



Caring Education

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Table of Contents

Child protection and safeguarding policy	3
Policy statement and principles	3
Child protection statement	3
Policy principles	4
Policy aims	4
Safeguarding legislation and guidance.....	5
Roles and responsibilities	6
The Designated Safeguarding Lead	6
The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	6
The governing body	7
The Principal	8
Good practice guidelines and staff code of conduct	9
Abuse of position of trust.....	10
Children who may be particularly vulnerable	10
Children with special educational needs and disabilities or who have mental health needs	10
Early Help and use of the Early Help Assessment process	11
Attendance	12
Children Missing from Education	12
Children who run away or go missing from home or care	13
Helping children to understand and recognise risk and identify available support	14
Support for pupils, families and staff involved in a child protection issue.....	15
Complaints procedure.....	15
Staff reporting concerns about a colleague or other adult who works with children (Whistleblowing).....	15
Managing allegations against staff	16
Staff training.....	17
Safer recruitment	18
Site security	19
Behaviour management	19
Record keeping	20
Confidentiality and information sharing	21
Extended school and off-site arrangements	22

Photography and images	23
Online safety	23
Online communication between staff and pupils	24
Child protection procedures	24
Recognising abuse	24
Physical abuse	24
Emotional abuse	25
Sexual abuse	25
Neglect	25
Indicators of abuse	25
Impact of abuse	26
Taking action	26
If a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about a pupil's welfare	27
If a pupil discloses to a member of staff or volunteer	27
Notifying parents	28
Making a referral to Children's Social Care	28
Statutory assessments	28
Submitting child protection referrals	29
Staff reporting directly to child protection agencies	29
What will Children's Social Care do?	29
Bullying, peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.	30
Peer on peer sexual violence and harassment	31
Youth produced sexual imagery ('sexting')	37
Serious violence	40
Contextual safeguarding	40
Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation	40
So-called Honour based violence	42
Female Genital Mutilation	42
Forced Marriage	43
Protecting children from radicalisation and extremism	43
Children who are looked after or were previously looked after	45
Private fostering arrangements	45
Related safeguarding portfolio policies	45
Domestic abuse	45
Homelessness	46
Special Circumstances	46
Children and the court system	46
Children with family members in prison	46

1. Policy Statement and Principles

VLC is currently an Alternative Education Provider. Our approaches are therapeutic. Students are taught on a one to one basis. Application for DFE status as an Independent School will happen in academic year 2019-20.

Our Vision statement is: Changing the lives of young people through caring education.

We work with students at risk of exclusion or who have been permanently excluded. We are also experts in attachment and trauma and also ASD.

It operates at:

St Margaret's Centre, 103 Whitnash Rd, Whitnash, CV31 2HB

and,

Bilton Methodist Church, Main Street, Bilton, Rugby, CV22 7ND.

and,

Oasis Christian Centre, The Old Square, Shottery, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 9HG

VLC's safeguarding arrangements could be inspected by OFSTED under the judgements for leadership and management, as well as the personal development, behaviour and welfare of children and learners. This policy is available on VLC's website and all staff and volunteers are required to read it and confirm they have done so in writing before commencing work at VLC.

We are commissioned by the Local Authority and also by Commissioning Schools.

Green Forms and safeguarding information is shared with VLC with which the student is on role. If a student is not on role at a school, we will share safeguarding information based on the ABP safeguarding policy.

Lead DSL is Amanda Woodward (Principal).

Additional DSL is Charly Skoppek (Deputy Principal).

This policy is one of a series in the VLC's integrated safeguarding portfolio. Please also see:

- *Staff, Volunteer and Subcontractor Code of Conduct,*
- *Safer Recruitment policy, Whistle Blowing Policy,*
- *Complaints Procedure,*
- *Children Missing Education Policy and*
- *eSafety Policy*

VLC's safeguarding arrangements are inspected by the Department for Education as well as the Local Authority (within the Alternative Provision Framework).

This policy is available on the VLC website and all staff and volunteers are required to read it and confirm they have done so in writing before commencing work.

Child Protection Statement

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

The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers, subcontractors and trustees and are consistent with those of the locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements put in place by Warwickshire Safeguarding (WS).

Policy Principles:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- VLC's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.
- Children who are safe and feel safe are better equipped to learn.
- VLC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All adults at the VLC are required to take all welfare concerns seriously and to encourage children and young people to talk to them about anything that worries them. Staff will always act in the best interests of children.
- Due to their day-to-day contact with students, staff at VLC are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and the outward signs of abuse, neglect, exploitation and radicalisation. Children may also turn to a trusted adult at VLC when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that all staff are alert to the signs of abuse, are approachable and trusted by students, listen actively to children and understand the procedures for reporting their concerns. VLC will act on identified concerns and will provide early help to prevent concerns from escalating.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm at home, in the community or in an education setting.
- All staff members will maintain an attitude of 'It could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the interests of the child.
- If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child a referral will be made to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately. **Anybody can make a referral.** If the child's situation does not appear to be improving, any staff member with concerns should press the Designated Safeguarding Lead for re-consideration.
- If a member of staff remains concerned about a child, they can discuss their concerns with the Principal, another DSL or contact the Education Safeguarding Manager for additional advice as necessary (contact details in Appendix 2).
- Students and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support.
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually unless an incident, new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review. Representatives of VLC community of students, parents, staff, volunteers and trustees will be involved in reviewing, shaping and developing the VLC's safeguarding arrangements and child protection policy.

Policy Aims:

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable them to meet their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
- To ensure consistent good practice.
- To demonstrate VLC's commitment with regard to safeguarding and child protection to students, parents and other partners.
- To contribute to VLC's safeguarding portfolio.

Terminology

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from maltreatment, preventing the impairment of health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

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

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

Child includes everyone under the age of 18.

Parent refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, foster carers and adoptive parents.

2. Safeguarding Legislation and Guidance

Section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require proprietors of independent schools (including academies and city technology colleges) to have arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils.

All staff must read Part One of **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019**. Staff can find a copy in our induction pack. In addition, all staff, volunteers and subcontractors who work directly with children must read Part Five and Annex A.

- **What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015 - Advice for practitioners** is non- statutory advice which helps practitioners (everyone who works with children) to identify abuse and neglect and take appropriate action. *(specify where staff will find a copy of this advice)*

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Key personnel

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is Amanda Woodward (Principal)

email: amanda.woodard@lvlc.org.uk

tel: ..07307 862985

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead is Charly Skoppek

email: charly.skoppek@lvlc.org.uk

tel: 07307862978

The nominated safeguarding governor is Rev Brian Nash

email: Brian.Nash@lvlc.org.uk

tel: 07530 997852

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Amanda is a senior member of staff from VLC's leadership team and therefore has the status and authority within VLC to carry out the duties of the post, including committing resources and supporting and directing other staff.
- She takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) in VLC, which will not be delegated although the activities of the DSL may be delegated to appropriately trained deputies. The role and responsibility is explicit in the role holder's job description.
- is appropriately trained, receives refresher training at two-yearly intervals and regularly (at least annually) updates their knowledge and skills to keep up with any developments relevant to their role.
- acts as a source of advice, support and expertise to VLC community.
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings.
- is alert to the specific needs of children in need; those with special educational needs; children who are looked after or were previously looked after; and young carers and oversees the provision of effective pastoral support.
- has a working knowledge of locally agreed multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and procedures put in place by WS.
- has an understanding of the early help process to ensure effective assessment and understanding of children's additional needs in order to inform appropriate provision of early help and intervention.
- keeps detailed written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely and flagged, but kept separate from, the pupil's general file.
- refers cases of suspected abuse to Children's Social Care or the Police as appropriate.
- ensures that staff do everything they can to support social workers when Children's Social Care become involved.
- notifies Children's Social Care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two days without explanation.
- ensures that, when a pupil under the age of 18 years leaves VLC, all child protection records are passed to the new school/college (separately from the main pupil file and ensuring secure transit) and confirmation of receipt is obtained. If the child is the subject of an open case to Children's Social Care, the pupil's social worker is also informed.
- attends and/or contributes to child protection conferences, strategy meetings and multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meetings.
- co-ordinates VLC's contribution to child protection plans as part of core groups, attending and actively participating in core group meetings.
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including the local safeguarding partnership.
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood the child protection and safeguarding policy; the staff behaviour policy (code of conduct); the behaviour policy; the VLC's safeguarding response to children who go missing from

education; and the role of the designated safeguarding lead (including the identity of the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies).

- ensures that all staff understand that if they have **any concerns** about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately, either by speaking to the DSL (or a deputy) or, in exceptional circumstances, taking responsibility to make a referral to Children's Social Care.
- ensures that all staff know how to make a referral as in sections 26-28 of this policy.
- has a working knowledge of relevant national guidance in respect of all specific safeguarding issues highlighted in paragraphs 21-34 (pages 8-11) and Annex A of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* (pages 78-91), ensuring that all staff receive necessary training, information and guidance.
- ensures that the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures are reviewed and updated at least annually, working with the whole VLC community of pupils, parents, staff, volunteers and governors and/or proprietors regarding this.
- liaises with Brian Nash (Trustee)
- keeps a record of staff attendance at child protection training.
- makes the child protection and safeguarding policy available publicly, i.e. on VLC's website or by other means.
- ensures parents are aware of VLC's role in safeguarding and that referrals about suspected abuse and neglect may be made.
- ensures that VLC holds more than one emergency contact number for every student.
- ensures that the Principal is aware of the responsibility under *Working Together 2018* to refer all allegations that a child has been harmed by or that children may be at risk of harm from a member of staff or volunteer to the Designated Officer (DO) in the Local Authority within one working day prior to any internal investigation; and to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as appropriate.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s):

Charly is appropriately trained to the same level as the DSL and supports the DSL with safeguarding matters as appropriate. In the absence of the DSL, carries out those functions necessary to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of students. The role and responsibility is explicit in the role holder's job description. In the event of the long-term absence of the DSL, the deputy will assume all of the functions of the DSL as above.

The Trustees:

- appoints a Designated Safeguarding Lead who is a member of the senior leadership team and who has undertaken training in inter-agency working, in addition to basic child protection training.
- ensures that the DSL role is explicit in the role holder's job description (and also the job description of any Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads) and that safeguarding responsibilities are identified explicitly in the job/role descriptions of every member of staff and volunteer.
- ensures that the DSL or a Deputy DSL is always available during VLC's office hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL or a Deputy DSL will generally be expected to be available in person but in exceptional circumstances availability will be via telephone and/or Skype or other such media.
- ensures that the DSL or a Deputy DSL is always available at least via telephone or other media as above during any out of hours/out of term school activities.
- has a child protection policy and procedures, including a staff code of conduct, that are consistent with local safeguarding partnership and statutory requirements, reviewed annually and made available publicly on VLC's website or by other means.
- has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff and volunteers including allegations made against the Principal and allegations against other children.
- follows safer recruitment procedures that include statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and disqualification from providing childcare regulations.

- develops an induction strategy that ensures all staff, including the Principal, and volunteers receive information about VLC's safeguarding arrangements, Staff Behaviour Policy (Code Of Conduct) and the role of the DSL on induction.
- develops a training strategy that ensures all staff, including the Principal, and volunteers receive appropriate and regularly updated safeguarding and child protection training and updates as required (at least annually) to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively in line with any requirements of WS. The training strategy will also ensure that the DSL receives refresher training and regular updates as defined under the DSL's duties above.
- ensures that all staff, including temporary staff and volunteers, are provided with copies of or access to VLC's child protection and safeguarding policy and Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct) before they start work.
- appoints a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after by the Local Authority and who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales; and ensures that the designated teacher has appropriate training.
- contributes to inter-agency working and plans.
- provides effective pastoral care, participates in the early help process and offers to initiate Early Help Single Assessments for pupils/students with additional needs in order to provide a co-ordinated offer of early help.
- teaches students about safeguarding and how to keep themselves safe at all times, including when online, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

The governing body nominates a member (normally the chair) to be responsible for liaising with the Local Authority and other agencies in the event of an allegation being made against the Principal.

The governing body also identifies a named governor to take leadership responsibility for VLC's safeguarding arrangements. That governor will maintain regular contact with the DSL and will ensure that the governing body receives regular reports about safeguarding activity at VLC.

It is the responsibility of the governing body to ensure that VLC's safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations procedures take into account the procedures and practice of the Local Authority, local safeguarding partnership and national guidance.

An annual report, using a pro forma provided by the Local Authority, will be submitted to WS about how the governing body's duties have been carried out. Any weaknesses will be rectified without delay.

The Principal:

- ensures that the child protection policy and procedures are understood and implemented by all staff.
- allocates sufficient time, training, support and resources, including cover arrangements when necessary, to enable the DSL and deputy/s to carry out their roles effectively, including the assessment of pupils and attendance at strategy discussions and other necessary meetings.
- supports the designated teacher for looked after children to promote the educational achievement of any students who are looked after by the Local Authority and who have left care through adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders or who were adopted from state care outside England and Wales.
- ensures that all staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep looked after and previously looked after children safe.
- ensures that all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistleblowing procedures.
- ensures that the culture of VLC supports the provision of effective pastoral care and

early help.

- ensures that staff do everything they can to support social workers when Children's Social Care become involved.
- ensures that students are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn about safeguarding and how to keep themselves safe at all times, including when online, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- refers all allegations that a child has been harmed by or that children may be at risk of harm from a member of staff or volunteer to the Designated Officer in the Local Authority within one working day prior to any internal investigation.
- ensures that anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk of harm to a child is referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service, as advised by the Designated Officer.
- appoints a case officer who will be a member of the senior leadership team to investigate allegations concerning members of staff and volunteers and/or act as a point of contact for the member of staff/volunteer against whom the allegation is made.

4. Good Practice Guidelines and Staff Code of Conduct

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards pupils, we identify standards of good practice and set out our expectations of staff in the Staff Behaviour Policy, which all members of staff and volunteers are required to read and sign before starting work. In summary, our expectations include:

- treating all pupils with respect
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- involving pupils in decisions that affect them
- encouraging positive, respectful and safe behaviour among students
- being a good listener
- being alert to changes in pupils' behaviour and to signs of abuse and neglect and exploitation
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- reading and understanding VLC's child protection policy, staff, volunteer, trustee and subcontractor code of conduct and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, behaviour, physical contact, sexual exploitation, extremism, online safety and information-sharing
- asking the pupil's permission before initiating physical contact, such as assisting with dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between pupils and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- not participating in, tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys";
- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up; and
- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature) which constitute sexual harassment, such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, flicking bras and lifting up skirts.
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some pupils lead to an increased risk of abuse
- applying the use of reasonable force and physical intervention only as a last resort and in compliance with school procedures and WS guidance
- referring all concerns about a pupil's safety and welfare to the DSL or, if necessary, directly to the Police or Children's Social Care
- following VLC's rules with regard to communication and relationships with pupils, including via social media
- referring all allegations against members of staff, volunteers or other adults that work with children and any concerns about breaches of the Staff Behaviour policy directly to the Principal; and any similar allegations against or concerns about the Principal directly to the chair of governors.

5. Abuse of Position of Trust

All school staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards pupils is unacceptable and that their conduct towards pupils must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of VLC staff and a pupil under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that pupil is over the age of consent.

6. Children who may be particularly vulnerable

Some children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect than others. Several factors may contribute to that increased vulnerability, including prejudice and discrimination; isolation; social exclusion; communication issues; a reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse can occur; as well as an individual child's personality, behaviour, disability, mental and physical health needs and family circumstances.

To ensure that all of our pupils receive equal protection, we will give special consideration to children who are:

- disabled, have special educational needs or have mental health needs
- young carers
- affected by parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and violence or parental mental health needs
- asylum seekers
- looked after by the Local Authority, otherwise living away from home or were previously looked after
- vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying behaviours
- living away from home or in temporary accommodation
- living transient lifestyles
- living in chaotic and unsupportive home situations
- vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexuality
- at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and/or child criminal exploitation
- at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime
- do not have English as a first language
- at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM)
- at risk of forced marriage
- at risk of being drawn into extremism.

This list provides examples of additionally vulnerable groups and is not exhaustive. Special consideration includes the provision of safeguarding information and resources in community languages and accessible formats for children with communication needs.

7. Children with special educational needs and disabilities or have mental health needs

Children with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities or who have mental health needs can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children, which can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability or mental health issues without further exploration;
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

Staff are trained to manage these additional barriers to ensure this group of children are appropriately safeguarded.

8. Early Help and use of the Early Help Assessment process

VLC recognises that providing timely pastoral support and early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* emphasises that **all** staff should be aware of the early help process and understand their role in it. All staff are therefore trained and required to notice any concerns about children which may help to identify that they would benefit from early help; to record those concerns using Green forms; and to share their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a Deputy DSL), who is most likely to have a complete picture and be the most appropriate person to decide how best to respond to any concerns.

Early help might be simple pastoral support and something VLC is able to address with parents so that the child's needs are met quickly and easily. VLC will keep a record of any such help using the '*Pre Early Help Assessment Action Plan*' to record clear targets and progress.

It may become necessary to take some time with parents to understand a child's needs and circumstances in a more structured way. Children and families may also need support from a range of local agencies beyond VLC. Where VLC has identified that a structured assessment would benefit a child in order to determine how best to meet their needs and support their family; or where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency (e.g. education, health, housing, Police) and her/his parents' consent, VLC will use the Early Help Assessment process to identify what help the child and family require to prevent the child's needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.

If early help is appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSL) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an Early Help Assessment as appropriate. Other staff may be required to work directly with pupils and their families and to support other agencies and practitioners in an Early Help Assessment, in some cases acting as the lead professional.

VLC is committed to working in partnership with children, parents and other agencies to:

- identify situations in which children and/or their families would benefit from early help;
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help when that is appropriate, using the Early Help Assessment process; and
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family, developing an action plan that will focus on activity to improve the child's outcomes.

VLC will be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for any child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care plan);
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups;
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home;
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
- is in a family whose circumstances present challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health issues or domestic abuse;
- has returned home to their family from care;
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;

- is a privately fostered child.
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect; and/or
- is particularly vulnerable in any of the ways identified in paragraph 6 above.

The Early Help process can only be effective if it is undertaken with the agreement of the child's parents/carers. Young people in secondary schools or FE colleges may consent to early help, possibly including an Early Help assessment in their own right, subject to *Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (HMG 2018)*. VLC should seek advice from an Early Help Officer or the Education Safeguarding Manager in those circumstances. The Early Help process should involve the child and family as well as all the practitioners who are working with them.

VLC will keep the needs and circumstances of children receiving early help under constant review. If the child's situation does not improve and/or the child's parents and/or the child do not consent to early help, VLC will make a judgement about whether, without help, the needs of the child will escalate. If so, VLC will seek the parents' consent to a referral to a multi-agency Locality Panel in order to address child's needs. Alternatively, a referral to Children's Social Care may be necessary.

9. Attendance

We recognise that full attendance at school is important to the well-being of all our pupils and enables them to access the opportunities made available to them at school. Attendance is monitored closely and we work in partnership with the Warwickshire County Council Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement (ACE) Service when patterns of absence give rise to concern. Our attendance policy is set out in a separate document and is reviewed regularly by the governing body.

10. Children Missing from Education

VLC operates in accordance with statutory guidance *Children Missing Education (DfE 2016)*

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation, child criminal exploitation, radicalisation or mental health problems. Staff will also be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. The DSL will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing repeatedly and/or are missing for periods during the school day.

We follow the DfE legal requirements for schools in respect of recording and reporting of children who leave school without any known destination.

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps* have been taken by VLC to establish their whereabouts without success, VLC will

make an immediate referral to Warwickshire County Council 's Education and Learning Business Unit at 01926 742036 or via e mail to cme@warwickshire.gov.uk.

* Reasonable steps include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts. Parents will be asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes.
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits where safe to do so
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family
- All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file

Upon receipt of a referral from VLC, the Local Authority will continue to attempt to track the child, for at least a further 10 school days, using access to additional contacts/services, e.g. the MASH, Health services, Housing services. If this also fails to establish the pupil's whereabouts, VLC will be informed by email and may then, but not before, remove the pupil from roll and place the child's name on the School to School database, entering XXXXXXXX in the box for destination. This will place the pupil on the list of Children Missing from Education.

Deletions from roll agreed with the Local Authority will normally be backdated to the first day of absence.

If the Local Authority is able to contact the pupil and her/his parents, arrangements will be made with VLC and family for a return to education, including a re-integration programme where necessary. If the pupil has registered at another school, VLC will delete the child's name from its roll and transfer the child's educational records to the new school in the normal way. Any child protection records will be transferred separately and securely for the attention of the DSL in the new school and a receipt secured.

Pupils leaving VLC for known destinations outside the maintained sector in England and Wales will be updated to the School to School database using MMMMMMM in the destination box. This includes private/independent schools, schools in other countries (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) and pupils moving into Home Education. The latter will be formally notified to the Elective Home Education Service by VLC as soon as written confirmation is received from the parent(s).

If no confirmation is received the above Missing Children procedures will apply.

11. Children who run away or go missing from home or care

VLC recognises that children who run away or go missing (particularly repeatedly) and are thus absent from their normal residence are potentially vulnerable to abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It could also indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 highlights that 'Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care' (DfE 2014) requires that every child or young person who runs away or goes missing must be offered a Return Home Interview (RHI) within a period of 72 hours of their return.

RHI's are intended to ascertain the factors that triggered the young person's absence. Those factors may include difficulties at home, in school and in the community. The short timescale of 72 hours is imposed in order to ensure that the RHI remains relevant to the young person and enables any required action to be initiated at the earliest opportunity.

RHI's are undertaken by practitioners who are independent in order to facilitate a discussion with the young person that is as open as possible. As soon as the Local Authority receives notification that a young person has gone missing from home or care, a letter will be sent to parents/carers seeking their consent to a RHI with their son/daughter. Direct contact will then be made with parents/carers and the young person to make arrangements for the interview.

In order to fulfil the timescale of within 72 hours, it is essential that all opportunities to interview young people including times during VLC day are utilised.

When necessary and in conjunction with the Local Authority, VLC will facilitate Return Home Interviews, both in terms of releasing the young person from their normal timetable to participate in an interview and in providing an appropriate and safe space on VLC site for the interview to take place.

VLC will check with the Local Authority whether or not parents/carers have given their consent to the interview. However, young people aged 16 and 17 years old are generally considered to be able to consent and withhold consent to their own information being shared and therefore to participate in a RHI or not. With reference to the Fraser Guidelines, younger children may also be deemed able to consent.

If the Local Authority has not received consent from parents/carers and the young person is not assessed as being capable of giving or withholding informed consent, VLC will contact the parent/carer and seek to secure their consent.

Parents/carers may also choose to accompany their son/daughter in interviews and VLC will facilitate that as appropriate.

12. Helping children to understand and recognise risk and identify available support
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 requires governing bodies and proprietors to ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of providing a 'broad and balanced curriculum.'

Children are taught to understand and manage risk through our personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and sex and relationships lessons and through all aspects of school life. Our approach is designed to help children to think about risks they may encounter and with the support of staff work out how those risks might be reduced or managed. Discussions about risk are empowering and enabling for all children and promote sensible behaviour rather than fear or anxiety. Children are taught how to conduct themselves and how to behave in a responsible manner. Children are also reminded regularly about online safety, the risks of sharing content and images online and tackling bullying, including cyber bullying procedures. VLC continually promotes an ethos of respect for children and pupils are encouraged to speak to a member of staff of their choosing about any worries they may have.

Discussions about risk will include talking to children about the risks and issues associated with young people sending, receiving and/or disseminating indecent images of themselves and other young people, which is widely referred to as 'sexting'.

It is recognised that a young person may choose to share indecent images with another young person in the context of a romantic relationship and that she or he may do so without any intention to cause harm or distress to anybody. Although technically an offence, 'sexting' of that nature is referred to as 'experimental sexting' and it is usually not necessary or appropriate to criminalise young people in those circumstances.

However, there are clear risks associated with such behaviour. Staff are trained to be vigilant and to notice and record any concerns about young people sending and receiving

indecent images, which includes listening to what young people say to each other and to staff, as they do with any other safeguarding concern.

When concerns are identified, staff will always speak to children and will inform parents about their concerns unless there is good reason to believe that doing so would place the child at increased risk of significant harm. The DSL will also need to consider the Fraser guidelines in making a judgement about whether or not to respect a young person's request not to inform his/her parents/carers.

N.B. Children under the age of 13 are unable to consent to sexual activity. Any imagery containing sexual activity involving under 13 year olds will therefore be referred to the Police.

(Please also refer to 'Youth produced sexual imagery' in section 27 below)

Children are also taught about online safety, issues of consent and healthy relationships, fundamental British values, how children can keep themselves safe from all forms of bullying including online bullying, child sexual exploitation including issues of informed consent, sexting, drugs and alcohol).

13. Support for pupils, families and staff involved in a child protection issue

Child abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved.

We will support pupils, their families, and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- nominating a link person (the DSL) who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact
- Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a pupil, separate link people will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest
- responding sympathetically to any request from pupils or staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- storing records securely
- offering details of helplines, counselling or other avenues of external support
- following the procedures laid down in our child protection, whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures
- co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

14. Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a pupil or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a pupil that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Poor practice examples include unfairly singling out a pupil or attempting to humiliate them, bullying or belittling a pupil or discriminating against them in some way. Complaints are managed by the Principal, other members of the senior leadership team and governors. An explanation of the complaints procedure is included in the safeguarding information for parents and pupils.

Complaints from staff are dealt with under VLC's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Complaints which escalate into a child protection concern will automatically be managed under VLC's child protection procedures.

15. Staff reporting concerns about a colleague or other adult who works with children (Whistleblowing)

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague - including visiting practitioners

and volunteers - towards a pupil are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood a situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise a colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount.

VLC's Whistleblowing Policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence, and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

Staff are expected to report all concerns about poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues - including what may seem minor contraventions of VLC's staff behaviour policy (code of conduct) – to the Principal; to facilitate proactive and early intervention in order to maintain appropriate boundaries and a safe culture that protect children and reduce the risk of serious abuse in school.

The recommended format for all staff in schools to record any such poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues or other adults who work with children is the pro forma '*Logging A Concern about the behaviour of an adult who works with children*', also known as the '*Yellow form*'.

All such forms should be passed directly to the Principal. Alternatively, staff are free to approach the Principal directly to discuss their concerns.

Concerns or complaints about the Principal should be reported to the chair of governors, whose contact details are displayed in the staff room for any member of staff to use in such an instance. The 'Yellow form' should also be used for that purpose as above.

Staff may also report concerns about suspected abuse or neglect directly to Children's Social Care or the Police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.

Staff can also contact the Designated Officer in the Local Authority, who is responsible for the co-ordination of responses to allegations against people who work with children (see contact and referral details in section 16 below). The Designated Officer's contact details are displayed on the safeguarding noticeboard in the staff room.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 between 8.00a.m. and 8.00p.m., Monday to Friday or e mail help@nspcc.org.uk. Information is also available on the NSPCC website at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline and contact numbers for Children's Social Care, the Police and the Designated Officer are all displayed in the staff room.

16. Managing allegations against staff

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. The full procedures for dealing with allegations against staff can be found in Part 4 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* and the WS inter-agency safeguarding procedures *Allegations Against Staff or Persons in Positions of Trust* – <https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/safeguarding-children/i-work-with-children-and-young-people/interagency-safeguarding-procedures>.

Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress.

Suspension is not the default option and alternatives to suspension will always be considered. However, in some cases staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be

the best way to ensure that allegations are investigated fairly, quickly and consistently and that all parties are protected. In the event of suspension VLC will provide support and a named contact for the member of staff.

Staff, parents and governors are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a teacher who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including content placed on social media sites.

Allegations concerning staff who no longer work at VLC or historical allegations will be reported to the Police.

In accordance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019*, VLC will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

As required by *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, all allegations in respect of an individual who works at VLC that fulfil any of the following criteria will be reported to the Designated Officer in the Local Authority (LADO) within one working day:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

The Designated Officer's contact number is **01926 743433**. Referrals to the Designated Officer should be submitted on a PoT MARF form and sent to lado@warwickshire.gov.uk.

NB it is the Principal's responsibility to contact and refer to the Designated Officer when necessary. The only exception is when the allegation is against the Principal, in which instance the nominated governor will undertake that responsibility.

In proprietor-led independent schools, concerns about the proprietor(s) should be referred directly to the Designated Officer using the contact details as above.

17. Staff Training

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

New staff, governors who will have direct contact with children and volunteers will receive an explanation during their induction which will include:

- VLC's child protection and safeguarding policy
- signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect
- responding to disclosure of abuse or neglect by a child
- reporting and recording arrangements
- the staff behaviour policy (code of conduct)
- the identity and role of the DSL and all Deputy DSLs
- VLC's behaviour policy
- VLC's safeguarding response to children who go missing from education.

NB all of the above will be explained **before** a new member of staff, governor or volunteer has direct contact with children in school. VLC's child protection policy and staff behaviour policy (code of conduct) will be sent with the letter confirming an appointment with a written requirement that the individual reads the two policies in advance of starting work. The individual will be given an opportunity to clarify any issues on their first day at work and then asked to sign to confirm that they have read and understood both policies and undertake to

comply with them.

All staff, including the Principal (unless the Principal is the DSL), volunteers and governors will receive appropriate and regularly updated safeguarding and child protection training and thematic updates as required (at least annually) during inset days and regular discussions at staff meetings, to provide them with the requisite skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively in line with statutory guidance and any requirements of the local safeguarding partnership.

The DSL will attend training for newly appointed DSLs and refresher training every two years delivered by Warwickshire County Council's Education Safeguarding Service. That training will include up to date information about local safeguarding partnership inter-agency procedures. In addition, the DSL will update their knowledge and skills at least annually to keep up with any developments relevant to their role and will be supported to access inter-agency training as part of their continuing professional development.

All staff will be made aware of the increased risk of abuse to certain groups, including children with special educational needs and disabilities, looked after children, previously looked after children, young carers and risks associated with specific safeguarding issues including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, peer on peer abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence in school, extremism, female genital mutilation and forced marriage; and will receive training in relation to keeping children safe online.

In addition, the Principal (and/or other school leaders as appropriate) and at least one governor (usually the chair) will attend safer recruitment training and VLC will ensure that there are at least two school leaders and/or governors that have attended safer recruitment training within the past three years.

18. Safer Recruitment

VLC endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ 'suitable' staff and allow 'suitable' volunteers to work with children by complying with the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* together with VLC's *Safer Recruitment* policies.

Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- complete an application form which includes their employment history and explains any gaps in that history
- provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children
- provide evidence of identity and qualifications
- if offered employment, be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) regulations as appropriate to their role. This will include:
 - an enhanced DBS check and a barred list check for those including unsupervised volunteers engaged in Regulated Activity;
 - an enhanced DBS check without a barred list check for all volunteers not involved in Regulated Activity but who have the opportunity of regular contact with children;
 - an enhanced DBS check for all governors (not including associate members), which will only include a barred list check for governors involved in Regulated Activity

At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.

All new members of staff and volunteers will undergo an induction that includes familiarisation with VLC's child protection and safeguarding policy, staff behaviour policy (code of conduct), other issues as in section 16 of this policy and identification of their child protection training needs.

All staff are required to sign to confirm they have received a copy of the child protection and

safeguarding policy and Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct).

All relevant staff (teachers, teaching assistants, other staff who have contact with students, and members of the senior leadership team) are made aware of the disqualification legislation within the safeguarding training.

VLC obtains written confirmation from supply agencies and third party organisations that they have satisfactorily undertaken all appropriate checks in respect of individuals they provide to work in VLC that VLC would have undertaken if they were employing the individual directly; and that those individuals are suitable to work with children.

Trainee teachers will be checked either by VLC or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained confirming their suitability to work with children.

VLC maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken and ensures that the record is maintained in accordance with section 3 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and guidance issued by Warwickshire County Council.

Volunteers

Volunteers will undergo checks commensurate with their work in VLC and contact with pupils. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately checked be left unsupervised or be allowed to engage in regulated activity.

Supervised volunteers

Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are not in regulated activity will undergo the safer recruitment checks appropriate to their role, in accordance with VLC's risk assessment process and statutory guidance.

Contractors

VLC checks the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at VLC and requests DBS checks where appropriate. As required by statutory guidance, where contractors and/or their staff are engaged in regulated activity, barred list checks are also requested. Contractors who have not undergone checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or in regulated activity.

19. Site security

Visitors to VLC, including contractors, are asked to sign in and are given an identity badge, which confirms they have permission to be on site. Parents who are simply delivering or collecting their children do not need to sign in. All visitors are expected to observe VLC's safeguarding and health and safety regulations to ensure children are kept safe. The Principal will exercise professional judgement in determining whether any visitor should be escorted or supervised while on site.

20. Behaviour Management

Our behaviour policy is set out in a separate document and is reviewed regularly by the governing body. It is shared with all staff before they start working with children as part of their induction. The policy is transparent to staff, parents and pupils.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2019) highlights that there are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools and colleges to use reasonable force to safeguard children and young people. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a young person needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. The use of force may involve either passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path, or active physical contact such as leading a pupil by the arm out of the classroom.

VLC operates in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's *Guidance on the Use of Force and Physical Intervention*, which highlights that staff should deploy every possible strategy to prevent the need for physical intervention. Those strategies would include de-escalation whenever there is a threat of violence or aggression towards an individual or property; communicating calmly with children; using non-threatening verbal and body language; helping children to recognise their own 'triggers' and 'early warning signs', and distracting or helping children to see a positive way out of a difficult situation.

However, VLC supports staff to intervene physically and to use reasonable force when all of those strategies are unsuccessful in calming a situation and a risk of violence, serious damage to property or disruption to VLC remains. Staff should always be able to demonstrate that any such intervention is reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the circumstances, is used for the shortest possible period of time, deploys the minimum force that is necessary and is never used as a sanction.

Searching

In accordance with DfE guidance *Searching, screening and confiscation - Advice for Principals, school staff and governing bodies* (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674416/Searching_screening_and_confiscation.pdf), school staff can search a pupil for any item if the pupil agrees. The Principal and any member of staff authorised by the Principal also has a statutory power to search pupils or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil may have one or more of the following prohibited items in their possession: knives or weapons; alcohol; illegal drugs; stolen items; tobacco and cigarette papers; fireworks; pornographic images; indecent images of children; any article that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil).

The Principal and authorised staff can also search for any item banned by VLC rules which has been identified in the rules as an item which may be searched for.

School staff can confiscate any prohibited item found as a result of a search. They can also confiscate any item they consider harmful or detrimental to school discipline.

21. Record Keeping

VLC will maintain safeguarding (including early help) and child protection records in accordance with the guidance document provided by WCC Education Safeguarding Service *Child Protection Record Keeping Guidance*.

VLC will:

- keep clear detailed written records of concerns about children (noting the date, event and action taken), even where there is no need to refer the matter to Children's Social Care immediately;
- keep records in a folder in a meticulous chronological order;
- ensure all records are kept secure and in locked locations;
- ensure all safeguarding records are transferred - separately from the child's main pupil file to the receiving school, college or other education establishment when a pupil moves. The DSL will do this as soon as possible, ensuring secure transit, and will ensure that confirmation of receipt of the records is obtained.
- the DSL will also consider whether it is appropriate to share any information with a child's receiving school in advance of the child leaving so that the receiving school is able to support the child as effectively as possible and plan for her/his arrival.
- ensure that incoming safeguarding records are brought to the attention of the DSL, Deputy DSLs and other key staff such as the SENCO when a child transfers in from another school.

Safeguarding and child protection records will be maintained independently from the pupil's

school file and VLC's file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held. Such records will only be accessible to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and school leaders who need to be aware.

The recommended format for all staff in schools to record any safeguarding or child protection observations or concerns about a child is the pro forma *Logging A Concern About A Child's Safety And Welfare* (Form C) also known as the 'Green form'. The same format will be used by staff to record and report any observations or concerns that suggest a child might benefit from early help.

Such records will include, in addition to the name, address and age of the child, timed and dated observations describing the child's behaviour, appearance, statements/remarks made to staff or other children and observations of interactions between the child, other children, members of staff and/or parents/carers that give rise to concern. Where possible and without interpretation, the exact words spoken by the child or parent/carer will be recorded. Records will be signed, dated and timed by the member of staff making the record.

Records of safeguarding/child protection observations or concerns can be completed electronically or as a paper version but it is most important that **all staff use one consistent system for the recording of concerns and that all records are passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead**, who should complete the form to confirm what action has been taken.

Child protection records form a part of children's pupil records, which parents ordinarily have a right to see. Any pupil or parent wishing to access the pupil's child protection records will need to submit a request to VLC for consideration. Access to the record will then be arranged but records may be redacted in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) if releasing information would place the child, or any other person, at risk of significant harm.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prevent school staff from sharing information with relevant agencies without the consent of parents, where that information may help to protect a child.

22. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

VLC will manage and share confidential information about children in line with *Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (HMG 2018)*. All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the pupil, family and staff involved but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the GDPR places duties on VLC and individual staff to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure.

However, neither the DPA nor the GDPR prevent or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2019)* states clearly that "**Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children**".

Staff will ensure confidentiality protocols are adhered to and information is shared appropriately. If in any doubt about confidentiality, staff will seek advice from the DSL, another SLT member or outside agency as required (e.g. Education Safeguarding Manager).

It is reasonable for staff to discuss day-to-day concerns about pupils with colleagues in order to ensure that children's general needs are met in school. However, staff should report all child protection and safeguarding concerns to the DSL or Principal or – in the case of

concerns about the Principal – to the chair of governors. The person receiving the referral will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

However, following a number of cases where senior leaders in schools failed to act upon concerns raised by staff, *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* emphasises that any member of staff can contact and/or make a referral to Children's Social Care if they are concerned about a child.

The GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent school staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child. All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.

The DSL will normally obtain consent from the pupil and/or parents to share sensitive information within VLC or with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the DSL may share information *without* consent, and will record the reason for not obtaining consent.

If any member of staff receives a request from a pupil or parent to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the data protection officer [or DSL].

Information sharing will take place in a timely and secure manner and where:

- it is necessary and proportionate to do so; and
- the information to be shared is relevant, adequate and accurate.

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child/parent to keep secrets.

Child protection information will be stored separately from the pupil's school file and VLC's file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held. All such information will be handled in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, which require that sensitive information is:

- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- kept no longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- secure.

Record of concern forms (Form C – Green forms) and other written information will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information. Any sensitive information that needs to be stored on portable devices such as laptop computers or tablets or on portable media such as a CD or flash drive will be password protected or encrypted and kept in locked storage.

VLC's policy on confidentiality and information-sharing is available to parents and pupils on request.

23. Extended school and off-site arrangements

All extended and off site activities are subject to a risk assessment to satisfy health and safety and safeguarding requirements. When our pupils attend off-site activities, including day and residential visits and work related activities, we will check that effective child

protection and whistleblowing arrangements are in place.

Where extended school activities are provided by and managed by VLC, VLC's child protection policy and procedures apply. If other organisations provide services or activities on VLC's site, VLC will check that those organisations have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures.

24. Photography and images

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

To protect pupils we will:

- seek their consent for photographs or video images to be taken;
- seek parental consent;
- ensure pupils are appropriately dressed; and
- encourage pupils to tell us if they are worried about any photographs/images that are taken of them.

Furthermore, when using images for publicity purposes (e.g. on our website or in newspapers or publications), we will:

- avoid naming children when possible
- if it is necessary to name children, use first names rather than surnames
- if children are named, avoid using their image
- establish whether the image will be retained for further use, where and for how long
- ensure that images are stored securely and used only by those authorised to do so.

For the protection of pupils and staff, only school owned equipment will be used to record and store images taken by staff or volunteers on VLC's site or during offsite school activities including residential visits.

Parents are **not** welcome to take still photographs of their **own children** during school activities. Parents must not publish (including on social media) photographs of other children inadvertently captured during school events without the express permission of the parents of those children.

Parents are **not** welcome to video record their **own children** during school activities, subject to the same terms and conditions as for photographs above.

Visiting practitioners who work directly with children are subject to the same restrictions as school staff and volunteers in respect of recording and storing images of children. However, some visiting professionals are permitted to record images of the premises only specifically for professional purposes and in order to support VLC, e.g. professionals providing advice or preparing quotations for work such as maintenance, health and safety and building.

25. Online Safety

Children and young people commonly use electronic equipment including mobile phones, tablets and computers on a daily basis to access the internet and share content and images via social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MSN, Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram.

Those technologies and the internet are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. Unfortunately, however, some adults and young people will use those technologies to harm children and the use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Child sexual exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation: technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm.

The breadth of issues within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into three areas of risk:

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example pornography, fake news, racist or radical and extremist views;
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults; and
- **conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example making, sending and receiving explicit images, or online bullying.

Chatrooms and social networking sites are the more obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful behaviour and pupils are not allowed to access those sites in school. Many pupils own or have access to hand held devices and parents are encouraged to consider measures to keep their children safe when using the internet and social media at home and in the community. Rules for students in respect of onsite usage in school can be found in our e-safety policy which is available on the VLC website.

VLC's **e-Safety Policy** explains how we try to keep pupils safe in school and protect and educate pupils in the safe use of technology. VLC has appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place to protect children from potentially harmful online material.

Cyberbullying and sexting by pupils will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures (see 'Sexting' below). Serious incidents may be managed in line with our sexual exploitation policy or child protection procedures.

All staff receive online safety training and are trained to be vigilant about and to report any concerns about risk to children online in the same way that they notice and report offline concerns.

Online communication between staff and pupils

Staff also receive advice regarding personal online activity, use of social networking and electronic communication with pupils, about which there are strict rules *please see our staff, volunteer, trustee and subcontractor code of conduct*. Staff found to be in breach of these rules may be the subject of a referral to the Designated Officer in the Local Authority and/or may be subject to disciplinary action.

26. Child protection procedures

Recognising abuse

To ensure that our pupils are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of children. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, for example by hitting them, or by failing to act to prevent harm, for example by leaving a small child home alone.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by adult men or women or by other children or young people. Staff are trained to understand and recognise indicators of all four categories of abuse as defined below.

There are four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. 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. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving 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. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education (see section 31).

Neglect

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

- a. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

Definitions taken from *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE 2019).

Indicators of abuse

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For those reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

It is the responsibility of staff to report their concerns. It is not their responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries;
- show signs of pain or discomfort;
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather;
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming;
- look unkempt and uncared for;
- change their eating habits;
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships;
- appear fearful;
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety;
- self-harm;
- frequently miss school or arrive late;
- show signs of not wanting to go home;
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn;
- challenge authority;
- become disinterested in their school work;
- be constantly tired or preoccupied;
- be wary of physical contact;
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol;
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age and/or stage of development; and/or
- acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends' or adults recently acquainted with the child's family.

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

It is very important that staff report all of their concerns, however minor or insignificant they may think they are – they do not need 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk.

Impact of abuse

The impact of child abuse, neglect and exploitation should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

Taking action

Key points for staff to remember when taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999;
- report your concern to the DSL as quickly as possible – immediately when there is evidence of physical or sexual abuse and certainly by the end of the day;
- do not start your own investigation;
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family;
- complete a record of concern, using a Form C (Green form)
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed or need to debrief.

If a member of staff or volunteer is concerned about a pupil's welfare

There will be occasions when staff may suspect that a pupil may be at risk without unequivocal evidence. The pupil's behaviour may have changed, their artwork could be bizarre, they may write stories or poetry that reveal confusion or distress or physical but inconclusive signs may have been noticed. In these circumstances, staff will try to give the pupil the opportunity to talk. The signs they have noticed may be due to a variety of factors, for example a parent has moved out, a pet has died, a grandparent is very ill or an accident has occurred. Staff are encouraged and supported to ask pupils if they are OK, if there is anything the child would like to talk to them about and if they can help in any way. Staff are trained to do this by asking appropriate open questions which do not lead the child in any particular direction but invite the child to talk about anything if they wish to.

Staff should use the same record of concern form Form C (Green form) to record these early concerns. If the pupil does begin to reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below. Following an initial conversation with the pupil, if the member of staff remains concerned, they should discuss their concerns with the DSL.

Concerns which do not meet the threshold for child protection intervention will be managed through the Early Help process as in this policy.

If a pupil discloses to a member of staff or volunteer

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual. Their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell. They may have lost all trust in adults. Or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault. Sometimes they may not be aware that what is happening is abusive.

If a pupil talks to a member of staff about any risks to their safety or wellbeing, **the staff member will need to let the pupil know that they must pass the information on** – staff are not allowed to keep unsafe secrets. The point at which they tell the pupil this is a matter for professional judgement. If they jump in immediately the pupil may think that they do not want to listen but if left until the very end of the conversation, the pupil may feel that they have been misled into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

If pupils have been completing the Taking Care curriculum they will have been taught about confidentiality and will generally understand the concept of safe and unsafe secrets. They should have a good knowledge and understanding of why staff cannot keep some information confidential but also know that information is passed on to specific people on a 'need to know' basis only.

During their conversations with pupils staff will:

- allow them to speak freely;
- remain calm and not overreact – the pupil may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting their listener;
- give reassuring nods or words of comfort – **'I'm glad you told me'/'thank you for telling me'; 'I believe you'; 'What happened to you is not your fault'/'This isn't your fault'; 'I'm going to do what I can to help you';**
- not be afraid of silences – staff must remember how hard this must be for the pupil;
- **under no circumstances** ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the pupil's mother think about it; (**however**, it is reasonable to ask questions to clarify understanding and to support a meaningful referral if that is required, e.g. 'when did this happen', 'where did this happen?')
- at an appropriate time tell the pupil that in order to help them, the member of staff must pass the information on;

- not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused;
- avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying things such as 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' may be the staff member's way of being supportive but may be interpreted by the child to mean that they have done something wrong;
- tell the pupil what will happen next;
- let the pupil know that someone (either the member of staff or another named person, e.g. the DSL) will come to see them before the end of the day;
- report verbally to the DSL (or Principal if the child has made an allegation against a member of staff);
- write up their conversation as soon as possible on the **record of concern form** Form C (Green form) and hand it to the DSL (or Principal if the child has made an allegation against a member of staff); and
- seek support if they feel distressed or need to debrief.

Notifying parents

VLC will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a pupil with their parents. This must be handled sensitively and the DSL will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.

Our focus is the safety and wellbeing of the pupil. Therefore, if VLC believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will be sought first from Children's Social Care.

27. Making a referral to Children's Social Care

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 emphasises that the DSL (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns. The DSL will make a referral to Children's Social Care (and if appropriate the Police) if it is believed that a pupil is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The pupil (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child or create undue delay. *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019* also emphasises that **all** staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to Children's Social Care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments.

Statutory assessments

Children in need

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm

Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquires under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Such enquiries enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and must be initiated where there are concerns about maltreatment, including all forms of abuse and neglect, female genital mutilation or other so-called honour based violence, and extra-familial threats like radicalisation and sexual exploitation.

28. Submitting child protection referrals

All child protection referrals should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) by completing a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and submitting it to the MASH at mash@warwickshire.gov.uk. The form can also be completed online.

All urgent child protection referrals, i.e. where there is an immediate concern about a child's safety, should be made in the first instance by telephoning the MASH on 01926 414144. This should be followed by submission of a MARF as above.

NB If a child is already the subject of an open case to Children's Social Care, the DSL will have the name and contact details of the allocated social worker. Further child protection concerns about any child in those circumstances must be referred directly to the allocated social worker, **not** to the MASH. Again, where there is an immediate concern about a child's safety, the DSL should contact the social worker by telephone in the first instance. Any difficulties in contacting the social worker must be escalated to their line manager, **not** to the MASH.

Outside of office hours, immediate concerns about a child should be referred to the Emergency Duty Team on telephone number 01926 886922.

If staff are ever concerned that a child is in immediate danger, they will contact the Police by dialling 999.

Staff may seek support directly from the Education Safeguarding Manager should they consider that necessary.

29. Staff reporting directly to child protection agencies

Staff should ordinarily follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy.

However, as highlighted above, **all** staff should be aware of the early help process and understand their role in it; and **all** staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to Children's Social Care and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989. **Any member of staff may therefore refer their concerns directly to Children's Social Care and/or the Police if:**

- the situation is an emergency and the DSL, the deputy DSL, the Principal and/or the chair of governors are all unavailable;
- they are convinced that a direct report is the only way to ensure the pupil's safety; or
- for any other reason they make a judgement that a direct referral is in the best interests of the child.

In any of those circumstances, staff may make direct child protection referrals and share information without being subject of censure or disciplinary action. However, staff should inform the DSL and/or Principal at the earliest opportunity that they have done so unless in their judgement doing so would increase the risk of harm to the child.

If in any doubt, members of staff may consult the MASH (details above) or seek support from the Education Safeguarding Manager via 01926 742525.

30. What will Children's Social Care do?

Children's Social Care should make a decision about the type of response that is required within one working day of a referral being made; and should let the referrer know the outcome. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required;
- whether the child is in need, and should be assessed under section 17;
- there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made and the child assessed under section 47;

- any services are required by the child and family and what type of services; and
- further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what further action to take.

VLC will follow up if this information is not forthcoming and if, after a referral, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, VLC will consider following the WS escalation procedure to ensure the referred concerns have been addressed and, most importantly, that the child's situation improves.

If Children's Social Care decide to carry out a statutory assessment, school staff will do everything they can to support that assessment, led and supported by the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) as required.

31. Bullying, peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour

VLC believes that all children have a right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm, both from adults and other students in VLC.

Children may be harmed by other children or young people. All staff recognise that children can abuse their peers and are trained to understand and implement VLC's policy and procedures regarding peer on peer abuse. All peer on peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. It is most likely to include, but is not limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- sexting including pressuring another person to send a sexual image or video content (also known as youth produced sexual imagery);
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm (upskirting is a criminal offence and may constitute sexual harassment);
- teenage relationship abuse - defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, perpetrated against a current or former partner;
- initiation/hazing - used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as sports team or school groups by subjecting them to a series of potentially humiliating, embarrassing or abusing trials which promote a bond between them; and
- prejudiced behaviour - a range of behaviours which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless or excluded and which relates to prejudices around belonging, identity and equality, in particular prejudices linked to disabilities, special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender and sexual identity.

Bullying is a very serious issue that can cause children considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying can have a disastrous effect on a child's well-being and in very rare cases has been a feature in the suicide of some young people.

All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying should be reported and will be managed through VLC's anti-bullying procedures which can be accessed on the website. All pupils and parents receive a copy of the procedures on joining VLC and the subject of bullying is addressed at regular intervals in PSHE education. All members of staff receive a copy of VLC's behaviour policy, which contains the anti-bullying procedures, as part of their induction and are trained to be aware of the harm caused by bullying and to respond to all incidents of bullying and peer on peer abuse proactively.

Abuse is abuse and will not be tolerated, minimised or dismissed as 'banter'; 'just having a laugh'; 'part of growing up'; 'boys being boys'; or 'girls being girls'. Different gender issues

can be prevalent when dealing with peer on peer abuse, for example girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence. Whilst mindful of the particular vulnerability of women and girls to violence, it is also recognised that boys as well as girls can be abused by members of the opposite as well as the same gender group.

We recognise that some students will sometimes negatively affect the learning and wellbeing of others and their behaviour will be dealt with under VLC's behaviour policy. However, there will be occasions when a pupil's behaviour warrants a response under child protection rather than anti-bullying procedures. In particular, research suggests that up to 30 per cent of child sexual abuse is committed by someone under the age of 18.

Occasionally, allegations may be made against students by others in VLC, which are of a safeguarding nature. Safeguarding issues raised in this way may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Members of staff to whom such allegations are made and/or who become concerned about a pupil's sexualised behaviour, including any known online sexualised behaviour, should record their concerns in the usual way *on a Green* form and report them to the DSL as soon as possible, as with any other safeguarding concern.

It is likely that for an allegation or concern to be addressed under child protection procedures, some of the following features will be found. The allegation or concern:

- is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger pupil or a more vulnerable pupil;
- is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence;
- raises risk factors for other pupils in VLC;
- indicates that other pupils may have been affected by this student;
- indicates that young people outside VLC may be affected by this student.

The potential for the impact of the incident to extend further than VLC's local community (e.g. for images or content to be shared around neighbouring schools/colleges) and for a victim (or alleged perpetrator) to become marginalised and excluded by both online and offline communities. There is also the strong potential for repeat victimisation in the future if abusive content continues to exist somewhere online. Online concerns can be especially complicated. Support is available from **The UK Safer Internet Centre** at 0344 381 4772 and helpline@saferinternet.org.uk and the **Internet Watch Foundation** at <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>.

Peer on peer sexual violence and sexual harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and gender and between children of the opposite or the same gender. They can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. While it is important that **all** victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support, staff are trained to be aware that it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys.

This policy largely refers to sexual violence and sexual harassment between pupils/students at VLC. However, there may be occasions when pupils/students report sexual violence and/or harassment perpetrated by other young people who attend a different educational provision. In that situation, the DSL will liaise with the DSL at the alleged perpetrator's school/college as well as the victim's parents, the Police and Children's Social Care. Support for the victim will be provided as described below, irrespective of which educational provision the alleged perpetrator attends.

What is sexual violence and sexual harassment?

When referring to sexual violence, this policy uses the definitions of sexual offences in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as follows:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity;
- the age of consent is 16;
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

Sexual harassment in the context of peer on peer behaviour is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Online sexual harassment may happen on its own or as part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

Sexual harassment creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence. VLC therefore recognises the importance of recognising the nature of, identifying and challenging sexual violence and sexual harassment in its wider approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; through policies; and through the curriculum.

Minimising the risk of sexual violence and sexual harassment at VLC through a planned curriculum

VLC addresses the following through its curriculum and policies, eg. PSHE, SMSC.

This will vary from pupil to pupil as it will be bespoke to their needs but VLC must be mindful of the principle that children of all ages need to learn about respect, consent, body autonomy and healthy relationships; and can harm other children.

- VLC's ethos and its inherent values and standards are demonstrated, promoted and upheld throughout all aspects of school life;
- healthy and respectful relationships;
- what respectful behaviour looks like;
- consent;
- gender roles, stereotyping, equality;
- body confidence and self-esteem;
- prejudiced behaviour;

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”;
- challenging cultures of sexual harassment including behaviour (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia and flicking bras and lifting up skirts - dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them;
- how additional barriers to minimising the risk of sexual violence and harassment are addressed, including assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child’s disability or special needs without further exploration;
- recognition that, in some cases, a child who is perceived by their peers to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.
- the process for students them to raise their concerns or make a report and how any report will be handled. This should include processes when they have a concern about a friend or peer.

How VLC will respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

VLC will respond to reports in accordance with Part 5 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019*. Schools may also find it useful to refer to the peer on peer abuse toolkit available at <https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf>

It is not possible to anticipate every particular set of circumstances and therefore what VLC’s response will be to every case. This policy sets out a set of principles which VLC will consider in responding on a case by case basis.

All responses to reports of sexual violence will be subject to an immediate risk and needs assessment undertaken by the DSL (or a deputy), using her/his professional judgement and supported by other agencies, such as children’s social care and the Police. The need for a risk and needs assessment in relation to reports of sexual harassment will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Advice may also be sought from the Education Safeguarding Manager.

Risk assessment

The risk and needs assessment will consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support;
- the alleged perpetrator/s (if she/he/they attend the same school/college); and
- all the other children (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at VLC, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with children’s social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. VLC’s risk assessment should not replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform VLC’s approach to supporting and protecting pupils and students and updating our own risk assessment.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment - what to consider

The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and will therefore be the most appropriate person to lead VLC’s initial response. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims will be given

as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. However, if the victim asks VLC not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment, the DSL (or a deputy) will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children. It is likely to be justified and lawful to share the information if doing so is in the public interest, e.g. to protect the victim and other young people from harm and to promote the welfare of children;

- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including: whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- the ages of the children involved;
- the developmental stages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse;
- whether there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or staff;
- informing parents/carers unless this would put the victim at greater risk);
- only sharing information with those staff who need to know in order to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigation. For instance, vocational staff may be asked to monitor the victim's welfare without needing to know that they are a victim of sexual violence or harassment.

Children sharing a classroom - initial considerations following a report of sexual violence

Any report of sexual violence is likely to be traumatic for the victim. However, reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator is likely to be especially distressing. Whilst VLC establishes the facts of the case and starts the process of liaising with Children's Social Care and the Police, the alleged perpetrator will usually be removed from any classes they share with the victim. Consideration will also be given to how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on VLC premises and on transport to and from VLC, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

For other reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator and considerations regarding shared classes, sharing premises and transport, will be considered immediately.

In all cases, the wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children in VLC will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

Responding to the report

If an offence has been committed, the Police will be informed. It is the prerogative of parents and victims to make complaints to the Police directly but VLC will also speak to the Police in order to ensure effective action is taken to safeguard other young people as well as the victim.

If a child has suffered significant harm, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care via the MASH in order to ensure that the needs of both the victim and perpetrator are the subject of professional risk assessments by social workers. Similarly, any instance of sexual activity between pupils on VLC's site will always be referred to Children's Social Care.

Responses to all incidents of both sexual violence and sexual harassment will be underpinned by the principles of:

- zero tolerance of sexual violence and sexual harassment;

- support for both the victim and alleged perpetrator/s, particularly pending the outcome of investigations
- all parties have an ongoing right to an education and are safest if they remain in VLC subject to appropriate risk assessments and risk management.
- exclusion will be avoided unless that is the only realistic option to keep one or more parties safe.

In principle, there are four possible responses to an allegation or concern about sexual violence or harassment on the part of a pupil/student:

1. Manage internally

In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, VLC may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or statutory intervention and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising the behaviour policy and anti-bullying procedures, speaking to the child and her/his parents, making expectations of future behaviour clear (in writing where appropriate) and by providing pastoral support.

Careful consideration will be given to the need to separate the victim and alleged perpetrator/s in lessons (as with sexual assaults) pending investigation would also be undertaken.

2. Early help

VLC may decide that the child/ren involved do not require statutory interventions but may benefit from early help, which can be particularly useful to address non-violent harmful sexual behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence.

A safeguarding record will be maintained of all concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions for all responses as in 1. and 2.

3. Referrals to Children's Social Care

Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, VLC will make a referral Children's Social Care via the MASH. All instances of sexual activity between pupils/students on VLC premises will be referred to Children's Social Care. All instances of sexual violence perpetrated by a child under ten years of age will be referred to Children's Social Care via the MASH. This will facilitate a consultation about the role of the Police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, the starting principle of reporting to the Police via the MASH remains. The Police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.

VLC will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (i.e. if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk or create undue delay). Any such decision should be made with the support of Children's Social Care.

Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of co-ordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator and any other children that require support.

However, VLC will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in VLC. The DSL (or a deputy) will work closely with Children's Social Care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions VLC takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment as above will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator, any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report and all children at VLC should be **immediate**.

In some cases, Children's Social Care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. VLC (generally led by the DSL or a deputy) will refer again if

we believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the DSL (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

4. Reporting to the Police

Any report to the Police will generally be in parallel with a referral to Children's Social Care (as above).

Where VLC receives a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault, the starting point is this should be passed on to the Police. It is the prerogative of victims and their parents/carers to make direct complaints to the Police. However, VLC should also be very clear with victims and parents/carers that VLC has a duty to ensure the Police are informed when an alleged crime has been committed in order to safeguard other young people.

Where a serious crime is reported, VLC can report directly to the local Police station. However, in most circumstances, VLC will consult with the MASH in the first instance in order to ensure that both the Police and Children's Social Care are informed.

Where a report has been made to the Police, VLC should consult the Police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.

In some cases, it may become clear very quickly, that the Police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that VLC continues to engage with specialist support for the victim as required.

VLC will also be informed by the Police or Children's Social Care about referrals made directly to those agencies from other sources (e.g. family members, family friends, parents of other children) in relation to alleged sexual offences or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by pupils inside and/or outside school.

In all such circumstances, VLC may be required to attend a strategy meeting under WS inter-agency child protection procedures in order to facilitate risk management and planning with other agencies.

VLC is committed to participating in plans both to provide pupils who are at risk from other children and those pupils who may present a risk to other children with appropriate services to address any concerns and, wherever possible, to facilitate ongoing access to education in school for all children concerned, subject to appropriate risk assessments and risk management plans.

Subsequent considerations

The needs and wishes of the victim should continue to be paramount (along with protecting the child) as the case progresses. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that VLC is a safe space for them.

Similarly, the alleged perpetrator/s has an ongoing right to an education and should be able to continue in their normal routine subject to the ongoing risk assessment and the needs of the victim.

Where a student is subject of bail conditions, VLC will work with Children's Social Care and the Police to manage any implications and safeguard all pupils/students concerned without jeopardising the Police investigation.

If a student is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, VLC will update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all students and consider any

suitable action in light of the behaviour policy. If the perpetrator remains at VLC along with the victim, VLC will meet with the student and her/his parents/carers to revisit and reiterate in writing expectations of the perpetrator in terms of future behaviour and complying with any restrictions and arrangements put in place to safeguard the victim and other students.

In the light of possible publicity, speculation and interest within the student and parent body, VLC will consider any other measures necessary to safeguard both the victim and perpetrator, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).

In respect of a not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with a criminal prosecution, VLC recognises that this will likely be traumatic for the victim and will continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

Support will be tailored on a case-by-case basis. Support can include emotional and practical support for victims from Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors in the specialist sexual violence sector; provision of a designated trusted adult in VLC of the student's choice to talk to about their needs. Every effort will be made to avoid isolating the victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, but it is recognised that there may be times when a victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. VLCs will provide a physical space for the victim to withdraw.

Where a criminal investigation into a rape or assault by penetration leads to a conviction or caution, VLC will consider any suitable sanctions in light of the behaviour policy, including consideration of permanent exclusion. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, the rape or assault will constitute a serious breach of discipline and lead to the view that allowing the perpetrator to remain in VLC would seriously harm the education or welfare of the victim (and potentially other pupils).

Where the perpetrator is going to remain at VLC, the principle would be to continue keeping the victim and perpetrator in separate classes and continue to consider the most appropriate way to manage potential contact on VLC's premises and transport. The nature of the conviction or caution and wishes of the victim will be especially important in determining how to proceed in such cases.

VLC will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand it needs to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions. Support (and sanctions) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. Advice will be taken, as appropriate, from Children's Social Care, specialist sexual violence services and the Police.

If a perpetrator (alleged or convicted) does move to another educational institution (for any reason), VLC will make the new educational institution aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The DSL will take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file.

Youth produced sexual imagery ('sexting')

VLC will act in accordance with advice endorsed by DfE '*Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people*' (UK Council for Child Internet Safety 2017) -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609874/6_2939_SP_NCA_Sexting_In_Schools_FINAL_Update_Jan17.pdf

All incidents of youth produced sexual imagery (YPSI) will be dealt with as safeguarding concerns. The primary concern at all times will be the welfare and protection of the young people involved.

Young people who share sexual imagery of themselves or their peers are breaking the law. However, as highlighted in national guidance, it is important to avoid criminalising young people unnecessarily. VLC will therefore work in partnership with external agencies with a view to responding proportionately to the circumstances of any incident.

All incidents of YPSI should be reported to the DSL as with all other safeguarding issues and concerns. Staff will not make their own judgements about whether an issue relating to YPSI is more or less serious enough to warrant a report to the DSL. What may seem like less serious concerns to individual members of staff may be more significant when considered in the light of other information known to the DSL, which the member of staff may not be aware of.

If staff become concerned about a YPSI issue in relation to a device in the possession of a student (e.g. mobile phone, tablet, digital camera), the member of staff will secure the device (i.e. it should be confiscated). This is consistent with DfE advice *Searching, Screening and Confiscation - Advice for Principals, school staff and governing bodies (DfE 2018)*, page 11 'After the search'.

Staff will not look at or print any indecent images. The confiscated device will be passed immediately to the DSL (see 'Viewing the imagery' below).

The DSL will discuss the concerns with appropriate staff and speak to young people involved as appropriate. Parents/carers will be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.

If, at any point in the process, there is concern that a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral will be made to Children's Social Care and/or the Police via the MASH immediately.

The Police will always be informed when there is reason to believe that indecent images involve sexual acts and any child in the imagery is under 13 years of age.

The DSL will make a judgement about whether a reported YPSI incident is experimental as in section 11 above or aggravated.

Aggravated incidents involve criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation, sending or possession of sexual images created by young people. These include possible adult involvement or criminal or abusive behaviour by young people such as sexual abuse, extortion, threats, malicious conduct arising from personal conflicts, or creation or sending or showing of images without the knowledge or against the will of a young person who is pictured.

Aggravated incidents of sexting will usually be referred to Warwickshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for advice about whether or not a response by the Police and/or Children's Social Care is required. This will facilitate consideration of whether:

- there are any offences that warrant a Police investigation
- child protection procedures need to be invoked
- parents/carers require support in order to safeguard their children
- a multi-agency sexual exploitation (MASE) meeting is required
- any of the perpetrators and/or victims require additional support. This may require the initiation of a CAF and the offer of early help services

Examples of aggravated incidents include:

- evidence of adult involvement in acquiring, creating or disseminating indecent images of young people (possibly by an adult pretending to be a young person known to the victim)
- evidence of coercing, intimidating, bullying, threatening and/or extortion of students by one or more other students to create and share indecent images of themselves
- pressure applied to a number of students (e.g. all female students in a class or year group) to create and share indecent images of themselves
- pressurising a student who does not have the capacity to consent (e.g. due to their age, level of understanding or special educational needs) or with additional vulnerability to create and share indecent images of themselves
- dissemination of indecent images of young people to a significant number of others with an intention to cause harm or distress (possibly as an act of so-called 'revenge porn', bullying or exploitation)
- what is known about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage or are violent
- sharing of indecent images places a young person is at immediate risk of harm, for example the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

The DSL will make a judgement about whether or not a situation in which indecent images have been shared with a small number of others in a known friendship group with no previous concerns constitutes an aggravated incident; or whether VLC is able to contain the situation in partnership with all parents of the students involved, arrange for the parents to ensure that all indecent images are deleted and that the young people involved learn from the incident in order to keep themselves safe in future.

In the latter instance, the DSL will usually consult with the Police and/or Children's Social Care through the MASH to check that no other relevant information is held by those agencies and to ensure an agreed response is documented before proceeding.

Viewing the imagery - adults should **not** view youth produced sexual imagery unless there is good and clear reason to do so. Wherever possible, the DSL's responses to incidents will be based on what they have been told about the content of the imagery.

Any decision to view imagery will be based on the DSL's professional judgement. Imagery will never be viewed if the act of viewing will cause significant distress or harm to a pupil.

If a decision is made to view imagery, the DSL will be satisfied that viewing:

- is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies (i.e. it is not possible to establish the facts from the young people involved)
- is necessary to report the image to a website, app or suitable reporting agency to have it taken down, or to support the young person or parent in making a report
- is unavoidable because a young person has presented an image directly to a staff member or the imagery has been found on a school device or network

If it is necessary to view the imagery then the DSL will:

- never copy, print or share the imagery; this is illegal
- discuss the decision with the Principal, Children's Social Care or the Education Safeguarding Manager
- ensure viewing is undertaken by the DSL or Deputy DSL with delegated authority from the Principal
- ensure viewing takes place with another member of staff present in the room, ideally the Principal, another DSL or a member of the senior leadership team. The other staff member does not need to view the images
- wherever possible ensure viewing takes place on VLC's premises, ideally in the Principal or DSL's office

- ensure wherever possible that images are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the young person in the imagery
- record the viewing of the imagery in the pupil's safeguarding record, including who was present, why the image was viewed and any subsequent actions; and ensure this is signed and dated and meets the wider standards set out by Ofsted for recording safeguarding incidents

Deletion of images - if VLC has decided that other agencies do not need to be involved, then consideration will be given to deleting imagery from devices and online services to limit any further sharing of the imagery.

32. Serious violence

All staff are made aware of indicators that children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime; and are trained to record and report any concern about children at risk of or involved in perpetrating serious violence as with any other safeguarding concern. Indicators may include increased absence, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts could also indicate that children have been approached by or are involved with individuals associated with criminal gangs.

33. Contextual safeguarding

Safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside VLC and/or can occur between children outside VLC. The DSL, deputy DSLs and all staff will consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. Contextual safeguarding means that assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors which are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Staff will listen to children and be vigilant about any signs or indicators that would suggest children may be at risk in the community and will share intelligence with the Police in order to prevent children suffering harm. VLC will provide as much information as possible when asked to do so as part of a police investigation and/or when making referrals to Children's Social Care, thus allowing any investigation or assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse.

34. Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. **Child criminal exploitation (CCE)** is a form of child abuse. Both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual and/or criminal activity

- (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants; and/or
- (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually and/or criminally exploited even if the sexual/criminal activity appears consensual. CSE and CCE do not always involve physical contact; they can also occur through the use of technology.

Victims of CSE and CCE can be boys or girls. Children and young people are often unwittingly drawn into sexual and/or criminal exploitation through the offer of friendship and care, gifts, drugs, alcohol and sometimes accommodation.

Sexual exploitation is a serious crime and can have a long-lasting adverse impact on a child's physical and emotional health. It may also be linked to other criminal activity including trafficking and illegal drugs. Drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns.

Criminal exploitation of children can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of

compliance and is often accompanied by violence or threats of violence. It can be perpetrated by individuals or groups; males or females; and young people or adults. It is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. As well as age, the power imbalance can also be due to other factors including gender, cognitive ability, physical strength, status and access to economic or other resources.

Child criminal exploitation may include activities such as:

- a child travelling outside the area in which she/he lives in order to transport, distribute or sell drugs for others by whom they are being exploited. This form of criminal activity and exploitation is referred to as **county lines** (for further information see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/741194/HOCountyLinesGuidanceSept2018.pdf);
- a child committing crimes on behalf of or at the behest of others because they, their friends or relatives have been threatened, deceived or manipulated;
- a child being forced to commit crime in order to settle actual or fabricated debts
- gang membership, which may lead to the child being exploited to do something illegal or dangerous in return for kudos/status in the gang;
- a child being encouraged or manipulated to commit crime via social media;
- a child receiving food, money, kudos or status in return for storing a weapon or drugs for others.

All staff are trained to be vigilant about and report indicators of CSE and CCE including:

- acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones, etc. without plausible explanation;
- gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- children being exposed to or perpetrating serious levels of violence; and/or being manipulated or forced into excessive violence towards others by somebody who is exploiting them (for further information see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418131/Preventing_youth_violence_and_gang_involvement_v3_March2015.pdf);
- exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- evidence of/suspicious of physical or sexual assault;
- relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;
- multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- frequenting areas known for sex work;
- concerning use of internet or other social media;
- increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Although the following vulnerabilities increase the risk of child sexual and/or criminal exploitation, not all children with these indicators will be exploited and child sexual and criminal exploitation can occur without any of these issues:

- having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
- lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
- recent bereavement or loss;
- social isolation or social difficulties;
- absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
- economic vulnerability;
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status;

- connections with other children and young people who are being sexually and/or criminally exploited;
- family members or other connections involved in adult sex work and/or other criminal activity;
- having a physical or learning disability; and
- being looked after (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories).

VLC teaches children about consent and the risks of sexual and criminal exploitation in the PSHE and SRE curriculum. A common feature of sexual and criminal exploitation is that the child often does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see her/himself as a victim. The child may initially resent what she/he perceives as interference by staff but staff must act on their concerns, as they would for any other type of abuse.

All staff are trained to report all concerns about CSE and CCE to the DSL immediately. The DSL will consider the need to make a referral to Children's Social Care via the MASH (see sections 27 and 28 above) as with any other child protection concern and with particular reference to WS procedures. Parents will be consulted and notified as above.

Following a referral to Children's Social Care, a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting may be convened under WS inter-agency safeguarding procedures. VLC will attend and share information at MACE meetings as required. Parents and young people will be invited to attend MACE meetings by Children's Social Care as appropriate.

35. So-called 'honour based' violence

So-called 'honour-based' violence (HBV) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of a family and/or community. Such crimes include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take.

Staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBV or already having suffered HBV.

All forms of so called HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and staff will record and report any concerns about a child who might be at risk of HBV to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as with any other safeguarding concern. The DSL will consider the need to make a referral to the Police, and/or Children's Social Care as with any other child protection concern; and may also contact the Forced Marriage Unit for advice as necessary.

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse. It is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons or other injury to the female genital organs. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways. The practice, which is most commonly carried out without anaesthetic, can cause intense pain and distress and long-term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth.

FGM is carried out on girls of any age, from young babies to older teenagers and adult women, so school staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators. Many such procedures are carried out abroad and staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns expressed by female pupils about going on a long holiday during the summer vacation period.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. Any person found guilty of an offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 is liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment or a fine, or

both. (See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-guidelines> for further information).

If staff have a concern that a girl may be at risk of FGM, they will record their concern and inform the DSL as they would any other safeguarding concern.

Teachers are subject to a statutory duty defined by Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) to report to the Police personally where they discover (e.g. by means of a disclosure) that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl who is aged under 18. This is known as mandatory reporting.

Teachers in that situation will record their concerns and inform the DSL, who will support the teacher in making a direct report to the Police.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which a female (and sometimes a male) does not consent to the marriage but is coerced into it. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. It may also involve physical or sexual violence and abuse.

A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage. In an arranged marriage, which is common in several cultures, the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Children may be married at a very young age, and well below the age of consent in England. School staff should be particularly alert to suspicions or concerns raised by a pupil about being taken abroad and not being allowed to return to England.

Since June 2014 forcing someone to marry has become a criminal offence in England and Wales under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. (See <https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage> for further information).

36. Protecting Children from Radicalisation and Extremism

All schools and colleges are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This duty is known as the **Prevent duty**.

Some children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of VLC's wider safeguarding duties and is similar in nature to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse. As such, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for VLC's strategy for protecting children from those risks.

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces. Even very young children have been exposed, in rare circumstances, to extremism at home and elsewhere including online.

As children get older, they look for adventure and excitement and they may start to ask questions about their identity and belonging. During that stage of their development they are vulnerable to extremist groups that may claim to offer answers, identity and a social network apparently providing a sense of belonging. Many of those extremist groups make sophisticated use of the internet and social media to target young people and spread their ideology, making young people more vulnerable to being influenced by extremist ideas.

Young people who feel isolated or disaffected in some way are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation as they are other forms of abuse and exploitation.

VLC has defined responsibilities to ensure that children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in school.

During the process of radicalisation it is possible to intervene to prevent vulnerable people being radicalised. VLC is committed to preventing pupils from being radicalised and drawn into any form of extremism or terrorism. VLC promotes the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs by providing pupils with opportunities through the curriculum to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture and learn how to discuss and debate points of view; and by ensuring that all pupils are valued and listened to within school.

Staff receive training that provides them with both the information they need to understand the risks affecting children and young people in this area; and a specific understanding of how to identify individual children who may be at risk of radicalisation and how to support them. Staff are trained to report all concerns about possible radicalisation and extremism to the DSL immediately as they would any other safeguarding concern, identifying early indicators of possible radicalisation including changes in behaviour and attitudes to learning; and expressions of interest in extremist ideas along with a tolerance towards potential violence to certain members of society.

VLC recognises the importance of providing a safe space for children to discuss controversial issues; and building their resilience and the critical thinking skills they need in order to challenge extremist perspectives. However, the DSL (or deputy) will make appropriate referrals to the Police PREVENT team and Channel programme in respect of any pupil whose behaviour or comments suggest that they are vulnerable to being radicalised and drawn into extremism and terrorism in order to ensure that children receive appropriate support.

Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It provides a mechanism for schools to make referrals if they are concerned that an individual might be vulnerable to radicalisation. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

As a Channel partner, VLC may be asked to attend a Channel panel to discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support.

VLC will discuss any concerns about possible radicalisation identified in school with a child's parents/carers as with any other safeguarding or child protection issue unless there is reason to believe that doing so would place the child at risk; and will also support parents/carers who raise concerns about their children being vulnerable to radicalisation. Subject to consultation with the Police PREVENT team and in the interests of making proportionate responses, VLC may offer support to children and their families through the provision of early help as appropriate.

VLC expects all staff, volunteers, governors, visiting practitioners, contractors and individuals or agencies that hire school premises to behave in accordance with VLC's Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct), will challenge the expression and/or promotion of extremist views and ideas by any adult on school premises or at school events and, when necessary, will make appropriate referrals in respect of any such adult.

Parents and staff may find the website www.educateagainsthate.com informative and useful. The website is designed to equip school and college leaders, teachers and parents with the information, tools and resources they need to recognise and address extremism and

radicalisation in young people and how best to support them. The website provides information on training resources for teachers, staff and school and college leaders.

As part of VLC's overall safeguarding arrangements and ongoing action plan for improvement, the DSL will take into account identified local issues; intelligence from pupils, parents, staff and partner agencies; and new information from national issues and learning to review practice and procedures in order to keep pupils safe.

37. Children who are looked after or were previously looked after

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. Children who were previously looked after potentially remain vulnerable. VLC ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep children who are looked after and children who were previously looked after safe and ensures that appropriate staff have information about a child's looked after status and care arrangements, including the level of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child. The designated teacher for children who are looked after and previously looked after and the DSL hold details of the social workers for all children who are looked after or were previously looked after; and the name and contact details of the head of the Local Authority's Virtual School for children who are looked after.

Private fostering arrangements

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative cares for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16, or under 18 if the child is disabled. Children looked after by the local authority or who are placed in a residential school, children's home or hospital are not considered to be privately fostered.

Private fostering occurs in all cultures, including British culture and children may be privately fostered at any age.

Most privately fostered children remain safe and well but safeguarding concerns have been raised in some cases so it is important that schools are alert to possible safeguarding issues, including the possibility that a child has been trafficked into the country

By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify Children's Social Care as soon as possible. When VLC becomes aware of a private fostering arrangement for a pupil that has not been notified to Children's Social Care, VLC will encourage parents and private foster carers to notify Children's Social Care and will share information with Children's Social Care as appropriate.

38. Related safeguarding portfolio policies

- Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct)
- Physical intervention and the use of reasonable force
- Behaviour
- Personal and intimate care
- Complaints procedure
- Tackling bullying including prejudice-based bullying
- Physical contact
- Whistleblowing
- SEN
- Missing children
- Safer recruitment
- Managing allegations
- Grievance and disciplinary

39. Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have

been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial; and
- emotional abuse.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life.

All concerns about children being affected by domestic abuse will be reported to the DSL as with any other safeguarding concern. The DSL will respond to the report by consulting Children's Social Care in order to establish whether a referral is required or the situation should be managed by discussion with parents/carers and possibly the offer of early help.

40. Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The DSL (and any deputies) refer any concerns to the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into Children's Social Care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

In most cases staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised that in some cases 16 and 17 year olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the DSL (or a deputy) will ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances.

41. Special Circumstances

Children and the court system

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. VLC will access guidance highlighted in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019, which explain each step of the process and support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children. The Ministry of Justice has launched an online child arrangements information tool with clear and concise information on the dispute resolution service. This may be useful for some parents and carers.

Children with family members in prison

Approximately 200,000 children have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. VLC will seek to support pupils in this position through pastoral care, early help and discussions with parents/carers and other family members as appropriate.