

## **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Statement**

Villiers Park Educational Trust carries out activities which bring our employees and people working on behalf of our organisation into regular contact with children and young people. Villiers Park Educational Trust believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The Trustees have a legal duty to act prudently and in the best interests of these children and young people and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect them and keep them safe. It also provides employees, tutors, workers and volunteers whose duties bring them into contact with children and young people with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection. The policy refers to all such people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age. Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action (for employees), and termination of the contract for workers or volunteers.

### **Definitions**

A "child" is anyone under the age of 18.

For the purposes of this policy and procedures "young people" includes children and those aged 18 up to their 19th birthday who are still in full-time education at school or in a sixth form college (but not those at university).

"Worker" is any freelance contractor, person seconded for a fixed term from another organisation, tutor, cleaning contractor's staff or temporary agency staff who is paid to undertake work on behalf of the Trust which brings them into contact with children or young people.

### **Legislation**

There is a considerable body of legislation designed to ensure that children are protected and it is important to understand that everyone is responsible for the safety of children. The main acts, policies and guidance include:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023 (Statutory Guidance) (Updated)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People 2018 (Statutory Guidance)
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

- Education Act 2002
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Education Act 2011
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998

**We recognise that:**

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children's Act 1989
- All children regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

**We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for children and young people and a team of Deputies for safeguarding
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff, workers and volunteers
- Developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and procedures
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures
- Recruiting staff safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing safeguarding and good practice with children, their families, staff and volunteers via our website, posters and one-to-one discussions
- Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with schools and other relevant agencies, and involving children, young people, families and carers appropriately
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- Creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that our policy and procedure will help us to deal effectively with any bullying that does arise

- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance

### **Communicating this policy and concerns**

All employees, tutors, workers and volunteers at Villiers Park Educational Trust will be made aware of this policy, and a copy will be included in the Staff Handbook on Peoplehr and Volunteer and Tutor Handbooks and given to partner organisations who work with young people on our behalf and contractors who provide on-site workers.

Furthermore, a copy of this policy will be given to all relevant bodies with whom we work if requested, and will be made available via our website to parents and carers of children/young persons with whom we plan to work.

Any concerns about this policy or people involved should be addressed to the Chief Executive.

### **Confidentiality**

All information regarding young people is highly confidential and should only be shared with appropriate people on a need to know basis. There are specific guidelines for Learning Mentors and e-mentors. Information must be stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (May 2018) and the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

### **Breach of this policy**

Failure to follow the guidelines in this policy is considered a serious offence and will be investigated thoroughly and dealt with through our disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal.

### **Implementation, monitoring and review of this policy**

This revised policy will take effect from 1 September 2023. The Trustees have overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation (at least annually) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices. The Designated Safeguarding Officer, or if unavailable their deputy, will monitor the effective implementation of this policy by annually reviewing a sample of risk assessments and will audit child protection data practices for all locations in which we work with young people.

## Contact Details for Safeguarding Team

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Name: Deborah Richardson

Mobile: 07593 021212

Email: [dr@villierspark.org.uk](mailto:dr@villierspark.org.uk)

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Name: Gaby Sumner

Email: [gaby.sumner@villierspark.org.uk](mailto:gaby.sumner@villierspark.org.uk)

Deputy Safeguarding Lead - Hastings and Bexhill and Tyneside Name: Alex Grant

Email: [ag@villierspark.org.uk](mailto:ag@villierspark.org.uk)

Deputy Safeguarding Lead - Swindon

Name: Julie Kiddier

Email: [Julie.kiddier@villierspark.org.uk](mailto:Julie.kiddier@villierspark.org.uk)

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Name: Jenny Parr

Email: [Jenny.parr@villierspark.org.uk](mailto:Jenny.parr@villierspark.org.uk)

Trustee Lead for Safeguarding

Name: Adrian Ball

Email: [adrian.ball@demat.org.uk](mailto:adrian.ball@demat.org.uk)

Safeguarding Meetings

Safeguarding Team - every three weeks

DSL, CEO and Safeguarding Trustee – once a term

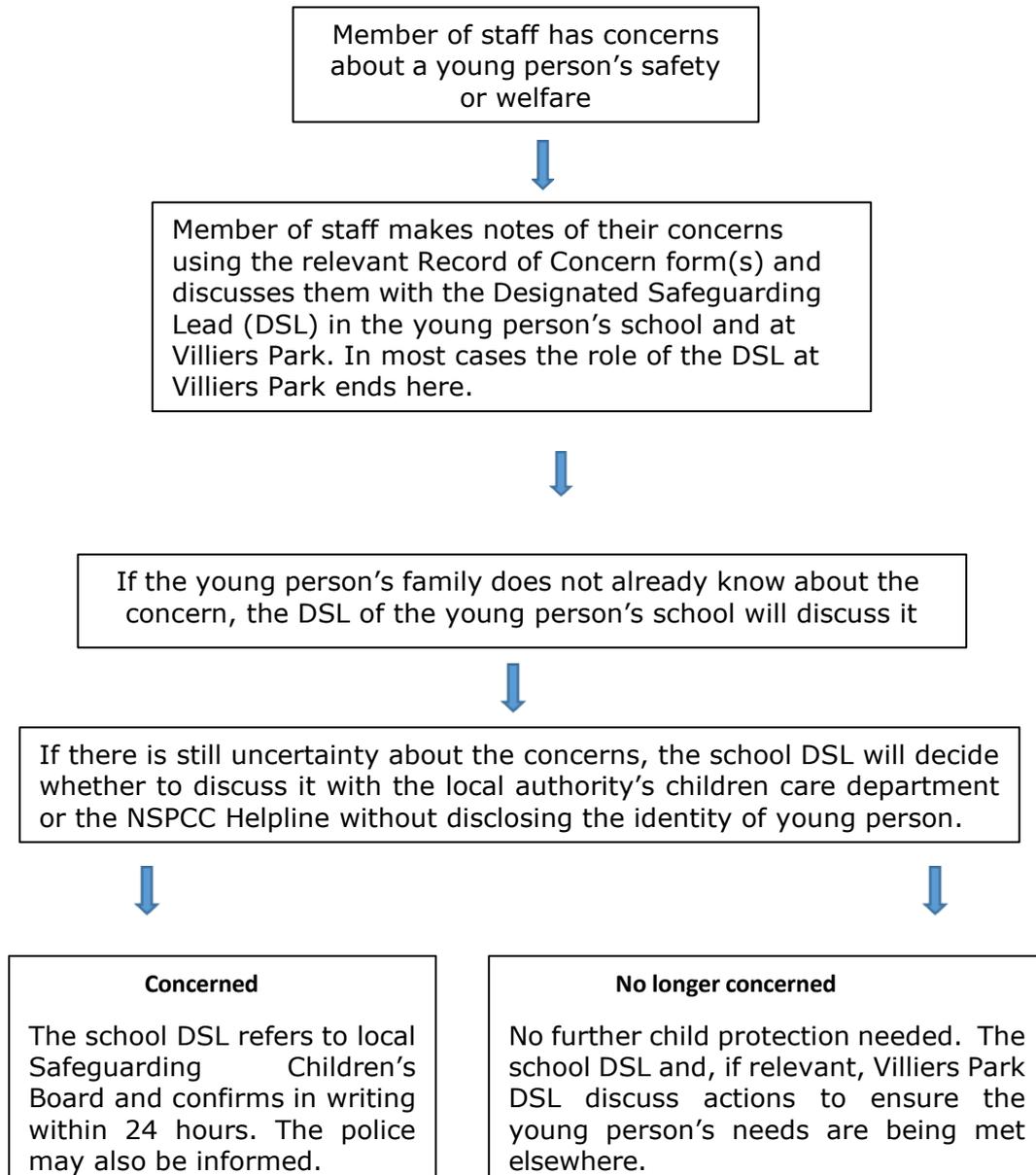
The Safeguarding Team review the Safeguarding Policy every year with reference to any change or updates as specified in the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education. The revised policy is then taken to the September Trustees Board meeting for approval before being shared with staff, schools, partners.

## **Reporting Procedure**

### **Staff**

1. All Staff : All Safeguarding concerns should be recorded on the appropriate form and emailed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at Villiers Park as soon as practically possible but no more than one working day after the concern is raised
2. Regional Hub staff will inform the DSL in the young person's school and their Assistant Director of the concern (s) as soon as possible but no more than one working day after the concern is raised. The DSL Team in a school are contactable at all times during the school day
3. The CEO and Trustee Lead for Safeguarding are available to provide advice and support for DSL if required.
4. If the DSL is unavailable the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) in the relevant region should take control and follow the procedure in point 3 above.

## Flow Chart



## Other Relevant Organisations

### Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - Local Safeguarding Partners consisting of The Local Authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Chief of Police of the area police force

### The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command, CEOP

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

## **Recruitment, Induction and Training**

Applications for roles with Villiers Park must always be completed on the organisation's application form. A CV should only be accepted alongside a full application form and as it is not sufficient on its own to support safer recruitment. Online searches will be carried out on short-listed candidates.

Those who are involved in situations where they have a sustained or prolonged unsupervised access to children are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation. This means that prospective employees, workers and volunteers must declare all criminal convictions, however long ago; and these will be taken into account when deciding on their suitability for working with children. Shortlisted candidates for any role will be advised that online searches will be undertaken. Villiers Park will continue being vigilant with all employees beyond the recruitment process.

A member of staff will not be permitted to undertake a role which involves regular contact with children or young people without a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. All staff also have to undertake the NSPCC online course Child Protection in Schools and an E-learning Prevent Duty Training provided by the Home Office as an introduction to the Prevent duty guidance to safeguard vulnerable young people from being radicalised to support terrorism or becoming a terrorist themselves. As part of their induction all staff, workers and volunteers will be instructed on their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities and procedures to be followed if anyone has concerns about a young person's safety or welfare as outlined in this document. Regular updating and training will be provided during the year as and when relevant.

Senior members of staff who interview on a regular basis are required to undertake the NSPCC online Safer Recruitment in Education course.

## **Training for governors and trustees**

Trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training twice during the academic year as well as receiving termly reports from the Safeguarding Team. Training provides them with the knowledge to ensure that Villiers Park's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective

## **Agency and Third Party Staff**

Villiers Park insists on written notification from any agency, or third party organisation, that they have carried out the same checks on any individual who will be working in their organisation (or who will be providing education on Villiers Park behalf, including through online delivery), including an enhanced DBS check, obtained either by the employment business or another business

## **Planning and Supervision of Activities**

All activities or assignments involving young people must be planned in advance to ensure they take into account the age range and ability of the participants and a risk assessment produced. Employees, tutors, volunteers or workers teaching, supervising and working with young people must be competent and trained to do so. Supervision must take account of the age, gender, nature of the activity and any special needs of the individuals.

### **Lone Working**

All employees, tutors, volunteers or workers should avoid working alone with a young person wherever possible. You should plan your work so that at least two adults are present at any time, where possible including a Villiers Park Educational Trust employee.

If this is not possible, for example in one-to-one coaching, ideally you should move to a workstation where you and the young person can both be seen by other colleagues or other adults e.g. through the glass panel of an office door or through an open door. If this is not possible ideally the meeting should be rescheduled or attended by a second adult.

If it is an online coaching session or an online facilitated activity, there should always be at least two adults with an Enhanced DBS check present one of which must be a Villiers Park member of staff. The coaching session or activity should not take place until this is the case. If breakout rooms are to be used the same conditions apply for every break out room.

### **External Providers and Off-site Activities**

If other organisations provide services or activities on our site we will check that they have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures. As part of our risk assessment, when the young people in our care attend off-site activities but excluding public events such as a theatre visit, we will check that effective child protection arrangements are in place. An external provider without a DBS check must never be left alone with our young people.

### **Safety**

The safety of the people we work with is paramount and we are therefore committed to providing a safe environment within which to work. Those working with young people should ensure all appropriate risk assessments and security checks have been carried out prior to any assignment. This should include DBS checks, first aid cover and accident reporting.

If transporting young people, the transport should be checked to ensure that the drivers have a DBS certificate and that the coach or taxi is roadworthy and adequate for the purpose. Only coach companies whose coaches have seatbelts

should be used. Any equipment used must be safe and only used for the purpose for which it is intended. Users should be adequately trained.

Employees should never transport a young person(s) in their private vehicle except in extreme circumstances and only on the authority of their line manager. In such circumstances they must be accompanied by another responsible adult who could either be an employee of Villiers Park or a member of staff from the young person's school and have appropriate up-to-date insurance with business cover.

Before a young person attends an activity, information is received by Villiers Park about their dietary requirements, any disabilities, medical conditions or other issues. Members of the Programmes Team work with the other staff and young people attending the activity or event to ensure that individuals are kept safe and are not discriminated against.

### **Photography and images**

Only designated employees of Villiers Park Educational Trust should take photographs and videos of the young people in our care. Photographs and videos should only be taken on mobile telephone, camera or computer owned and provided by Villiers Park Educational Trust. To protect these young people we will:

- seek parental consent and/or, if over 16 years, the consent of the young people for photographs and videos to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications or with certain third parties and organisations)
- never allow organisations working with us to take photographs for their own use without the written consent of parents or students if over 16 years old.
- encourage young people to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

### **Physical contact**

On no account must any employee, tutor, worker or volunteer have any physical contact with a young person unless it is to prevent accident or injury to themselves or anyone else, (e.g. to prevent a fall), or in the case of medical assistance being needed (e.g. to administer first aid) in which case the prior consent of the affected person should be requested where possible.

If a young person is hurt or distressed, you should do your best to comfort or reassure the affected person without compromising his/her dignity or doing anything to discredit your own behaviour.

## Communication

Where appropriate, consent from parents or those with parental or caring responsibility must be obtained. Communication with young people is vital in establishing relationships built on trust. Those working with young people should listen to what they are saying, and respond appropriately. Young people are entitled to the same respect as any employees, workers and volunteers. It should also be made clear to them what standards of behaviour and mutual respect are expected from them.

Those working with young people must behave appropriately, ensure that language is moderated in their presence and must refrain from adult jokes or comments which are clearly unsuitable.

Contact must not be made with any of the young people with whom we are working for any reason unrelated to the particular project. In particular, staff are required to do everything to maintain our reputation for integrity and responsibility in dealing with young people, and must not enter into any social or other non-work related arrangements with them. All communication with young people should be done via VP mail, using the student's school email address. If the young person is not a Future Leader then programmes@villierspark.org.uk should be copied into any email communication. This email address is monitored by the Director of Curriculum and the Assistant Directors who are either a DSL or Deputy DSL. If sending out a group email the students email addresses should be inserted in the Bcc box. Employees must never share their personal email address with students.

## Online Safety

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

- **content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.
- **contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
- **conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, sharing other explicit images and online bullying,
- **commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing financial scams.

## **Filtering and Monitoring of School/College IT Systems**

We all have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and provide them with a safe environment in which to learn, and leadership teams in schools and colleges should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children's and young people's exposure to the above risks from the school's or college's IT system. As part of this process, a school or college should have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and regularly review their effectiveness.

Every school and college will have a different system in place depending on the number and age range of their young people, those who are potentially at greater risk of harm and how often they access the IT system. When accessing a school or college's IT system with their Future Leaders Villiers Park employees should be aware of the school or college's filtering and monitoring system and should never be accessing inappropriate content. If they are aware that inappropriate content is being or has been accessed by a student or a third party in a school, they should escalate this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.

## **Use of Mobile Telephones**

Employees should never contact a young person by mobile telephone unless in a crisis or emergency and only as a final resort i.e. a young person does not arrive back to a meeting point during a visit. Future Leaders should only be contacted through VP Mail or via their school/college. Mobile telephones should not be used to send reminders about appointments.

If an employee has to contact a young person on their mobile telephone, they should first ask the permission of their line manager and have a witness whilst making the call. A follow up message to the relevant young person(s) should be sent by VP Mail if it is a Future Leader and by email if it is a young person on an IEP course to confirm that the telephone conversation took place and why. Failure to follow this procedure will lead to disciplinary action.

## **Use of Social Media**

For the purposes of this policy, social media refers to web based social networks, internet forums and blogs, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat. Given the rapid expansion of social media, it is impossible to list all possible types of media as they are constantly evolving and multiplying.

Staff, volunteers and contracted workers should assume that all online activity is covered by this policy and should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use, both at work and to an extent in their personal situation.

While acknowledging the benefits of social media and the internet it is also important to recognise that risk to the safety and well-being of users is ever-

changing and that the misuse/abuse of these facilities can range from inappropriate to criminal.

When using social media whether at work or outside of work staff should:

- Never share work log-in details or passwords
- Never share personal telephone numbers, email addresses, or other personal data with young people
- Never disclose any information confidential to Villiers Park to third parties
- Never publish material that is illegal
- Set privacy settings to private, friends only etc. to restrict access to certain groups of people on their social media sites and pages.

They should maintain appropriate boundaries and manage personal information effectively so that it cannot be misused by third parties e.g. for 'cyber-bullying' or identity theft.

All staff are personally responsible for what they communicate on social media. Often materials published will be accessible by the public and will remain accessible for a long time.

Staff are prohibited from and should not make 'friends' with the young people we work because this could potentially be construed as 'grooming', nor should they accept invitations to become a 'friend' of any young person.

Staff should keep any communications with young people transparent and professional and should only use their work laptop, mobile phone or VP Mail for communications.

## **Behaviour and Abuse**

We should all aim to promote an environment of trust and understanding. Those working with young people should not tolerate unsociable behaviour but should try to ensure good working relationships.

### **What is abuse?**

All staff, tutors, volunteers and workers have a strict duty never to subject any young person to any form of harm or abuse. This also applies to student on student issues/ incidents.

There are four types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. This means that it is unacceptable for example to treat a young person in the following ways:

- to slap, shake, squeeze, throw, burn, scald, bite or cut them
- to hold them in such a way that it causes pain,

- to physically restrain them except to protect them from harming themselves or others
- to cause distress by shouting or calling them derogatory names
- to take part in horseplay or rough games
- to allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind
- to do things of a personal nature for the person that they can do for themselves –i.e. includes changing clothing, or going to the toilet with them unless with another adult
- to allow or engage in sexually suggestive behaviour with a young person or within their sight or hearing, or make suggestive remarks to them
- to give or show anything which could be construed as pornographic
- to seek or agree to meet them anywhere beyond the normal workplace without the full prior knowledge and agreement of the parent, guardian or carer.

### **Children potentially at greater risk of harm**

Whilst all children should be protected, it is important to recognise that some groups of children, are potentially at greater risk of harm than others. The list below, is not exhaustive, but highlights some of those groups.

- **Children who need a social worker** (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans) - Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs such as to abuse and/or neglect and/or complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.
- **Children absent from education** - This can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future
- **Elective Home Education (EHE)** - Many home educated children have an overwhelmingly positive learning experience.. However, this is not the case for all, and home education can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs
- **Children requiring mental health support** - Schools and colleges have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their pupils. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- **Looked after children** - The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect

- **Care leavers** - Local authorities have on-going responsibilities to the children who cease to be looked after and become care leavers. That includes keeping in touch with them, preparing an assessment of their needs and appointing a Personal Advisor who develops a pathway plan with the young person. This plan describes how the local authority will support the care leaver to participate in education or training
- **Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT)** - The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.

### **Safeguarding issues**

All staff should have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, deliberately missing education, serious violence (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation and consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos can be signs that children are at risk. Below are some safeguarding issues all staff should be aware of.

### **Child-on-child abuse (formerly peer-on-peer abuse)**

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. If a member of staff is aware that a child or children may be at risk from child-on-child abuse, they must follow the usual procedure for reporting a cause for concern immediately and speak to the DSL. This is important in order to prevent it happening or continuing.

It is essential to understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children and young people.

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

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)

- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- consensual image sharing, especially between older children of the same age, may require a different response. It might not be abusive – but children still need to know it is illegal and abusive.
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual
- harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone
- to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos(also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

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

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

### **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

Some specific forms of CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. Both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration. It may include noncontact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Whilst all staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM), there is a specific legal duty on teachers and educators. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police.

### **Forced Marriages**

Forcing a young person into a marriage before their eighteenth birthday is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). This applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages. If a Villiers Park becomes aware of such a situation they should raise the concern immediately with the school. DSL.

## **Serious violence**

All staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school or college, 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 or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation

## **Mental Health and Well-Being of Young People**

The mental health and well-being of young people is an important aspect of safeguarding. Young people can experience behavioural or emotional problems growing up which can affect their mental health. Often these are resolved over time but sometimes the young people will need professional support and the situation may be a safeguarding concern.

Knowing how to talk to young people about their mental health, or recognising the signs that they might be struggling, can be really hard. Signs of depression or anxiety in young people can sometimes look like normal behaviour, particularly in teenagers who can keep their feelings to themselves.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following their child protection policy, and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

It's also natural for young people to feel stressed or anxious about things like exams or moving to a new school. But while these experiences can be very difficult, they're different from longer term depression or anxiety, which affect how they feel every day. Signs of anxiety can include:

- Persistent low mood or lack of motivation
- Not enjoying what they used to like doing
- Becoming withdrawn and spending less time with their friends and family
- Experiencing low self-esteem or feeling like they are 'worthless'
- Feeling tearful or upset regularly
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits

If a young person shows any of the above signs or confides in you about their feelings you

- must not promise confidentiality
- must request further support if you feel uncomfortable and feel concerned about their behaviour and attitude. This could be a member of the school staff or Villiers Park or even the emergency services.

- Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.
- must always follow up the meeting by talking to a member of staff in the school, preferably the DSL
- must record your concern and action(s) on a record of concern for Villiers Park which should be sent to the DSL who may then forward it on to the DSL in the relevant school/college
- must follow up with a check in with the student two working days later

## **Bullying and Cyber Bullying**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts the victims either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms and is often motivated by prejudice against a particular group, for example, on grounds of race, religion, background, physical disability or medical conditions.

All forms of bullying are unacceptable. It is the responsibility of the Trustees of Villiers Park Educational Trust to take measures to prevent and tackle bullying amongst children and young people on their premises and at external events.

Cyberbullying is an increasingly common form of bullying behaviour which happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Cyberbullying includes:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms, online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up sites or groups about a child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble for them
- sending explicit messages
- pressurising young people into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations

## **Safeguarding Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

The term special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) refer to children and young people who have disabilities or additional needs. Children and young people with disabilities are 3.7 times more likely than other children to be abused or neglected. Adults who work with children and young people with SEND should be aware of the additional needs children may have that could mean they are more vulnerable to abuse and/or less able to speak out if something isn't right. Some children may be vulnerable because they:

- have additional communication needs
- do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
- need intimate care or are isolated from others
- are dependent on adults for care.

Parenting children with disabilities comes with additional stresses or challenges, which can heighten the potential for abuse or neglect. Professionals can sometimes miss signs of abuse due to the complexity of young people's needs, an acceptance of things being how they are, or allowing their recognition of the challenges facing parents to cloud their judgement leading to abuse or neglect being under-reported.

It is therefore important that we maintain an open mind about what we are seeing, and as maintain a professional curiosity. For example:

- not accepting that an injury is a result of the needs of the child, but instead consider what other causes there may be and what the evidence suggests.
- considering a behaviour such as self-harm as possibly being indicative of abuse.
- recognising the potential for 'fabricated or induced illness'
- Spotting the Signs
- Most research suggests that disabled boys are at greater risk of abuse than disabled girls when compared to non-disabled children (NSPCC 2014)
- Disabled children and young people are more likely to be abused by someone in their family or someone they know
- Disability is a common feature where children and young people have experienced abuse
- Children and Young People with disabilities are at greatest risk of abuse than those with behaviour/conduct disorders.

## **Human Rights**

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It compels public organisations to respect and protect an individual's human rights when they make individual decisions about them. Under the HRA, it is unlawful for schools and colleges to act in a way that is incompatible with the Convention. The specific Convention rights applying to schools and colleges are:

- Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (an absolute
- right)
- Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life (a qualified right) includes a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity

- Article 14: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be
- protected and applied without discrimination
- Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education.

Being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of these rights, depending on the nature of the conduct and the circumstances. Further information (including on absolute and qualified rights) can be found at Human Rights Equality and Human Rights Commission

## **Equality**

According to the Equality Act, schools and colleges must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics). Whilst all of the above protections are important in the context of safeguarding, this guidance and the legal duties placed on schools and colleges, in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, governing bodies and proprietors should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils and students with regard to particular protected characteristics

- including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race. Provisions within the Equality Act allow schools and colleges to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with a particular protected characteristic in order to meet their specific need. This includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people, including those with long term conditions. A school or college, could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment.

## **Gifts and inducements**

On no account should anyone from Villiers Park Educational Trust give a child/young person a gift or buy refreshments for example which could be in any way considered as a bribe or inducement to enter into a relationship with the Villiers Park Educational Trust person or give rise to any false allegations of improper conduct against the individual.

## **Procedure for Reporting a Concern about a Young Person**

Ways in which a concern might be brought to your attention

- A young person might make a direct disclosure about themselves
- A young person might make a direct disclosure about another child

- A young person might offer information that is worrying but not a direct disclosure
- You might be concerned about a young person's appearance or behaviour
- You might be concerned about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- An adult might make a disclosure about abuse that a young person is suffering or is at risk of suffering
- An adult may offer information about a young person that is worrying but not a direct disclosure

If a young person discloses personal information to you or you have information or concerns about abusive behaviour towards a young person it is your responsibility to report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) of Villiers Park Educational Trust who will then inform the DSL in the school.

- Remain, calm, approachable and receptive
- Listen carefully without interrupting. Do not try to investigate or quiz them but make sure that they are clear about what they are saying
- Be understanding and reassure them that they have done the right thing
- Tell them that you now have to do what you can to support them and keep them (or the young person who is subject to abuse) safe
- Let the young person know what you are going to do next and who else needs to be informed – you cannot promise confidentiality
- Helping a young person in immediate danger
- If the young person is with you, remain with them and call the police
- If the young person is elsewhere contact the police and explain the situation
- If the young person needs medical attention, call an ambulance and while waiting for it to arrive get help from a first aider if you are in a school/college or Villiers Park
- You also need to contact your line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer

A decision will be made about when and who should inform the young person's family and the local authority social services department and the next course of action by the relevant DSO. The welfare of the young person is of the highest priority when making decisions.

Once any immediate danger or medical emergency has been dealt with follow the steps set out in the flowchart at the beginning of this document. You have a right to enquire that the incident has been followed up with the relevant agencies resulting in action to protect the young person.

## **Professional Disagreement**

If the Safeguarding Team at Villiers Park is not satisfied with a response from a school/college and they are convinced the incident or issue is a safeguarding concern it should be escalated to the local authority.

## **Internal Disagreement**

If there is disagreement amongst staff over how a concern is being dealt with and you are confident in your opinion and will to be accountable for your actions, then the situation must be brought to the attention of the CEO.

## **Supporting Employees**

If an employee is affected by a disclosure or abusive behaviour they have witnessed, they should discuss this with the DSL and/or their Line Manager who will offer advice and guidance on how to receive appropriate support.

## **Completing a Report of Record of Concern**

- If the incident takes place at premises belonging to or hired by Villiers Park then you must write careful notes of the facts on what you witnessed, heard or were told on the Record of Concern and email it, password protected to the DSL only within 24 hours. You must also notify the DSL by telephone call or text immediately that you have a concern.
- The DSL will be responsible for contacting the Designated Safeguarding Lead in the child's school and if necessary the local Safeguarding Children's Board and/or the police.
- If the concern or disclosure takes place in the young person's school then it should be reported to the DSL in the school immediately or within one working day and you will be expected to complete a detailed report for the school. A Record of Concern should also be completed for Villiers Park records and other relevant partners.

It is NOT our responsibility to investigate our suspicions – this requires expertise we are not expected to have, our role is to report only.

## **Investigation Process for Allegations against Villiers Park Employees and Volunteers**

- Once the details of any allegations have been completed and passed on to the relevant DSLs within one working day, they must be reported immediately to the Chief Executive of Villiers Park Educational Trust.
- If the concern or allegations do not involve an employee of Villiers Park Educational Trust or someone working on their behalf, it is up to the

school, local children's authority or police to investigate the allegations further.

- If the concerns or allegations involve an employee or someone working on behalf of Villiers Park Educational Trust, then an internal investigation will be carried out by the Chief Executive who may then decide to refer it to the Police. The internal investigation must take place immediately or within one working day of the reporting of the concern or allegations.
- The person subject to the allegations will be informed as soon as possible, given an explanation of the process and any support and advice available to them.
- The Chief Executive will inform the local Safeguarding Children's Board within one working day of all allegations against an adult that are brought to the attention of the Trust or that are made directly to the police.
- Once an internal investigation has taken place and a course of action decided upon, the person in question will be informed of the outcome. If it is a member of staff or a volunteer it may result in their immediate dismissal. Contractors/ external workers may have their contract terminated.
- In the instance that an employee or volunteer is dismissed because they pose a risk of harm to children/ young people a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service who will consider whether to add the individual to the barred list.

## **Management of Retention of Record of Concerns and Data Protection**

### **Retention of Records of Concerns of Abuse towards a Young Person**

All concerns and incidents involving a young person should be reported on the relevant form from the DSO at Villiers Park Educational Trust and/or the school/college and returned to the named individuals.

Villiers Park has a designated Safeguarding drive for storing confidential and sensitive information which is accessed by the DSL and the Deputy DSL.

Records of any concerns and incidents will be kept for 50 years after our last contact with the young person.

### **Retention of Records of Concern about an Employee or Volunteer's Behaviour towards a Young Person**

Records relating to concerns or allegations about an employee or volunteer will be kept in the person's confidential personnel file and a copy given to the individual. Records will be kept until the person reaches retirement age or for 10 years whichever is longer.

Records will be kept for the same amount of time even if the allegations were unfounded or if the person leaves the organisation.

If the allegations are malicious they will be destroyed immediately.

### **Related In-house Documents**

- Code of Practice for Learning Mentors (Villiers Park Educational Trust Learning Mentor Handbook)
- Code of Behaviour for Adults Working with Young People
- Conduct Policy (Section 02 Employees' Handbook)
- Disciplinary Procedure (Section 03 Employees' Handbook)
- Health and Safety and Environment Policy ( Section 13 Employees' Handbook)
- Data Protection Policy (Employees Handbook Section 16)
- Privacy Policy (available on website)
- IT and Computer Use Policy (Staff Handbook Section 15)
- Whistleblowing Policy (Staff Handbook Section 17)
- Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse (Section 25 Employees' Handbook)
- Stress Management (Section 26 Employees' Handbook)
- Complaints Procedure (Staff Handbook Section 27 and on website)
- Lone Working Policy (Section 28 Employees Handbook)

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually. This policy was reviewed in September 2023

**Signed: Gaby Sumner**

**Position: CEO**