CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

2024 – 2025

The Rodillian Multi Academy Trust

Summary	The purpose of the policy is to ensure all stakeholders understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding and child protection and that all reporting and necessary action is taken in the appropriate methods and timescales to ensure children's welfare.
Responsible Person/Author:	Chief Operating Officer
Applies to: (please circle/delete as appropriate)	**Staff** ☒ **Student**☒ **Community** ☒
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November 2020	1.1	Updated DSL on front page	Front page
August 2021	2	Updated DSL details and full policy in line with updated guidance	Throughout
July 2022	3	Updated DSL details and full policy in line with updated guidance	Throughout
August 2023	4	Updated DSL details and full policy in line with updated guidance	Throughout
August 2024	5	Redrafted based on Solicitors advice	Throughout

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Our strong safeguarding culture

Why is it important

1. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and it is the duty of RMAT including Southway to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. 'Children' includes everyone under the age of 18. This is our core safeguarding principle.

2. In adhering to this principle, we focus on providing a safe and welcoming environment for all of our children regardless of age, ability, culture, race, language, religion, gender identity or sexual identity. All of our children have equal rights to support and protection.

3. One of the cornerstones of our safeguarding culture is this policy and the procedures contained within it. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, Members, Trustees and Local Review Board (LRB) Members all of whom are trained upon its contents and on their safeguarding duties. We update this policy at least annually to reflect changes to law and guidance and best practice.

4. This policy should be read alongside our other safeguarding policies, which are set out in Appendix Two.

Safeguarding legislation and guidance

5. The following safeguarding legislation and guidance has been considered when drafting this policy:

    - Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
    - Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2023)
    - What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015)
    - Prevent Duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales (2023)
    - The Teacher Standards 2012
    - The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
    - Section 157 of the Education Act 2002
    - The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
    - The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
    - PACE Code C 2019
    - Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Roles and Responsibilities

6. Each Academy in RMAT has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a number of Deputy DSL's. There is also a Trust DSL and a Designated Safeguarding Trustee as well as each LRB having a Safeguarding Link LRB member. Photos of the Academy DSL and Deputy DSLs are positioned around each academy.

7. Details of DSL's are as follows:

Name:	E-Mail:	Tel:
BBG Academy		
Miss T Binns (Lead)		
Miss D Williams*(Dep Lead)	office@bbgacademy.com	01274 871225
Mr L Andre		
Mrs B Berry		
Miss O Blackburn		
Ms S Brazier		
Mr R Cattley		
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Miss E Hayes		
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Mr P Carney (Dep Lead)		
Mr P Beaumont		
Miss J Eden		
Mr J Howard		
Ms L Jordan		
Mr J Levick		
Mr C Parish		
Mrs J Rowley		
Mrs C Walker		
Mrs A West		
The Featherstone Academy		
Mr K Paddy (Lead)	info@featherstone.academy	01977 698000
Mrs A Ballance (Dep Lead)		
Mr B Eaton		
Mrs A Howarth		
Mr C McColl		
Ms D Townshend*		
Mrs C Robert		
Miss C Kelso		
Rodillian Academy		
Mr J Grayston (Lead)		
Mr J Birkbeck (Dep Lead)		
Mr A Amoss		
Miss L Bottomley		
Mrs L Bulliment		

Name:	E-Mail:	Tel:
Mrs A Bjelic	contact@rodillianacademy.co.uk	01924 825667
Mrs A Corrigan		
Miss W Easby		
Mr D Fowler		
Mr S Graham		
Mr S Holdsworth		
Mrs N Kisby		
Mrs S Laycock		
Miss R McGowan		
Mr J Naylor		
Mr A Moon*		
Mrs F Nordoff		
Mr A Oxley		
Mr D Paul		
Mr T Riley		
Mr A Shields		
Miss K Sowden		
Mr D Stevens		
Mrs C Roebuck		
Ms V Rowntree		
Mr D Thomas		
Mrs A Williams		
Mrs L Weaver		
Mrs G Wright		
Mrs N Wright		
Southway		
Mr A Collins (Lead)	info@southway.org.uk	0113 3367772
Mrs D Millar (Dep Lead)		
Mrs C Boardman		
Mrs M Callaghan		
Ms R Greenwood		
Mr M Gunjal		
Mrs C Hezlewood		
Miss K Lockwood		
Mr C Miller*		
Mrs L Moon		
Mr T Moon		
Mr M Reilly		
Ms G Roberts		
Mrs L Waterson		

*Denotes Principal or Head of School

Name:	E-mail:	Tel:
UTC Leeds		
Mr T Smeaton (Lead)		

Mrs M Barthorpe (Dep Lead)	enquiries@utcleeds.co.uk	0113 3530140
Mrs S Ellis		
Mrs R Leckenby		
Mrs J Ratcliffe		
Mr A Saunders		
Mrs E Robinson-Coe		
RMAT		
Mrs M Ashby (RMAT DSL)	contact@rodillianacademytrust.co.uk	01977 698000
Mrs A Farmery		
Mrs S Luffman[1]		
Mrs G Warren		
Ms H A Headley[2]		

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

8. The RMAT DSL is the Director of Safeguarding and SEND, Mrs Ashby. The RMAT DSL takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) in RMAT. The RMAT DSL duties include:

- Ensuring child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately by staff.
- Work with the Board of Trustees to ensure that RMAT's child protection policies are reviewed annually, and the procedures are reviewed regularly.
- acting as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff on child protection and safeguarding matters.
- Liaise with Principals regarding ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations and be aware of the requirement for Children to have an Appropriate Adult in relevant circumstances.
- acting as a point of contact with the three safeguarding partners.
- liaising with the "case manager" and the designated officer(s) at the local authority if allegations are made against staff.
- Work with the Principal of Primary Academies to ensure that the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable.
- Work with the Principal of Primary Academies to ensure that each Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) child is assigned a key person

9. RMAT Academy DSLs takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) in their RMAT. The RMAT Academy DSL duties include:

- Ensuring child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately by staff

[1] Chief Executive
[2] Safeguarding Trustee

- Work with the LRB to ensure that RMAT's child protection procedures are followed.
- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff on child protection and safeguarding matters.
- Liaise with the Principal regarding ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations and be aware of the requirement for Children to have an Appropriate Adult in relevant circumstances.
- Act as a point of contact with the three safeguarding partners.
- Make and manage referrals to children's social care, the police, or other agencies.
- Keep detailed, accurate, secure records of concerns, discussions and decisions made including the rationale for those decisions (including where referrals were or were not made) on CPOMS.
- Take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings.
- Make staff aware of training courses and the latest local safeguarding arrangements available through the local safeguarding partner arrangements.
- Transfer the child protection file to a child's new school.
- In Primary Academies work with the Principal to ensure that the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable
- In Primary Academies work with the Principal to ensure that each EYFS child is assigned a key person.

Deputy DSL's

10. Our Deputy DSLs are trained to the same level as the DSL and support the DSL with safeguarding matters on a day-to-day basis. The ultimate lead responsibility for child protection in RMAT lies with the RMAT DSL and the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection in each Academy lies with the Academy DSL.

The Safeguarding Trustee

11. The role of the safeguarding Trustee is to provide support and challenge to the RMAT DSL and the leadership of RMAT on how they manage safeguarding so that the safety and wellbeing of the children can continuously improve. The role includes:

- understanding the requirements of the Governance Handbook and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
- supporting and challenging the RMAT DSL on the standards of safeguarding at RMAT.
- confirming that consistent and compliant safeguarding practice takes place across RMAT.
- reporting to the board of trustees about the standard of safeguarding in RMAT

12. The RMAT DSL and the safeguarding trustee meet on a regular basis to discuss safeguarding issues and to agree steps to continuously improve safeguarding practices in RMAT. The RMAT DSL and the safeguarding trustee also meet with the Safeguarding LRB link members to aid continuous improvement of safeguarding practices in RMAT.

LRB Safeguarding link members

13. The role of the safeguarding LRB Safeguarding link members is to provide support and challenge to their Academy DSL and the leadership of their Academy on how they manage safeguarding so that the safety and wellbeing of the children can continuously improve. The role includes:

    - understanding the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.
    - supporting and challenging the Academy DSL on the standards of safeguarding at the Academy.
    - confirming that consistent and compliant safeguarding practice takes place across the Academy.
    - reporting to the LRB about the standard of safeguarding in the Academy.

14. The RMAT DSL and the safeguarding Trustee meet on a regular basis to discuss safeguarding issues and to agree steps to continuously improve safeguarding practices in RMAT. The RMAT DSL and the safeguarding trustee also meet with the Safeguarding LRB link members to aid continuous improvement of safeguarding practices in RMAT.

Children who may be particularly vulnerable

15. Some children are at greater risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. This increased risk can be caused by many factors including social exclusion, isolation, discrimination and prejudice. To ensure that all of our children receive equal protection, we give special consideration to children who:

    - are vulnerable because of their race, ethnicity, religion, special educational needs, disability, gender identity or sexuality.
    - are vulnerable to being bullied or engaging in bullying.
    - are at risk of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, or being drawn into extremism.
    - live in chaotic or unsupportive home situations.
    - live transient lifestyles or live away from home or in temporary accommodation.
    - are affected by parental substance abuse, domestic violence or parental mental health needs.
    - do not have English as a first language.

- experience or have experienced bereavement or mental health difficulties.
- are in care or privately fostered or have returned home to their family from care.
- have experienced multiple suspensions and are at risk of, or have been, permanently excluded.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

16. Children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation 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 without further exploration;
    - being more prone to peer group isolation than other children;
    - the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
    - communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

17. Our staff are trained to be aware of and identify these additional barriers to ensure this group of children are appropriately safeguarded.

Children who are absent from education

18. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods, on an increasing basis and/or on repeat occasions, and children with unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education, can be an indicator of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including sexual abuse or exploitation, child criminal exploitation, mental health problems, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Our staff are alert to these risks.

19. We closely monitor attendance, absence and exclusions and our academy DSLs will take appropriate and proactive action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions, on an increasing basis and/or are missing for periods during the school day.

Alternative Provision

20. Where a child is placed with an alternative provision provider, we continue to be responsible for the safeguarding of that child and will ensure we are satisfied that the placement meets the child's needs. This includes RMAT children placed at Southway and any Southway children placed at another Alternative Provision.

Mental Health

21. Academies have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children.

22. All staff are aware that mental health problems can be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff are also aware that where children have suffered adverse childhood experiences those experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

23. Where staff are concerned that a child's mental health is also a safeguarding concern, they will discuss it with the DSL or a Deputy who will alert other relevant agencies as necessary.

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi or trans (LGBT)

24. The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. Unfortunately, children who are LGBT, or are simply perceived to be LGBT, can be targeted by other children. The risk to these children can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open.

25. Our staff endeavour to reduce the barriers and provide a safe space for those children to speak out or share their concerns with them.

26. The 2024 Cass review of gender identity services for children and young people identified that caution is necessary for children questioning their gender as there remain many unknowns about the impact of social transition and children may well have wider vulnerabilities, including having complex mental health and psychosocial needs.

27. When supporting a gender questioning child, as recommended by statutory guidance, we take a cautious approach and consider the broad range of their individual needs, in partnership with the child's parents (other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child), including any clinical advice that is available and how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying.

Child on child abuse

28. Child-on-child abuse – children harming other children - is unacceptable and will be taken seriously; it will not be tolerated or passed off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys.' It is more likely that boys will be perpetrators of child-on-child abuse and girls' victims, but allegations will be dealt with in the same manner, regardless of whether they are made by boys or girls.

29. All staff should be clear about RMAT's policy and procedures for addressing child-on-child abuse and maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

30. Child-on-child abuse can take many forms, including:

    - **physical abuse** such as shaking, hitting, biting, kicking or hair pulling.
    - **bullying**, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.
    - **sexual violence and harassment** such as rape and sexual assault or sexual comments and inappropriate sexual language, remarks or jokes.
    - **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.

- **up skirting**, which involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their knowledge for the purposes of sexual gratification or to cause humiliation, distress or alarm.

- **consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)** including pressuring others to share sexual content.

- **abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers (also known as teenage relationship abuse)** - such as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

- **initiation/hazing** – used to induct newcomers into sports team or school groups by subjecting them to potentially humiliating or abusing trials with the aim of creating a bond.

31. Different gender issues can be prevalent when dealing with child-on-child abuse, for example girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

32. All staff recognise that that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place but is not being reported.

Minimising risk

33. We take the following steps to minimise or prevent the risk of child-on-child abuse:

- Promoting an open and honest environment where children feel safe and confident to share their concerns and worries.

- Using assemblies to outline acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

- Using Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Personal Social Health and Economic education (PSHE) to educate and reinforce our messages through stories, role play, current affairs and other suitable activities.

- Ensuring that the Academy is well supervised, especially in areas where children might be vulnerable.

Investigating allegations

34. All allegations of child-on-child abuse should be passed to the DSL immediately who will investigate and manage the allegation as follows:

- **Gather information** - children and staff will be spoken with immediately to gather relevant information.

- **Decide on action** - if it is believed that any child is at risk of significant harm, a referral will be made to children's social care. The Academy DSL will then work with children's social care to decide on next steps, which may include contacting the police. In other cases, we may follow our behaviour policy alongside this Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

- **Inform parents** - we will usually discuss concerns with the parents. However, our focus is the safety and wellbeing of the child and so if the academy believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to a child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from children's social care and/or the police before parents are contacted.

- **Recorded** – all concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions will be recorded on CPOMS, kept confidential and stored securely on the academy's child protection and safeguarding systems and/or in the child's separate child protection file. The record will include a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, and a note of the action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.

35. Where allegations of a sexual nature are made, the Academy will follow the statutory guidance set out in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

36. Children can report allegations or concerns of child-on-child abuse to any staff member and that staff member will pass on the allegation to the DSL in accordance with this policy. To ensure children can report their concerns easily, RMAT Academies have the following system in place for children to confidently report abuse:

    - Posters identify the DSLs in the Academies who can be contacted directly by children.

    - All children have access to a safeguarding trained pastoral member of staff linked to their year group

    - Updates are given in form time and assemblies about who to report concerns to and how

    - During this year, if not already in place, each Academy will put in place, a 'tell someone' email address that students can report concerns to.

37. **Supporting those involved:** Our staff reassure all victims that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Our staff will never give a victim the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment, nor will victims be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

38. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the Academy will not be downplayed and will be treated equally seriously. We recognise that sexual violence and sexual harassment occurring online can introduce a number of complex factors. Amongst other things, this can include widespread abuse or harm across a number of social media platforms that leads to repeat victimisation.

39. The support required for a child who has been harmed will depend on their particular circumstance and the nature of the abuse. The support we provide could include counselling and mentoring or some restorative justice work.

40. Support may also be required for the child that caused harm. We will seek to understand why the child acted in this way and consider what support may be required to help the child and/or change behaviours. The consequences for the harm caused or intended will be addressed.

Serious violence

41. All staff are made aware of indicators that children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime. These include increased absence, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of mental health difficulties, 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.

42. All staff are made be aware of the range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as being male, having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school, having experienced maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

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

43. Both CCE and CSE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of 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. This power imbalance can be due to a range of factors, including:

    - Age
    - Gender
    - Sexual identity
    - Cognitive ability
    - Physical strength
    - Status
    - Access to economic or other resources

44. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. They can be one-off occurrences or a series of incidents over time and may or may not involve force or violence. Exploitation can be physical and take place online.

CCE

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

46. Children can become trapped by this exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or carry a knife for a sense of protection.

47. Children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

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

CCE Indicators

49. **CCE** indicators can include children who:

- appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associate with other young people involved in exploitation
- suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- misuse drugs or alcohol
- go missing for periods of time or regularly return home late
- regularly or increasingly miss school or education or do not take part in education

CSE

50. CSE is a form of child sexual abuse which may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact 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.

51. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge e.g. through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

52. CSE can affect any child, who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities. This includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited e.g. they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

53. 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 child trafficking.

CSE Indicators

54. The above indicators of CCE can also be indicators of CSE, as can children who:

- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffer sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant

55. We include the risks of criminal and sexual exploitation in our RSE and health education curriculum. It is often the case that the child does not recognise the coercive nature of the exploitative relationship and does not recognise themselves as a victim.

56. Victims of criminal and sexual exploitation can be boys or girls and it can have an adverse impact on a child's physical and emotional health.

57. All staff are aware of the indicators that children are at risk of or are experiencing CCE or CSE. All concerns are reported immediately to the DSL. Staff must always act on any concerns that a child is suffering from or is at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation.

County Lines

58. County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs around the country using dedicated mobile phone lines. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money, with offenders often using coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons to ensure compliance of victims.

59. County lines exploitation can occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child. This power imbalance can be due to the same range of factors set out above at paragraph 30 of this policy.

60. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations, including schools and colleges. Indicators of county lines include those indicators set out at paragraph 30 of this policy, with the main indicator being missing episodes from home and/or school.

61. Additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited include children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from home
- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation with which they have no connection or in a hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing.

62. All staff are aware of indicators that children are at risk from or experiencing criminal exploitation. The main indicator is increased absence during which time the child may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs or money.

Sharing Nudes and Semi Nudes

63. Sharing photos, videos and live streams online is part of daily life for many children and young people, enabling them to share their experiences, connect with friends and record their lives. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes means the sending or posting online of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams by young people under the age of 18. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums, or carried out offline between devices via services like Apple's Airdrop.

64. The term 'nudes' is used as it is most commonly recognised by young people and more appropriately covers all types of images sharing incidents. Alternative terms used by children and young people may include 'dick pics' or 'pics'. Other terms used in education include 'sexting', youth produced sexual imagery' and 'youth involved sexual imagery'.

65. The motivations for taking and sharing nudes and semi-nudes are not always sexually or criminally motivated. Such images may be created and shared consensually by young people who are in relationships, as well as between those who are not in a relationship. It is also possible for a young person in a consensual relationship to be coerced into sharing an image with their partner. Incidents may also occur where:

- children and young people find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer
- children and young people digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online
- images created or shared are used to abuse peers e.g. by selling images online or obtaining images to share more widely without consent to publicly shame.

66. All incidents involving nude or semi-nude images will be managed as follows:

- The incident will be referred to the DSL immediately and the DSL will discuss it with the appropriate staff. If necessary, the DSL may also interview the children involved.
- Parents will be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put a child at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process, if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, we will refer the matter to the police and/or children's social care.

67. The UK Council for Internet Safety updated its advice for managing incidences of sharing nudes and semi-nudes in December 2020 -**UKCIS advice 2020**. RMAT will have regard to this advice when managing these issues.

Online Safety

68. It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. As well as educating children about online risks, we have appropriate and effective filtering and monitoring systems in place to limit the risk of children being exposed to inappropriate content, subjected to harmful online interaction with other users and to ensure their own personal online behaviour does not put them at risk.

69. These filtering and monitoring systems block harmful and inappropriate content, and we take care to ensure that they do not unreasonably impact on teaching and learning. The systems are reviewed regularly (at least annually) to ensure their effectiveness, and staff have been identified and assigned suitable roles and responsibilities to manage these systems. We also have effective monitoring strategies in place to meet the safeguarding needs of our children.

70. We tell parents and carers that we use and how we use filtering and monitoring systems, so they can understand how we work to keep children safe.

71. We will also inform parents and carers of what we are asking children to do online, including the sites they need to access, and with whom they will be interacting online.

72. Online safety risks can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content such as pornography, fake news, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, radicalisation and extremism

- **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users such as peer to peer pressure and adults posing as children or young adults to groom or exploit children

- **Conduct**: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm such as making, sending and receiving explicit images, sharing other explicit images and online bullying

- **Commerce**: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing or financial scams.

73. All staff are aware of these risk areas and should report any concerns to the DSL.

Handheld devices and cameras

74. Personal devices are only to be used by staff when on a designated break away from students.

75. RMAT devices are only to be used by staff for work purposes. Photographs and videos of children are only to be taken on RMAT devices.

76. Images of RMAT children will only be used in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Domestic Abuse

77. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduces a legal definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse.

78. Domestic abuse is 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. It includes people who have been or are married, are or have been civil partners, have agreed to marry one another or each have or have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child. It can include psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

79. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. This means children can also be victims of domestic abuse.

80. Children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic violence in their home life. Experiencing domestic abuse and exposure to it can have a serious emotional and psychological impact on children, and in some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

81. Where police have been called to a domestic violence incident where children are in the household and experienced that incident, the police will inform the DSL. This ensures that the Academy has up to date safeguarding information about the child.

82. All staff are aware of the impact domestic violence can have on a child. If any of our staff are concerned that a child has witnessed domestic abuse, they will report their concerns immediately to the DSL.

Honour-Based abuse

83. So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses actions taken to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and practices such as breast ironing.

84. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. Our staff are aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors and we take them into consideration when deciding what safeguarding action to take.

85. If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

FGM

86. FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

87. FGM is carried out on females of any age, from babies to teenagers to women. Our staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators, including concerns expressed by girls about going on a long holiday during the summer break. If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of FGM or who has suffered FGM, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead. Teachers are also under legal duty to report to the police where they discover that FGM has been carried out on a child under 18. In such circumstances, teachers will personally report the matter to the police as well as informing the designated safeguarding lead.

Forced Marriage

88. 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. Coercion may include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure or abuse.

89. Forced marriage is illegal. It is also illegal to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

90. Our staff are trained to be aware of risk indicators, which may include being taken abroad and not being allowed to return to the UK.

91. Forced marriage is not the same as arranged marriage, which is common in many cultures.

92. If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of forced marriage, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

Radicalisation and Extremism

93. Extremism is defined as vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Radicalisation refers to the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of terrorist violence.

94. Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Whilst Islamic fundamentalism is the most widely publicised, extremism and radicalisation can occur in other cultures, religions and beliefs, including the far right and white supremacy. Our staff are trained to identify those at risk of being radicalised or drawn into extremism.

95. If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of radicalisation or being drawn into extremism, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

Staff/student relationships

96. Staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards students is unacceptable and that it is a criminal offence for them to engage in any sexual activity with a student under the age of 18.

97. We provide our staff with advice regarding their personal online activity, and we have clear rules regarding electronic communications and online contact with students. It is considered a serious disciplinary issue if staff breach these rules.

98. Our Staff Code of Conduct sets out our expectations of staff.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations made about staff, supply staff, contractors and volunteers

99. If a safeguarding concern or allegation is made about a member of staff, supply staff, contractor or a volunteer, or relates to incidents that happened when an individual or organisation was using RMAT premises for the purposes of running activities for children our set procedures must be followed. Our safeguarding concerns and allegations made about staff, supply staff, contractors and volunteers' policy and procedure can be accessed **here** and the full procedure for managing such allegations or concerns are set out in Part Four of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

100. Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff who no longer work in RMAT will be reported to the police.

Whistle blowing if you have concerns about a colleague

101. It is important that all staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about a colleague's practice. All such concerns should be reported to the Principal, unless the concern is about the Principal, in which case concern should be reported to the Chief Executive. Concerns about the Chief Executive should be reported to the Chair of the Trust Board.

102. Staff may also report their concerns directly to children's social care or the police if they believe direct reporting is necessary to secure action.

103. RMATs **whistleblowing policy** allows staff to raise concerns or make allegations and for an appropriate enquiry to take place.

Staff and governance training

104. Our staff receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety and an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring) which is regularly updated. In addition, all staff receive safeguarding and child protection updates on a regular basis to ensure they are up to date and empowered to provide exceptional safeguarding to our children.

105. New staff and volunteers receive a briefing during their induction which covers this Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and our staff behaviour policy, how to report and record concerns and information about our Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy DSLs.

106. Our Trustees/LRB Members receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring) training at induction which equips them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that there is an effective whole trust approach to safeguarding. This training is updated at least annually.

107. Our safeguarding trustee receives additional training to empower them to support and challenge the Designated Safeguarding Lead and support the delivery of high-quality safeguarding across the trust.

Safer Recruitment

108. The RMAT Board and our Executive team are responsible for ensuring we follow recruitment procedures that help to deter, reject or identify people who might harm children. When doing so we check and verify the applicant's identity, qualifications and work history in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and the local safeguarding partner arrangements.

109. All relevant staff (involved in early years settings and/or before or after school care for children under eight) are made aware of the disqualification from childcare guidance and their obligations to disclose to us relevant information that could lead to disqualification.

110. We ensure that our volunteers are appropriately checked and supervised when in an Academy. We check the identity of all contractors working on site and requests DBS checks where required by Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024. Contractors who have not undergone checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised during the school day.

111. When using supply staff, we will obtain written confirmation from supply agencies or third-party organisations that staff they provide have been appropriately checked and are suitable to work with children. Trainee teachers will be checked either by the Academy or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained confirming their suitability to work with children.

112. RMAT maintains the single central record of recruitment checks undertaken in each of our academies. Our **recruitment policy** and procedures can be accessed here.

Site security

113. Visitors are asked to sign in at Academy receptions and are given a badge, which confirms they have permission to be on site. If visitors have undergone the appropriate checks, they can be provided with unescorted access to the Academy site. Visitors who have not undergone the required checks will be escorted at all times.

Child Protection procedures

Recognising abuse

114. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children and young people.

115. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 refers to four categories of abuse. These are set out at Appendix One along with indicators of abuse.

Taking action

116. Any child could become a victim of abuse. Key points for staff to remember for taking action are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, if necessary call 999

- complete a record of concern on CPOMS and report your concern to the DSL as soon as possible

- share information on a need-to-know basis only and do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family

If you are concerned about a student's welfare

117. Staff may suspect that a student may be at risk. This may be because the student's behaviour has changed, their appearance has changed, or physical signs are noticed. In these circumstances, staff will give the student the opportunity to talk and ask if they are OK.

118. If the student does reveal that they are being harmed, staff should follow the advice below.

119. Staff are aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. Children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened, which could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This will not prevent our staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to our DSL if they have concerns about a child.

If a student discloses to you

120. If a student tells a member of staff about a risk to their safety or wellbeing, the staff member will:
    - remain calm and not overreact

    - allow them to speak freely

    - not be afraid of silences

    - not ask investigative questions

    - give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'

    - not automatically offer physical touch as comfort

    - let the student know that in order to help them they must pass the information on to the DSL

    - tell the student what will happen next and give them an opportunity to ask questions about what will happen next

    - complete a concern on CPOMS and pass it to the DSL as soon as possible

    - report verbally to the DSL even if the child has promised to do it by themselves

    - let the student know when they can expect to be updated or receive more information, emphasising that the pupil can talk to them or the DSL at any time

Notifying parents

121. The Academy will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a student with their parents. If the Academy believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, advice will first be sought from children's social care and/or the police before parents are notified.

Referral to children's social care

122. The DSL will make a referral to children's social care if it is believed that a student is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The student (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.

Reporting directly to child protection agencies

123. Staff should follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy. However, they may also share information directly with children's social care or the police if they are convinced that a direct report is required or if the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the deputies, the head teacher or the chair of governors are not available, and a referral is required immediately.

Confidentiality and sharing information

124. Child protection issues necessitate a high level of confidentiality. Staff should only discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Principal, Chief Executive, Chair of the LRB, Safeguarding LRB Link Member or the Safeguarding Trustee.

Sharing information

125. The DSL will normally obtain consent from the child and/or parents to share child protection information. Where there is good reason to do so, the DSL may share information **without** consent, and will record the reason for deciding to do so.

126. Information sharing will take place in a timely and secure manner and only when it is necessary and proportionate to do so and the information to be shared is relevant, adequate and accurate.

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

128. The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent RMAT staff from sharing information with relevant agencies, where that information may help to protect a child. If any member of staff receives a request from a student or parent to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the Data Protection Officer.

Storing information

129. Child protection information will be stored separately from the student's school file and the school file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held. It will be stored and handled in line with our Records Management Policy.

130. Our Records Management policy is available to parents and students on request.

Special Circumstances

Looked after children

131. The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse or neglect. RMAT ensures that staff have the necessary skills and understanding to keep looked after children safe. 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 looked after children and the DSL have details of the child's social worker and the name and contact details of the local authority's virtual head for children in care.

Children who have a social worker

132. Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Local authorities will share this information with us, and the DSL will hold and use this information to inform decision about safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare.

Work Experience

133. RMAT Academies which offer work experience have detailed procedures to safeguard students undertaking work experience, including arrangements for checking people who provide placements and supervise students on work experience which are in accordance with statutory guidance.

Children staying with host families

134. RMAT Academies may make arrangements for students to stay with host families, for example during a foreign exchange trip or sports tour. When we do, we follow the guidance set out in the statutory guidance to ensure hosting arrangements are as safe as possible.

135. Schools cannot obtain criminal record information from the Disclosure and Barring Service about adults abroad. Where students stay with host families abroad we will agree with the partner schools a shared understanding of the safeguarding arrangements. The Academy Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure the arrangements are sufficient to safeguard our students and will include ensuring students understand who to contact should an emergency occur, or a situation arise which makes them feel uncomfortable. We will also make parents aware of these arrangements.

136. Some overseas students may reside with host families during school terms, and we will work with the local authority to check that such arrangements are safe and suitable.

Private fostering arrangements

137. A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative care 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 aged under 18 if the child is disabled.

By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify children's services as soon as possible.

138. Where a member of staff becomes aware that a student may be in a private fostering arrangement they will tell the DSL and the Academy will notify the local authority of the circumstances.

Diversity

139. RMAT is committed to a policy of celebrating diversity, promoting equality of opportunity, providing an inclusive workplace and eliminating any unfair treatment or unlawful discrimination. This overriding objective applies to all policies and procedures relating to staff and students. The Trust will comply at all times with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Appendix 1 – Four Categories of abuse

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.

All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-alone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is 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.

Indicators of physical abuse

The following may be indicators of physical abuse:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, bites, 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
- An injury that is not consistent with the account given
- Symptoms of drug or alcohol intoxication or poisoning
- Inexplicable fear of adults or over-compliance
- Violence or aggression towards others including bullying
- Isolation from peers

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to 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.

Indicators of emotional abuse

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- The child consistently describes him/herself in negative ways
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Delayed physical, mental or emotional development
- Inappropriate emotional responses, fantasies
- Self-harm
- Drug or solvent abuse
- Running away
- Appetite disorders – anorexia nervosa, bulimia; or
- Soiling, smearing faeces, enuresis

Sexual abuse

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 is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Indicators of sexual abuse

The following may be indicators of sexual abuse:

- Sexually explicit play or behaviour or age-inappropriate knowledge
- Aggressive behaviour including sexual harassment or molestation
- Reluctance to undress for PE or swimming

- Anal or vaginal discharge, soreness or scratching
- Bruises or scratches in the genital area
- Reluctance to go home
- Refusal to communicate
- Depression or withdrawal
- Isolation from peer group
- Eating disorders, for example anorexia nervosa and bulimia
- Self-harm
- Substance abuse
- Acquire gifts such as money or a mobile phone from new 'friends'

Neglect

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

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Indicators of neglect

The following may be indicators of neglect:

- Constant hunger or stealing, scavenging and/or hoarding food
- Frequent tiredness
- Frequently dirty or unkempt
- Poor attendance or often late

- Poor concentration
- Illnesses or injuries that are left untreated
- Failure to achieve developmental milestones or to develop intellectually or socially
- Responsibility for activity that is not age appropriate such as cooking, ironing, caring for siblings
- The child is left at home alone or with inappropriate carers

Appendix 2 – Related Safeguarding Policies

- Staff code of conduct
- PD Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safe working practice
- Whistleblowing Policy
- SEN Policy
- Recruitment and selection Policy
- Safeguarding concerns and allegations made about staff, supply staff, contractors and volunteers Policy
- Grievance and disciplinary Policies
- ICT E-Safety Policy