimes known as the common assessment framework) and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.
- The process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play.
- What to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals
- The signs of different types of abuse and neglect, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)
- The importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.
- The fact that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their home, at school and online.
- The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bi, or gender questioning, (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children.
- What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

This policy outlines how staff are supported to do this.

## 5.2 The Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL)

At The Meadows Montessori we have 2 DSL's and 2 Deputy DSL's due to our school being situated over 2 sites. The Safeguarding team are split as follows:

DSL – Faye Metcalfe and Matt Sims

Deputy DSL – Kristie Manser and David Green

The Safeguarding team cover both sites with Matt Sims and David Green based at our High School site and Faye Metcalfe and Kristie Manser based at our Primary School site.

The DSLs take 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 school networks to keep pupils safe online.

During term time, the DSLs will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns.

When the DSLs are absent, the deputies – Kristie Manser for EYFS and Primary, and David Green for High School will act as cover.

The DSLs will be given the time, funding, training, resources, and support to:

- Provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters.
- Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so.
- Contribute to the assessment of children.
- Refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly.
- Have a good understanding of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Have a good understanding of the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place at our school.

The DSLs will also:

- Keep the Head of School informed of any issues.
- Liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate.
- Discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children's social care colleagues to prepare the school's policies.
- Be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment and be confident as to how to access this support.
- Be aware that children must have an 'appropriate adult' to support and help them in the case of a police investigation or search.

The full responsibilities of the DSLs and deputies are set out in their job description.

### 5.3 The Advisory Board

The Advisory board will:

- Evaluate and review the policy, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the head of School to account for its implementation.
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and our school's local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Appoint an advisory board member to monitor the effectiveness of this policy. This is always a different person from the DSL.
- Ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with advice from the safeguarding partners.
- Ensure that the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and review their effectiveness. This includes:
  - Making sure that the leadership team and staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training.
  - Reviewing the [DfE's filtering and monitoring standards](#), and discuss with head of School what needs to be done to support the school in meeting these standards



Make sure:

- The DSLs have the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources, and support.
- Online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-school approach to safeguarding and related policies.
- The DSLs have lead authority for safeguarding, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.
- The school has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations that do not meet the harm threshold (low-level concerns) about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors). Appendix 3 of this policy covers this procedure.
- That this policy reflects those children with SEND, or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to any abuse or neglect being recognised.

Where another body is providing services or activities (regardless of whether or not the children who attend these services/activities are children on the school roll):

- Seek assurance that the other body has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies/procedures in place and inspect them if needed.
- Make sure there are arrangements for the body to liaise with the school about safeguarding arrangements, where appropriate
- Make sure that safeguarding requirements are a condition of using the school premises, and that any agreement to use the premises would be terminated if the other body fails to comply.

The Safeguarding Advisory Board member will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the head of School, where appropriate (see appendix 3).

All Advisory Board members will read Keeping Children Safe in Education in its entirety.

This policy outlines how Advisory Board members are supported to fulfil their role.

## 5.4 The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:
  - Are informed of our systems which support safeguarding, including this policy, as part of their induction
  - Understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect.
- Communicating this policy to parents/carers when their child joins the school and via the school website.
- Ensuring that the DSLs have appropriate time, funding, training, and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSLs are absent.
- Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate (see appendix 3)
- Making decisions regarding all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSLs on this.
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable
- Making sure each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assigned a key person.
- Overseeing the safe use of technology, mobile phones, and cameras in the setting

## 6. Confidentiality

### Information sharing, record keeping and confidentiality.

As part of meeting a child's needs, the school understands that it is critical to recognise the importance of information sharing between professionals and local agencies and will contribute to inter-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children. Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm.

Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life would not prevent sharing where there are real safeguarding concerns.

If staff need to share 'special category personal data' the Data Protection Act 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

Staff will have regard to the SSCB Information Sharing Guidelines: [Information Sharing Guidelines](#).

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements, staff should discuss with the DSL.

Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

The school will have regard to SCC [Guidance for schools on maintaining and transferring pupil safeguarding/child protection records](#).

The school recognises that confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all matters relating to child protection. Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the DSL or alternate DSL with other relevant members of staff. This will be on a 'need to know' basis and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including parents / carers or pupils) or promise a child to keep a secret which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.

The school will always undertake to share its intention to refer a child to Social Care with their parents /carers unless doing so could put the child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, staff will consult the MASH Professional Consultation Line on this point.

If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment:

- There is no definitive answer, because even if a victim does not consent to sharing information, staff may lawfully share it if there is another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies.
- The DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.
- The DSL should consider that:
  - Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risks)
  - The basic safeguarding principle is that if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to the local authority children's social care.
  - Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains.

Regarding anonymity, all staff will:

- Be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system.
- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved.
- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities.

The government's [information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#) includes 7 'golden rules' for sharing information, and will support staff who have to make decisions about sharing information

If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they should speak to the DSLs or deputies.

Confidentiality is also addressed in this policy with respect to record-keeping, and allegations of abuse against staff in appendix 3.

## 7. Recognising abuse and taking action

Staff, volunteers, and advisory Board members must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue.

### **Our Safeguarding Procedures**

**Where a member of staff suspect's abuse or a child/young person makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect:**

#### **We will**

- Take the child seriously.
- Listen carefully and record their concerns.
- Tell the child they have done the right thing by telling us.
- Clarify if necessary.
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible.
- Inform the DSL without delay.
- Act in the child's best interest

#### **We will not**

- Promise confidentiality.
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions.
- Repeatedly question/ask the child to repeat the disclosure over and over.

If at any time we consider that the child may be defined as a child in need (Children Act 1989), or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, we will immediately refer to children's social care services. If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral will be made to the children's social care immediately. We understand that within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and inform us, if we have been the referrer, whether: -

- The child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required.
- The child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- Any services are required by the child and family and what type of services; or
- Further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what action to take.

It is not the role of adults in our school to investigate or resolve allegations of abuse. Once an adult has clarified that a concern is present, cease questioning the child and pass the information on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. Adults must not think 'I can protect this child better on my own.' Adults working with a child often know something which no one else knows. Our staff will share anything they know with the DSL.

1. It is explained to the child that this information will need to be shared with particular people in order to help them.
2. We do not promise to keep secrets - all allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon.
3. Report it to DSL immediately.
4. If there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention, assistance will be called for.
5. We make an accurate written record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings), within 24 hours of the disclosure, of all that has happened, including details of:
  - what they have observed and when.
  - injuries.
  - times when any observations / discussions took place.
  - explanations given by the child / adult.
  - what action was taken.
6. The records must be signed and dated by the author.

## Following a report of concerns from a member of staff, the DSL must:

Contact the Safeguarding Children Team on **0808 800 4005** or use the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) on Suffolk Children and Young People's Portal:

<https://earlyhelpportal.suffolk.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/marf>

and make a clear statement of:

- the known facts
- any suspicions or allegations
- whether or not there has been any contact with the child's family

If the DSL feels unsure about what the child has said or what has been said and would like to discuss whether or not a referral is required, call the Professional Consultation Line on 03456 061 499 to speak with a MASH social worker.

This line is to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child (or adult) we feel is at risk of abuse. Doing so does not constitute a child abuse referral and may well help to clarify a situation. The DSL will decide if a referral should be made to the LADO and will do so within 24 hours of a disclosure. Where a child and family have an allocated Social Worker, they will need to be contacted directly first.

- If there is not a risk of significant harm, then the DSL will either actively monitor the situation or instigate the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process.
- If a child is in immediate danger, the police will be informed and can take immediate protective action. If it is believed that the child is in imminent danger urgent advice should be sought from Children's Social Care and/or the police. The child can be kept in school if advised to do so by these agencies. The parents should be informed, and a decision should be made with Children's Social Care/police about who should do this.
- Where there are doubts or reservations about involving the child's family, the DSL should clarify with Children's Social Care or the police whether, and if so when and by whom, the parents should be told about the referral. This is important in cases where the police may need to conduct a criminal investigation. Where appropriate, the DSL should help the parents understand that a referral is in the interests of the child and that The Meadows Montessori School will be involved in the enquiry or police investigation, as per the Children Act 1989. Where a known social worker is already involved with the family, we will inform them of our concerns and actions accordingly. Parent/carer(s) are obliged to inform us of any external agency involvement in keeping with our school's terms and conditions. Where we have received no reply from children's social care services about the type of response that is required within three days of a referral, we will immediately inform the appropriate line manager in children's social care to establish progress.
- When a pupil is in need of *urgent* medical attention and there is suspicion of abuse the DSL should take the child to the Accident and Emergency Unit at the nearest hospital, having first notified Children's Social Care and sought advice about what action Children's Social Care and /or the police will take and who and how the parents will be informed, remembering that parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention. If the suspected abuse is sexual then the medical examination should be delayed until Children's Social Care and the police can liaise with the hospital, unless the needs of the child are such that medical attention is the priority. If the decision is made not to inform the parents there must always be a responsible adult with the child, whether from The Meadows Montessori School, Children's Social Care, or the police. We understand that there are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. We understand that our local safeguarding board procedures require us to consider the severity of the ill-treatment which may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements. Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, such as poisoning or a violent assault. However, more often it is a compilation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which can change or damage a child's physical and psychological development.

## If you discover that FGM has taken place, or a pupil is at risk of FGM.

Keeping Children Safe in Education explains that FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs".

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Possible indicators that a pupil has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in appendix 4 of this policy.

**Any teacher** who either:

- Is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- Observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth.

Must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to disclose, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate.

**Any other member of staff** who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for teachers mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Upon disclosure of FGM from the child the police must be informed – Tel: 101

For suspected FGM Referrals are through Customer First 0808 800 4005.

## Early Help Assessment

Early help is about stopping problems escalating. It relies on accurate early identification of difficulties and early action which is targeted and evaluated. It can involve intensive intervention or lighter touch support and is usually based on a clear support plan, with identified actions, responsibilities, and outcomes, which is then reviewed.

Early help is a form of targeted activity, with a specific action or actions being put in place to address a defined issue or combination of issues. It therefore forms part of a continuum of activity in supporting families. The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the school will consider a referral to the local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

As a school we are aware that any child may benefit from early help, but we recognise that we need to be aware of the potential need for early help for children who:

- are disabled or has certain health conditions and specific additional needs.
- have special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education Health and Care Plan)
- have a mental health need.
- are a young carer.
- are bereaved.
- are showing signs of being drawn into anti-social behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines.
- are frequently missing/going missing from education, care or from home.
- are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation.
- are at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- are viewing problematic and / or inappropriate online content or developing inappropriate relationships online.
- have a parent or carer in custody or affected by parental offending.
- are in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse.
- are misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- have returned home to their family from care.
- are at risk of so called "honour"- based abuse such as FGM or forced marriage.
- are privately fostered children.
- are missing education or persistently absent from school or not in receipt of full-time education.
- has experience multiple suspensions and is at risk of / or being permanently excluded.

If an early help assessment is appropriate, the DSL will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

We will discuss and agree, with statutory safeguarding partners, levels for the different types of assessment, as part of local arrangements.

The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the school will consider a referral to local authority children's social care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

## Referral

If it is appropriate to refer the case to local authority children's social care or the police, the DSLs will make.

The local authority will make a decision within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up with the local authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

## If you have concerns about extremism

If a child is not suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger, where possible speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL are not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or seek advice from local authority children's social care. Make a referral to local authority children's social care directly, if appropriate (see 'Referral' above). Inform the DSL or deputy as soon as practically possible after the referral.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include the police or [Channel](#), the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism, or the local authority children's social care team.

The DfE also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which school staff and governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email [counter.extremism@education.gov.uk](mailto:counter.extremism@education.gov.uk). Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- Think someone is in immediate danger.
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group.
- See or hear something that may be terrorist related.

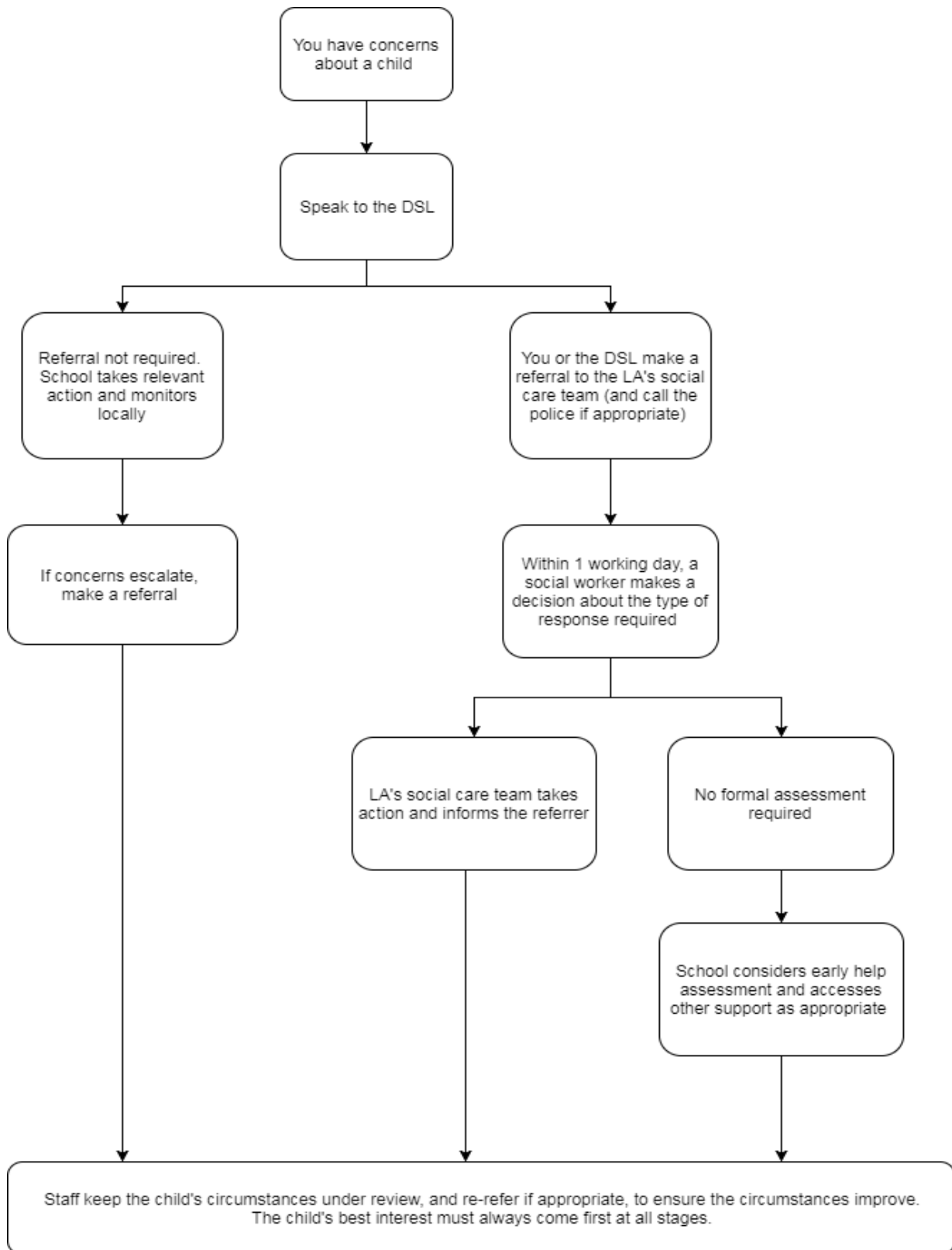
## If you have a concern about mental health

All staff at The Meadows Montessori School are aware that a child's mental health is important and may be an indicator that they are suffering from abuse or that it may make them more susceptible to falling victim to abuse, neglect or exploitation. As a school we accept that we are not trained to diagnose mental health problems, however all staff are in a position to observe children on a day-to-day basis, putting us in a good place to identify any changes in behaviour which may indicate mental health problems or possible signs of abuse. The Meadows Montessori School understands that children who have suffered abuse, neglect or other traumatic experiences are likely to suffer a lasting impact throughout their childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. We also understand how this may affect a child's education, behaviour, and mental health. All staff are to report any mental health concern they deem to be a safeguarding issue to the DSL or Deputy, and safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Refer to the Department for Education guidance on [mental health and behaviour in schools](#) for more information.

## **Figure 1: procedure if you have concerns about a child's welfare (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger)**

(Note – if the DSL is unavailable, this should not delay action refer to Safeguarding referral procedure)



**Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer, or contractor**

**Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff.**

**In dealing with allegations or suspicions against an adult in The Meadows Montessori School environment, inclusive of all staff, volunteers, and the Proprietor the procedure is to:**

- Report to the Head of School on any concern about the conduct of other school staff, volunteers, or other adults on The Meadows Montessori School site.
- Inform the Head of School as soon as practical if a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, volunteer, or another adult on site.
- In either event, the Head of School will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on **0808 800 4005**
- If the Head of School is absent the allegation is passed to the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL), Faye Metcalfe for Primary or Matt Sims for Secondary. In the case of serious harm, the police are informed from the outset.
- In the event of an allegation where a member of staff has a conflict of interest staff are required to contact either Judy Boosey (Safeguarding Advisory Board member) [booseyjudy@gmail.com](mailto:booseyjudy@gmail.com) or the Lado on **0808 800 4005**

If the allegation concerns the Head of School (who is also the Proprietor) the person receiving the allegation should immediately inform the LADO without notifying the Head of School. In the case of serious harm, the police are informed from the outset.

This section of this policy applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

It applies regardless of whether the alleged abuse took place in the school. Allegations against a teacher who is no longer teaching and historical allegations of abuse will be referred to the police.

We will deal with any allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer very quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement. We acknowledge that many cases may well either not meet the criteria set out above or may do so without warranting consideration of a police investigation or enquiries by Suffolk County Council Social Care. In these cases, local arrangements should be followed to resolve cases without delay.

### **Suspension**

Suspension will not be the default position and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned.
- Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children.
- Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children.
- Moving the child or children to classes where they will not come into contact with the individual, making it clear that this is not a punishment, and parents have been consulted.

### **Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations**



- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

### Procedure for dealing with allegations.

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the Head of School – the ‘case manager’ – will take the following steps (unless the allegation is against the Head of School and then the LADO will be informed immediately and by the person who the allegation was made too):

- Immediately discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or children’s social care services. (The case manager may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police *before* consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the case manager will notify the designated officer as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)
- Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or children’s social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or children’s social care services are involved, the case manager will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies.
- Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or children’s social care services, as appropriate.
- **If immediate suspension is considered necessary**, agree, and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details.
- **If it is decided that no further action is to be taken** in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation.
- **If it is decided that further action is needed**, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or children’s social care services as appropriate.
- Provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate.
- Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with children’s social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The case manager will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice.
- Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case and the outcome, where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process (in confidence)
- Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child. Contact details for referrals is PO Box 181, Darlington, DL1 9FA (Tel: 01325 953795)

We will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegations being made.

If the school is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the Proprietor will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

### **Timescales**

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious will be resolved within 1 week.
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, we will institute appropriate action within 3 working days.
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, we will hold this within 15 working days.

### **Specific actions**

#### **Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution.**

The case manager will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or children's social care services.

#### **Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated.**

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the case manager and the school's personnel adviser will discuss with the designated officer whether to make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of the teaching staff, the case manager and personnel adviser will discuss with the designated officer whether to refer the matter to the TRA to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

#### **Supporting those involved**

We have a duty of care to our employees. We will act to manage and minimise the stress inherent in the allegations process. We know that support for the individual is vital to fulfilling this duty.

Individuals should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action unless there is an objection by Suffolk County Council Social Care services or the police. The individual should be advised to contact their trade union representative – if they have one, or a colleague for support.

The case manager should appoint a named representative to keep the person who is the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual. Social contact with colleagues and friends should not be prevented unless there is evidence to suggest that such contact is likely to be prejudicial to the gathering and presentation of evidence.

Parents or carers of the child or children involved should be told about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know of it. They should also be kept informed about the progress of the case and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution, including the outcome of any disciplinary process.

Parents and carers should also be made aware of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers whilst investigations are ongoing as set out in section 141F of the Education Act 2002.

In cases where a child may have suffered significant harm, or there may be a criminal prosecution, children's social care services or the police, as appropriate, should consider what support the child or children involved may need.

#### **Resignations and 'Settlement Agreements'**

If the accused person resigns, or ceases to provide their services, this should not prevent an allegation being followed up in accordance with this policy. A referral to the DBS must be made if the criteria are met.

It is important that every effort is made to reach a conclusion in all cases of allegations bearing on the safety or welfare of children – including any in which the person concerned refuses to cooperate with the process.

'Settlement Agreements' (compromise agreements) by which a person agrees to resign if the employer agrees not to pursue disciplinary action, and both parties agree a form of words to be used in any future references, should not be used in cases of refusal to cooperate or resignation before the person's notice period expires. Such an agreement will not prevent a thorough police investigation where that is appropriate.

### **Individuals returning to work after suspension.**

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the case manager will consider how best to facilitate this.

The case manager will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation if they are still attending the school.

### **Unsubstantiated or malicious allegations**

If an allegation is shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the headteacher, or other appropriate person in the case of an allegation against the headteacher, will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the pupil(s) who made it, or whether the police should be asked to consider whether action against those who made the allegation might be appropriate, even if they are not a pupil.

### **Confidentiality**

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The case manager will take advice from the local authority's designated officer, police, and children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- How to manage speculation, leaks, and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality.
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

### **Record-keeping**

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case. Such records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved.
- Notes of any action taken, and decisions reached (and justification for these, as stated above)

If an allegation or concern is not found to have been malicious, the school will retain the records of the case in the individual's confidential personnel file and provide a copy to the individual. We will retain these records at least until the individual has reached the normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

The records of any allegation that is found to be malicious will be deleted from the individual's personnel file.

### **References**

When providing employer references, we will not refer to any allegation that has been proven to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious, or any history of allegations where all such allegations have been proven to be false, unsubstantiated, or malicious.

### **Learning lessons**

After any cases where the allegations are *substantiated*, we will review the circumstances of the case with the local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the members of staff.
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified
- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

### **First Aid and Medical Plans**

Except in cases of emergency, first aid will only be administered by qualified First Aiders. All first aid treatment will be recorded and where significant will be shared with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity. Children requiring regular medication or therapies for long-term medical conditions will be made the subject of a medical plan that has been agreed with the parents.

### **Staff taking medication or other substances.**

Staff members may not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children. If any member of staff is taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children, those practitioners should seek medical advice and should inform the Head of School. The Head of School will review the medical advice, in consultation with the member of staff. The Meadows Montessori School will only allow practitioners to work directly with children if the medical advice confirms that the medication is unlikely to impair that staff member's ability to look after children properly. Should a member of staff need to bring their medication to school with them, it must be securely stored, in their locker or in The Meadows Montessori School office, out of the reach of children at all times.

### **Working in Partnership with Parents**

We work in partnership with parents or carers to secure the best outcomes for our children. All parents need to understand that we have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children of our school, that this responsibility necessitates a child protection policy and procedures, and that we may need to share information in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. Parent/carer(s) will also be reminded that, where appropriate, any referral will be discussed with them before the referral is made. However, parent/carer(s) will not be contacted, nor will the referral be discussed, where it is felt that to do so would place the child at an increased risk of harm, and/or where children's social care or the LADO have advised as such. The child's safety and welfare will always be our main priority. All parents applying for places at this School will be informed of our safeguarding responsibilities and the existence of this policy. In situations where pupils sustain injury or are otherwise affected by an accident or incident whilst they are the responsibility of The Meadows Montessori School, parents will be notified of this as soon as possible.

We will therefore communicate as clearly as possible about the aims and ethos of The Meadows Montessori School including:

- using clear statements in our brochures and correspondence.
- involving pupils in the development of Codes of Conduct and Behaviour policies and communicate these to parents.
- liaising with agencies in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and locality teams that are active in supporting families.
- being alert to the needs of parents/carers for whom English is an additional language (EAL).
- keeping parents informed as and when appropriate.
- Seeking to discuss any concerns about a child's welfare with parents, however in certain circumstances this may not be deemed appropriate.

### **Allegations of abuse made against other pupils.**

We recognise that children are capable of abusing their peers. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up", as we recognise that this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

Most cases of pupils hurting other pupils will be dealt with under our school's behaviour policy, but this child protection policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns. This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious, and potentially a criminal offence.
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers

- Bullying – this includes cyberbullying.
- Causing physical harm
- Involves pupils being forced to use drugs or alcohol.
- Involves sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, such as
  - indecent exposure
  - sexual violence – such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include any online element which suggests the threat of sexual violence)
  - sharing nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (this can also be referred to as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
  - upskirting
  - sexual harassment – such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment.
  - initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this may also include an online element)

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- You must tell the DSL and record the allegation, but do not investigate it.
- The DSL will contact the local authority children’s social care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence.
- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved – both the victim(s) and the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made – with a named person they can talk to if needed.
- The DSL will contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), if appropriate

We will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- Challenging any form of derogatory or sexualised language or behaviour
- Being vigilant to issues that particularly affect different genders – for example, sexualised or aggressive touching or grabbing towards female pupils, and initiation or hazing type violence with respect to boys.
- Ensuring our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent.
- Ensuring pupils know they can talk to staff confidentially.
- Ensure staff are trained to understand:
  - How to recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse, and know how to identify it and respond to reports
  - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse in school, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”.
  - That if they have any concerns about a child’s welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
    - Children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to
    - A friend may make a report.
    - A member of staff may overhear a conversation.
    - A child’s behaviour might indicate that something is wrong.
  - That certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.
  - That a pupil harming a peer could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy.
  - The important role they have to play in preventing child-on-child abuse and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.
  - That they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns
  - That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident, including for potential contact between the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), and friends from either side.

## Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes ('sexting')

### Your responsibilities when responding to an incident.

If you are made aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images/videos, including pseudo images which are computer generated images that otherwise appear to be photograph or video (also known as 'sexting' or 'youth produced sexual imagery'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must **not**:

- View, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a pupil to share or download it (if you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL)
- Delete the imagery or ask the pupil to delete it.
- Ask the pupil(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery (this is the DSL's responsibility)
- Share information about the incident with other members of staff, the pupil(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.

You should explain that you need to report the incident and reassure the pupil(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

### Initial review meeting

Following a report of an incident, the DSL will hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff – this may include the staff member who reported the incident and the safeguarding or leadership team that deals with safeguarding concerns. This meeting will consider the initial evidence and aim to determine:

- Whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)
- If a referral needs to be made to the police and/or children's social care
- If it is necessary to view the image(s) in order to safeguard the young person (in most cases, images or videos should not be viewed)
- What further information is required to decide on the best response?
- Whether the image(s) has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)
- Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images or videos from devices or online services
- Any relevant facts about the pupils involved which would influence risk assessment.
- If there is a need to contact another school, college, setting or individual.
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents/carers should be involved)

The DSL will make an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care if:

- The incident involves an adult.
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed, or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to SEN)
- What the DSL knows about the images or videos suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the images or videos is under 13.
- The DSL has reason to believe a pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming)

If none of the above apply then the DSL, in consultation with the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate, may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care. The decision will be made and recorded in line with the procedures set out in this policy.

### Further review by the DSL

If at the initial review stage, a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or children's social care, the DSL will conduct a further review to establish the facts and assess the risks.

They will hold interviews with the pupils involved (if appropriate).

If at any point in the process there is a concern that a pupil has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

### **Informing parents/carers**

The DSL will inform parents/carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

### **Referring to the police**

If it is necessary to refer an incident to the police, this will be done through contacting the police by dialling 101.

### **Recording incidents**

All incidents of sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, and the decisions made in responding to them, will be recorded. The record-keeping arrangements set out in section 14 of this policy also apply to recording these incidents.

### **Curriculum coverage for the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes**

Pupils are taught about the issues surrounding the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes at an applicable age as part of our RSHE curriculum. Teaching covers the following in relation to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes:

- What it is
- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding, or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive and when it may be deemed as online sexual harassment.
- Issues of legality
- The risk of damage to people's feelings and reputation

Pupils also learn the strategies and skills needed to manage:

- Specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images.
- The receipt of such images.

This policy on the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes is also shared with High School students so they are aware of the processes that the school will follow in the event of an incident.

Teaching follows best practice in delivering safe and effective education, including:

- Putting safeguarding first
- Approaching from the perspective of the child
- Promoting dialogue and understanding
- Empowering and enabling children and young people
- Never frightening or scare-mongering
- Challenge victim blaming attitudes

## **Reporting Systems**

### **Our Safeguarding Procedures**

**Where a member of staff suspect's abuse or a child/young person makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect:**

#### **We will**

- Take the child seriously.
- Listen carefully and record their concerns.
- Tell the child they have done the right thing by telling us.
- Clarify if necessary.
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible.
- Inform the DSL without delay.

- Act in the child's best interest

**We will not**

- Promise confidentiality.
- Investigate
- Ask leading questions.
- Repeatedly question/ask the child to repeat the disclosure over and over.

If at any time we consider that the child may be defined as a child in need (Children Act 1989), or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, we will immediately refer to children's social care services. If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral will be made to the children's social care immediately. We understand that within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should make a decision about the type of response that is required and inform us, if we have been the referrer, whether: -

- The child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required.
- The child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- Any services are required by the child and family and what type of services; or
- Further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what action to take.

It is not the role of adults in our school to investigate or resolve allegations of abuse. Once an adult has clarified that a concern is present, cease questioning the child and pass the information on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. Adults must not think 'I can protect this child better on my own.' Adults working with a child often know something which no one else knows. Our staff will share anything they know with the DSL.

- It is explained to the child that this information will need to be shared with particular people in order to help them.
- We do not promise to keep secrets - all allegations of harm or potential harm must be acted upon.
- Report it to DSL immediately.
- If there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention, assistance will be called for.
- We make an accurate written record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings), within 24 hours of the disclosure, of all that has happened, including details of:
  - what they have observed and when.
  - injuries.
  - times when any observations / discussions took place.
  - explanations given by the child / adult.
  - what action was taken.
- The records must be signed and dated by the author.

**Following a report of concerns from a member of staff, the DSL must:**

Contact the Safeguarding Children Team on **0808 800 4005** or use the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) on Suffolk Children and Young People's Portal:

<https://earlyhelpportal.suffolk.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/marf>

and make a clear statement of:

- the known facts
- any suspicions or allegations
- whether or not there has been any contact with the child's family

If the DSL feels unsure about what the child has said or what has been said and would like to discuss whether or not a referral is required, call the Professional Consultation Line on 03456 061 499 to speak with a MASH social worker.



This line is to discuss the most appropriate and effective way of providing or obtaining help and support for a child (or adult) we feel is at risk of abuse. Doing so does not constitute a child abuse referral and may well help to clarify a situation. The DSL will decide if a referral should be made to the LADO and will do so within 24 hours of a disclosure. Where a child and family have an allocated Social Worker, they will need to be contacted directly first.

- If there is not a risk of significant harm, then the DSL will either actively monitor the situation or instigate the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process.
- If a child is in immediate danger, the police will be informed and can take immediate protective action. If it is believed that the child is in imminent danger urgent advice should be sought from Children's Social Care and/or the police. The child can be kept in school if advised to do so by these agencies. The parents should be informed, and a decision should be made with Children's Social Care/police about who should do this.
- Where there are doubts or reservations about involving the child's family, the DSL should clarify with Children's Social Care or the police whether, and if so when and by whom, the parents should be told about the referral. This is important in cases where the police may need to conduct a criminal investigation. Where appropriate, the DSL should help the parents understand that a referral is in the interests of the child and that The Meadows Montessori School will be involved in the enquiry or police investigation, as per the Children Act 1989. Where a known social worker is already involved with the family, we will inform them of our concerns and actions accordingly. Parent/carer(s) are obliged to inform us of any external agency involvement in keeping with our school's terms and conditions. Where we have received no reply from children's social care services about the type of response that is required within three days of a referral, we will immediately inform the appropriate line manager in children's social care to establish progress.
- When a pupil is in need of *urgent* medical attention and there is suspicion of abuse the DSL should take the child to the Accident and Emergency Unit at the nearest hospital, having first notified Children's Social Care and sought advice about what action Children's Social Care and /or the police will take and who and how the parents will be informed, remembering that parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention. If the suspected abuse is sexual then the medical examination should be delayed until Children's Social Care and the police can liaise with the hospital, unless the needs of the child are such that medical attention is the priority. If the decision is made not to inform the parents there must always be a responsible adult with the child, whether from The Meadows Montessori School, Children's Social Care, or the police. We understand that there are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. We understand that our local safeguarding board procedures require us to consider the severity of the ill-treatment which may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements. Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, such as poisoning or a violent assault. However, more often it is a compilation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which can change or damage a child's physical and psychological development.

## 8. Online Safety and the use of Mobile Technology

### Child exploitation and E-safety

Children and young people can be exploited and suffer bullying through their use of modern technology such as the internet, mobile phones, and social networking sites. We are aware how the internet can expose children to criminal and sexual exploitation (contact), radicalisation(content), bullying (conduct) and many other safeguarding issues. In order to minimize the risks to our children and young people whilst in our care we ensure that we have in place appropriate measures such as security filtering.

At the Meadows Montessori School we like to ensure safety online as well as empowering children to use it as an important tool, therefore:

- Our internet is screened through the use of Smoothwall and BT. This allows us to block inappropriate content and monitor what both children and staff are accessing.
- We ensure that staff are aware of how not to compromise their position of trust in or outside the setting and are aware of the dangers associated with social networking sites.
- Set clear guidelines for use of mobile phones for the whole school community.

- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns where appropriate.
- We educate pupils through our RSHE curriculum on how to keep themselves safe online. For example, the safe use of social media, keeping information private and how to recognise and report unacceptable behaviour online.

In accordance with legislative requirements, we have a whole school approach to e-safety. This includes:

- Annual update training for staff regarding e-safety and educating children how to keep themselves safe online, the warning signs they need to look out for and what they can do if they have a concern when they are online.
- The Meadows Montessori School also organises awareness sessions and/or mailshots for parents with regards to e-safety.
- Carry out annual reviews on our approach to online safety, supported by an annual risk assessment that considers and reflects the risks faced by our school community.
- We have put in place robust filtering and monitoring systems which limit the children's exposure to the 4 key categories of risk as described below. More information can be found in our Online Safety policy.

### The 4 key categories of risk online:

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

- **Content** – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.
- **Contact** – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **Conduct** – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as making, sending, and receiving explicit images (e.g., consensual, and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and
- **Commerce** – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams.

As a school we expect all pupils and staff to adhere to the safe use of the internet as detailed in our On-line Safety Policy.

The Meadows Montessori School E-Safety Officer is **Matt Sims**

## Mobile Phones as Early Years Provider

The Meadows Montessori School allows staff to bring in mobile phones for their own personal use. These phones must be kept in staff bags in a locked cupboard within the classroom or the locked staff room and are not accessed during teaching time **with the exception of the EYFS where no mobile phones or personal recording device are stored within the classroom.**

If staff need to make an emergency call, they must do so either in the staff room, the main office, an empty class or outside of The Meadows Montessori School grounds. Staff should provide The Meadows Montessori School number to members of the family and next of kin so in an emergency the members of staff can be contacted on The Meadows Montessori School phone.

There are digital cameras and school iPads available within The Meadows Montessori School and only these should be used to record visual information within the consent criteria guidelines of The Meadows Montessori School. (Please see our Mobile Phone, Camera, and Photograph Policy).

The Meadows Montessori School discourages the bringing in of mobile phones by Primary aged pupils, however, understands in some cases it may be necessary for children to do so. In which case these are handed in to the school office until the end of the school day. Children within the Secondary school are allowed to bring their mobile phones into the setting, but these are to be kept in lockers next to the school entrance. These are to be kept locked throughout the day and mobile phones may **not** be accessed. With regard to being off-site, information about access to mobile phones can be found in the mobile phone policy.

### 8.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

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 Bard.

The Meadows Montessori recognises 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.

The Meadows Montessori will treat any use of AI to access harmful content or bully pupils in line with this policy and our behaviour policy.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools whilst they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the school.

## 9. Notifying parents or carers

### Responding to Parents

The Head of School must be notified of a concern before involving parents in conversations about abuse. It is important to be open and honest with parents and where appropriate, they should be informed as soon as possible about any concerns regarding their children. Parents will always be told the source of a referral if it comes from a professional agency, e.g., a school. Members of the public can ask to remain anonymous. An honest approach is always more productive and likely to help a school's future relationship with the parents. In cases of alleged abuse, especially in cases of sexual abuse, social services should be informed first, in case the alleged abuser is part of the household, and they might put pressure on the child to deny or withdraw the allegation. Staff must be careful neither to blame parents nor to dismiss allegations because they believe the parents are considered to be not the sort of people who would abuse their children.

The parent/carer will normally be contacted before a referral is made to Children's Social Care (Children's Services). However, if the concern involves alleged or suspected sexual abuse or the DSL has reason to believe that informing the parent at this stage might compromise the safety of the child or a staff member there will be no contact by The Meadows Montessori School prior to the referral, (although the reasons for this course of action will be documented on the referral). Where a child sustains a physical injury or is distressed as a result of reported chastisement or alleges that they have been chastised by the use of an implement or substance, this will immediately be reported for investigation. Referrals to the local authority will be confirmed in writing. The Meadows Montessori School recognises the need to be alert to the risks posed by strangers or others (including the parents or carers of other pupils) who may wish to harm children in School or pupils travelling to and from School and will take all reasonable steps to lessen such risks.

Parents are reminded that in matters of parental contact or residency, The Meadows Montessori School will not act as a mediator for parents. The Meadows Montessori School will seek to protect the interests of the child, first and foremost. Any parent asking The Meadows Montessori School to get involved in contact disputes must refer such matters to the appropriate authorities, such as the court and CAFCASS/NSPCC. Parents wishing The Meadows Montessori School to actively take sides outside the best interests of the child will find their child is referred to the appropriate relevant agency to protect the child, including from being at risk of emotional harm. Contact orders must be given to the school by the parents so that these can be meticulously followed, including any timely revisions, in accordance with our school's terms and conditions.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

The DSL will, along with any relevant agencies (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis):

- Meet with the victim's parents or carers, with the victim, to discuss what's being put in place to safeguard them and understand their wishes in terms of what support they may need and how the report will be progressed.
- Meet with the alleged perpetrator's parents or carers to discuss support for them, and what's being put in place that will impact them, e.g., moving them out of classes with the victim, and the reason(s) behind any decision(s)

## 10. Pupils with Special Educational Needs, Disabilities or Health issues

We recognise that pupils with SEND, or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges. Children with disabilities are more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group, including:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- Pupils being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other pupils.
- The potential for pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.
- Cognitive understanding-being unable to understand the difference between fact or fiction in online content, and then repeating the content / behaviours in schools or the consequences of doing so.

We offer extra pastoral support for these pupils.

Any abuse involving pupils with SEND will require close liaison with the DSL (or deputy) and the SENCO.

## 11. Pupils with a social worker

Pupils may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

Where we are aware that a pupil has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.
- The provision of pastoral and/or academic support

## 12. Looked-after and previously looked-after children

We will ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep looked-after children and previously looked-after children safe. In particular, we will ensure that:

- Appropriate staff have relevant information about children's looked after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, and care arrangements.
- The DSL has details of children's social workers and relevant virtual school heads.

We have appointed an appropriately trained teacher, Lisa Elvish, to take the lead on promoting the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

As part of their role, they will:

- Work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding looked-after and previously looked-after children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Work with virtual school heads to promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked-after children.

## 13. Complaints and concerns about school safeguarding policies

### 13.1 Complaints against staff

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff (see appendix 3).

### 13.2 Other complaints

Please refer to our Complaints Policy

### EYFS – Additional requirements

The Meadows Montessori School EYFS Department ensures that the Child Protection policy which applies to the rest of The Meadows Montessori School also applies to the EYFS.

- We inform Ofsted and ISI immediately (on the same day), or as soon as is reasonably practicable, but certainly within 14 days, of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether that allegation relates to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere). This could include any other abuse which is alleged to have taken place on the premises, and of the action taken in respect of these allegations.

### 13.3 Whistleblowing

The Head of School recognises that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.

Whistleblowing is 'making a disclosure in the public interest' and occurs when a worker (or member of the wider school community) raises a concern about danger or illegality that affects others, for example, pupils in the school or members of the public.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions/inactions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the school's safeguarding arrangements.

The Head of School would wish for everyone in the school community to feel able to report any child protection/safeguarding concerns through existing procedures within school, including the whistleblowing policy adopted by the school where necessary. However, for members of staff who do not feel able to raise such concerns internally, there is an NSPCC whistleblowing helpline. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 (line available from 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday) or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

### 14. Record-keeping

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded in writing. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency, such as Local authority children's social care or the prevent programme etc. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will include:

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

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child.

Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the school.

Child Protection records are not open to pupils or parents. They may only be accessed by the Designated Safeguarding Leads and the Head of School. Referrals made to Children's Services under The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership procedures will be recorded on the Multi-Agency Referral form. If a pupil is withdrawn from The Meadows Montessori School having not reached the normal date of transfer; due to a family move or any other reason, all efforts will be made to identify any new address and The Meadows Montessori School to which they are being admitted and to ensure that their educational records are sent without delay to that School. If the parent/carer fails to provide this information, an urgent referral will be made to the Local Authority in order that they might make further enquiries. If educational records are sent to this School concerning a child who is not registered by the parent, the records will be returned to the sending School with a note, advising them to refer to their Local Authority.

The content of the Child Protection Conference or Review reports prepared by The Meadows Montessori School will be in accordance with the Local Authority criteria and will, wherever possible, be shared with the parents/carer in advance of the meeting. The Meadows Montessori School will require documentary proof as to the identity of pupils presented for admission. If there is any doubt as to the identity of a pupil, advice will be sought from the local authority and other statutory agencies, as appropriate. We will maintain accurate records

of those with Parental Responsibility and emergency contacts. Pupils will only be released to the care of those with Parental Responsibility or someone acting with their written consent.

A child's name will only be removed from The Meadows Montessori School's Admissions Register in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations.

If a child for whom the school has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another school, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main pupil file.

To allow the new school/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this should be within:

- **5 days** for an in-year transfer, or within
- **The first 5 days** of the start of a new term

In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving school and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

## 15. Training

### All staff

All staff members will undertake safeguarding and child protection training and have a meeting with the Designated Safeguarding Lead at induction, including whistle blowing procedures, to ensure they understand the school's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities and can identify signs of possible abuse or neglect. This training will be regularly updated.

Whole-school in-service training on safeguarding issues is organised. All newly recruited staff (teaching and non-teaching) volunteers, Advisory Board members and the Head of School are provided with this policy and are required to attend Level 1 training or in-house training as part of their induction, with this being refreshed annually.

All staff, including volunteers and contractors - if applicable, to be given the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct on induction or first day of work.

All staff are required to read and understand Part 1, and in addition Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2024) and will be required to sign and date a record to confirm they have read it.

All staff will have training on the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of becoming involved in or supporting terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas. They will also undertake training for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to identify children at risk of this abuse as well as how to notice the signs that someone has been victim to FGM.

Staff will also receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, through emails, staff meetings) as required, but at least annually. This will include Online Safety, understanding the expectations, roles, and responsibilities for staff around filtering and monitoring,

### The DSL and Deputies

The DSL and deputies will undertake child protection and safeguarding training at least every 2 years.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

They will also undertake Prevent awareness training.

### Recruitment – Interview panels

At least 1 person conducting any interview for any post at the school will have undertaken safer recruitment training. This will cover, as a minimum, the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and will be in line with local safeguarding procedures.

See appendix 2 of this policy for more information about our safer recruitment procedures.

### Staff who have contact with pupils and families.

All staff who have contact with children and families will have supervisions which will provide them with support, coaching and training, promote the interests of children and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

## **16. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed annually by Faye Metcalfe DSL. At every review, it will be approved by the Head of School.

## **17. Links with other policies**

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- : Behaviour
- : Code of conduct
- : Complaints
- : Health and safety
- : Attendance
- : Online safety
- : Mobile phone use
- : Relationships and sex education
- : First aid
- : Curriculum
- : Privacy notices
- : Whistleblowing

**These appendices are based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education.**

## **Appendix 1: types of abuse**

**Abuse**, including neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by 1 definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

**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 adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

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

- Physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing.
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (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.

**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)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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



# Safer Recruitment Policy

## Recruitment and Selection Process

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

### Advertising

When advertising roles, we will make clear:

- Our school's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- That safeguarding checks will be undertaken.
- The safeguarding requirements and responsibilities of the role, such as the extent to which the role will involve contact with children.
- Whether or not the role is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the amendments to the Exceptions Order 1975, 2013 and 2020. If the role is exempt, certain spent convictions and cautions are 'protected', so they do not need to be disclosed, and if they are disclosed, we cannot take them into account.

### Application forms

Our application forms will:

- Include a statement saying that it is an offence to apply for the role if an applicant is barred from engaging in regulated activity relevant to children (where the role involves this type of regulated activity)
- Include a copy of, or link to, our child protection and safeguarding policy and our policy on the employment of ex-offenders.

### Shortlisting

Our shortlisting process will involve at least 2 people and will:

- Consider any inconsistencies and look for gaps in employment and reasons given for them.
- Explore all potential concerns.

Once we have shortlisted candidates, we will ask shortlisted candidates to:

- Complete a self-declaration of their criminal record or any information that would make them unsuitable to work with children, so that they have the opportunity to share relevant information and discuss it at interview stage. The information we will ask for includes:
  - If they have a criminal history
  - Whether they are included on the barred list
  - Whether they are prohibited from teaching
  - Information about any criminal offences committed in any country in line with the law as applicable in England and Wales
  - Any relevant overseas information
- Sign a declaration confirming the information they have provided is true.

We will also consider carrying out an online search on shortlisted candidates to help identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online. Shortlisted candidates will be informed that we may carry out these checks as part of our due diligence process.

### Seeking references and checking employment history

We will obtain references before interview. Any concerns raised will be explored further with referees and taken up with the candidate at interview.

When seeking references, we will:

- Not accept open references
- Liaise directly with referees and verify any information contained within references with the referees.
- Ensure any references are from the candidate's current employer and completed by a senior person. Where the referee is school based, we will ask for the reference to be confirmed by the headteacher/principal as accurate in respect to disciplinary investigations.
- Obtain verification of the candidate's most recent relevant period of employment if they are not currently employed.
- Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the candidate worked with children if they are not currently working with children.
- Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any inconsistencies with the candidate.
- Resolve any concerns before any appointment is confirmed.

### **Interview and selection**

When interviewing candidates, we will:

- Probe any gaps in employment, or where the candidate has changed employment or location frequently and ask candidates to explain this.
- Explore any potential areas of concern to determine the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- Record all information considered and decisions made.

### **Pre-appointment vetting checks**

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals' personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

#### **New staff**

All offers of appointment will be conditional until satisfactory completion of the necessary pre-employment checks. When appointing new staff, we will:

- Verify their identity.
- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced DBS certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will obtain the certificate before, or as soon as practicable after, appointment, including when using the DBS update service. We will not keep a copy of the certificate for longer than 6 months, but when the copy is destroyed, we may still keep a record of the fact that vetting took place, the result of the check and recruitment decision taken.
- Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available.
- Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities.
- Verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards.
- Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate.
- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher.
- Carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK. These could include, where available:
  - For all staff, including teaching positions: [criminal records checks for overseas applicants](#)
  - For teaching positions: obtaining a letter from the professional regulating authority in the country where the applicant has worked, confirming that they have not imposed any sanctions or restrictions on that person, and/or are aware of any reason why that person may be unsuitable to teach.
- Check that candidate taking up a management position\* are not subject to a prohibition from management (section 128) direction made by the secretary of state.

\* Management positions are most likely to include, but are not limited to, headteachers, principals and deputy/assistant headteachers.

We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

**Regulated activity** means a person who will be:

- Responsible, on a regular basis in a school or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or
- Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children; or
- Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not.

### **Existing staff**

In certain circumstances we will carry out all the relevant checks on existing staff as if the individual was a new member of staff. These circumstances are when:

- There are concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children; or
- An individual moves from a post that is not regulated activity to one that is; or
- There has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more.

We will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult where:

- We believe the individual has engaged in [relevant conduct](#); or
- We believe the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#); or
- We believe the 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e., they may harm a child or vulnerable adult or put them at risk of harm); and
- The individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left.

### **Agency and third-party staff**

We will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

### **Contractors**

We will ensure that any contractor, or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at the school has had the appropriate level of DBS check (this includes contractors who are provided through a PFI or similar contract). This will be:

- An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity.
- An enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children.

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors.

We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months.

Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances.

We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

For self-employed contractors such as music teachers or sports coaches, we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

### **Trainee/student teachers**

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out.

Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children.

In both cases, this includes checks to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006.

### **Volunteers**

We will:

- Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity.
- Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity.
- Carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity. We will retain a record of this risk assessment.
- Ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the 2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

### **Proprietor**

All proprietors, will also have the following checks:

- A section 128 check (to check prohibition on participation in management under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#)).
- Identity
- Right to work in the UK
- Other checks deemed necessary if they have lived or worked outside the UK.

### **Staff working in alternative provision settings.**

Where we place a pupil with an alternative provision provider, we obtain written confirmation from the provider that they have carried out the appropriate safeguarding checks on individuals working there that we would otherwise perform. If this is not available, a member of staff will sit in on the provision.

### **Adults who supervise pupils on work experience**

When organising work experience, we will ensure that policies and procedures are in place to protect children from harm.

We will also consider whether it is necessary for barred list checks to be carried out on the individuals who supervise a pupil under 16 on work experience. This will depend on the specific circumstances of the work experience, including the nature of the supervision, the frequency of the activity being supervised, and whether the work is regulated activity.

# Allegations against staff Policy (including low-level concerns)

## Section 1: Allegations that may meet the harm threshold.

This section applies to all cases in which it is alleged that a current member of staff, including a supply teacher, volunteer, or contractor, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, and/or
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, and/or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, and/or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children – this includes behaviour taking place both inside and outside of school.

If we're in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, we will consult our local authority designated officer (LADO).

We will deal with any allegation of abuse quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective child protection while also supporting the individual who is the subject of the allegation.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Head of School.

Our procedures for dealing with allegations will be applied with common sense and judgement.

If we receive an allegation of an incident happening while an individual or organisation was using the school premises to run activities for children, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform our LADO.

### Suspension of the accused until the case is resolved.

Suspension of the accused will not be the default position and will only be considered in cases where there is reason to suspect that a child or other children is/are at risk of harm, or the case is so serious that there might be grounds for dismissal. In such cases, we will only suspend an individual if we have considered all other options available and there is no reasonable alternative.

Based on an assessment of risk, we will consider alternatives such as:

- Redeployment within the school so that the individual does not have direct contact with the child or children concerned.
- Providing an assistant to be present when the individual has contact with children.
- Redeploying the individual to alternative work in the school so that they do not have unsupervised access to children.

If in doubt, the case manager will seek views from the school's HR Company - Citation and the designated officer at the local authority, as well as the police and children's social care where they have been involved.

### Definitions for outcomes of allegation investigations

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive, or to cause harm to the subject of the allegation
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation (this does not imply guilt or innocence)
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

### Procedure for dealing with allegations.

In the event of an allegation that meets the criteria above, the Head of School will take the following steps:

- Conduct basic enquiries in line with local procedures to establish the facts to help determine whether there is any foundation to the allegation before carrying on with the steps below.
- Discuss the allegation with the designated officer at the local authority. This is to consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action, including whether further enquiries are necessary to enable a decision on how to proceed, and whether it is necessary to involve the police and/or children's social care services. (The Head of School may, on occasion, consider it necessary to involve the police *before* consulting the designated officer – for example, if the accused individual is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence. In such cases, the Head of School will notify the designated officer as soon as practicably possible after contacting the police)
- Inform the accused individual of the concerns or allegations and likely course of action as soon as possible after speaking to the designated officer (and the police or children's social care services, where necessary). Where the police and/or children's social care services are involved, the Head of School will only share such information with the individual as has been agreed with those agencies.
- Where appropriate (in the circumstances described above), carefully consider whether suspension of the individual from contact with children at the school is justified or whether alternative arrangements such as those outlined above can be put in place. Advice will be sought from the designated officer, police and/or children's social care services, as appropriate.
- Where the Head of School is concerned about the welfare of other children in the community or the individual's family, they will discuss these concerns with the DSL and make a risk assessment of the situation. If necessary, the DSL may make a referral to children's social care.
- **If immediate suspension is considered necessary**, agree, and record the rationale for this with the designated officer. The record will include information about the alternatives to suspension that have been considered, and why they were rejected. Written confirmation of the suspension will be provided to the individual facing the allegation or concern within 1 working day, and the individual will be given a named contact at the school and their contact details.
- **If it is decided that no further action is to be taken** in regard to the subject of the allegation or concern, record this decision and the justification for it and agree with the designated officer what information should be put in writing to the individual and by whom, as well as what action should follow both in respect of the individual and those who made the initial allegation.
- **If it is decided that further action is needed**, take steps as agreed with the designated officer to initiate the appropriate action in school and/or liaise with the police and/or children's social care services as appropriate.
- Provide effective support for the individual facing the allegation or concern, including appointing a named representative to keep them informed of the progress of the case and considering what other support is appropriate.
- Inform the parents or carers of the child/children involved about the allegation as soon as possible if they do not already know (following agreement with children's social care services and/or the police, if applicable). The Head of School will also inform the parents or carers of the requirement to maintain confidentiality about any allegations made against teachers (where this applies) while investigations are ongoing. Any parent or carer who wishes to have the confidentiality restrictions removed in respect of a teacher will be advised to seek legal advice.
- Keep the parents or carers of the child/children involved informed of the progress of the case (only in relation to their child – no information will be shared regarding the staff member)
- Make a referral to the DBS where it is thought that the individual facing the allegation or concern has engaged in conduct that harmed or is likely to harm a child, or if the individual otherwise poses a risk of harm to a child.

We will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), and any action taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as reasonably possible and always within 14 days of the allegations being made.

If the school is made aware that the secretary of state has made an interim prohibition order in respect of an individual, we will immediately suspend that individual from teaching, pending the findings of the investigation by the Teaching Regulation Agency.

Where the police are involved, wherever possible the school will ask the police at the start of the investigation to obtain consent from the individuals involved to share their statements and evidence for use in the school's disciplinary process, should this be required at a later point.

## **Additional considerations for supply teachers and all contracted staff**

If there are concerns or an allegation is made against someone not directly employed by the school, such as a supply teacher or contracted staff member provided by an agency, we will take the actions below in addition to our standard procedures.

- We will not decide to stop using an individual due to safeguarding concerns without finding out the facts and liaising with our LADO to determine a suitable outcome.
- We will involve the agency fully, but the school will take the lead in collecting the necessary information and providing it to the LADO as required.
- We will address issues such as information sharing, to ensure any previous concerns or allegations known to the agency are taken into account (we will do this, for example, as part of the allegations management meeting or by liaising directly with the agency where necessary)

When using an agency, we will inform them of our process for managing allegations, and keep them updated about our policies as necessary, and will invite the agency's HR manager or equivalent to meetings as appropriate.

## **Timescales**

We will deal with all allegations as quickly and effectively as possible and will endeavour to comply with the following timescales, where reasonably practicable:

- Any cases where it is clear immediately that the allegation is unsubstantiated or malicious should be resolved within 1 week.
- If the nature of an allegation does not require formal disciplinary action, appropriate action should be taken within 3 working days.
- If a disciplinary hearing is required and can be held without further investigation, this should be held within 15 working days.

However, these are objectives only and where they are not met, we will endeavour to take the required action as soon as possible thereafter.

## **Specific actions**

### **Action following a criminal investigation or prosecution.**

The Head of School will discuss with the local authority's designated officer whether any further action, including disciplinary action, is appropriate and, if so, how to proceed, taking into account information provided by the police and/or children's social care services.

### **Conclusion of a case where the allegation is substantiated.**

If the allegation is substantiated and the individual is dismissed or the school ceases to use their services, or the individual resigns or otherwise ceases to provide their services, the school will make a referral to the DBS for consideration of whether inclusion on the barred lists is required.

If the individual concerned is a member of teaching staff, the school will consider whether to refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency to consider prohibiting the individual from teaching.

### **Individuals returning to work after suspension.**

If it is decided on the conclusion of a case that an individual who has been suspended can return to work, the Head of School will consider how best to facilitate this.

The Head of School will also consider how best to manage the individual's contact with the child or children who made the allegation if they are still attending the school.

### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious reports**

If a report is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the DSL will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation needs help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it.

### **Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious allegations**

If an allegation is:

- Determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the LADO and The Head of School will consider the appropriate next steps. If they consider that the child and/or person who made the allegation needs help, or the allegation may have been a cry for help, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.
- Shown to be deliberately invented, or malicious, the school will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual(s) who made it.

## Confidentiality and information sharing

The school will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

The Head of School will take advice from the LADO, police, and children's social care services, as appropriate, to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared.
- How to manage speculation, leaks, and gossip, including how to make parents or carers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality.
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises

## Record-keeping

The Head of School will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case.

The records of any allegation that, following an investigation, is found to be malicious or false will be deleted from the individual's personnel file (unless the individual consents for the records to be retained on the file).

For all other allegations (which are not found to be malicious or false), the following information will be kept on the file of the individual concerned:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved.
- Notes of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.
- A declaration on whether the information will be referred to in any future reference.

In these cases, the school will provide a copy to the individual, in agreement with children's social care or the police as appropriate.

We will retain all records at least until the accused individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer.

## References

When providing employer references, we will:

- Not refer to any allegation that has been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious, or any repeated allegations which have all been found to be false, unfounded, unsubstantiated, or malicious.
- Include substantiated allegations, provided that the information is factual and does not include opinions.

## Learning Lessons

After any cases where the allegations are *substantiated*, the Head of School will review the circumstances of the case with the local authority's designated officer to determine whether there are any improvements that we can make to the school's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

This will include consideration of (as applicable):

- Issues arising from the decision to suspend the member of staff.
- The duration of the suspension
- Whether or not the suspension was justified



- The use of suspension when the individual is subsequently reinstated. We will consider how future investigations of a similar nature could be carried out without suspending the individual.

For all other cases, the Head of School will consider the facts and determine whether any improvements can be made.

## **Non-recent allegations**

Abuse can be reported, no matter how long ago it happened.

We will report any non-recent allegations made by a child to the LADO in line with our local authority's procedures for dealing with non-recent allegations.

Where an adult makes an allegation to the school that they were abused as a child, we will advise the individual to report the allegation to the police.

## **Section 2: Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold.**

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers, and contractors, which do not meet the harm threshold set out in section 1 above.

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent, or other adult within or outside the school.
- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

## **Definition of low-level concerns**

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how 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, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the designated officer at the local authority.

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

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

## **Sharing low-level concerns**

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust, and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others.
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns as per section 7 of this policy.
- Empowering staff to self-refer.
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage.
- Providing a responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.
- Helping to identify any weakness in the school's safeguarding system.

## Responding to low-level concerns

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Head of School will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern unless it has been raised anonymously.
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The Head of School will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the school's Code of conduct. The Head of School will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the DSL.

## Record keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidential, held securely, and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern to meeting the harm threshold as described in section 1 of this appendix, we will refer it to the designated officer at the local authority.
- Retained at least until the individual leaf's employment at the school.

Where a low-level concern relates to a supply teacher or contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

## References

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance.

## Appendix 4: specific safeguarding issues

### Children who are absent from education

A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may be absent or become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect.
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM.
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families.
- Come from the families of service personnel.
- Go missing or run away from home or care.
- Are supervised by the youth justice system.
- Cease to attend a school.
- Come from new migrant families.

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being absent, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

### Assessing adult-involved nude and semi-nude sharing incidents

This section is based on annex A of the UK Council of Internet Safety's [advice for education settings](#).

All adult-involved nude and semi-nude image sharing incidents are child sexual abuse offences and must immediately be referred to police/social care. However, as adult-involved incidents can present as child-on-child nude/semi-nude sharing, it may be difficult to initially assess adult involvement.

There are two types of common adult-involved incidents: sexually motivated incidents and financially motivated incidents.

#### Sexually motivated incidents

In this type of incident, an adult offender obtains nude and semi-nudes directly from a child or young person using online platforms.

To make initial contact, the offender may present as themselves or use a false identity on the platform, sometimes posing as a child or young person to encourage a response and build trust. The offender often grooms the child or young person on social media, in chatrooms or on gaming platforms, and may then move the conversation to a private messaging app or an end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) environment where a request for a nude or semi-nude is made. To encourage the child or young person to create and share nude or semi-nude, the offender may share pornography or child sexual abuse material (images of other young people), including AI-generated material.

Once a child or young person shares a nude or semi-nude, an offender may blackmail the child or young person into sending more images by threatening to release them online and/or send them to friends and family.

Potential signs of adult-involved grooming and coercion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications, which may include the offender sharing unsolicited images

- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Coerced/pressured into doing sexual things, including creating nudes and semi-nudes
- Offered something of value such as money or gaming credits
- Threatened or blackmailed into carrying out further sexual activity. This may follow the child or young person initially sharing the image or the offender sharing a digitally manipulated image of the child or young person to extort 'real' images

### **Financially motivated incidents**

Financially motivated sexual extortion (often known as 'sextortion') is an adult-involved incident in which an adult offender (or offenders) threatens to release nudes or semi-nudes of a child or young person unless they pay money or do something else to benefit them.

Unlike other adult-involved incidents, financially motivated sexual extortion is usually carried out by offenders working in sophisticated organised crime groups (OCGs) overseas and are only motivated by profit. Adults are usually targeted by these groups too.

Offenders will often use a false identity, sometimes posing as a child or young person, or hack another young person's account to make initial contact. To financially blackmail the child or young person, they may:

- Groom or coerce the child or young person into sending nudes or semi-nudes and financially blackmail them
- Use images that have been stolen from the child or young person taken through hacking their account
- Use digitally manipulated images, including AI-generated images, of the child or young person

The offender may demand payment or the use of the victim's bank account for the purposes of money laundering.

Potential signs of adult-involved financially motivated sexual extortion can include the child or young person being:

- Contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person. They may be contacted by a hacked account of a child or young person
- Quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications which may include the offender sharing an image first
- Moved from a public to a private/E2EE platform
- Pressured into taking nudes or semi-nudes
- Told they have been hacked and they have access to their images, personal information and contacts
- Blackmailed into sending money or sharing bank account details after sharing an image or the offender sharing hacked or digitally manipulated images of the child or young person

### **Child criminal exploitation**

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. For example, young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation.
- Suffering from changes in emotional wellbeing
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- Going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late

- Regularly missing school or education
- Not taking part in education

If a member of staff suspects CCE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

## Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. It may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

CSE can include both physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity. It can also happen online. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam. CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge, for example through others copying videos or images.

In addition to the CCE indicators above, indicators of CSE can include a child:

- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant

If a member of staff suspects CSE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

## Child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of school. It can also take place both face-to-face and online and can occur simultaneously between the 2.

The Meadows Montessori has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are there no reports, that doesn't mean that this kind of abuse isn't happening.

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

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes, and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm.
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages; the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups; and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who don't want to receive such content.

If staff have any concerns about child-on-child abuse, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

When considering instances of harmful sexual behaviour between children, we will consider their ages and stages of development. We recognise that children displaying harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced their own abuse and trauma and will offer them appropriate support.

## **Domestic abuse**

Children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse and/or violence at home where it occurs between family members. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse (abuse in intimate personal relationships between children) and child/adolescent to parent violence and abuse. It can be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, or emotional. It can also include ill treatment that isn't physical, as well as witnessing the ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant – for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse including where they see hear or experience its effects.

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background, and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. Children who witness domestic abuse are also victims.

Older children may also experience and/or be the perpetrators of domestic abuse and/or violence in their own personal relationships. This can include sexual harassment.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children and affect their health, wellbeing, development, and ability to learn.

If police are called to an incident of domestic abuse and any children in the household have experienced the incident, the police will inform the key adult in school (usually the designated safeguarding lead) before the child or children arrive at school the following day.

The DSL will provide support according to the child's needs and update records about their circumstances.

## **Homelessness**

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare.

The DSL and deputies will be aware of contact details and referral routes into the local housing authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity (where appropriate and in accordance with local procedures).

Where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, the DSL will also make a referral to children's social care.

## **So-called 'honour-based' abuse (including FGM and forced marriage)**

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community, including FGM, forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

Abuse committed in this context often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All forms of HBA are abuse and will be handled and escalated as such. All staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA or already having suffered it. If staff have a concern, they will speak to the DSL, who will activate local safeguarding procedures.

## **FGM**

The DSL will make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to be alert to children affected by FGM or at risk of FGM.

Section 7 of this policy sets out the procedures to be followed if a staff member discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out or suspects that a pupil is at risk of FGM.

Indicators that FGM has already occurred include:

- A pupil confiding in a professional that FGM has taken place.
- A mother/family member disclosing that FGM has been carried out.

. A family/pupil already being known to social services in relation to other safeguarding issues.

. A girl:

- Having difficulty walking, sitting, or standing, or looking uncomfortable
- Finding it hard to sit still for long periods of time (where this was not a problem previously)
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet due to difficulties urinating
- Having frequent urinary, menstrual or stomach problems
- Avoiding physical exercise or missing PE
- Being repeatedly absent from school or absent for a prolonged period.
- Demonstrating increased emotional and psychological needs – for example, withdrawal or depression, or significant change in behaviour
- Being reluctant to undergo any medical examinations.
- Asking for help, but not being explicit about the problem
- Talking about pain or discomfort between her legs

Potential signs that a pupil may be at risk of FGM include:

. The girl's family having a history of practising FGM (this is the biggest risk factor to consider)

. FGM being known to be practised in the girl's community or country of origin.

. A parent or family member expressing concern that FGM may be carried out.

. A family not engaging with professionals (health, education or other) or already being known to social care in relation to other safeguarding issues.

. A girl:

- Having a mother, older sibling or cousin who has undergone FGM.
- Having limited level of integration within UK society
- Confiding to a professional that she is to have a "special procedure" or to attend a special occasion to "become a woman".
- Talking about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent, or parents/carers stating that they or a relative will take the girl out of the country for a prolonged period.
- Requesting help from a teacher or another adult because she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk of FGM.
- Talking about FGM in conversation – for example, a girl may tell other children about it (although it is important to take into account the context of the discussion)
- Being unexpectedly absent from school
- Having sections missing from her 'red book' (child health record) and/or attending a travel clinic or equivalent for vaccinations/anti-malarial medication

The above indicators and risk factors are not intended to be exhaustive.

### **Forced marriage.**

Forcing a person into marriage is a crime. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of 1 or both parties and where violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological.

It is also illegal to cause a child under the age of 18 to marry, even if violence, threats, or coercion are not involved.

Staff will receive training around forced marriage and the presenting symptoms. We are aware of the '1 chance' rule, i.e., we may only have 1 chance to speak to the potential victim and only 1 chance to save them.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into marriage, they will speak to the pupil about their concerns in a secure and private place. They will then report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- . Speak to the pupil about the concerns in a secure and private place.

- Activate the local safeguarding procedures and refer the case to the local authority's designated officer.
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or [fm@fco.gov.uk](mailto:fm@fco.gov.uk)
- Refer the pupil to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor, learning mentor, or school counsellor, as appropriate.

## Preventing radicalisation

- **Radicalisation** refers to the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence
- **Extremism** is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to:
  - Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
  - Undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
  - Intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results outlined in either of the above points
- **Terrorism** is an action that:
  - Endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people.
  - Causes serious damage to property; or
  - Seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system.

The use or threat of terrorism must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

Schools have a duty to prevent children from becoming involved with or supporting terrorism. The DSL will undertake Prevent awareness training and make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to identify children at risk.

At The Meadows Montessori we will assess the risk of children in our school being drawn into terrorism. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the potential risk in our local area, in collaboration with Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership and local police force.

Staff will be alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

We will ensure that suitable internet filtering is in place and equip our pupils to stay safe online at school and at home.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period.

The government website [Educate Against Hate](#) and charity [NSPCC](#) say that signs that a pupil is being radicalised can include:

- Refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from themselves.
- Becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- Changes in friendship groups and appearance
- Rejecting activities, they used to enjoy.
- Converting to a new religion
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- An unwillingness or inability to discuss their views.
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- Expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions
- Accessing extremist material online, including on Facebook or Twitter
- Possessing extremist literature



- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining, or seeking to join, extremist organisations.

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour – staff should have confidence in their instincts and seek advice if something feels wrong.

If staff are concerned about a pupil, they will follow our procedures set out in section 7.5 of this policy, including discussing their concerns with the DSL.

Staff should **always** take action if they are worried.

## **Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools**

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur:

- Between 2 children of any age and sex
- Through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children
- Online and face to face (both physically and verbally)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school.

Whilst at school if a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When supporting victims, staff will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them.
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt.
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns.
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the school that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again.
- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence and show sensitivity to their needs.

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender questioning (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up.
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

If staff have any concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures set out in section 7 of this policy, as appropriate. In particular, section 7.8 and 7.9 set out more detail about our school's approach to this type of abuse.

## **Serious violence**

Indicators which may signal that a child is at risk from, or involved with, serious violent crime may include:

- Increased absence from school
- Change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups.
- Significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing

- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions (this could indicate that the child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation (see above))

Risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence include:

- Being male
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school.
- Having experienced child maltreatment
- Having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Staff will be aware of these indicators and risk factors. If a member of staff has a concern about a pupil being involved in, or at risk of, serious violence, they will report this to the DSL.

## Checking the identity and suitability of visitors

At The Meadows Montessori all visitors will be required to verify their identity to the satisfaction of staff and to leave their belongings, including their mobile phone(s), in a safe place during their visit.

If the visitor is unknown to the setting, we will check their credentials and reason for visiting before allowing them to enter the setting. Visitors should be ready to produce identification.

Visitors are expected to sign the visitors' book and wear a visitor's badge.

Visitors to the school who are visiting for a professional purpose, such as educational psychologists and school improvement officers, will be asked to show photo ID and:

- Will be asked to show their DBS certificate, which will be checked alongside their photo ID; or
- The organisation sending the professional, such as the LA or educational psychology service, will provide prior written confirmation that an appropriate level of DBS check has been carried out (if this is provided, we will not ask to see the DBS certificate)

All other visitors, including visiting speakers, will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times. We will not invite into the school any speaker who is known to disseminate extremist views and will carry out appropriate checks to ensure that any individual or organisation using school facilities is not seeking to disseminate extremist views or radicalise pupils or staff.

## Non-collection of children

If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day, we will:

- Contact parents and all emergency contacts on file. Child can be placed in our after-school care until 5.30pm
- After 5.30pm if parents or emergency contacts have failed to collect, ensure that 2 staff members stay with the child including one member of SLT.
- If the parents or emergency contacts still fail to respond, we will follow our safeguarding procedures.
- Record the incident under our safeguarding procedures.

### Missing pupils

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child goes missing, we will:

- Alert the member of staff in charge, who will make enquiries of relevant members of staff to ascertain when and where the child was last seen.
- Ensuring that the remaining children are sufficiently supervised and secure, one or preferably two members of staff should search the building, garden, and immediate vicinity.
- If the child cannot be found, then the Police and parents must be informed.
- Continue to search, opening up the area, and keeping in touch by mobile phone if available.
- When the situation has been resolved members of staff should review the reasons for it happening and ensure that measures are taken to ensure that it does not happen again.

# Job Description: Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

## Main purpose

The DSL will take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection across the school (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems in place). They will take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and contribute to the assessment of children.

They will advise and support other members of staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, and liaise with relevant agencies such as the local authority and police.

At The Meadows Montessori we have 2 DSL's and 2 Deputy DSL's due to our school being situated over 2 sites. The Safeguarding team are split as follows:

DSL – Faye Metcalfe and Matt Sims

Deputy DSL – Kristie Manser and David Green

The Safeguarding team cover both sites with Matt Sims and David Green based at our High School site and Faye Metcalfe and Kristie Manser based at our Primary School site.

The team meet altogether as a minimum once every half term to review all cases but will work together on each case as required.

Some safeguarding activities may be delegated to deputies, but the DSL's will retain ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.

## Duties and responsibilities

### Managing referrals

- Refer cases of suspected abuse and neglect to the local authority children's social care
- Support staff who make referrals to the local authority children's social care
- Refer cases to the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern.
- Support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme
- Refer cases to the Disclosure and Barring Service where a person is dismissed or leaves due to risk or harm to a child.
- Refer cases to the police where a crime may have been committed.

### Working with staff and other agencies

- Act as a source of support, advice, and expertise for all staff, providing in-house training and safeguarding updates regularly.
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners
- Inform the Head of School of safeguarding issues, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations, and the requirement for pupils to have an appropriate adult.
- Liaise with the Head of School and the local authority designated officer(s) (LADO) for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member.
- Liaise with staff on matters of safety, safeguarding, and welfare (including online and digital safety), and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children's needs are considered holistically.
- Liaise with the SENCO and, where available, the mental health support team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health.
- Promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances.
- Work with the Head of School to promote educational outcomes by:
  - Knowing the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing or have experienced.
  - Identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement, and achievement at school.

• The above includes:

- Ensuring the school knows which children have or have had a social worker, understood their academic progress and attainment, and maintained a culture of high aspirations for this cohort.
- Supporting teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help these children reach their potential.

## **Managing the child protection file**

- Ensure child protection files are kept up to date.
- Keep information confidential and store it securely.
- Make sure records include:
  - A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
  - Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved.
  - A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.
- Ensure files are only accessed by those who need to see them, and that where a file or content within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Where children leave the school (including in year transfers):
  - Ensure their child protection file is securely transferred to the new school as soon as possible, separately from the main pupil file, with a receipt of confirmation, and within the specified time set out in KCSIE.
  - Consider whether it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new school before the child leaves, to help them put appropriate support in place.

## **Raising awareness**

- Ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents are aware that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements.
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing information with teachers and school leadership staff about the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues that children who have or have had a social worker are experiencing.

## **Training**

- Undergo training (at least every 2 years) to gain the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role and meet the expectations set out in KCSIE, including those outlined in the 'Training, knowledge, and skills' section of annex C.
- Undertake Prevent awareness training.

## **Providing support to staff**

- Support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters.
- Support staff during the referrals process
- Support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.

## **Understanding the views of children**

- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school may put in place to protect them.

- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

## **Holding and sharing information**

- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school, with other schools and colleges on transfer, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations, and practitioners
- Understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions. This includes instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency.

## **Other areas of responsibility**

The DSL will be required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and follow school policies and the staff code of conduct.

During term time, the DSL should always be available during school hours for staff in the school to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Ideally this will be in person but can also be via phone or video call in exceptional circumstances.

Please note that this list of duties is illustrative of the general nature and level of responsibility of the role. It is not a comprehensive list of all tasks that the DSL will carry out. The postholder may be required to do other duties appropriate to the level of the role.

## **Useful Contacts**

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Professional Helpline: 0345 606 1499

Customer First (Professional Referral Line) for use in emergencies only: 0345 606 6167

Customer First: 0808 800 4005

Police (emergency only): 999

Suffolk Police main switchboard: 01473 613500

Suffolk Police Cybercrime Unit/ Police non-urgent: 101

The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership: <http://suffolksp.org.uk>

Suffolk County Council: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/staying-safe-online/e-safer-suffolk/](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/staying-safe-online/e-safer-suffolk/)

## **ISI Contacts**

Independent Schools Inspectorate,  
CAP House,  
9-12 Long Lane,  
London EC1A 9HA

t: [02076000100](tel:02076000100)

e: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

**Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Referrals – 01325 953 795**