Appendix 8:
Safeguarding Children and Young People: Indicators of Abuse

Adults working with our students must know and understand the indicators that may suggest a child or young person is suffering or at risk of suffering harm.

Definition of abuse
The DfE guide ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ defines abuse as ‘a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.’

Section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act broadens the definition of harm to ‘including for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing ill-treatment of another’.

Types of abuse
Abuse can take many forms. This Policy recognises the following types of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect by others
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional/Psychological abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Institutional abuse
- Self-Neglect
- Financial abuse

Physical abuse
Physical abuse 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.

Neglect by others
Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person'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 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 care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
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/young person 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children.

Emotional/psychological abuse
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to children 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 the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child in participating in normal social interaction. It may also involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children 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 though it may also occur alone.

Institutional abuse
Institutional abuse occurs when the lifestyles of children and young people are sacrificed in favour of the rituals, routines and/or restrictive practices of the home or care setting.

Institutional abuse is the repeatedly poor care of children or a group of children by those working in the care establishment.

Children and young people living within an institution, for example a children’s home or a residential special school, are potentially vulnerable to institutional abuse

Self-neglect
Self-neglect is where a child or young person constantly fails to respond to their own needs and this has a detrimental effect on their health and well-being; where a person is unable to understand the consequences of his or her actions or inaction and this inability leads to or may lead to harm.

Financial abuse
Financial abuse occurs when individual resources are being inappropriately used to the advantage of another person
Signs and symptoms of abuse

The following is a list of signs and symptoms that may be consistent with abuse; some children/young people can exhibit one or more of these signs for other reasons.

If there are concerns about a child displaying any of these indicators the concern should be shared with the DSL/DSO and/or a senior member of staff.

Physical abuse

Physical indicators
Unexpected or unexplained bruises/welts/lacerations/abrasions:
• On face, lips, mouth
• On torso, back, buttocks, thighs
• In various stages of healing
• Clustering forming regular patterns
• Reflecting shape of article used, e.g. belt, buckle, electrical flex
• On several different surface areas
• Regularly appear after absence, weekend, or holiday
• Bite marks or fingernail marks.

Unexplained burns:
• Cigar or cigarette burns e.g. on soles, buttocks, palms or back
• ‘Immersion’ burns, where hands, feet or body have been forcibly immersed in very hot water
• Patterns like electrical burner, iron etc
• Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso

Unexplained fractures:
• To skull, nose, facial structure and others
• In various stages of healing
• Multiple or spiral fractures

Behavioural indicators
• Flinching when approached or touched
• Reluctance to change clothes for PE lessons
• Wary of adult contacts
• Difficult to comfort
• Apprehension when other children cry
• Crying, irritability
• Frightened of parents/staff member/particular individual
• Afraid to go home/to an activity etc
• Rebelliousness in adolescence
• Reported injury
• Behavioural extremes - aggressiveness, withdrawal, impulsiveness
• Regression or child-like behaviour
• Apathy
• Depression
• Poor peer relationships
• Panic in response to pain
Neglect by others

Physical indicators
• Consistent hunger
• Poor hygiene
• Inappropriate and inadequate dress
• Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods
• Unattended physical problems or medical needs
• Abandonment

Behavioural indicators
• Begging
• Stealing food
• Constant fatigue, listlessness
• Poor relationships with care-giver
• Deterioration in health
• Unexplained accidents

Sexual Abuse

Physical indicators
• Difficulty in walking, sitting down
• Stained or bloody underclothing
• Pain or itching in genital area
• Bruising, bleeding, injury to external genitalia, vaginal and/or anal areas
• Vaginal discharge
• Bed-wetting
• Excessive crying
• Sickness

Behavioural indicators
• Inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge for the child’s age
• Promiscuity
• Sudden change in behaviour
• Running away from home
• Wary of adults
• Feeling different from other children
• Unusual avoidance of touch
• Reporting of assault
• Substance abuse (e.g. glue sniffing)
• Emotional withdrawal through lack of trust in adults
• Over-compliance with requests of others
• Frequent complaints of unexplained abdominal pains
• Eating problems
• Sleep disturbances
• Poor peer relationships
• Possessing money or ‘gifts’ that cannot be adequately accounted for
• Inappropriate sexually explicit drawings or stories
• Soiling
Emotional/psychological abuse

Physical indicators
- Failure to thrive
- Delays in physical development or progress

Behavioural indicators
- Sucking, biting, rocking
- Anti-social or destructive behaviour
- Sleep disorders, inhibition of play
- Complaint, passive, aggressive, demanding
- Impairment of intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development
- Reduced levels of personal hygiene
- Eating too much or too little
- Unable to sleep
- Withdrawn or shunning company
- Seeking reassurance

Institutional abuse

Physical indicators
- Shared clothing and possessions
- Inappropriate use of medication
- Failure to thrive

Behavioural indicators
- Low self esteem
- Individual becoming compliant
- No recognition of cultural or religious choices
- No support plans or complaints

Self-Neglect

Physical indicators
- Not eating or over eating
- Not drinking sufficient fluids
- Poor personnel hygiene
- Not taking prescribed medication
- General deterioration in health/hygiene
- An unkempt look
- Weight loss
- Unexplained accidents

Behavioural indicators
- Low self esteem
- Lack of any self confidence
- Not wanting to engage with others

Financial abuse

Physical indicators
- Individual with a decreased amount of money available
- Possessions going missing
- Money disappearing without explanation
- Accounts and receipts not adding up
• Individuals only having a small amount of money available when they used to have more
• Clothing/possessions of poor quality

**Behaviour indicators**

- Low self esteem
- Appears compliant

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**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

**Indicators**

Grooming and sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for ‘normal’ teenage behaviour and/or development. However, parents, carers, school teachers and practitioners are advised to be alert to the following signs and symptoms:

- inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- repeat sexually transmitted infections; in girls repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- going missing from home or care
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- truancy, exclusion, disengagement with MacIntyre School, opting out of education altogether
- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- drug or alcohol misuse
- getting involved in crime
- injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault

(Please also see Bucks CC Children’s Board screening tool for CSE).

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**Indications of abuse in children who have disabilities or medical needs**

Whilst any of the above indicators may identify that abuse is occurring or has occurred, some of them may have other causes. This is particularly important when students have social and communication problems associated with autism or specific medical problems. Research also tells us that children with special needs are at an increased risk of abuse.

Some children and young people display these specific indicators at all times, and where these have been shown not to be a result of abuse it is important to monitor any changes in a child’s behaviour, physical condition, emotional state and sociability. Such changes may themselves indicate that abuse is taking place.

Staff should read individual student files to familiarise themselves with medical conditions that can present with the same symptoms as abuse - but should never assume that the indicator is not the result of abuse.

Because such judgements often require sophisticated knowledge and understanding, all staff must err on the side of caution. It is better to report cases where no abuse is occurring than to miss one case because a wrong assumption has been made. If there is any worry or concern about a child it must be reported.
We recognise other specific safeguarding issues which may or may not be an area for close vigilance, depending on the residential arrangements. These are:

- bullying including cyberbullying
- children missing from education
- children missing from home or care
- child sexual exploitation
- domestic violence
- drugs
- female genital mutilation
- fabricated or induced illness
- faith abuse
- forced marriage
- gangs and youth violence
- gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- mental health
- private fostering
- radicalisation
- sexting
- teenage relationship abuse
- trafficking