

Child Sexual Exploitation Policy

Amended: April 2022

Approved by Trustees: June 2022

Review date: April 2023

Reviewing Panel: Standards, Staffing and Curriculum (SSC)

Introduction

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has become a growing and serious concern and is recognised as a form of child sexual abuse. This Policy is recognition of this concern and our commitment to protecting and supporting the school community and working with partner agencies to achieve this. This policy falls within the established Child Protection and Safeguarding framework that is already in place in school.

At Woodlands we strive to support and teach pupil how to make positive choices and informed decisions in their relationships so that they develop awareness and can protect themselves from all potential forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. As a school we promote healthy friends and relationships through the school ethos, school policies, student-staff relationships and the AROE (PSHRE) curriculum. An awareness of the risk factors and signs and indicators of CSE is key for all staff as is how to access support and guidance.

The purpose of this policy is to create a considered and consistent approach to dealing with CSE at Woodlands School.

Aims and Objectives

- To increase awareness and understanding of CSE within the school setting
- To raise awareness of the risk factors and warnings signs of CSE
- To provide relevant information and guidance on CSE, which is accessible to staff, parents/carers and pupils
- To provide a consistent approach when dealing with CSE
- To make available support for pupils, parents/carers and staff in the event of concerns arising in relation to CSE
- To enable those seeking help to feel secure and supported

Key principles to consider:

1. Sexual exploitation includes sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and, in some cases, neglect
2. Children and young people do not make informed choices to enter or remain in sexual exploitation, but do so due to coercion, enticement, manipulation or desperation
3. Young people under 16 cannot consent to sexual activity: sexual intercourse with children under the age of 13 is statutory rape. (Sexual Offences Act 2003)
4. Sexually exploited children and young people should be treated as victims of abuse, not as offenders
5. Many sexually exploited young people have difficulty distinguishing between their own choices about sex and sexuality, and the sexual activities they are coerced into. This potential confusion should be handled with care and sensitivity by professionals.
6. The primary law enforcement effort must be made against the coercers and adults who sexually exploit young people. In some cases young people themselves may exploit other young people, and in these cases law enforcement action may also be necessary.

CSE Vulnerability factors

Children are more vulnerable to abuse through sexual exploitation if they have experience of one or more of the following:

- Child sexual abuse
- Domestic violence within the family
- Family breakdown
- Physical abuse and emotional deprivation
- Bullying in or out of school

- Family involvement in sexual exploitation
- Parents with a high level of vulnerabilities (drug, alcohol, mental health etc.)
- Drug/alcohol, mental health or other difficulties themselves
- Being looked after in residential care
- Going missing frequently

By virtue of regular contact with young people, school staff are well placed to notice changes in behaviour and physical signs which may indicate involvement in sexual exploitation. School staff should also be mindful of the risks posed by CSE and remain alert to the potential for this and need to respond immediately.

In the event of staff identifying concerns relating to CSE, this information should be shared immediately with the Designated School Protection Officer. The concerns will be reviewed and appropriate action taken in line with the school Child Protection Policy and procedures. Where appropriate consultation will take place with Social Care and/or the Police.

CSE Support

A multi-agency approach will be adopted to ensure that holistic support is available – potentially involving partner agencies such as the Police, Children’s Social Care, School Nurse and Youth and other Youth and Family Support Services.

Prevention

Staff will be made aware of this policy and the importance of on-going vigilance and early interventions to prevent the likelihood of sexual exploitation or abuse occurring.

The issue of Child Sexual Exploitation will also be raised on different levels within the school and will be informed by support and guidance from the Local Authority and partner agencies as appropriate.

At a whole school level:-

This will be achieved through staff briefings, staff training and pupil assemblies which will provide information and guidance relating to CSE as well as the support available in school and through external agencies.

Information and guidance:-

Will be provided and reinforced through tutor time and the AROE (PSHRE) curriculum. This will provide positive guidance and advice to facilitate and support healthy personal and social development, alongside E-Safety issues.

At an individual level:-

Where concerns are identified or suspected (through information received or disclosed) a response will be fashioned in line with the Child Protection Policy. All expressions of concern will be taken seriously and investigated.

It is accepted that all children and young people may potentially be at risk of online CSE and therefore, by way of response, Woodlands School has a robust E-Safety policy to ensure pupils are taught to recognise online risk and who to report any concerns to.

Woodlands School will commit to having appropriate staff complete CEOP training and attend County Council training on CSE to ensure that appropriate knowledge and skills are available to support the school community.

Confidentiality

We appreciate that some pupils may feel anxious about seeking help due to concerns about sharing of information and confidentiality. We always strive to share information on a “need to know” basis

and manage information discreetly and sensitively. Therefore, information will only be shared in the young person's best interest.

Staff are legally bound to share information if they feel the pupil is at risk or is suffering from significant harm, and therefore complete confidentiality cannot be achieved.

Parental Involvement

As a school we always seek where possible to establish a positive partnership with parents and carers and to work proactively to support pupils and their families.

If a concern is raised by either a young person or a peer, it would be usual to initiate contact with home. It is often the case that the parent/carer will be invited to attend a meeting with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads and Head of Year. The pupil involved will also be asked to attend this meeting if at all possible. The concerns raised will be discussed and an action plan may be formulated to address concerns.

In specific circumstances it may not be possible to contact the parents/carer prior to sharing information and concerns with the relevant agencies. Professional guidance will be sought and every effort made to communicate with the parents/carers as soon as possible whilst ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils.

Monitoring and Evaluation

As with all Child Protection and Safeguarding concerns within school, the identification or disclosure of CSE will be recorded and securely stored. Information will be shared on a "need to know" basis to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved.

Any communication with home, or meetings with the child, will be recorded and the relevant bodies will be informed about issues or concerns.

Senior staff and Governors will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and agree adjustments that may be necessary to address any on-going concerns. These will be shared with staff, parents/carers and pupils.

How do we ensure that people are aware of this Policy?

- Formal acceptance by the Governing Body
- This policy will be made available to staff, parents and pupils on the School website
- Pupils will be informed about Child Sexual Exploitation and the school policy through assemblies, academic teaching (PSHRE and tutor time)
- Pupils can speak to members of staff about their concerns throughout the school day and will be offered support, advice and guidance

Appendix for Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It is complex and can manifest itself in different ways.

The agreed definition of child sexual exploitation “involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive “something” (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology within the child’s immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In call cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability” (HM Government, 2012, Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation).

As with all types of abuse, child sexual exploitation can have a devastating impact on the child or young person who is being exploited. It can disrupt their social lives and education, and cause long-term mental health problems including self-harm, attempts at suicide, and relationship behaviours which can affect achieving a fulfilling life.

In March 2015 the government stated that tackling CSE was a national priority.

What we know

Child sexual exploitation has had a higher profile in recent years, due to the widely publicised cases in Rochdale, Rotherham and Oxfordshire. Separate independent reviews of these cases highlighted that organised child sexual exploitation had “been happening on a massive scale over many years” and that “local agencies had dismissed concerns or put in place an adequate response” (Jay 2013; Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013)). It is clear that child sexual exploitation has been an issue for other local authorities, although these have not been subject to the same media coverage.

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. It can be difficult to identify victims, as children and young people rarely disclose abuse through sexual exploitation due to a number of complex factors, for example, children not being aware that they are being abused, fear and shame and feeling “in love” with the perpetrators(s).

Facts, Figures, Trends

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups indicated that over 16,500 children and young people in England were at high risk of child sexual exploitation in 2010/11. 2,409 children were confirmed as victims over this period, although this was recognised as an under-estimation of the true number of victims.

The Inquiry’s findings showed that victims of child sexual exploitation were both male and female, and a range of ages, ethnicities and sexualities. Of the 2408 victims identified:

- Ages ranged between 4 and 19 years old, with a peak age of 15
- Majority were girls
- High rate of victimisation of children from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. 28% of all victims identified were from a BME group, which is an over-representation of England’s population

- 155 were also identified as being perpetrators of child sexual exploitation

The Inquiry explained that the characteristics common to all victims were “their powerlessness and vulnerability”, rather than a particular demographic. However, while it is acknowledged that “children from loving and secure home can be abused...those for whom there are no protective measures in place are at greater risk”.

National Strategies

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including keeping children safe from sexual exploitation, is a key part of the Government’s drive to improve outcomes for children and young people. This is underpinned by a number of national strategies and policies:

- Department for Education (2018); Working Together to Safeguard Children- the core Government guidance which sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) The Staying Safe Action Plan
- Department of Health (2009), Healthy lives, brighter futures: the strategy for children and young people’s health – sets out the Government’s long-term strategy to support children’s and families’ health including a commitment to ensure that all organisations with responsibility for child health and wellbeing are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children
- HM Government (2009); Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation this national guidance supplements ‘Working together to Safeguard Children’ and is aimed at local safeguarding children’s boards, practitioners and professionals working with children and young people



Signed: _____

Head Teacher

Dated: 6th June 2022



Signed: _____

Chair of Trustees

Dated: 6th June 2022

