

Froebel House School

Vulnerable Children Policy

Summary

Vulnerable pupils include those who have medical conditions or specific behavioural needs or who are looked after, at risk (including of being drawn into extremism), displaced, sexually exploited, school-age parents, or from Traveller families. Children's services have a key role to play with regard to keeping them safe and ensuring they receive an education.

This topic looks at the issues around safeguarding pupils in these categories of risk. Advice about general safeguarding procedures can be found in the Child Protection Policy.

In Practice

Children at Risk

Schools should have the following in place to protect children at risk.

- A Child Protection Policy and plan.
- A secure system for recording and reporting child protection concerns and for storing sensitive information.
- A system for ensuring effective reporting to multi-agency meetings.

They should also have procedures in place for:

- Safe recruitment.
- Dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and/or volunteers.

Children with special educational needs or disabilities

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may be especially vulnerable to abuse. Where abuse is suspected, pupils who have difficulties in communicating should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff with appropriate communication skills.

Schools should try to create an atmosphere in which pupils feel confident and able to discuss these matters.

Where children need physical contact as part of their teaching, clear guidelines should be available for staff on how to maintain a balance between providing support and preventing any allegations of abuse. This might need to be accompanied by an "intimate care policy".

Pupils at Risk of Being Drawn into Terrorism

Since July 2015, all schools have a duty (under s.26 of the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015) to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This is known as the Prevent Duty, and it covers four main areas.

- Risk assessment.
- Working in partnership (with Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Local Authorities and families).
- Staff training.
- ICT policies.

Schools must assess the risk of pupils being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology. "Extremism" is defined as "vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values", including calls for the death of members of [British] armed forces". Schools must demonstrate a general understanding of the risks affecting local pupils and a specific understanding of how to identify pupils at risk of radicalisation (defined as "the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of

extremism leading to terrorism") and how to support them.

Identifying pupils at risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of the school's wider safeguarding duties and is similar to protecting pupils from other risks of harm, such as sexual exploitation. A key part of this is protecting pupils from online radicalisation, via social media and the internet. Suitable filtering should be put in place to prevent this, and online safety should be covered in the curriculum.

Staff should also be alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour that indicate they may be holding, or attempting to hide extremist views. They should also understand when it is appropriate to make a referral.

Pupils' resilience to radicalisation should be built up by:

- Promoting fundamental British values.
- Showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.
- Not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with difference faiths and beliefs.

These standards enable schools to take action against staff who demonstrate unacceptable views.

Look-after Children

Children may be looked after for a wide variety of reasons including:

- Family breakdown.
- Abuse.
- Neglect.
- Social need.

They are a priority within government legislation.

Voluntary care arrangements

When parents are unable to care for a child properly or require respite, the Children's Act 1989 states that the predicament should preferably be resolved through voluntary arrangements with the parents. The parents continue to have parental responsibility and should participate in the child's care and retain contact.

The parents can take their child home at any time.

Care Orders

A child considering to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm will be made subject to a Care Order by the Courts. The Social Services Department can then acquire parental responsibility which it shares with the parents. The responsibility for the majority of looked-after children remains with their natural parents.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards

Local Safeguarding Children Boards lead inter-agency work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, building on the work of area child protection committees.

Educational achievement

The pupil premium provides additional money for the support of looked-after children. The grant allocation for looked-after children is managed by the virtual school Head.

Expectations of what looked-after children can achieve should always be high. They should be monitored

and tracked as a group as well as individually.

Personal education plans

Every looked-after child must have a personal education plan (PEP). This is the central mechanism for making and recording decisions about the child's education and development. It should set high expectations for rapid progress.

The PEP should be initiated within 20 days of the young person either entering care, or joining a new school by the young person's social worker, in partnership with the:

- Young person.
- Designated teacher.
- Parent or carer.

The PEP is part of the care plan. It is a record of what needs to happen in order to enable the young person to fulfil his or her potential. It should reflect other education plans, e.g. individual education plans. It might include:

- Personal information.
- Contact details.
- For each academic year, baseline information, attendance, transport, targets, actions.
- Transition and career plans.
- Developmental and educational needs in relation to skills, knowledge, subject areas and experiences.
- Short-term targets.

It is recommended that children at risk of exclusion, or who have been excluded, are provided with personalised education plans – similar to the PEP.

Reviews of the PEP give the child the opportunity to raise issues that may be affecting their education, e.g. bullying.

If the child is placed and educated outside their L.A the child's social worker from the home authority retains responsibility for the PEP but has to complete it in conjunction with the child, carers and teachers in the new authority.

Virtual School Head

LAs are expected to have somebody at a senior level who is accountable for the overall attainment of looked-after children. The virtual school Head (VSH) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the attainment of pupils using data and tracking methods.
- Ensuring that every school has the information it needs.
- Making sure there is a PEP and one-to-one support as needed.
- Promoting a focus on educational attainment for looked-after children across the LA.
- Improving behaviour and attendance.
- Promoting stability of placement and school stability.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, every LA is required to appoint a VSH to promote the educational achievement of looked-after children.

Designated teacher

The designated teacher for looked-after children should agree a PEP for each child. They should provide access to additional learning opportunities such as targeted learning support and intervention programmes. Schools should make use of one-to-one tuition unless there are overriding reasons not to, and ensure that carers understand the benefits and follow it up at home.

Academic study support, such as homework clubs, peer education programmes, book clubs, mentoring and catch-up sessions is recommended.

Forced Marriages

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties and where duress is a factor.

These are some of the signs that a forced marriage is to take place.

- Extended absence from school/college.
- Drop in performance or low motivation.
- Excessive parental restrictions.
- Siblings who left education to marry early.
- Limited career/higher education aspirations.
- Limited financial independence.
- Evidence of self-harm.
- Social isolation.
- Apparent family disputes.
- Overly protective siblings or cousins.
- A sudden announcement of an engagement.

Schools should be cautious about making assumptions and stereotyping. An extended visit does not necessarily mean that a forced marriage is being planned and confusion between arranged or assisted marriages (which are entered into freely by both parties) and forced marriages must be avoided.

Staff should be made aware of these signs and what to do if they suspect that a pupil is at risk. A child being forced into marriage is a child protection issue and the child protection procedure should be implemented. The designated person for child protection can obtain additional advice, if needed, from the:

- Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Local police's Child Protection Unit or Domestic Abuse Unit.
- Forced Marriage Unit.

Where a school has strong grounds for suspicion, a referral should be made to the appropriate authority. Under no circumstances should any attempt be made to carry out an investigation or to approach the family as this could put the pupil at additional risk.

Attention should be drawn to the issue by displaying posters and materials, including contact numbers and helpline information. The issue can also be discussed in personal, social, health and citizenship education or tutor group time.

Female Genital Mutilation

See separate Policy.

Trafficked Children

UNICEF defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Reasons for trafficking children include sexual or labour exploitation and involvement in criminal activity.

Staff should be vigilant for the signs that a child has been trafficked, including:

- A history of unexplained moves.
- Limited freedom of movement between home and school.
- Being cared for by adults who are not his or her parents.
- Not being registered with a GP.

Language difficulties can make establishing circumstances more difficult and children may have a sense of loyalty to their trafficker. If staff are suspicious that a pupil is a victim of trafficking, they should

make a referral to children's social care and should not attempt to take any action themselves. If the traffickers become aware of the school's suspicions, it might heighten the risk of harm or abduction.

All children's services have a role to play. Local Safeguarding Children's Boards should identify trafficking co-ordinators to oversee the sharing of information between organisations. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre's role includes prevention work in source countries, delivery of awareness-raising initiatives and responsibility for missing children.

Where it is established that a child has been trafficked, he or she might be:

- Returned to the country of origin.
- Placed as a looked-after child (with an assessment of the child's ongoing vulnerability to being trafficked).

Child Sexual Exploitation

The Department for Education's Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan sets out a programme of co-ordinated actions by the Government and its partners for dealing with the sexual exploitation of children and young people up to the age of 18.

The key measures are as follows:-

- Improved training on sexual exploitation for frontline professionals.
- Prioritisation of sexual exploitation by Local Safeguarding Children Boards.
- Improved services for young victims.
- Improved sex and relationships education for young people.
- Improved information for parents on spotting the signs of sexual exploitation.
- Better support for victims from the police, Crown Prosecution Service, magistrates and judges.
- Improved procedures in court for victims, such as the use of screens and video links to ensure that they do not have to see the defendant.

The Government says it will work with Ofsted to ensure that inspectors have clear guidance on how they should take child sexual exploitation into account.

Missing Children

"Missing Children" includes those who have run away as well as those who are victims of trafficking or abduction. The categories covered by the term include:

- Children abducted by strangers.
- Children abducted by a parent – usually where there are custodial disagreements.
- Runaways – children up to the age of 16 who have spent one night or more away from home without parental permission.
- Detached children – those who live away from home for long period of time, who are self-reliant and do not receive formal sources of support.
- Groomed and trafficked children (mostly girls and including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) – those exploited by older men or gangs.

Young runaways can be at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation, and alcohol, drugs and physical abuse. Abuse can have a psychological impact on children before or after they go missing and career opportunities and aspirations can be dramatically changed.

Among the most vulnerable are:

- Looked-after children.

- Migrant young people.
- Children living in a women's refuge, temporary accommodation or a house of multiple occupancy.
- Children of homeless families.
- Young runaways.
- Children with long-term medical or emotional problems.
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees.
- Children with gypsy/Traveller backgrounds.
- Young carers.
- Children with transient families.
- Teenage mothers.
- Children who are permanently excluded from school.

The issue of missing children, including those who are particularly vulnerable should be drawn to the attention of staff. School policy should enable immediate referral to take place if a vulnerable child does go missing and a link person should be assigned to the child where possible. It is important that a multi-agency perspective is taken to address the issues that caused the child to run away, rather than just addressing the symptoms.

It is beneficial to build into the curriculum opportunities to discuss with young people the risks of stranger abduction, running away or becoming detached from the family. It is beneficial to ensure that time is always available for pupils to seek out a trusted adult and share their anxieties.

Children Not Receiving a Suitable Education

Children from mobile communities, such as gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and the armed forces, are at particular risk of becoming "lost" from the system. Missing children are also a key concern.

Pupils at risk of harm may be removed from education in order to disguise the evidence of neglect or abuse. It is important that those working in children's services take appropriate action if they suspect this is happening.

Children who are educated at home may also be vulnerable and local authorities should keep a record of them. They should make enquiries with parents about whether their home-educated children are receiving a suitable education. They can insist on seeing a home-educated child if there is cause for concern about safety and welfare.

Pupils with Specific Behavioural Needs

The school's behaviour policy is the key document in terms of minimising challenging behaviour.

Well-documented ways of avoiding behavioural difficulties in schools include:

- The use of positive reinforcement.
- Praising good behaviour.
- The raising of self-esteem and self-respect.
- Early intervention strategies, e.g. nurture groups, which can be vital in tackling emerging difficulties at an early stage.
- The use of counselling and therapy.

Nurture groups are small supportive classes where the focus is on the pupil's emotional development and language skills. The groups are staffed by a teacher and an assistant and pupils attend for a part of each week before returning full-time to mainstream classes within two to four terms.

Children with significant behavioural difficulties should have their own pastoral support programme.

Pupils with Medical Needs

The needs of pupils with chronic or long-term medical conditions are now considered alongside those of other vulnerable groups.

This includes pupils with:

- Musculo-skeletal problems
- Cancer
- Asthma
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes
- Crohn's Disease
- Heart problems
- Mental health problems such as anxieties, depression and/or school phobia.

Inspectors may report on how well the needs of these groups are met.

Schools should have a policy for:

- Dealing with medical needs; and
- The administration of medication.

A named member of staff should be responsible for dealing with pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs.

For more information on supporting pupils with medical conditions, see the Medical Conditions and Communicable Diseases topic.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is a combination of the police and law enforcement sectors and the children's services. Its three main objectives are to:

- Prevent
- Protect
- Pursue

It does this by:

- Reducing the number of children who go missing and potentially suffer harm.
- Identifying, locating and making contact with those who remain missing.
- Facilitating more opportunities for children to re-unite with their families or carers where it is in their best interests.

CEOP has an advice and help centre which can be accessed through the CLICK CEOP icon which is now included on many websites.

Organisations

- [Child Exploitation and Online Protection \(CEOP\) Centre](#)

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is part of UK policing and is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children. It is responsible for the Think U Know programme which has a range of resources for download.

- [CHILDREN 1st](#)

CHILDREN 1st is an independent charity that works with other organisations, the Government and local authorities to support families under stress, protect children from harm and neglect, help them to recover from abuse and promote children's rights and interest. It was previously known as the Royal Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

- [Department for Education \(DfE\)](#)

The Department for Education is responsible for education and children's services in England.

- [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](#)

The NSPCC is the UK's leading children's charity campaigning to end child abuse. They work with children, families and schools, offering guidance, support and training. The NSPCC runs the 24 hours a day Childline on 0800 1111. Adults worried about a child can call 0808 800 5000.

- [The Children's Society](#)

The Children's Society helps children of all faiths and none, including those at risk on the streets, disabled children, young refugees, young carers or those within the youth justice system.

- [YoungMinds](#)

YoungMinds is committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.