

Safeguarding Update September 2021

Keeping children safe in education 2021

The Department for Education (DfE) has published an updated version of the statutory safeguarding and child protection guidance for education providers in England, Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2021a). This guidance replaces Keeping children safe in education 2020 and comes into force on 1 September 2021.

Below is a summary of changes.

Supporting victims of abuse

A new paragraph has been added emphasising that all staff should be able to reassure victims of abuse that they are being taken seriously and will be supported. Children and young people should never be made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment.

Child criminal and sexual exploitation

Guidance has been added to support all staff in understanding and recognising child criminal and sexual exploitation. The guidance highlights that the vulnerability of children involved in criminal exploitation is not always recognised by adults and professionals and that the indicators of exploitation are different for boys and girls. It also emphasises that child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse and can be a one-off occurrence or might happen over time. All children and young people, including 16- and 17-year-olds, can experience child sexual exploitation.

Mental health

Links have been added to resources to help staff support children and young people's mental health, including DfE guidance on mental health and behaviour (DfE, 2018).

Peer-on-peer abuse

Guidance on peer-on-peer abuse for all staff has been expanded, emphasising that all staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between children and young people. Staff should also recognise that downplaying certain behaviours as "just banter" or "boys being boys" can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment for children and young people and a culture that normalises abuse. Staff should understand that even if there are no reports of peer-on-peer abuse in their school, this doesn't mean it is not happening. If staff have any concerns about peer-on-peer abuse, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy.

Serious violence

New information about risk factors that might increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence has been added.

Risk factors include:

- being male
- having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school
- having experienced child maltreatment
- having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Online safety

Additional guidance has been added to help schools and education providers protect children and young people and educate them on online safety. There should be a whole company approach to online safety, making sure it is reflected in all relevant policies, the curriculum, teacher training, the role of the DSL and parental engagement.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold

Governing bodies and proprietors should have policies and processes in place to deal with low-level concerns and allegations that don't meet the harm threshold. Staff codes of conduct and safeguarding policies should explain what a low-level concern is and the importance of sharing concerns.

A low-level concern is any concern that an adult has acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- Does not meet the allegations threshold or is not considered serious enough to refer to the local authority designated officer (lado). Examples of low-level concerns could include:
 - Being over friendly with children (having favourites)
 - Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
 - Engaging with a child one-to-one in a secluded area or behind a closed door
 - Using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating, or offensive language

Low-level concerns should be reported to the DSL or a deputy. If there are concerns about a DSL, these should be reported to the Senior Leadership Team.

Best Practice Networks Safeguarding Team and Contact Information

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Links to Guidance Documents

Department for Education (DfE) (2021a) Keeping children safe in education 2021: statutory guidance for schools and colleges (PDF). London: Department for Education (DfE).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/99

For anyone who has not completed an annual Prevent training session please complete the Home Office training using the link below.

Prevent Training

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/99

Best Practice Network Safeguarding and Prevent Policies September 2021

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