Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

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This is a core policy that forms part of the induction for all staff. It is a requirement that all members of staff have access to this policy and sign to say they have read and understood its contents.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any lessons learnt and/or updates to national or local guidance and procedures.

based on DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026

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What to do if you have a welfare concern in Veritas MAT

Why are you concerned?

- something a child has said, such as an allegation, disclosure or comment that causes concern
- changes in appearance, presentation, behaviour, emotional wellbeing or attendance
- unexplained injuries, marks or bruises
- witnessed or reported concerning, harmful or inappropriate behaviour, including online
- concerns linked to family circumstances, peer relationships or wider community context

Act immediately and record your concerns: If urgent, speak to a DSL first

- Reassure the child and listen carefully; do not promise confidentiality.
- Use open questions if needed, for example: TED - Tell, Explain, Describe.
- Record facts and not opinions, using the child's own words where possible.
- Report the concern on My Concern. Speak to the DSL first if urgent. Always follow up with a DSL to discuss any actions/outcomes.

Inform the Veritas MAT Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) Refer to specific school

- If a child is at risk of immediate harm, is unsafe to go home, or requires urgent protection, make an urgent Request for Support to the Front Door Service via the Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal and/or call 03000 41 11 11. If there is immediate danger, call 999.
- If there is no immediate risk of harm, consider what support is needed in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance and KSCMP procedures. This may include internal support, signposting to community-based early help services, contacting the Police, reporting allegations against staff to the LADO, or making a Request for Support to the Front Door Service via the Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal.
- If Veritas MAT believes a child may need support but is unclear whether a Request for Support is required, advice can be sought from the Front Door Service on 03000 41 11 11.
- If support is required outside normal working hours, contact the Out of Hours Service on 03000 41 91 91.

If you are unhappy with the response:

DSLs/Staff:

- Follow Trust whistleblowing procedures (see separate policy).
- Follow Kent safeguarding partnership escalation procedures.

Pupils or Parents:

- Follow Trust complaints procedures.

Record decision making and action taken in the pupil child protection file/My Concern

Monitor

- Be clear about what you are monitoring, for example behaviour trends or appearance.
- Be clear about how long you will monitor for.
- Be clear where, how and to whom you will feed back, and how this will be recorded.

Review and request further support if necessary.

At all stages, the child's circumstances will be kept under review.
The DSL/staff will request further support if required to ensure the child's safety is paramount.

1. Child Focused Approach to Safeguarding

1.1 Introduction

- Veritas MAT recognises its statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Safeguarding is **everybody's responsibility** and everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe. This includes staff, volunteers, governors, trustees, leaders, parents/carers, wider family networks and pupils.

- Veritas believes that the best interests of children always come first. All children, defined in law and in this policy as anyone under the age of 18, have a right to be heard, protected and supported. This policy applies to all children, including those living with birth parents or extended family, children in kinship care, adopted children, looked after children, previously looked after children and care leavers. Where safeguarding concerns relate to pregnancy, staff will also consider the help, support and protection needs of unborn children.

- All children have equal rights to protection, regardless of age, sex, ability, culture, race, language, religion, belief, sexual orientation or identity. Veritas is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive, anti-discriminatory safeguarding culture. Staff are expected to recognise and challenge racism, discrimination and prejudice, and to consider how these experiences may affect children's safety, welfare and access to support.

- Staff at Veritas will maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff will always act in the best interests of the child. If any member of our community has a safeguarding concern about any child or adult, they should act and act immediately.

- This policy applies to child protection concerns relating to children who attend Veritas schools. It may also apply to other children connected to the Veritas MAT, such as siblings, children on student or work placements, or members of staff who are under the age of 18.

- Veritas MAT recognises the importance of providing an ethos and environment where children are safe and feel safe. Children will be respected, listened to and encouraged to talk openly. Their wishes and feelings will be taken into account when deciding what safeguarding action to take and what support to provide.

- Veritas MAT recognises that children's behaviour, presentation and experiences should be understood in context. Staff will take a trauma-informed and child-centred approach, considering the possible root causes of behaviour and the impact of abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, adversity and wider contextual or extra-familial harm.

- Our core safeguarding principles are:
    - **Prevention:** providing a positive, supportive and safe culture, curriculum and pastoral opportunities for children, alongside safer recruitment procedures.
    - **Protection:** following agreed procedures and ensuring all staff are trained and supported to recognise and respond appropriately and sensitively to safeguarding concerns
    - **Support:** adopting a child-centred approach and providing appropriate support for pupils, parents/carers and staff, including specific interventions for those who may be at risk of harm.
    - **Collaboration:** working with parents/carers, where safe and appropriate, and with other agencies to ensure timely, proportionate and effective safeguarding action is taken.

- The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, including governors, temporary or third-party agency staff and volunteers, and are consistent with those outlined within 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026.

1.2 Policy context

- This policy is implemented in accordance with our compliance with the current statutory guidance from the Department for Education 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE), which requires individual schools and colleges to have an effective child protection policy.

- This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and related national and local guidance. This includes but is not limited to:
    - Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
    - Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTSC) 2026
    - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective from 1 September 2026)
    - Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and State-funded schools inspection toolkit (for use from September 2026)
    - Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026
    - Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures
    - The Education Act 2002
    - Education and Inspections Act 2006
    - The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
    - The Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015
    - The Human Rights Act 1998
    - The Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty)
    - Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – referred to collectively as 'data protection laws'

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires school governing bodies, local education authorities and further education institutions to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age. Such arrangements will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

- Veritas MAT will follow local or national guidance in response to any emergencies. We will amend this policy and our procedures as necessary but regardless of the action required, our safeguarding principles will always remain the same and the welfare of the child is paramount.

1.3 Definition of safeguarding

- In line with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and KCSIE, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:
    - providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
    - protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
    - preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
    - ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
    - promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the child(ren)
    - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

- Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It refers to the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

- Veritas MAT understands that significant harm is the threshold used to determine when statutory child protection intervention may be required. Under the Children Act 1989, “Harm” is the “ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of the child”. Harm can be determined “significant” by “comparing a child’s health and development with what might be reasonably expected of a similar child”. There are no absolute criteria for determining significant harm. Significant harm may arise from a single serious incident or from a pattern of acute, longstanding, chronic or cumulative concerns which impair a child’s health or development.

- Veritas recognises that safeguarding concerns are rarely isolated. Children may experience multiple and overlapping harms, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, online harms and extra-familial harm. Our safeguarding response will consider the full context of a child’s lived experience, including their relationships, family circumstances, peer groups, community, online activity and wider environment.

- Safeguarding includes a wide range of issues including, but not limited to:
    - abuse and neglect
    - bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
    - child-on-child abuse
    - children absent from education, missing from education, home or care
    - children with family members in prison or affected by parental offending
    - contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm
    - domestic abuse
    - drugs and alcohol misuse
    - exploitation, including child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation, group-based exploitation, county lines, gangs, serious violence, trafficking and modern slavery
    - fabricated or induced illness
    - gender-based abuse and violence against women and girls
    - hate, discrimination and harmful prejudice
    - homelessness
    - honour or faith-based abuse, including Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage
    - mental health concerns
    - online abuse and technology-assisted harm, including making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes
    - preventing radicalisation and extremism
    - private fostering
    - sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour and relationship abuse

Further information about specific safeguarding issues can be found in Part one and Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

1.4 Related safeguarding policies

- This policy is one of a series in the Veritas MAT integrated safeguarding portfolio and should be read and actioned in conjunction with the policies listed below:
    - Acceptable Use of Technology Policies (AUP)
    - Anti-bullying
    - Attendance
    - Behaviour, including Relationships and Behaviour Policy and Use of Restrictive Intervention ***Behaviour in Schools Advice for headteachers and school staff’Searching, screening and confiscation in schools***
    - Complaints
    - Confidentiality
    - Data protection and information sharing
    - Emergency procedures, such as evacuations and lockdowns

- Health and safety
- First aid and accidents, including medication and managing illness, safer eating and allergies, health and safety, and infection
- Image use
- Managing allegations against staff
- Mobile Phone Policy ***Mobile Phones in Schools***
- Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Personal and intimate care
- Relationship, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) ***statutory Relationships, Sex, and Health Education***
- Risk assessments, such as school trips, use of technology
- Safer recruitment
- Searching, screening and confiscation
- Social media
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing

Supporting Guidance to be read and followed alongside this document

- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People in Education Settings - Safer Recruitment Consortium
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused

- These documents can be found on Veritas SharePoint for staff and Veritas website.

1.5 Policy compliance, monitoring and review

- Veritas will review this policy at least annually and update it as needed, so that it remains current and reflects safeguarding issues as they emerge and evolve, including lessons learnt. The policy will also be updated following relevant national or local guidance changes, significant safeguarding events or learning, and any changes to Veritas MAT procedures.

- All staff, including temporary staff, agency staff and volunteers, will be provided with access to this policy and Part one of the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Staff will be expected to read and understand the relevant information as part of induction and ongoing safeguarding training. These documents can be accessed here:KCSIE

- The Trust Board of Trustees, working with the senior leadership team and DSL, will ensure mechanisms are in place to support all staff to understand and discharge their safeguarding roles and responsibilities as set out in Part one of KCSIE.

- Parents/carers can obtain a copy of the Veritas MAT Child Protection Policy and other related policies on request. These policies can also be viewed via the Veritas MAT website: Here

- The policy forms part of our safeguarding arrangements and will be reviewed annually by the Trustees and leadership team who have responsibility for oversight of safeguarding and child protection systems.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Headteacher will provide regular reports to the Trustees and leadership team on safeguarding activity, systems and themes. Reports will support effective oversight and challenge but will not include details that identify individual pupils or families, unless this is required for a specific safeguarding purpose and is lawful and appropriate.

2 Key Responsibilities

2.1 Governance and leadership

- The Trust Board of Trustees and leadership team have strategic responsibility for the Veritas MAT safeguarding arrangements and will ensure they comply with their duties under legislation and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

- The Trust Board of Trustees will ensure there is a whole Veritas MAT approach to safeguarding. This means ensuring safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development, and that all systems, processes and policies operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.
- The Trust Board of Trustees and leadership team will ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place so that timely action is taken to safeguard and promote children's welfare. The Headteacher will ensure that these policies and procedures are understood and followed by all staff.

- The Trust Board of Trustees will have regard to their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, and the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements set out by the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP).
    - This includes but is not limited to safeguarding all members of the school community, including staff, pupils, parents/carers and other family members, who are identified with protected characteristics within the Equality Act; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
    - For further information about our approaches to equality, diversity, and inclusion, please access our policy here.

- The Trust Board of Trustees and leadership team will promote an inclusive, anti-discriminatory safeguarding culture and ensure staff are supported to identify, understand and challenge racism, discrimination and disproportionality in safeguarding practice.

- The Trust Board of Trustees will ensure an appropriate senior member of staff, from the Veritas MAT leadership team, is appointed to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). They will ensure the DSL and any deputies have the appropriate status, authority, time, funding, training, resources and support to carry out the role effectively.

- Veritas MAT has a nominated safeguarding governor for each school: Warden House - Lynn Lawrence; Pilgrims' Way - Thomas Collie; Mundella - Georgina Keith-Hill.

2.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Veritas MAT has appointed an appropriate senior member of staff within each school to act as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL for each school is identified at the start of this policy.

- The DSL has overall responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of safeguarding and child protection, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.
- The Veritas MAT has also appointed Deputy DSLs who are trained to the same standard as the DSL and will have delegated responsibilities to act in the DSLs absence: See beginning of policy.

- For the purposes of this policy, references to the DSL, includes the DSL and any appropriately trained deputies, however, Veritas MAT recognises that whilst the activities of the DSL may be delegated to the

deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection remains with the DSL and this responsibility will not be delegated.

- The DSL is most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and is the most appropriate person to advise staff on the response to safeguarding concerns.

- The DSL will carry out their role in line with Annex B of KCSIE. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - managing referrals to the Front Door Service, the police, the Channel programme, the Disclosure and Barring Service and other agencies as required.
    - working with others, including the Headteacher, senior leaders, relevant staff, social workers, early help services, Family Help workers, local authority services and other safeguarding partners.
    - acting as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.
    - maintaining a confidential recording system for safeguarding and child protection concerns.
    - coordinating safeguarding action for individual children, including children who need a social worker, children receiving early help, children who are looked after or previously looked after, and children subject to child protection or child in need plans.
    - ensuring the Veritas MAT contributes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and is appropriately represented at relevant safeguarding meetings.
    - ensuring locally established procedures, including Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures are followed as necessary.
    - promoting educational outcomes by sharing relevant welfare, safeguarding and child protection information with teachers and school/college leadership staff, where appropriate.
    - taking lead responsibility for online safety, including understanding filtering and monitoring systems and processes.
    - ensuring staff access appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and receive regular safeguarding updates.
    - keeping the Headteacher informed of safeguarding issues, especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.
    - being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult where there is a need for police detention, treatment or questioning.
    - ensuring child protection files are kept up to date, stored securely and transferred appropriately when a child moves setting.
- During term time, the DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns.
    - All safeguarding concerns, discussions and decisions, and reasons for those decisions, will be recorded on My Concern. This system automatically informs the DSL of any concerns that have been raised. Safeguarding records will include a clear and comprehensive summary of any concerns, details of how concerns were followed up and resolved, and a note of any action taken, decisions reached and outcomes.

- Where the DSL is not available, following arrangement is in place so that safeguarding concerns can be raised, received, monitored and acted on without delay.
    - Staff should speak to a member of the senior leadership team, a DSL from another Trust school, take advice from the Education Safeguarding Service or a consultation with a social worker from the Front Door (for contact information, see flowchart). In these circumstances, any action taken will be shared with a DSL as soon as is practically possible.

- The Veritas MAT will ensure appropriate DSL cover arrangements are in place during any closures, out-of-hours activities and out-of-term activities arranged by the Veritas MAT.
    - Staff should contact the Lead DSL if they have a concern and log on My Concern. For schools that operate holiday provision, a timetable will be shared with staff with which DSL is on duty.

- The DSLs will undergo appropriate and specific training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training will be updated at least every two years. The DSLs' knowledge and skills will be refreshed at regular intervals, and at least annually, to keep up with developments relevant to safeguarding and child protection.

2.3 Members of staff

- All staff have an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. They are particularly well placed to observe changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, attendance or wellbeing, identify concerns early, provide help for children and prevent concerns from escalating.

- All members of staff have a responsibility to:
    - provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
    - be aware of the systems within Veritas MAT which support safeguarding, including this child protection policy, the Staff Code of Conduct, the safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, and the role of the DSL.
    - be aware of the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, so they can identify children who may need help or protection.
    - be prepared to identify children who may benefit from support before statutory intervention, including universal services, community-based Early Help, targeted early help through Family Help, and/or statutory support from children's social care, in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance and local procedures.
    - understand the local process for seeking advice and making referrals, including Requests for Support to the Front Door Service, and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance. This includes where a child may be in need, disabled, or suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
    - know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused, neglected or exploited, and understand the impact this can have on a child.
    - maintain an attitude of professional curiosity and speak to the DSL if they have any concerns about a child.
    - be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.
    - know how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality, while understanding that early sharing of information is vital to keeping children safe.
    - reassure children who report concerns that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.
    - undertake safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and engage with regular safeguarding updates.
    - act in line with the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct and other relevant safeguarding policies.
    - where applicable, act in line with the Teachers' Standards, which state that teachers, including headteachers, should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.

- Staff at Veritas MAT recognise 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 being abusive or harmful. This will not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and speaking to a DSL where they have concerns.

- Staff at Veritas MAT will determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and parents/carers which support appropriate communication and early identification of needs and concerns. This will be achieved in line with relevant Veritas MAT policies, including the Staff Code of Conduct and pupil behaviour policy.

2.4 Children

- Children have a right to:
    - feel safe, be listened to, and have their wishes and feelings taken into account.
    - be taken seriously when they raise concerns about abuse, neglect, exploitation or any other safeguarding issue.

- receive appropriate help and support from safe adults.
- safely express their views, share concerns and give feedback about safeguarding arrangements.
- contribute to the development of Veritas MAT safeguarding policies.
- learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

2.5 Parents and carers

- Parents/carers have an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of their children. They are encouraged to work in partnership with the Veritas MAT and to:
  - understand and follow relevant Veritas MAT policies and procedures.
  - talk to their children about safeguarding, including online safety, and support the Veritas MAT in their safeguarding approach.
  - identify behaviours or changes which may indicate that their child, or another child, may be at risk of harm, including online.
  - speak to the Veritas MAT if they have concerns about their child, or another child's, welfare or wellbeing.
  - seek advice or support from the Veritas MAT or other agencies if they have concerns about their child, or another child's, safety or wellbeing.

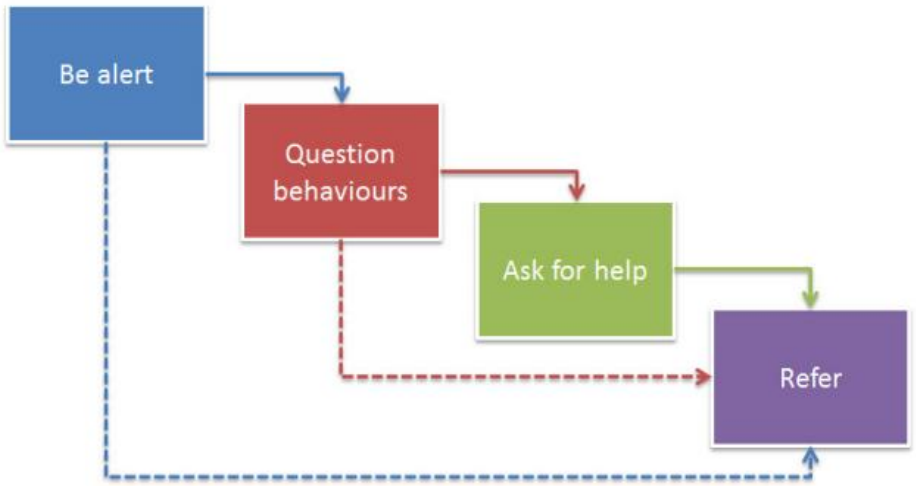
3 Child Protection Procedures

3.1 Recognising indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation

- Staff will maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff will always act in the best interests of the child.

- All staff are made aware of the definitions and indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation as identified in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Staff will also be expected to understand these indicators in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance.

- All members of staff are expected to be aware of and follow the 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' guidance if they are concerned about a child:



- Veritas MAT recognises that when assessing whether a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm, there are four categories of abuse (further information is included in appendix 1):
  - Physical abuse

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

- By understanding the indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation, we can identify children who may need help or protection, respond as early as possible, and help ensure children and families receive the right support.

- Veritas MAT recognises that concerns may arise in many different contexts and can vary in nature and seriousness. Indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation do not automatically mean that a child is being harmed; however, all concerns will be taken seriously and explored by the DSL on a case-by-case basis.

- Veritas MAT recognises abuse, neglect, exploitation and other safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events and cannot always be covered by one definition or one label. In many cases, multiple issues will overlap.

- All staff will consider whether children may be at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm in situations outside their families. Veritas MAT recognises that extra-familial harms can take a variety of forms and that children may be vulnerable to multiple harms, including sexual abuse, sexual harassment and exploitation, domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships, criminal exploitation including financial exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, online harms and radicalisation. Staff will report any concerns to the DSL in line with this policy, and the DSL will consider the wider context of the child's experiences when assessing risk and support needs.

- Veritas MAT recognises that any child may benefit from support before statutory intervention is required. This may include support from universal services, community-based Early Help, or the targeted early help level of Family Help. Further information about how Veritas MAT responds to safeguarding and welfare concerns, including requests for support, is set out in section 3.2 of this policy.

- All staff will be alert to the potential need for additional support for children who may be more vulnerable or whose circumstances may indicate emerging, escalating or unmet needs. Staff will be particularly alert to the potential need for additional support for a child who:
  - is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
  - has special educational needs, whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care plan
  - has a mental health need
  - is a young carer
  - is pregnant and/or is a parent themselves
  - has exhibited early signs of abusive, violent and/or harmful behaviours
  - is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement, association with organised crime groups or county lines
  - is frequently missing or goes missing from education, home or care
  - electively home educated
  - has been repeatedly removed from the classroom, experienced multiple suspensions, is on a part-time timetable, is at risk of permanent exclusion, is attending alternative provision or is attending a Pupil Referral Unit
  - is at risk of exploitation, modern slavery or trafficking, including criminal or sexual exploitation
  - is at risk of being radicalised into terrorism
  - has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending
  - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues or domestic abuse
  - is misusing alcohol or other drugs themselves

- is at risk of honour or faith-based abuse, such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is privately fostered.

- Where staff identify that a child may benefit from additional support, they will report their concerns to the DSL in line with this policy.

- Staff will be alert to:
  - concerns raised by children, including disclosures or comments about themselves, their peers or family members.
  - changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, attendance, presentation or emotional wellbeing.
  - indicators of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
  - concerning interactions between children and parents/carers.
  - parental behaviours which may indicate risk, including concerns linked to substance misuse, mental health, domestic abuse or other family circumstances.
  - risks outside the family home, including peer groups, the wider community and online context.
  - the needs of children with additional or complex needs, who may require additional support or specialist services.

- Children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone they are being abused, neglected or exploited. They may also not recognise their experiences as harmful. This should not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns.

- All reports and concerns raised by children will be taken seriously and responded to in line with this policy. Staff will reassure children that they are being taken seriously, that they will be supported and kept safe, and that they will not be made to feel ashamed or that they are creating a problem by reporting concerns.

- Veritas MAT recognises that technology can be a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues; children are at risk of abuse or exploitation online from people they know (including other children) and from people they do not know; in many cases, abuse will take place concurrently via online channels and in daily life.

- Following a concern about a child's safety or welfare, any searching, screening or confiscation of items, including electronic devices, will be managed in line with the Behaviour Policy and/or Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy which is informed by the DfE '[Searching, screening and confiscation at school]' guidance.
  - The DSL will be informed of any search where there were reasonable grounds to suspect a pupil was in possession of a prohibited item, or where a search identifies a potential safeguarding risk. The DSL will consider the circumstances and any wider safeguarding concerns.

3.2 Responding to child protection concerns

- Where safeguarding concerns are identified, the child's lived experience, voice and views will remain central to our decision-making, assessment and planning.

- If staff are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child, they are expected to:
  - listen carefully to child and reflect back the concern.
  - use the child's own language.
  - be non-judgmental.
  - avoid leading questions, using open questions where necessary to clarify information, for example: who, what, where, when, or TED: Tell, Explain, Describe
  - not promise confidentiality, as concerns will have to be shared further, for example, with the DSL and/or other agencies.

- be clear about boundaries and how the concern will be progressed.
- record the concern using the facts as the child presents them, in line with Veritas MAT record keeping procedures.
- inform the DSL, as soon as practically possible.

- All staff are made aware that early information sharing is vital for the effective identification, assessment, and allocation of appropriate support. This applies when concerns first emerge and where a child is already known to other agencies. Staff will not assume that a colleague or another professional will act or share information that may be critical in keeping a child safe.

- Veritas MAT recognises that children should not be seen or relied upon as protective factors for adults. When considering family circumstances, adult vulnerabilities or parental needs, staff will remain focused on the child's needs, safety, welfare and lived experience. Staff will not assume that a child's presence, behaviour, affection, resilience or relationship with a parent/carer reduces risk, prevents harm, or means that an adult's needs are safely managed.

- Veritas MAT will respond to safeguarding concerns in line with the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP) procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance which follow the principle of 'Right Help, Right Time, Right Professional'.
    - The full KSCMP procedures and additional guidance relating to reporting concerns and specific safeguarding issues can be found on the KSCMP website: www.kscmp.org.uk

- All staff will be made aware of the process for identifying, assessing and responding to children's needs in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance. This includes understanding the criteria, including the level of need, for when children and families may be supported through
    - universal services and community-based Early Help
    - the targeted early help level of Family Help, under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004
    - statutory services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children in need and disabled children
    - statutory child protection processes under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm
    - care and supervision proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989
    - accommodation under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

- Staff are not expected to make threshold decisions alone. If staff are concerned about a child's welfare or safety or are unsure what level of support may be required, they will speak to the DSL in line with this policy. The DSL will consider the concern in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance, KSCMP procedures and local referral pathways.

- Where safeguarding concerns are identified, options may include:
    - managing support for the child internally through Veritas MAT pastoral, welfare and/or safeguarding support processes, where this is appropriate and does not place the child at additional risk.
    - considering whether parents/carers should be informed to further support the child's wellbeing, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
    - accessing universal services and community-based Early Help for *children with emerging needs*, including support available through Kent Family Hubs, the Veritas MAT and other local universal, voluntary or community services.
    - making a Request for Support to the Front Door Service via the Kent Children's Services Portal where a child's needs cannot be met by universal or community-based early help support alone and coordinated, multi-disciplinary support may be required, or where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

- Community-based Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience, improves outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not a single service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners, including education providers. The Kent Support Levels Guidance describes this as '*children with emerging needs (Level 2)*'.
    - Children at this level are usually best supported by professionals who already work with them, such as health professionals, early years settings, schools or colleges, and/or through community resources such as Family Hubs or voluntary services.
    - A Request for Support via Front Door Service is not required for support at this level.
    - Where community-based Early Help is appropriate, the DSL will consider what support can be provided within Veritas MAT and/or through local universal, voluntary or community services, including Kent Family Hubs.
    - Where the need of a child/family escalate, become persistent, or cannot be met by universal or community-based Early Help alone, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support to Family Help is required in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance.

- Where children and families have multiple and/or complex needs, or persistent needs, which cannot be met by universal or community-based early help support alone, they may require coordinated, multi-disciplinary support to prevent escalation through the targeted early help level of Family Help. The Kent Support Levels Guidance describes this as '*Family Help – Children with multiple and/or complex needs (Level 3)'*. Support at this level may include targeted early help and statutory support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, where required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
    - A Request for Support is required and will be made to the Front Door Service via the Kent Children's Services Portal.

- Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and needs and risks cannot be safely managed through targeted or Child in Need Family Help support alone, a statutory child protection response is required. The Kent Support Levels Guidance describes this as '*Family Help – Children in need of protection (Level 4)'*.
    - Safeguarding activity at this level is led under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
    - A Request for Support is required and will be made to the Front Door Service via the Kent Children's Services Portal.
    - If a child is at immediate risk, the Request for Support will be marked as "urgent".
    - If the child is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted using 999.
- Veritas MAT will take appropriate safeguarding action in response to concerns but will not investigate child protection concerns as a single agency or attempt to determine whether abuse, neglect or exploitation has occurred. Staff will record and report concerns in line with this policy and KSCMP procedures, and information will be shared with Children's Front Door and/or the police where appropriate, so that concerns can be considered through the appropriate multi-agency process.
- Veritas MAT recognises that children may be harmed in contexts outside the home, including within peer groups, the wider community and online. When making a Request for Support, the Veritas MAT will provide as much relevant information as possible so that any assessment can consider the full context of the child's lived experience and take a contextual approach to harm.

- If the Veritas MAT believes a child may need support but is unclear whether a Request for Support should be submitted, the DSL may seek advice through a no-name consultation with the Front Door Service before deciding next steps. A consultation will not be used where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; in these circumstances, a Request for Support will be submitted without delay.

- The DSL will usually have responsibility for making Requests for Support and other safeguarding referrals. However, all staff are made aware of the local Kent process for making referrals to the Front Door and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, including the role they may be expected to play in such assessments.

- If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare or safety, they are expected to act on them immediately.
    - If staff are unsure whether something is a safeguarding issue, they will speak to a DSL.
    - If, in exceptional circumstances, a DSL or deputy DSL is not available, this must not delay appropriate action being taken. In these circumstances, staff should speak to a member of the Veritas MAT senior leadership team, seek a consultation from the Front Door Service, contact the police where urgent action is required, or make a Request for Support themselves. Contact information is available in the safeguarding flowchart on page 6.
    - Any safeguarding action taken by staff must be shared with the DSL as soon as possible.

- Parents/carers will usually be spoken to where a Request for Support is being considered, and their agreement to engage will be sought where this is required and safe/appropriate to do so. This will be considered in line with KSCMP procedures and the Kent Support Levels Guidance.
    - Parent/carer agreement to engage is not required for *'Family Help – Children in need of protection (Level 4)'*, where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. A Request for Support must be made in these circumstances; however, it is good practice for the Veritas MAT to work openly and transparently with parents/carers and inform them of the Request for Support where it is safe to do so.
    - Parents/carers will not be informed before a Request for Support is made where this may place a child at increased risk of harm, place an adult at risk of serious harm, prejudice the prevention or detection of serious crime, or undermine a criminal investigation.

- If, after a Request for Support or other external intervention, a child's situation does not appear to be improving, or there are concerns about a decision or response, staff or the DSL will consider whether to re-refer and/or follow the Kent Safeguarding Children Escalation Procedure to ensure concerns are addressed and, most importantly, that the child's situation improves.

- Any pastoral or welfare support provided by the Veritas MAT to children and families will be recorded and reviewed. The DSL will oversee support where families are requiring additional support, to ensure that Veritas MAT activity does not obscure potential safeguarding concerns from the wider professional network.

3.3 Multi-agency working

- Veritas MAT recognises the pivotal role education settings play in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. We are committed to working in line with the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and the principle of 'Right Help, Right Time, Right Professional'.

- The Veritas MAT leadership team, Trust Board of Trustees and DSL(s) will work to establish effective and co-operative relationships with safeguarding partners and other local agencies. This may include Children's Front Door, social workers, Family Help practitioners, health professionals, mental health services, specialist teachers, educational psychologists, other education settings and the police.

- Veritas MAT will work with partner agencies to provide a coordinated safeguarding response which promotes children's welfare and protects them from harm. This includes contributing to relevant multi-agency plans and meetings, such as child in need meetings, child protection conferences, core groups, strategy discussions and care planning meetings.

- Where a child is supported through community-based Early Help, Family Help, child in need, child protection or care planning processes, the Veritas MAT will work with partner agencies to promote

joined-up planning, avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure the child's educational needs, safety, voice and lived experience are considered.

- The Veritas MAT will allow access for Kent Children's Social Care and, where relevant, a placing local authority, so that they can conduct, or consider whether to conduct, assessments under section 17 or section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

- When making a Request for Support or contributing to statutory assessments, the Veritas MAT will provide relevant information about the child's presentation, attendance, progress, relationships, family circumstances, wider context and any known risks outside the home, including online, peer group or community-based concerns.

- The Headteacher and DSL are aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult where there is a need for police detention, treatment or questioning. The Veritas MAT will respond in line with relevant guidance and local procedures, including the Behaviour Policy and/or Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy, where applicable. ***'Searching, screening and confiscation at school'***

3.4 Child Protection Records

- All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for those decisions, will be recorded in writing using My Concern. All information is kept on this platform.
- If there is an immediate safeguarding concern, staff will speak to the DSL first. Completing a written record must not delay urgent safeguarding action.

- Records will be completed as soon as possible after the incident/event and be signed and dated by the member of staff. They will be accurate, factual and written in a clear and professional manner, using the child's own words where relevant. Records will not include personal opinions unless these are clearly identified as professional judgement.

- Staff will include relevant details such as the date, time, location, people present, the concern or disclosure, any visible injuries, the child's presentation and any action taken. A body map will be completed where visible injuries to a child have been observed.

- If staff are unsure about recording requirements, they will seek advice from the DSL.

- Our child protection records will include a clear and comprehensive summary of concerns, details of how concerns have been followed up and resolved, actions taken or not taken, decisions reached, the rationale for those decisions and any outcomes.

- Child protection records will be kept confidential and stored securely. Records will be maintained separately from the child's main Veritas MAT record and retained in line with data protection legislation and Veritas MAT record retention arrangements.

- The DSL will have oversight of child protection records and will ensure they are reviewed, shared and transferred appropriately in line with statutory guidance, KSCMP procedures and Veritas MAT record keeping arrangements.

3.5 Transferring and receiving child protection files and safeguarding information

- When a child leaves Veritas MAT, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is transferred to the DSL at the new setting as soon as possible. This will be within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term.

- Child protection files will be transferred securely, separately from the child's main file, and in accordance with data protection legislation and statutory safeguarding guidance. Confirmation of receipt will be obtained.
- In addition to transferring the child protection file, the DSL will consider whether it is appropriate to share relevant information with the DSL at the new setting in advance of the child leaving. This may include information to support the new setting to undertake an assessment of risk to others, as well as to make arrangements to safeguard the child, promote their welfare or continue appropriate support. Where there are safeguarding concerns, known risks or significant support needs, the DSL will instigate a direct conversation with the new setting to support effective information sharing and transition planning.
- Where Veritas MAT receives a child protection file from another setting, the DSL will review the records and ensure relevant staff are made aware of information they need to know in order to safeguard and support the child. This may include the SENCO, pastoral staff, relevant teaching staff or other appropriate members of staff.
- Where information shared during transition indicates that a child may present a risk to others and/or may be at risk themselves, Veritas MAT will consider what safeguarding action is required before, or as soon as possible after, the child starts. This may include completing or reviewing a safeguarding risk assessment and putting in place an appropriate safety and support plan.
- Where a child joins Veritas MAT and no child protection file is received, the DSL will proactively contact the previous setting to confirm whether a child protection file exists and, if so, ensure it is transferred securely without delay.

3.6 Confidentiality and information sharing

Information Commissioner's Office Data Protection in schools guidance a'Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners

- Veritas MAT recognises its duty and powers to hold, use and share relevant information with appropriate agencies where this is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Information will be shared at the earliest opportunity where this is needed to identify, assess or respond to risk, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children, KSCMP procedures and data protection legislation.

- Veritas MAT has an appropriately trained Data Protection Officer (DPO) in line with data protection law requirements. The DPO is Judicium Education. Please contact VMAT Finance.

- All staff are made aware of the need to protect children's privacy and to handle information in a way that is lawful, proportionate and secure. Staff are also made aware that confidentiality must never prevent appropriate safeguarding action from being taken.

- Staff will not promise confidentiality to a child, as safeguarding concerns may need to be shared with the DSL, the Front Door Service, the police and/or other agencies where appropriate.

- Staff are expected to be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to concerns about a child's safety, welfare or wellbeing. Staff will not assume that a colleague or another professional will share information that may be critical to keeping a child safe.

- Data protection laws do not prevent the sharing of information for the purpose of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. Information sharing decisions will be informed by safeguarding need, risk assessment, proportionality, data protection requirements and the need to promote the welfare and safety of the child and others.

- Staff will have due regard to relevant data protection laws and principles, including when information should be shared and when it should be withheld. Staff will receive appropriate information and guidance about confidentiality, information sharing and data protection through induction, safeguarding training, staff code of conduct, information sharing through school briefings.

- Where possible and appropriate, staff will be open and transparent with children and families about what information may be shared, with whom and why. However, information may be shared without agreement where this is necessary to safeguard a child, promote a child's welfare, prevent delay or avoid increasing risk.

- The Headteacher and DSL will share relevant safeguarding information with staff on a need-to-know basis, so that staff can safeguard and support children appropriately.

- Staff can access further information through the Veritas MAT confidentiality policy, data protection policy and/or information governance procedures: Here

3.7 Complaints

- All members of the Veritas MAT community should feel able to raise or report any concerns about children's safety, safeguarding practice or potential failures in the Veritas MAT safeguarding arrangements.

- Veritas MAT has a complaints procedure available to parents/carers, pupils, staff and visitors who wish to raise a concern or complaint. This can be found on the Veritas MAT website: Here and concerns can also be raised with the Trust's Governance Professional via governance.professional@veritasmat.co.uk.

- The leadership team at Veritas MAT will take all safeguarding concerns, complaints and whistleblowing reports seriously. Concerns will be considered and responded to in line with the relevant Veritas MAT policy and procedure.

- Whilst we encourage members of our community to raise concerns directly with the Veritas MAT where appropriate, we recognise this may not always be possible.
    - Children, young people or adults who have experienced, witnessed or are concerned about sexual abuse or harassment in education settings can contact the NSPCC Report Abuse in Schools helpline on 0800 136 663.
    - Staff who do not feel able to raise concerns about child protection failures internally, or who feel their concerns are not being addressed, can contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285

- Any concern or complaint that constitutes an allegation against, or concern about, a member of staff, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor will be dealt with in line with section 8 of this policy.

4 Specific Forms of Abuse and Other Safeguarding Issues

- Veritas MAT recognises that children may be vulnerable to a wide range of safeguarding issues, both inside and outside the home, including online. Staff will maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and will report any concerns to the DSL in line with section 3 of this policy.

- Further information about specific safeguarding issues is available in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

4.1 Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)

- All members of staff at Veritas MAT recognise that children can abuse other children; this is known as child-on-child abuse and may take place online, face-to-face, physically, verbally or through a combination of channels.

- Staff will maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”. Even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, staff will remain alert to the possibility that it may be taking place and not being reported.

- Veritas MAT adopts a zero-tolerance approach to child-on-child abuse. We believe that abuse is abuse and it will never be tolerated or dismissed as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys”; this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, misogyny/misandry, and can create an unsafe environment for children and a culture that normalises abuse, which can prevent children from coming forward to report it.

- Veritas MAT recognises that child-on-child abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:
    - bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.
    - abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’.
    - physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm, including where there is an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse.
    - serious physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon.
    - sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault, including where there is an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence.
    - sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
    - 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.
    - Consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (previously known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery), including where generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI)
    - Upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
    - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals, which could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.

- Veritas MAT recognises that harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum, from developmentally inappropriate or problematic sexual behaviour through to abusive behaviour and sexual violence.

- Concerns will be considered in context, taking account of the age and stage of development of the children involved, any power imbalance, coercion, threats, exploitation, the nature of the behaviour, the impact on those affected, and any wider safeguarding risks.

- All staff have a role to play in challenging inappropriate, harmful or abusive behaviours between children. Staff will be alert to factors which may increase risk or affect how children experience or report abuse, including age, developmental stage, sex, ability, SEND, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, power imbalance, peer group dynamics and wider contextual factors. Staff will be aware of the possibility that children may minimise, normalise or not recognise harmful behaviours, and that some behaviours may be facilitated, threatened, encouraged or shared online.

- Veritas MAT recognises that for some (but not all) forms of child-on-child abuse, girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely to be perpetrators. However, all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable, will be taken seriously and will be responded to in line with this policy.

- Veritas MAT recognises that the law is in place to protect children rather than unnecessarily criminalise them. Where relevant, this will be explained to pupils in an age and developmentally appropriate way which avoids alarming or distressing them, while making clear that harmful, abusive or non-consensual behaviour is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

- Veritas MAT want children to feel confident to report abuse, knowing that their concerns will be treated seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. The Veritas MAT will ensure reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible. Children who report child-on-child abuse will be reassured that they are not creating a problem and will not be made to feel ashamed for sharing a concern.

- Veritas MAT recognises that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding issue for all children involved. We will consider the safety, welfare and support needs of the child who has experienced harm, any other affected children, and the child alleged to have caused harm.

- Any concerns or allegations relating to child-on-child abuse, whether on-site, off-site or online, will be recorded and reported to the DSL in line with this policy.
    - The DSL will consider the concern in line with relevant Veritas MAT policies and procedures, including behaviour, anti-bullying and child protection procedures.
    - The DSL will consider the behaviour in context, including the child's age and stage of development, any SEND or communication needs, trauma or abuse history, power imbalance, coercion, intent, frequency, escalation and the impact on others.
    - Concerns will be responded to, and where appropriate investigated under relevant Veritas MAT procedures, while recognising the need to engage with multi-agency processes where safeguarding or child protection concerns are identified.
    - Where concerns involve harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment or sexual violence, DSLs will respond in line with Part five of KCSIE.
    - Responses will always be child-centred, proportionate and based on the circumstances of the case.

- When a concern of child-on-child abuse is reported, a DSL will consider whether an immediate risk and needs assessment is required. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may include:
    - the wishes and feelings of the child who has been harmed
    - the nature of the concern or alleged incident
    - whether a crime may have been committed
    - whether harmful sexual behaviour may have been displayed
    - the ages and developmental stages of the children involved
    - any power imbalance, coercion, intimidation or exploitation
    - whether the concern appears to be a one-off incident or part of a pattern of behaviour
    - any vulnerability, SEND or additional needs affecting the children involved
    - any online elements or wider contextual factors
    - any ongoing risks to the child who has been harmed, other children, staff or the wider Veritas MAT community
    - whether the concern links to other safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, serious violence or abuse within intimate personal relationships between children.

- The risk and needs assessment, where completed, will be recorded and kept under review. Actions will be taken to protect and support all children involved and to address any wider safeguarding risks within the Veritas MAT environment.

- The Veritas MAT will take appropriate safeguarding, pastoral and/or behaviour-related action in response to child-on-child abuse. However, where the concern indicates that a child may require Family Help, statutory support or protection, a DSL will make a Request for Support via the Kent Children's Services Portal, in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance and KSCMP procedures.

- The Veritas MAT will normally inform parents/carers of the children involved in child-on-child abuse, unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm, place another person at risk, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, or undermine a police or statutory safeguarding response.
    - Information shared with parents/carers will be relevant to their own child and shared in line with safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection requirements. The Veritas MAT will not share confidential information about other children, including any safeguarding action, support or sanctions, unless there is a lawful and appropriate basis to do so.

- Child-on-child abuse is preventable. Timely, evidence-based support can be key to preventing children from going on to commit abuse or violence. Veritas MAT will work to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by creating a safe culture, promoting respectful relationships, providing appropriate curriculum opportunities, ensuring children know how to report concerns, and responding consistently to harmful behaviour.
    - This will include, but is not limited to: a clear and consistently applied Behaviour and Relationships Policy; an age-appropriate RSHE curriculum which teaches consent, boundaries, healthy and respectful relationships and online safety; regular safeguarding education through assemblies and wider curriculum opportunities; staff training to recognise and respond to child-on-child abuse; clear and accessible reporting routes for pupils; appropriate supervision and consideration of identified areas or times of increased risk; and the early identification of, and support for, children displaying harmful or concerning behaviour.

- Children affected by child-on-child abuse will be supported according to their needs.
    - This may include pastoral support, safety planning, adjustments to reduce further risk, support from the DSL or other trusted adults, and referral to external or specialist services where appropriate. The needs of all children involved will be considered, including children who have experienced harm, children who have displayed harmful behaviour, and any other children affected or witnessing the behaviour. Support and risk management arrangements will be regularly reviewed and adapted as necessary.

4.2 Making or sharing nudes and/or semi-nudes

- Veritas MAT recognises that all incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, whether consensual or non-consensual, will require a safeguarding response.

- For the purpose of this policy, nudes and semi-nudes means nude or semi-nude images, videos or livestreams of children under the age of 18. This includes imagery that is taken/created by a child, taken/created by a child and shared by another person, digitally altered, or generated using artificial intelligence (AI). Nudes and semi-nudes may be shared online, between devices, through social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, forums, livestreams or other digital routes.

- Creating, possessing or sharing nudes and semi-nudes of children under 18, including where this has happened with consent, is illegal and can present complex safeguarding issues. However, Veritas MAT recognises that the law is in place to protect children rather than unnecessarily criminalise them. Responses will therefore be child-centred, proportionate and focused on safeguarding and supporting the children involved.

- All concerns must be reported to and managed by the DSL in line with this policy, the Kent and Medway Responding to Nude and Semi-Nude Image Sharing Guidance, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and the UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' guidance.

- When made aware of concerns involving consensual or non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, staff must:
    - report the concern to the DSL immediately.
    - never view, copy, print, share, forward, store or save the imagery, or ask a child to share or download it.
    - report immediately to the DSL if imagery has been viewed inadvertently
    - not delete the imagery or ask the child to delete it.
    - not investigate images themselves or ask children involved to disclose information about the imagery, as this is the responsibility of the DSL.
    - avoid saying or doing anything which may blame or shame any child involved.
    - reassure the child that they will be supported and kept safe.
    - explain that the concern must be shared with the DSL and that confidentiality cannot be promised.
    - not share information about the incident with other staff, children, parents/carers or other families.

- When made aware of a concern involving making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, the DSL will hold an initial review meeting in line with the UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' guidance to explore the context and ensure appropriate and proportionate safeguarding action is taken in the best interests of any child involved. This may include speaking with relevant staff and children, involving parents/carers where safe and appropriate, seeking advice, making a Request for Support via the Kent Children's Services Portal, and/or contacting the police where required.

- Parents/carers of children involved in making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes, will be informed at an early stage, unless there is good reason to believe that involving them would put a child at risk of harm.

- A Request for Support will be made to the Front Door Service via the Kent Children's Services Portal, and/or the police informed immediately if:
    - the incident involves an adult (over 18).
    - there is reason to believe that a child has been coerced, blackmailed, groomed or exploited.
    - there are concerns about a child's capacity to consent, including due to age, developmental stage, vulnerability or additional needs
    - the imagery involves sexual acts, violence, threats, exploitation or other high-risk features (for example, a child under the age of thirteen, or images depict sexual acts which are unusual for the child's developmental stage)
    - a child is at immediate risk of harm
    - there are wider safeguarding concerns, including links to child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour or abuse within intimate personal relationships between children.

- All decisions and action taken regarding nude or semi-nudes will be responded to and recorded in line with our child protection procedures.

- The DSL may choose to involve other agencies where there are concerns about nudes or semi-nudes at any time, including if further information is disclosed at a later date or there are additional concerns or incidents.

- If the DSL is unsure if a Request for Support is appropriate, advice will be sought from the Front Door Service.

4.3 Exploitation, including child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), county lines, serious violence and modern slavery

- Veritas MAT recognises that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), county lines, serious violence and modern slavery are safeguarding issues and may overlap. Children may also experience exploitation alongside other forms of abuse, neglect or harm. The Veritas MAT will therefore need to consider the full context of the child's lived experience, including risks outside the home, peer groups, community locations, transport routes and online environments.

- Veritas MAT recognises that CSE and CCE are forms of abuse. They occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in criminal or sexual activity. This may involve an exchange for something the child needs or wants, and/or be for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or involve violence or the threat of violence.
- Veritas MAT recognises that exploitation may be committed or facilitated by individuals, organised networks or gangs, and the child may identify as being part of the group that is exploiting them. Exploitation can affect children of any age and sex, and it is not possible for a child to consent to being exploited, abused or trafficked.

- Children may not recognise that exploitation is happening to them and may be manipulated, groomed or coerced into situations they do not fully understand. Children who are exploited may also be coerced, controlled, threatened or manipulated into activity which appears to be offending behaviour, and the Veritas MAT will consider whether such behaviour may be linked to exploitation before responding.
- Veritas MAT recognises that:
    - **Child Sexual Exploitation** (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. CSE can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and may range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into sexual activity, including 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to sexual activity. Some children may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship and may not recognise that they are being exploited.
    - **Child Criminal Exploitation** (CCE) can include children being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines, working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, pickpocketing, vehicle crime, threatening or committing serious violence, or carrying weapons. Children can become trapped in criminal exploitation through threats, violence, intimidation, debt bondage, grooming or coercion, including threats towards their families. The experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be different from that of boys, and indicators may not be the same. Girls are also at risk of criminal exploitation. Both boys and girls who are criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.
    - **County lines** is a form of criminal exploitation involving gangs or organised criminal networks using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of "deal line" to export illegal drugs. This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK; no specific distance of travel is required. Children may be exploited to move, store or sell drugs or money and may be controlled through coercion, intimidation, violence, threats, debt bondage, online activity or exploitation of their family circumstances.
    - **Serious violence** includes violence and exploitation involving weapons, gangs, criminal networks or serious physical harm. It can involve carrying, threatening with, or using knives or other weapons, or concerns that a child may be exposed to weapons through peers, gangs, criminal networks or community-based harm. The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as being male, having been suspended, spent time in alternative provision or been permanently excluded, having experienced child maltreatment,

having been involved in offending, having used drugs or alcohol in early adolescence, or having previously been a victim or displayed violence. Serious violence can often peak in the hours just before or after school/college, including when children are travelling to and from the setting, and may be concentrated in particular places.
    - **Modern slavery** includes human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, forced criminality, forced labour, domestic servitude and the removal of organs.

- Staff will be alert to indicators that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing, exploitation, county lines or serious violence. These may include:
    - unexplained gifts, money or new possessions
    - increased absence from school/college or regularly missing education
    - going missing from home or care, or regularly returning home late
    - changes in friendship groups or relationships with older individuals or group
    - a significant decline in educational performance
    - signs of assault, unexplained injuries, self-harm or changes in wellbeing
    - drug or alcohol misuse
    - association with others involved in exploitation, gangs or criminal networks
    - receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs or collecting money
    - being found in accommodation with which they have no connection, sometimes referred to as a trap house, cuckooing address or hotel room linked to drug activity
    - owing money or a “debt bond” to exploiters
    - having their bank account used to facilitate criminal activity
    - being vulnerable to grooming, coercion, threats, intimidation or online exploitation.

- The Veritas MAT will seek to understand when and where children may feel unsafe, including by listening to children, consulting staff and working with partners to understand the local context and support a coordinated safeguarding response.

- Veritas MAT recognises that children who have been exploited may need additional support to help keep them safe and engaged in education.

- If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, serious violence, trafficking or modern slavery, they will report their concerns to the DSL without delay.

- The DSL will consider concerns about exploitation in line with this policy and relevant local and national guidance and make referrals or reports as appropriate.
    - The DSL will consider use of the Kent and Medway Child Exploitation Identification Tool where there are concerns that a child may be experiencing, or be vulnerable to, exploitation.
    - Where broader intelligence is known about potential exploitation or other community safety concerns, the DSL will consider whether information should be shared with Kent Police through the Community Partnership Intelligence Portal.
    - Where modern slavery or trafficking is suspected, relevant safeguarding and/or child protection procedures will be followed, and the DSL will consider whether a referral through the National Referral Mechanism is required.
    - Any safeguarding concerns for children will be referred to the Front Door Service and/or police as appropriate. If there is a crime in progress or immediate risk, emergency services will be contacted using 999.

- When sharing information or making a Request for Support to the Front Door Service or other appropriate agencies, Veritas MAT will provide as much relevant information as possible to support a contextual safeguarding response. This may include information about the child’s presentation, attendance, peer relationships, online activity, family circumstances, community risks, known locations

of concern, transport routes, patterns of absence, and any indicators of exploitation, trafficking, modern slavery or serious violence.

4.4 Domestic abuse

- Veritas MAT recognises that domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial/economic or emotional abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour. Domestic abuse can take place inside or outside the home and within different types of relationships, including intimate partner relationships, ex-partners and family members. Types of domestic abuse can include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child-to-parent or caregiver abuse.

- Veritas MAT recognises that anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, background or identity.
- Veritas MAT recognises children can be victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. Children may also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships, sometimes referred to as teenage relationship abuse. Where one or both children are under 16, this may not fall within the statutory definition of domestic abuse, but it will still be responded to as a safeguarding concern.

- Veritas MAT recognises that domestic abuse can have a detrimental and long-term impact on children's health, wellbeing, development and ability to learn.

- Veritas MAT recognises that domestic abuse may occur, continue or escalate following separation. Concerns will not be viewed in isolation, and the Veritas MAT will consider the child's lived experience, family circumstances and any wider safeguarding risks.

- Staff will respond to domestic abuse concerns in a trauma-informed way and will avoid victim-blaming language or assumptions.

- If staff are concerned that a child may be seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse, or experiencing abuse within their own intimate relationship, they will report their concerns to the DSL.

- The DSL will consider concerns about domestic abuse in line with this policy, KSCMP procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and any relevant local or national guidance. Where the concern indicates a need for Family Help, statutory support or protection, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support should be made via the Kent Children's Services Portal. If a child or adult is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted using 999.

- Veritas MAT participates in Operation Encompass. Operation Encompass is an information-sharing scheme between the police and education settings which supports schools/colleges to provide timely, informed support to children affected by domestic abuse. Police forces in England have a duty to notify a child's school where they have attended a domestic abuse incident and have reasonable grounds to believe a child may be a victim of domestic abuse. This includes children connected to the household regardless of whether they were present at the incident.

- Operation Encompass notifications will help the Veritas MAT to have up-to-date and relevant information about a child's circumstances so that appropriate support can be considered according to the child's needs. Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures, and where there are concerns about a child's welfare, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support is required in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance.

- Operation Encompass notifications will be handled confidentially, stored securely and managed in line with data protection requirements and Veritas MAT child protection recording procedures. The DSL will have oversight of notifications and will ensure that relevant information is shared with staff on a need-to-know basis to safeguard and support the child.

- Where the Veritas MAT is unsure how to respond to an Operation Encompass notification, advice may be sought from the Front Door Service or from the Operation Encompass advice and helpline service: 0204 513 9990.

4.5 Honour or Faith-Based Abuse (HBA)

- Veritas MAT recognises that honour or faith-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. This can include female genital mutilation, forced marriage and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. Staff will be alert to this dynamic and the additional risks it may create when deciding what safeguarding action is required.

- All forms of HBA are abuse, regardless of the motivation, and will be handled and escalated as such. If staff have any concerns that a child may be at risk of, or has experienced, honour or faith-based abuse, they will speak to the DSL without delay. The DSL will consider concerns in line with this policy, KSCMP procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and any relevant national or local guidance. If there is an immediate threat or danger, the police will be contacted.

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. FGM is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.
    - All staff will speak to the DSL if they have any concerns that a child may be at risk of FGM or may have experienced FGM.
    - Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers, to directly report to the police where they discover that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases may face disciplinary sanctions.
    - It will be rare to see visual evidence of FGM, and staff must not examine pupils. Unless the teacher has good reason not to, they should also discuss the concern with the DSL. The mandatory reporting duty does not apply to suspected or at-risk cases where FGM has not been discovered; in these cases, staff must follow local safeguarding procedures and speak to the DSL.
- Forced marriage is a crime.
    - A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties, and where violence, threats or another form of coercion is used. Coercion may be physical, emotional or psychological. A lack of full and free consent can also arise where a person cannot consent, for example due to learning disabilities.
    - It is also a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even where violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. This applies to non-binding, unofficial "marriages" as well as legal marriages.
    - Staff will report any concerns about forced marriage to the DSL. Advice can also be sought from the Forced Marriage Unit: 020 7008 0151 or fmu@fcdo.gov.uk

4.6 Preventing radicalisation

- Veritas MAT recognises that children may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Protecting children from this risk forms part of the Veritas MAT's wider safeguarding approach.

- Veritas MAT is aware of its duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism". This is known as the Prevent duty.
- For the purposes of this policy:
    - **extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
    - **radicalisation** is the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence
    - **terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to people, causes serious damage to property, or seriously interferes with or disrupts an electronic system, where the use or threat is designed to influence the government or intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.
- Veritas MAT recognises that there is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. As with other safeguarding risks, staff will be alert to changes in behaviour, presentation, language, relationships or online activity which may indicate that they are in need of help or protection.
- Staff will use their professional judgement and act proportionately where they have concerns that a child may be susceptible to radicalisation. Any concerns will be reported to the DSL in line with this policy.
- The DSL and senior leaders will be familiar with the Prevent duty guidance and local procedures for making a Prevent referral. The Veritas MAT's approach to Prevent will be considered as part of wider safeguarding arrangements and will include appropriate attention to:
    - leadership and partnership
    - staff capability, training and awareness
    - reducing permissive environments, including online environments, external speakers, visitors, use of premises and access to extremist or terrorist content.
- Veritas MAT will ensure that staff receive appropriate Prevent training so they understand the Prevent duty, can recognise concerns, know how to report them internally, and understand the local Prevent referral process.
    - The DSL will receive more in-depth training to enable them to support staff on Prevent matters and provide updates on relevant issues.
- Where the DSL considers that a Prevent referral may be appropriate, this will be managed in line with local Kent Prevent procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and relevant national guidance. The DSL may seek advice from the Kent and Medway Prevent Team where appropriate. If there is an immediate threat to safety, emergency services will be contacted using 999.
- Prevent referrals are assessed by police and may be passed on to a multi-agency Channel panel to consider whether support is required. Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. A representative from Veritas MAT may be asked to attend a Channel panel to support assessment and planning. ***Channel guidanceChannel training from the Home Office***
- Where a child is receiving support through Prevent or Channel and moves to a new setting, the DSL will share relevant information with the DSL at the new setting in advance of the child leaving, so that support can continue when the child arrives.

4.7 Cybercrime

- Veritas MAT recognises that cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. Cybercrime is broadly categorised as either **cyber-enabled** or **cyber-dependent**.

- **Cyber-enabled crime** refers to crimes that can happen offline but are enabled at scale and speed online, such as fraud, purchasing illegal drugs online, child sexual abuse and exploitation, online harassment or other technology-assisted harm.
- **Cyber-dependent crime** refers to crimes that can only be committed using a computer, computer network or internet-enabled device. This may include unauthorised access to computers, sometimes referred to as hacking, denial of service attacks or "booting", and making, supplying or obtaining malware such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets or Remote Access Trojans.

- Veritas MAT recognises that children with particular skills and interests in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately become involved in cyber-dependent crime, sometimes without understanding the legal, ethical or safeguarding implications.

- If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of becoming involved in cyber-dependent crime, they will report their concerns to the DSL. The DSL will consider the concern in line with this policy, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and any relevant local or national guidance.

- Where appropriate, the DSL may consider accessing local support and/or referring to the Cyber Choices programme.

- Cyber Choices is focused on cyber-dependent crime. Concerns about cyber-enabled crime, such as fraud, purchasing illegal drugs online, child sexual abuse and exploitation, online bullying or other online safety concerns, will be responded to in line with this policy and relevant Veritas MAT safeguarding, behaviour, acceptable use and online safety arrangements.

- If the concern indicates that a child may require Family Help, statutory support or protection, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support should be made via the Kent Children's Services Portal, in line with the Kent Support Levels Guidance and KSCMP procedures. If a child is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted using 999.

4.8 Bruising in non-mobile children

- Bruising in babies, infants or children with complex needs that are not mobile (meaning a child who is unable to move independently through rolling, crawling, cruising, or bottom shuffling) is unusual and should always be explored.

- If our Veritas MAT is concerned about actual or suspected bruising on a non-mobile child, we will respond in line with the 'Kent and Medway Protocol for the Management of Actual or Suspected Bruising in Infants and Children who are not Independently Mobile' procedures (2.2.8 of the KSCMP procedures). In summary, these procedures state:
  - If a child appears seriously ill or injured, emergency treatment should be sought through an emergency department (ED) and the Front Door Service should be notified of the concern and the child's location.
  - In all other cases:
    - Staff must inform the DSL immediately and describe and document accurately on a body map, the size, shape, colour, and position of the mark/s on the head and/or body.
    - Any explanation of the history of the injury or comments by the parents/carers will be documented accurately (verbatim) in the child's record, along with the body map.
    - If there is a concern about parental response to the injury, no explanation, or an explanation that is inadequate, unlikely or does not rule out abuse or neglect, an immediate referral will be made to the Front Door Service, who have responsibility for arranging further multi-agency assessments.
    - If there are concerns regarding the immediate safety of the child or staff, the police will be called.

- If the setting is in any doubt as to how to respond to bruising on a non-mobile child, advice may be sought from the Front Door Service.

4.9 Child abduction and community safety incidents

- Veritas MAT recognises that child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a child from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members, by people known to the child, or by strangers.
- Veritas MAT also recognises that community safety incidents in the vicinity of the Veritas MAT can raise safeguarding concerns for children, parents/carers and staff.
- Staff will report any concerns about child abduction or community safety incidents to the Headteacher and/or DSL immediately. Where there is an immediate risk to a child, emergency services will be contacted using 999.
- Veritas MAT will support children to develop age-appropriate personal safety awareness through the curriculum and wider safeguarding education. This will focus on building children's confidence, judgement and ability to seek help, rather than simply warning them about strangers.

4.10 Children and the court system, including children affected by parental separation, court orders or family disputes

- Veritas MAT recognises that children may be affected by the court system in different ways, including where they are required to give evidence in criminal proceedings or where they are affected by private or public family law proceedings, child arrangements or parental disputes.
- Where staff are aware that a child is involved in, or affected by, court proceedings, they will share relevant information with the DSL so that appropriate support can be considered. This may include pastoral support, adjustments within Veritas MAT, liaison with parents/carers where appropriate, and working with partner agencies where this is needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
- Veritas MAT recognises that parental separation, child arrangements and family court processes can be stressful for children and may contribute to conflict, anxiety or safeguarding concerns. The welfare and best interests of the child will remain central to the Veritas MAT's decision-making.
- Where parents/carers disagree about arrangements, decisions or the exercise of parental responsibility, the Veritas MAT will act in line with statutory guidance, relevant court orders, education law, safeguarding duties and data protection requirements. Where necessary, parents/carers may be advised to seek independent legal advice or resolve disputes through the appropriate legal route.
- Veritas MAT will consider any court orders or legal restrictions that are shared with the setting and relevant to the child's education, welfare or safety. Parents/carers may be asked to provide the most recent court order where this is appropriate and/or necessary to help the Veritas MAT understand arrangements or restrictions.
- Staff will remain alert to any safeguarding concerns arising from parental disputes, child arrangements or court proceedings. Concerns will be reported to the DSL and responded to in line with this policy.

4.11 Homelessness

- Veritas MAT recognises that being homeless, or being at risk of homelessness, can present a real risk to a child's welfare.

- The DSL will be aware of local contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so that concerns can be raised or progressed at the earliest opportunity. Discussion with, or referral to, the Local Housing Authority does not replace safeguarding action where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm

- In most cases, homelessness concerns will relate to children living with their families. However, Veritas MAT recognises that some 16- and 17-year-olds may be living independently from their parents or carers, for example due to exclusion from the family home. Where this is the case, the DSL will make appropriate referrals based on the child's circumstances, including to the Front Door Service where safeguarding or accommodation concerns are identified.

- Where Veritas MAT receives information that a child has been placed in temporary accommodation, the DSL will consider what support may be required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. This may include considering the impact on attendance, wellbeing, learning, transport, access to resources and family support needs.

4.12 Children with family members in prison or affected by parental offending

- Veritas MAT recognises that children with family members in prison, or who are otherwise affected by parental offending, may experience additional emotional, practical and safeguarding needs. This may include stigma, isolation, poverty, poor mental health, disrupted family relationships, attendance concerns or changes in behaviour.

- Staff will share any concerns with the DSL so that appropriate support can be considered. This may include pastoral support, safe adult support, signposting to specialist services, liaison with parents/carers where appropriate, and consideration of early help or wider multi-agency support.

- Veritas MAT will respond to children affected by parental imprisonment or offending in a sensitive and trauma-informed way, recognising the potential impact on the child's safety, wellbeing, attendance, learning and relationships.

5 Supporting Children Potentially at Greater Risk of Harm

- Veritas MAT recognises that some children may be more vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation or harm, or may face additional barriers to recognising, reporting or being supported with safeguarding concerns. Staff will be alert to the needs and experiences of these children and will ensure concerns are reported to the DSL in line with this policy.

- The Veritas MAT will take a child-centred, trauma-informed and contextual approach, considering the child's voice, lived experience, individual circumstances and any barriers they may face in accessing help or support.

5.1 Safeguarding children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

- Veritas MAT recognises that children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline.
- Veritas MAT recognises that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, neglect and exploitation for these children. These may include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse, such as behaviour, mood or injury, relate to the child's SEND without further exploration.
- children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying, including prejudice-based bullying
- the potential for children with SEND to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting concerns.
- children not understanding that what is happening to them is abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- the need for intimate or personal care, or children being isolated from others.
- children being more dependent on adults for care and support.
- difficulties with cognitive understanding.

- Staff will appropriately explore potential indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation and will not assume that these are related to a child's SEND. Concerns will be reported to the DSL in line with this policy.

- Veritas MAT will support children with SEND to communicate, be listened to and have their voice heard and acted upon. Staff will consider whether reasonable adjustments, communication aids, trusted adults or other support may be needed to help children share concerns.

- Any report or concern involving a child with SEND will require close liaison between the DSL and the SENCO with oversight for SEND: Warden House: Lucy Watson Pilgrims Way: Olivia Watts, Mundella: Lauren Wharmby

- Veritas MAT will consider whether extra pastoral support, communication support or other adjustments are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with SEND.

- Veritas MAT has intimate and/or personal care arrangements which promote children's health, safety, independence and welfare, while respecting their dignity and privacy. Arrangements for intimate and personal care will be open, transparent and appropriately recorded. Further information is set out in the trust Intimate Care policy

4.1 Safeguarding children with medical conditions

- Veritas MAT recognises that children with medical conditions, including allergies, should be properly supported so they can access education safely and fully. The Trust will have regard to the DfE statutory guidance Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions. Further information about the Trust's arrangements, including the development and implementation of individual healthcare plans where required, is set out in the trust, Allergy Policy.

- An incident relating to the management of a child's medical condition, including allergies, will not automatically require safeguarding actions. However, staff will report concerns to the DSL where an incident, pattern of incidents or wider information suggests that a child may be at increased risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation because of their medical condition. This may include, for example, where relevant information about a child's medical condition is not shared with the Veritas MAT, where a child is repeatedly sent to Veritas MAT without essential medication or equipment, or where agreed healthcare arrangements are not followed in a way that places the child at risk.

- The DSL will consider concerns in line with this policy, national and local guidance and relevant Veritas MAT medical or allergy arrangements. Where appropriate, this may include considering whether a Request for Support should be made.

4.2 Children requiring mental health support

- Veritas MAT has an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our pupils. We recognise that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns,

including where there are concerns about self-harm, eating disorders, suicidal ideation or risk of suicide. Mental health problems can also be an indicator that a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- Only appropriately trained professionals should diagnose a mental health problem. However, Veritas MAT recognises our staff are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour, presentation or circumstances suggest that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.
  - Staff will be alert to potential warning signs that a child may be struggling with their mental health. These may include significant changes in behaviour, ongoing difficulty sleeping, withdrawing from social situations, not wanting to do things they usually enjoy, physical signs of self-harm, neglecting themselves, suicidal ideation, changes in attendance, engagement, relationships or emotional wellbeing.
  - Not every child who displays these behaviours will have a mental health concern. However, staff will remain professionally curious and will record and report any concerns so children can receive appropriate support and early intervention.

- If staff have a concern about a child's mental health or wellbeing, they will follow the Veritas MAT processes for recording and reporting concerns:
  - Where the concern indicates that a child may have suffered, or may be at risk of suffering, abuse, neglect or exploitation, this must be reported to the DSL or a deputy DSL in accordance with the safeguarding procedures set out in this policy. Appropriate pastoral, SEND or mental health support may also be sought, including support from the FLO, Mental Health Lead, SENCO or other relevant services.

- If a mental health concern is also a safeguarding concern, staff will speak to the DSL in line with this policy. The DSL will consider whether the child may benefit from support through universal services or community-based early help, or whether a Request for Support is required.

- Where mental health support is needed, parents/carers will be informed to support the child's wellbeing, unless doing so would place the child at additional risk.

- If staff believe that a child is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted using 999 or arrangements will be made for the child to be taken to A&E immediately by a parent/carer or other suitable person. A referral can be made to SPA (single point of access) which is then signposted by a mental health team and signposts for immediate support. Kent and Medway children and young people's mental health service can also be contacted on 0800 011 3474

- Veritas MAT will consider the range of locally available support to meet children's mental health and wellbeing needs. This may include internal pastoral support, the senior mental health lead, Mental Health Support Teams, school nursing, early help/Family Help, NHS services, early support hubs, young futures hubs, voluntary sector support and specialist services. ***Children and Young People's Mental Health - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency PartnershipNavigate Wellbeing: Mental Health Signposting for Education Settings***

- Veritas MAT will ensure that any mental health support or intervention offered is appropriate to the child's needs, age and phase of education, and is evidenced as safe and effective.

- Veritas MAT will support children's mental health and wellbeing by:
  - promoting positive mental wellbeing and resilience.
  - observing pupils and identifying early those who may be experiencing mental health problems or be at risk of developing them.
  - ensuring early targeted support is considered and provided where appropriate.
  - liaising with and/or referring to specialist services where needed.

- Age and ability appropriate education will be provided to pupils to help promote positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience.
    - This is delivered through the school's PSHE curriculum, a positive and values-based culture, assemblies and wider curriculum opportunities, and activities that promote mental health awareness and emotional wellbeing. Where additional needs are identified, pupils may also receive targeted or personalised support from appropriately trained staff, including the SENCO, pastoral staff and other relevant professionals or external services.

4.3 Children who are absent from education

- In line with the Working Together to Improve School Attendance and Children Missing Education statutory guidance, Veritas MAT recognises that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including abuse and neglect, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and county lines.

- Veritas MAT recognises that a robust response to absence supports the identification of safeguarding concerns and may help prevent the risk of children becoming missing from education in the future.

- Staff will be alert to patterns of absence, persistent absence, severe absence, repeated absence, unexplained absence and children missing from education. Where absence raises a welfare or safeguarding concern, staff will report this to the DSL in line with this policy.

- The DSL will consider whether absence may be linked to wider safeguarding risks within the family or community, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health concerns, domestic abuse, forced marriage, FGM, trafficking, serious violence, county lines, online harm or other extra-familial harm.
- Where possible, Veritas MAT will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil, so there are additional options to contact a responsible adult where a child who is absent from education is also identified as a welfare or safeguarding concern.
    - Veritas MAT will seek to hold emergency contact information for both parents where appropriate, unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm or be contrary to a court order or other legal restriction.
    - Where contact with a parent or other adult is restricted or unsafe, this will be clearly recorded in line with Veritas MAT safeguarding and record keeping procedures.
    - Veritas MAT will be proactive in understanding children's significant relationships and lived experiences, including the role of fathers, non-resident parents and other adults who may be important in the child's life, where this is appropriate and safe.
- Veritas MAT recognises that a child may be considered missing from education at any stage where their whereabouts, education provision or safety cannot be established.
- Where Veritas MAT has concerns that a child has unexplained, persistent, repeated or prolonged absence, or may be missing from education, action will be taken in line with statutory duties and local procedures. This may include working with parents/carers, Kent PRU and Attendance Service (KPAS), the local authority CME team, the Front Door Service and/or other agencies as appropriate.

- Where there are concerns that a child may be missing from education, including where the Veritas MAT becomes aware that a child has moved out of area or their whereabouts are unknown, the Veritas MAT will make a referral to KPAS promptly so that appropriate checks can be undertaken. The Veritas MAT will not delay referral while completing local enquiries where this may prevent timely action by the local authority.
- Where there are concerns that a child may be missing from education or where their absence raises welfare or safeguarding concerns, the DSL will make a Request for Support as appropriate.

- Veritas MAT will provide information to the local authority where required when a child is removed from roll, including at standard and non-standard transition points, in line with Children missing education statutory guidance and local procedures. ***Children Missing Education***

4.4 Children attending alternative provision

- Where Veritas MAT places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, the Veritas MAT remains responsible for the safeguarding of that child and will ensure that the placement is appropriate and meets the child's needs.
- Veritas MAT recognises that children attending alternative provision may have complex needs and may be vulnerable to additional safeguarding risks. Safeguarding arrangements will therefore be considered before, during and throughout the placement.
- Before a placement is agreed, Veritas MAT will obtain written confirmation from the alternative provision provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been carried out on individuals working at the provision. This includes confirmation that the provider will inform the Veritas MAT of any arrangements that may affect the child's safety, including relevant staffing changes, so the Veritas MAT can assure itself that appropriate safeguarding checks remain in place.
- Veritas MAT will carry out appropriate due diligence and quality assurance before commissioning alternative provision and will continue to monitor whether the provision remains safe, suitable and able to meet the child's individual needs.
- Veritas MAT will always know where a child is based during school hours. This includes keeping records of the address of the alternative provision provider and any subcontracted provision or satellite sites the child may attend.
- Alternative provision placements will be reviewed regularly, at least half-termly, to provide assurance that the child is attending regularly, the placement remains safe, and the provision continues to meet the child's needs.
- Where safeguarding concerns arise, the placement will be reviewed immediately and will be suspended or ended, if necessary, unless and until concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.
- The DSL will ensure appropriate safeguarding information is shared with the alternative provision provider, in line with information sharing, confidentiality and data protection requirements, so that the child can be safeguarded and supported effectively.
- Veritas MAT will respond to any safeguarding concerns relating to a child attending alternative provision in line with this policy.

4.5 Elective Home Education (EHE)

- Veritas MAT recognises that many home educated children have a positive learning experience, and that parents/carers may choose elective home education with their child's best education at the heart of the decision. Veritas MAT also recognises that elective home education can mean some children are not in receipt of suitable education and may become less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported.
- Where a parent/carer expresses their intention to remove a child from school with a view to educating at home, we will respond in line with national Elective Home Education guidance, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and local Kent guidance.

- Where possible, Veritas MAT will work with the local authority, parents/carers and other key professionals to ensure that the implications of elective home education have been considered before a final decision is made and that decisions are made in the best interests of the child. This will be particularly important where the child has SEND, an Education, Health and Care plan, has or is known to partner agencies, or is otherwise vulnerable.

- Veritas MAT will consider local guidance and tools, including the KSCMP EHE Leavers Checklist, to support proportionate safeguarding checks, information sharing and decision-making before a child is removed from roll. This will include considering the child's lived experience, any existing safeguarding or welfare concerns, parental responsibility arrangements, SEND or EHCP needs, young carer status, attendance, and whether further advice or a Request for Support is required.
- Where there are safeguarding or welfare concerns, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support is required.

4.6 Children who need a social worker (child in need and child protection plans)

- Veritas MAT recognises that children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs, including abuse, neglect, exploitation or complex family circumstances.

- The DSL will hold and use information about children who need or have a social worker so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes.

- Where a child needs or has a social worker, this will inform Veritas MAT decisions about safeguarding and welfare. This may include responding to unauthorised absence, children absent from or missing education, behaviour, pastoral support, academic support and any wider safeguarding risks within the family or community.

- Where appropriate, information will be shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis so that the child can be safeguarded and supported effectively.

4.7 Looked after children, children in kinship care, previously looked after children and care leavers

- Veritas MAT recognises that the most common reason for children becoming looked after is abuse and/or neglect, and that looked after and previously looked after children may remain vulnerable.

- Where safeguarding concerns arise for children who are looked after, previously looked after, in kinship care or leaving care, the Veritas MAT will ensure safeguarding action is considered alongside existing care planning, education planning and support arrangements.
- The Veritas MAT has appointed a designated teacher in each school: Warden House: Jane Grant, Pilgrims Way: Helen Fennell, Mundella: Lauren Wharmby. The designated teacher will work with local authorities, including Virtual School Kent, to promote the educational achievement of registered pupils who are looked after or who have been previously looked after, including those in kinship care.
- The designated teacher will work closely with the DSL to ensure appropriate staff have the information they need in relation to a child's looked after legal status, contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility, care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the local authority.

- Where a child is looked after, the DSL will hold details of the child's social worker and the name of the Virtual School Head in the authority that looks after the child.

- Where a child is a care leaver, the DSL will hold details of the local authority Personal Advisor appointed to guide and support them and will liaise with them as necessary regarding any safeguarding or welfare concerns.

4.8 Young carers

- Veritas MAT recognises that young carers may have caring responsibilities for a family member with a long-term illness, disability, mental health need, substance misuse issue or other care need.
- Veritas MAT will be alert to the needs of young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on a child's attendance, attainment, behaviour, emotional wellbeing, relationships and ability to participate fully in school life.
- Early identification is important to ensure young carers receive support at the right time and from the appropriate services. Staff will remain alert to indicators that a child may be a young carer, including changes in attendance, punctuality, concentration, tiredness, homework completion, emotional wellbeing, social relationships or increased responsibilities at home. If staff are concerned that a child may be a young carer, or that caring responsibilities may be affecting their safety, welfare or wellbeing, they will report this to the DSL.
- The DSL will consider what support may be required, including pastoral support within Veritas MAT, reasonable adjustments, support with attendance or learning, and whether advice or support should be sought from external partners, local authority services, health services or young carers services.
- Where caring responsibilities appear to be inappropriate, excessive, unsafe, or are having a significant impact on the child's welfare, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support should be made.
- Support for young carers is currently available through:
    - Imago Young Carers, who provide information, advice, signposting and support for young carers, families and professionals.

4.9 Children who are privately fostered

- Private fostering occurs when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 for children with a disability) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer.
- Where private fostering arrangements come to the attention of the Veritas MAT, for example, through the normal course of their interaction and promotion of learning activities with children, we must notify Kent Front Door Service in line with the local KSCMP arrangements in order to allow the local authority to check the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child.

4.10 Children who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB)

Education People EDIT team

- Veritas MAT recognises that a child being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not in itself a risk factor for harm. However, children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual can sometimes be vulnerable to discriminatory bullying, prejudice, harassment or child-on-child abuse.
- Veritas MAT also recognises that children who are perceived by others to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, whether they are or not, can be just as vulnerable as children who are.

- Staff will be alert to the possibility that children who are lesbian, gay or bisexual, or perceived to be, may face additional barriers to sharing concerns, particularly where they do not have a trusted adult they can speak to openly.

- Veritas MAT will take steps to prevent and respond to discriminatory bullying, prejudice and harmful behaviour, including through our safeguarding, behaviour, anti-bullying, curriculum and pastoral arrangements. Where appropriate, sanctions and support will be considered in line with relevant Veritas MAT policies.

- Veritas MAT will provide a safe, inclusive and trusted environment where children can speak openly, share concerns and be taken seriously. Concerns will be reported to the DSL in line with this policy.

- Appropriate education will be provided through our Relationships Education/Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum to support respectful relationships, inclusion and the prevention of prejudice-based bullying.

4.11 Children who are questioning their gender

Education People EDIT team

- Veritas MAT recognises that some children may question the way they feel about being a boy or a girl, including the physical attributes of their sex and the related ways in which they fit into society.

- Veritas MAT recognises that children may express themselves in ways that are less typically associated with their sex, and this is not in itself a safeguarding concern. Staff will avoid making assumptions based on appearance, behaviour, interests or presentation.

- Veritas MAT will be a respectful environment where bullying, harassment, discrimination and harmful behaviour are not tolerated. Staff will be alert to the potential vulnerabilities of children who are questioning their gender, including bullying, family difficulties, online harm, mental health concerns, psychosocial needs or wider safeguarding concerns.

- Staff will take time to listen to and understand the child's thoughts, feelings and experiences. Staff will remain professionally curious and consider the full context of the child's lived experience, including relationships with family, peers and the wider Veritas MAT environment.
- Veritas MAT will respond to children who are questioning their gender in line with KCSIE, ensuring that any support is considered as part of Veritas MAT's wider safeguarding responsibilities and with the child's welfare and best interests as a central consideration. The Veritas MAT will take a careful, considered and recorded approach, recognising that children's individual circumstances, needs and experiences will vary.
- Veritas MAT will not make assumptions or initiate action regarding social transition. Where a child is questioning their gender, staff will respond sensitively, listen to the child's views and experiences, and consider any support needs or safeguarding concerns in line with this policy.

- Where a child speaks to a member of staff about questioning their gender but does not ask the Veritas MAT to make changes to how they are treated, staff will not normally break confidence unless there is a related safeguarding concern. Where a conversation raises concerns about the child's wellbeing or safety, staff will follow this policy and speak to the DSL.

- Parents/carers will usually be involved as a matter of priority where a child requests support relating to social transition. Their views will be treated with importance and properly considered. In the rare circumstances where involving parents/carers may place the child at greater risk of harm, the DSL will be involved before parents/carers are contacted or any decisions are made.

- Where a child and their parents/carers requests support or changes in relation to social transition, the Veritas MAT will follow an agreed decision-making process, taking account of KCSIE, safeguarding duties, equality and human rights obligations, and relevant Veritas MAT policies.

- Any request relating to social transition should be referred to the Headteacher and DSL and considered on an individual basis. The school will take time to understand the child's circumstances, needs and views and will involve parents/carers in decision-making unless there is a safeguarding reason why doing so may place the child at risk of harm. Any available relevant clinical advice will also be considered.

- Decisions will be made in the best interests of the child, while considering the safeguarding, welfare, privacy and rights of all pupils. Relevant school and Trust policies, including Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour and Relationships, Equality, Anti-Bullying and SEND policies, will be considered as appropriate. Decisions and agreed actions will be recorded and kept under review.

- When considering any requests for support with social transition, Veritas MAT will ensure our decision-making process is documented and records are kept.

- Veritas MAT will be particularly alert to the vulnerabilities of children who have socially transitioned from an early age, including where their biological sex may not be known to peers or some staff. The DSL will be involved in these cases, particularly where support, safeguarding or wellbeing concerns arise as the child approaches or experiences puberty. Any information will be handled sensitively and recorded appropriately.

- Any decision-making will be child-centred and safeguarding-led. The Veritas MAT will consider what is in the best interests of the child, while also taking account of the safety, welfare, rights and needs of other children who may be affected. The child's voice and lived experience will always be carefully considered, however any agreed response may not always be the same as the child's wishes.

- The DSL and relevant senior leaders will be involved in considering any request for support relating to social transition. The Veritas MAT may also consider relevant advice from parents/carers, clinical professionals, the SENCO, mental health lead, pastoral staff or other appropriate professionals, depending on the child's circumstances.

- Veritas MAT will take a careful approach when considering any request relating to social transition, recognising that such decisions may have significant implications for the child and others affected, and that arrangements may need to remain flexible and open to review.

- Any requests or issues relating to names, pronouns, uniform, toilets, changing rooms, residential accommodation, sport, trips or other Veritas MAT arrangements will be considered through the Veritas MAT's agreed process and in line with KCSIE, safeguarding duties, equality and human rights obligations, and relevant Veritas MAT policies.

- Veritas MAT will ensure that records are accurate and that relevant staff have the information they need to safeguard and support the child. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and managed in line with confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding requirements.

- The Veritas MAT will keep any agreed arrangements under review, recognising that a child's circumstances, wishes or needs may change over time. This includes where new safeguarding information becomes known, where a child wishes to change or reverse previous arrangements, or where arrangements may no longer be meeting the child's needs or the needs of others affected.

- If staff have any concerns about a child who is questioning their gender, including concerns about bullying, mental health, family response, online harm, self-harm, exploitation or any other safeguarding issue, they will report these to the DSL in line with this policy.

- Where a safeguarding or welfare concern is identified, the DSL will consider whether a Request for Support should be made.

4.12 Transitional safeguarding for young people aged 18+

- Veritas MAT recognises that safeguarding needs do not automatically end when a young person turns 18. Young people aged 18 and over may continue to experience, or be at risk of, abuse, neglect, exploitation, coercion, self-neglect, homelessness, domestic abuse, mental health crisis or other forms of harm.
- Where a safeguarding or welfare concern relates to a young person aged 18 or over, staff will report the concern to the DSL. The DSL will consider the concern in line with relevant safeguarding procedures, the young person's wishes and views, mental capacity, consent, risk, and the need to share information to prevent or respond to harm.
- The DSL will consider which pathway is most appropriate. This may include support within Veritas MAT, adult safeguarding, health, mental health, housing, police, Prevent or other relevant local services.
    - Where appropriate, referrals will be made to adult social care in line local adult safeguarding referral pathways, with reference to guidance and resources from the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board.
    - Where the young person is already known to children's services, is a care leaver, has an Education, Health and Care plan, has care and support needs, or is moving between services, the Veritas MAT will consider how information can be shared appropriately to support continuity of safeguarding and support.
    - Where there is an immediate risk of harm, emergency services will be contacted using 999. Safeguarding decisions and the rationale for actions taken or not taken will be recorded.

6 Online Safety

- It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate material or behaviours online. Veritas MAT recognises that online safety is an essential part of safeguarding and will adopt a whole Veritas MAT approach to online safety which empowers, protects, and educates pupils and staff in their use of technology, and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.
- Online safety is considered a running and interrelated theme when devising and implementing our policies and procedures, and when planning our curriculum, staff training, the role and responsibilities of the DSL, and parental engagement.
- Veritas MAT identifies that the breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:
    - **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation, including fake news, and conspiracy theories.
    - **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this: for example, peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.
    - **Conduct:** online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. For example, making, sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated by AI and online bullying.
    - **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams.

- Staff will maintain an attitude of “it could happen here” in relation to online harm. Any concerns about a child’s online safety, digital activity or technology use will be reported to the DSL in line with this policy.

- The Trust Board of Trustees and leadership team will ensure that online safety is reflected within the Veritas MAT’s safeguarding arrangements and that appropriate systems, policies, procedures, training and monitoring are in place.

- The DSL has responsibility for online safety within the Veritas MAT including understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place. The DSL will work with senior leaders, IT staff/providers, curriculum leads and other relevant staff to ensure online safety concerns are recognised, reported and responded to appropriately.

- The DSL will respond to online safety concerns in line with our child protection and other associated policies, including our Anti-bullying policy, Acceptable Use policy and Relationship and Behaviour policies.
    - Internal sanctions and/or support will be implemented as appropriate.
    - Where necessary, concerns will be escalated and reported to relevant partner agencies in line with local policies and procedures.

- Veritas MAT uses a wide range of technology. This includes computers, laptops, I-pads, chrome books and other digital devices, SharePoint and email.

- All Veritas MAT owned devices and systems will be used in accordance with relevant policies, including but not limited to Acceptable Use Agreement, Mobile Phone Policies], and with appropriate safety and security measures in place.

5.1 Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- ***Generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education - GOV.UK***
- ***Using AI in education settings: support materials - GOV.UK***
- ***Generative AI: product safety expectations - GOV.UK***
- ***Generative AI in education: user research and technical report - GOV.UK***
- ***Generative AI in education: educator and expert views - GOV.UK***
- ***Artificial intelligence (AI) and data protection in schools - Guidance - GOV.UK***
- ***National AI Strategy - GOV.UK***
- ***Ofsted's approach to artificial intelligence (AI) - GOV.UK***
- ***Artificial Intelligence and Online Safety | SWGfL***
- ***Integrating AI in Schools: New Policy Template Available | SWGfL***
- ***Using artificial intelligence (AI) safely | Internet Matters***
- **A Safeguarding First Approach to adopting Gen-AI in schools | LGFL**

- Veritas MAT recognises that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools can support teaching, learning, communication and administrative tasks when used safely, lawfully and appropriately. However, AI can also create safeguarding, data protection, privacy, intellectual property, academic integrity and information security risks. These include, but are not limited to:
    - exposure to inappropriate or harmful content, including bullying, harassment, abuse and exploitation
    - the creation or sharing of AI-generated or digitally manipulated images
    - privacy and data protection breaches/risks
    - intellectual property infringements

- academic integrity challenges such as plagiarism and cheating
- exposure to inaccurate, misleading, or biased content.

- Staff and pupils will be made aware of the benefits and risks of generative AI, and of Veritas MAT expectations, through the Computing and PSHE curriculum, age-appropriate lessons and assemblies, wider online safety education, staff training and relevant Trust policies and procedures.
  -

- Veritas MAT will not permit the use of generative AI tools for work and/or educational purposes unless they have been approved by the Veritas MAT following appropriate risk assessment and, where required, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). The risk assessment will evaluate whether the tool meets the DfE generative AI product safety standards expectations and will consider safeguarding, data protection, privacy, confidentiality, age and ability of users, content risks, bias and accuracy, intellectual property, academic integrity, information security and how use will be monitored or reviewed.

- Veritas MAT will maintain a record of any generative AI tools approved for staff and/or pupils.
  - Currently, Microsoft Copilot is available to authorised staff through the Trust's managed Microsoft 365 environment. Any generative AI tool must be reviewed and approved by the Trust before being used for Trust business or with pupils. Approval will take account of safeguarding, data protection, privacy, security and age-appropriateness. Staff must not enter personal, sensitive or confidential information about pupils, families or staff into generative AI tools unless the tool and the specific use have been expressly approved by the Trust.

- AI tools that record, transcribe, summarise or generate notes from meetings, lessons, training or online discussions must only be used where approved by the Veritas MAT and in line with safeguarding, confidentiality, consent, data protection and acceptable use arrangements. All participants will be made aware where such tools are being used and how any information will be captured, used, stored and shared.***LESAS acceptable use policy templates***

- Veritas MAT recognises that the use of images online, including through AI tools, can create safeguarding, privacy and data protection risks for children and staff. Images of pupils or staff must not be uploaded to, generated by, edited in, or shared through AI tools unless risk assessed and approved by the Veritas MAT. Any taking or publishing of images of pupils or staff will always be in line with our image use, consent, acceptable use, data protection and safeguarding arrangements.***LESAS Image Use guidance and policy template***

- Veritas MAT will ensure expectations about the safe and appropriate use of AI are set out in our acceptable use arrangements.***LESAS acceptable use policy templates***

- Veritas MAT will respond to any misuse of AI in line with relevant policies, including but not limited to, anti-bullying, behaviour, data protection, complaints, allegations against staff and child protection.

- Concerns involving AI-generated or digitally manipulated content, including nude or semi-nude imagery, harmful impersonation, bullying, harassment, abuse or exploitation, will be reported to the DSL and responded to in line with this policy.

- Where the Veritas MAT believe that AI tools may have facilitated the creation of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), the Veritas MAT will respond in line with this policy, local safeguarding procedures, the UKCIS 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people' and national guidance from the IWF and NCA-CEOP as appropriate.

- Where the Veritas MAT believe that AI tools may have facilitated harassment, including the deep fake abuse of adults, advice and support will be provided to individuals affected, such as via Unions, Professionals Online Safety Helpline or Report Harmful Content and/or if a crime has been committed,

via the police. Where this involves staff, actions will be in line with the DfE Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff. Action will also be taken in line with relevant Veritas MAT policies, including but not limited to, anti-bullying, behaviour and complaints.

5.2 Mobile and Smart Devices

Mobile Phones in Schools*our website**, ***Supporting Schools to Implement Mobile Phone Policies in a Safeguarding-Led, Child-Centred Way

- Veritas MAT recognises the safeguarding risks that can be posed by mobile phones, smart devices and wearable technology. This includes devices that can send or receive messages or notifications, connect to mobile networks or the internet, record images, audio or video, or share location information, and may include but is not limited to, devices with built-in mobile connectivity, smart phones, smart watches, smart glasses, fitness trackers and other wearable technology.

- Our wider approach to mobile phones, smart devices and wearable technology, including expectations for pupils/students, staff, visitors and parents/carers, is set out in our Mobile Phone and Smart Devices Policy: Here

- Veritas MAT will operate in line with the expectation that schools are mobile phone-free environments by default. Pupils will not have access to mobile phones during the school day, including during lessons, transition times, breaktimes and lunchtimes, except where an agreed exception applies. Any exceptions will be determined by the Veritas MAT leadership team in line with safeguarding, behaviour, accessibility, reasonable adjustment and considerations around individual need, and will be set out in the Veritas MAT mobile phone and smart technology policy.

- Veritas MAT recognises that while restrictions on mobile phone use, including operating mobile-free environments, can help to manage safeguarding risks, such measures are most effective when embedded within a wider safeguarding and behaviour framework. Clear, proportionate and consistently applied expectations, alongside education that promotes safe and respectful online behaviour, strong and supportive relationships and robust safeguarding and anti-bullying policies, are essential to support safe and appropriate use.

- Veritas MAT recognises that safeguarding concerns involving mobile phones, smart devices and wearable technology may arise outside of Veritas MAT, but still affect children's safety, wellbeing, relationships, attendance or learning. Such concerns will be reported to the DSL and responded to in line with this policy.

- Veritas MAT will ensure that mobile phone and smart technology expectations do not discourage pupils from disclosing safeguarding concerns. Where a pupil needs to report messages, images, videos, posts or other content as part of reporting a concern, staff will respond in line with this policy, avoid viewing or sharing illegal or harmful content unnecessarily, and report the concern to the DSL.

5.3 Appropriate filtering and monitoring on Veritas MAT devices and networks

- Veritas MAT will do all that it reasonably can to limit children's exposure to online harms through Veritas MAT devices, systems, platforms and networks. In line with the requirements of the Prevent Duty and KCSIE, we will ensure that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place.

- Filtering and monitoring are part of our wider safeguarding approach and will be supported by effective supervision, staff training, clear policies, curriculum education, regular risk assessment and timely response to concerns.

- Veritas MAT recognises the distinction between filtering and monitoring. Filtering is preventative and controls access to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content and services. Monitoring observes and reports on user activity to support safeguarding intervention where concerns are identified.

- Filtering and monitoring arrangements will be informed by the Veritas MAT's safeguarding risk profile. This will include the age and ability of children, children who may be at greater risk of harm, how often children access technology, the devices and systems used, remote access arrangements, any use of personal devices, and the risks identified through the Prevent duty risk assessment.

- Veritas MAT recognises that filtering and monitoring must be effective in real-world use and not limited to traditional web browsing. The Veritas MAT will seek to ensure application of appropriate filtering and monitoring across websites, apps, cloud services, embedded browsers, mobile devices, remote access and generative AI tools, including any technical limitations. ***Generative AI: product safety expectationsUK Safer Internet Centre 2026***

- When implementing appropriate filtering and monitoring, Veritas MAT will ensure that systems are configured to help protect children from illegal, inappropriate and harmful content, while avoiding unreasonable restrictions that could limit what children can be taught about online safety, safeguarding and the safe use of technology.

- Filtering and monitoring form an important part of our online safety and safeguarding responsibilities, but they are not a standalone solution. Veritas MAT recognises that we cannot rely on filtering and monitoring alone to safeguard pupils. Effective safeguarding practice, clear policies and procedures, appropriate supervision, classroom and behaviour management, staff training, and regular education about safe and responsible technology use are all essential.

- pupils will use search tools, apps, online resources and digital platforms that are appropriate to their age, ability and needs. These will be selected by staff following an informed consideration of safeguarding, educational value, data protection and privacy requirements.
    - Only digital tools, apps, online resources and platforms that have been approved for educational use will be used with pupils. Staff will ensure that their use is appropriate to pupils' age, developmental stage, ability and educational needs, with additional consideration given to pupils who may be more vulnerable to online harm.

- Internet and technology use will be supervised by staff in a way that is appropriate to pupils' age, ability, needs and potential risk of harm.

5.3.1 Responsibilities

- The Trust Board of Trustees has overall strategic responsibility for ensuring that appropriate filtering and monitoring systems and processes are in place as part of the Veritas MAT's wider safeguarding arrangements. This includes ensuring that filtering and monitoring provision is reviewed, that roles and responsibilities are clear, and that leaders and relevant staff understand how to manage systems effectively and escalate safeguarding concerns when identified.

- Zoe Cooper, Trust Safeguarding Lead, alongside Veritas schools' headteachers, have operational responsibility for filtering and monitoring. Jeannine Oliver, trustee responsible for safeguarding is responsible for strategic oversight of Filtering and monitoring standards

- Our senior leadership team is responsible for:
    - ensuring filtering and monitoring systems are appropriate to the Veritas MAT context and safeguarding risk profile.
    - procuring filtering and monitoring systems.
    - documenting decisions on what is blocked or allowed and why.
    - ensuring reviews and checks are completed and recorded.
    - overseeing reports.
    - ensuring all staff understand their role, are appropriately trained, follow policies, processes and procedures and act on reports and concerns.
    - ensuring the DSL and Concero have sufficient time and support to manage their filtering and monitoring responsibilities.

- The DSL has lead responsibility for overseeing and acting on:
    - any filtering and monitoring reports.
    - any child protection or safeguarding concerns identified.
    - checks to filtering and monitoring systems.

- The IT service providers, Concero have technical responsibility for:
    - maintaining filtering and monitoring systems.
    - providing filtering and monitoring reports.
    - completing technical actions identified following any concerns or checks to systems.
    - working with the senior leadership team and DSL to procure systems, identify risks, carry out reviews and carry out checks.
- All staff will receive information about filtering and monitoring as part of induction and ongoing safeguarding training. This will include their responsibilities for reporting concerns, responding to incidents, following acceptable use expectations and escalating concerns where filtering or monitoring may not be working effectively.

- All staff, pupils and parents/carers are expected to follow this policy, the Veritas MAT's acceptable use policy and to report any filtering or monitoring concerns.

5.3.2 Decision making and reviewing our filtering and monitoring provision

- When procuring or making decisions about filtering and monitoring provision, the senior leadership team will work closely with the DSL and Concero, ICT providers to ensure systems are appropriate to the Veritas MAT's needs and circumstances.
- Decisions about filtering and monitoring will be informed by the Veritas MAT's safeguarding risk profile. This will include consideration of:
    - the age and ability of pupils
    - children who may be at greater risk of harm
    - how often pupils access technology
    - our local context, including contextual safeguarding concerns
    - the devices, systems, platforms and networks in use
    - remote access arrangements
    - any use of Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD)
    - the Veritas MAT's Prevent duty risk assessment
    - emerging risks, including mobile platforms, apps, cloud services and generative AI.

- Decisions about what is blocked or allowed, and the rationale for those decisions, will be recorded. Any changes to filtering and monitoring arrangements will be assessed by staff with appropriate safeguarding, educational and technical knowledge and approved by the leadership team. Changes will be logged and recorded.

- Reviews of filtering and monitoring provision will be carried out at least once every academic year by the senior leadership team member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with support from the DSL and Concero. Reviews will include checks that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and a record will be kept of these checks.***filtering and monitoring standards***
    - Reviews will consider whether filtering and monitoring remain effective across all relevant devices, systems and locations, including Veritas MAT-owned devices, mobile devices, apps, embedded browsers, cloud services, remote access, guest access and any permitted personal device use.
    - Filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed earlier than the annual review where there is a safeguarding concern, a change in technology or working practice, the introduction of new systems or devices, changes to remote access or personal device arrangements, or updates to local or national guidance.

- Veritas MAT will also undertake regular and active checks on filtering and monitoring systems to ensure they are working effectively in practice and as expected.
    - These checks will be recorded and used to provide assurance to the Trust Board of Trustees that filtering and monitoring arrangements remain appropriate, effective and aligned with safeguarding responsibilities.
    - Checks will be undertaken from both a safeguarding and technical perspective and will consider the Veritas MAT context and risk profile. This may include checking different devices, accounts, user groups, filtering policies, locations, apps, mobile devices, remote access arrangements and AI tools, where relevant.
- Any technical concerns identified through checks or reviews will be escalated to Concero. Any safeguarding concerns identified will be reported to the DSL and responded to in line with this policy.

5.3.3 Appropriate filtering

- Veritas MAT's education internet connectivity is provided through Primary Technologies and Veritas MAT uses Watchguard to block access to harmful content.

- Watchguard blocks Veritas MAT provided internet access to illegal content and activity as identified in the Online Safety Act, including:
    - Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)
    - Controlling or coercive behaviour
    - Extreme sexual violence
    - Extreme pornography
    - Fraud
    - Racially or religiously aggravated public order offences
    - Inciting violence
    - Illegal immigration and people smuggling
    - Promoting or facilitating suicide
    - Intimate image abuse
    - Selling illegal drugs or weapons
    - Sexual exploitation
    - Terrorism

- Primary Technologies is a member of Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and uses IWF services to block access to CSAM.

- Watchguard has signed up to Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit list (CTIRU).

- Veritas MAT uses Primary Technologies to filter Trust-provided internet access and restrict access to websites and online content that may be harmful or inappropriate. This includes, but is not limited to, content associated with hate speech and discrimination, gambling, bullying, malware and hacking, misinformation and disinformation, breaches of privacy or copyright, pornography, self-harm and eating disorders, and violence against women and girls.

- Filtering arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and effective, while recognising the need to avoid unreasonable restrictions that may interfere with teaching and learning.

- Our filtering system is operational, up to date and applied to all users, including guest accounts, all Veritas MAT owned or provided devices, systems and networks, and all devices using the Veritas MAT internet connection. This is achieved by:

- The DSL and leadership team will work with Concero and Primary Technologies as appropriate and as identified in section 6.3.2, to ensure that our filtering policy is checked and reviewed to reflect our needs, risks and requirements.

- If pupils or staff accidentally or deliberately access, witness or suspect that unsuitable material has been accessed, they should stop viewing the content and, where possible, minimise or cover the screen without closing, deleting, forwarding or sharing the material. The concern must be reported immediately to an appropriate member of staff and, where there is a safeguarding concern, to the DSL or a deputy DSL. Staff should not investigate the content themselves. Details of the website, URL, app or platform should be reported to Concero, in accordance with the school's safeguarding and online safety procedures. Any suspected failure of filtering or monitoring systems must be reported promptly so that it can be investigated and appropriate action taken.

- Filtering breaches will be reported to the DSL and escalated as appropriate using Concero Portal and in line with relevant policies, including our Acceptable Use, Staff Grievance Resolution Policies
- Parents/carers will be informed of filtering breaches involving their child, unless to do so would put a child at risk of harm or compromise a criminal investigation.

- Any access to material believed to indicate a risk of significant harm, or that could be illegal, will be reported as soon as it is identified to the appropriate agencies. This may include but is not limited to the Internet Watch Foundation (where there are concerns about child sexual abuse material), Kent Police, NCA-CEOP, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or Front Door Service.

- If staff are teaching topics which could create unusual activity, or if staff perceive there to be unreasonable restrictions affecting teaching, learning or administration, they will report this to the DSL and/or leadership team.

5.3.4 Appropriate monitoring

- We will appropriately monitor the use of all Veritas MAT provided devices and networks to detect safeguarding risks in real or near-real time, including accessing or attempting to access, or engaging with or attempting to engage with illegal and/or harmful/inappropriate content or activity by any user. This is achieved by:
    - Monitoring is achieved through a combination of appropriate staff supervision and technical filtering and monitoring systems. Veritas MAT uses WatchGuard to monitor activity on Trust-managed systems and networks, with alerts relating to potentially concerning searches or activity sent to designated senior leaders for review. Where an alert indicates a potential

safeguarding concern, this is escalated to the DSL in accordance with the Trust's safeguarding procedures.
    - The effectiveness of filtering and monitoring arrangements is checked and reviewed regularly, including appropriate testing of the filtering system and an annual review of the Trust's filtering and monitoring provision. Identified concerns or weaknesses are reported to the appropriate technical staff/provider and safeguarding leads and addressed promptly.

- In accordance with our Mobile Phone and Smart Devices policy, Veritas MAT has clear expectations regarding the use of personal mobile phones and smart devices by staff, visitors and pupils. Where personal devices of staff and/or visitors are permitted to access Veritas MAT systems or networks, the Veritas MAT will consider how filtering and monitoring applies in line with safeguarding, data protection, human rights and privacy requirements. Please see Mobile Phone Policy.

- All users will be informed that use of our devices, systems and networks can/will be monitored and that monitoring will be carried out in line with safeguarding, data protection, human rights and privacy legislation.

- Monitoring systems and processes will be supported by sufficient staff capacity, appropriate safeguarding expertise and clear processes to review, prioritise and act on alerts or reports.

- If a concern is identified via our monitoring approaches:
    - Where the concern relates to pupils, it will be reported to the DSL and will be recorded and responded to in line with relevant policies, such as child protection, acceptable use, and relationship and behaviour policies.
    - Where the concern relates to staff, it will be reported to the headteacher (or Chair Of Governors/Trust Governance Professional) if the concern relates to the headteacher), in line with our trust Complaints Policy.
    - where the concern relates to a technical issue or system limitation, it will be reported to the relevant senior leader and Concero

- Parents/carers will be informed of safeguarding concerns involving their child identified through our monitoring approaches, unless to do so would put a child at risk of harm or compromise a criminal investigation.

- Where our monitoring approaches detect any immediate risk of harm or illegal activity, this will be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate agencies. This may include, but is not limited to, the emergency services via 999, Kent Police, NCA-CEOP , LADO or Front Door Service.

5.4 Information security and access management

- Veritas MAT recognises that information security and access management are part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities. Appropriate security measures will be in place to help protect children, staff, systems, personal information and safeguarding records.

- Veritas MAT will take appropriate action to strengthen cyber security, reduce the risk of disruption, prevent data breaches and mitigate safeguarding risks, in line with the DfE Cyber security standards for schools and colleges and relevant data protection law requirements.

- Veritas MAT will ensure expectations are in place for secure access to systems and information. This includes arrangements relating to passwords, account access, user permissions, multi-factor

authentication where applicable, use of Veritas MAT systems, secure storage of information, reporting concerns and responding to incidents.

- Veritas MAT will review the effectiveness of information security, access management and cyber security arrangements periodically, and in response to cyber incidents, data breaches, system changes, technology developments or updates to national guidance.

- The strategic management of technology is the responsibility of the CEO. The Trust cyber and technical security policy assures that the Trust fulfils the responsibility to comply with KCSIE. The policy and its implementation and its monitoring sits within the Risk & Audit Committee overview, including compliance with]cyber security standards.

- Staff will report concerns about data breaches, cyber security incidents, inappropriate access to systems, lost or stolen devices, compromised accounts, phishing, malware or risks to safeguarding information in line with Veritas MAT procedures.

5.5 Remote learning

- Where Veritas MAT provides remote learning, it will be delivered in line with safeguarding, privacy, data protection, acceptable use and online safety requirements.

- Remote learning will take place through Veritas MAT approved systems and channels, for example Veritas MAT email accounts/telephone numbers, or other approved platforms Atom Learning, Times, Tables Rock Stars, Numbots, Learning by Question

- Staff and pupils will engage with remote learning in line with existing expectations for behaviour, staff conduct, safeguarding and acceptable use.

- Staff will only use Veritas MAT approved platforms, accounts and communication methods when delivering remote learning or communicating with pupils and families. Any exceptional circumstances which mean this cannot be followed must be discussed with the DSL and/or senior leadership.

- pupils, parents/carers and staff will be encouraged to report concerns or issues that arise during remote or online learning. Concerns will be responded to in line with this policy and other relevant Veritas MAT procedures.

- Where remote learning raises a safeguarding or welfare concern, staff will report this to the DSL in line with this policy. The DSL will consider whether a Request for Support should be made. ***hereAUPs***.

5.6 Online Safety Training for Staff

- Veritas MAT will ensure that online safety is included within safeguarding and child protection training for all staff, including at induction and through regular updates.

- Training and updates will include staff roles and responsibilities in relation to online safety, including filtering and monitoring, acceptable use, reporting concerns and responding to online safety incidents.

- Online safety training will be integrated into Veritas MAT's wider safeguarding training arrangements. Further information is set out in section 7 of this policy.

- All staff will receive appropriate online safety training and updates as part of safeguarding induction, annual safeguarding training and ongoing safeguarding briefings. DSLs and other staff with specific

safeguarding, IT, curriculum, filtering or monitoring responsibilities will receive additional training or guidance appropriate to their roles. Governors and trustees will receive appropriate information and training to enable them to understand and fulfil their strategic responsibilities for online safety, including oversight of filtering and monitoring arrangements. Where external IT providers are used, the Trust will ensure that roles and responsibilities for filtering, monitoring and online safety are clearly understood.

5.7 Educating pupils

statutory Relationships, Sex, and Health Education 'Teaching online safety in school'here.

- Veritas MAT will ensure that pupils receive age and ability appropriate education to help them understand online risks and how to stay safe online.

- Online safety education will support pupils to understand safe and respectful use of technology, including content, contact, conduct and commerce risks, reporting concerns and seeking help.

- Online safety will be addressed through the curriculum and wider safeguarding education, including PSHE/RSHE and other appropriate opportunities. Further information is set out in section 9 of this policy.

- Online safety is taught progressively across all year groups through the PSHE and Computing curriculum, with learning appropriate to pupils' age, developmental stage and needs. This is reinforced through assemblies, wider curriculum opportunities and pastoral provision. Where specific or emerging online risks are identified, schools will provide additional targeted or responsive education for individual pupils, groups or the wider school community, as appropriate.

5.8 Working with parents/carers

- Veritas MAT will work in partnership with parents/carers to support children's online safety. We will use appropriate communication channels to reinforce the importance of children being safe online and to share information about online risks, safe technology use, reporting routes and how parents/carers can support children at home.

- This will be achieved through a range of appropriate communication channels, which may include school websites, newsletters, parent/carer communications and events, curriculum information, safeguarding updates and signposting to trusted online safety resources. Schools may also provide additional information or support in response to emerging online risks, incidents or issues affecting their pupils or wider school community.

- Veritas MAT will ensure that parents/carers are provided with clear and appropriate information about online safety arrangements. This will include, where relevant, information about filtering and monitoring systems, expectations for pupils' use of technology, the types of sites, platforms or online services pupils may be asked to access, and any arrangements through which pupils may communicate or interact online with staff.

- This information will be provided through relevant Trust and school policies, Acceptable Use arrangements, curriculum information, school websites and parent/carer communications, as appropriate. Additional information will be provided where new technologies, platforms or online learning arrangements are introduced that significantly affect how pupils access or use technology.

- Parents/carers will usually be informed and involved where online safety concerns arise involving their child, unless doing so may place a child at increased risk of harm or could undermine a police or statutory safeguarding response.

- Where Veritas MAT becomes aware of potentially harmful online risks, challenges, hoaxes or trends, we will respond in a proportionate and safeguarding-led way. Communications with children, staff and parents/carers will aim to provide clear, helpful advice without unnecessarily amplifying harmful content or creating avoidable anxiety.

5.9 Reviewing online safety

- Veritas MAT recognises that technology, and the risks and harms related to it, evolve and change rapidly.
- The Veritas MAT will review its approach to online safety at least annually, supported by a risk assessment which considers and reflects the current online risks faced by pupils.
- The review will consider the effectiveness of the Veritas MAT's wider online safety arrangements, including policies and procedures, staff training, curriculum, pupil voice, parental engagement, incident records, filtering and monitoring assurance, mobile and smart technology, artificial intelligence, remote learning and information security.

- The Trust Board of Trustees, leadership team and DSL will use the outcomes of online safety reviews to identify strengths, address gaps and improve the Veritas MAT's approach to keeping children safe online.

7 Staff Engagement and Expectations

6.1 Staff awareness, induction and training

- All members of staff will be provided with, and are required to read, part one of the current version of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

- All staff who work directly with children will also read Annex A of KCSIE, which provides further information to support safeguarding practice.

- Veritas MAT leaders, including the DSL, Headteacher, Trustees and Local Governors and relevant senior leaders, will read the full version of KCSIE to ensure they understand the statutory safeguarding requirements placed on schools and colleges.

- Staff will also be directed to any additional sections of KCSIE, local procedures or Veritas MAT policies that are relevant to their role, responsibilities or the children they work with.

- Induction training will ensure staff understand Veritas MAT's internal safeguarding processes, how to identify, respond to, report and record concerns, and how to follow Kent safeguarding procedures, including the role of the DSL and making a Request for Support to the Front Door Service where relevant.

- This will be achieved through safeguarding induction led by the DSL or an appropriately trained member of the safeguarding team, supported by relevant safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance. Staff will be shown how to access and use My Concern and will receive appropriate information about local safeguarding arrangements, including how to contact the DSL and deputies and

what action to take if they are unavailable. Induction may be supplemented by appropriate e-learning, staff briefings and local safeguarding flowcharts or guidance.

- It is a requirement that all members of staff have access to this policy and confirm that they have read and understood its contents. Staff are expected to re-read this policy at least annually and following any updates, so they understand the Veritas MAT's safeguarding expectations, procedures and reporting arrangements.

- All staff will be made aware of the systems within Veritas MAT which support safeguarding as part of induction. This will include, but is not limited to:
    - this child protection policy
    - the behaviour policy, including measures to prevent bullying, cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying
    - the Staff Code of Conduct, including expectations regarding low-level concerns, allegations against staff, whistleblowing, acceptable use of technology, staff/pupil relationships and communication, including use of social media
    - the Veritas MAT's safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods
    - the role and identity of the DSL and any deputy DSLs
    - how to report safeguarding concerns, including concerns about children, staff, safeguarding practice or online safety.

- All new staff and volunteers, including agency, supply and third-party staff where appropriate, will receive safeguarding and child protection training as part of induction. This will include online safety and an understanding of expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring.

- All staff, including agency, supply and third-party staff where appropriate, will receive safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, which is updated at least annually. This will ensure staff are aware of a range of safeguarding issues, understand their responsibilities and know how to report concerns.

- This will be achieved through a combination of whole-staff safeguarding training, including annual safeguarding updates, staff briefings and meetings, and appropriate e-learning through The National College. Training will be supplemented throughout the year by additional updates, briefings or role-specific training in response to changes in statutory guidance, emerging safeguarding issues or identified needs.

- Online safety training for staff will be integrated, aligned and considered as part of the whole Veritas MAT safeguarding approach, wider staff training and curriculum planning. This will include staff responsibilities in relation to online safety, acceptable use, mobile phones/smart devices, filtering and monitoring, reporting concerns and responding to online safety incidents.

- This will be achieved through safeguarding induction and training, regular safeguarding and online safety updates, staff briefings, Acceptable Use Policy updates and specific training or guidance relating to filtering and monitoring. Additional role-specific training will be provided for staff with particular responsibilities for online safety, filtering and monitoring, safeguarding or IT systems, as appropriate

- In addition to safeguarding and child protection training, all staff will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates, including online safety, as required and at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

- Updates will be provided through a range of appropriate methods, which may include staff meetings and briefings, safeguarding updates and reminders, email communications, training sessions and learning arising from safeguarding reviews, incidents or changes to statutory guidance. Additional or role-specific updates will be provided where required.

- Veritas MAT recognises the expertise staff build through safeguarding training and through managing safeguarding concerns in practice. Staff will be given opportunities to contribute to and shape Veritas MAT safeguarding arrangements and child protection policies.

- This will be achieved through regular safeguarding training and updates, staff meetings and briefings, opportunities to provide feedback on policies and procedures, safeguarding audits and reviews, and reflection and learning following safeguarding incidents or concerns. Feedback from staff will be used, where appropriate, to inform improvements to safeguarding practice, procedures and future training.

- All Trustees and Local Governors will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, at induction. This training will support them to provide strategic challenge and assurance that safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole Veritas MAT approach to safeguarding. All training is accessed through Governor Hub and is regularly updated.

- When considering safeguarding training requirements, Veritas MAT will have regard to the Teachers' Standards, including the expectation that teachers manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe educational environment and have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils.

- The DSL and Headteacher will provide an annual report to the Trust Board of Trustees detailing safeguarding training undertaken by staff and relevant governors/proprietors/trustees. Veritas MAT will maintain an up-to-date record of safeguarding and child protection training.

6.2 Safer working practice

- Veritas MAT will take steps, through this policy and other relevant Veritas MAT policies and procedures, to promote a culture of continuous vigilance, deter and prevent abuse, and ensure that inappropriate or unsafe behaviour is challenged and responded to appropriately.

- All staff, volunteers, contractors, agency and third-party staff are expected to work within clear expectations for safe and professional conduct, as set out in the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct, acceptable use arrangements and other relevant policies. This includes expectations relating to professional boundaries, communication with children and families, physical contact, one-to-one working, confidentiality, information sharing, use of technology, social media, mobile and smart devices, and reporting concerns about the conduct of adults. Staff Code of Conduct, Mobile Phone, Use of Restrictive Use and Whistle Blowing Policy can be found: Here

- Staff will be made aware of the Veritas MAT procedures for reporting and responding to concerns about adults working with children, including allegations, low-level concerns and whistleblowing. Concerns will be managed in line with the relevant sections of this policy and the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct.

- Staff will be made aware of the Veritas MAT behaviour management and physical intervention policies. Staff will manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe educational environment and will have a clear understanding of the needs of all children. Any physical intervention and/or use of reasonable force will be in line with our agreed policy, procedures and national guidance. Here

- All staff will be made aware of the professional risks associated with the use of social media, personal devices and electronic communication, including email, mobile phones, messaging, texting and social networking. Staff will follow relevant policies, including the Staff Code of Conduct, acceptable use arrangements, mobile and smart technology policy, social media policy and data protection procedures. Here

6.3 Supervision and support

- Veritas MAT will provide appropriate supervision, guidance and support for staff so that they are able to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively.
- The Veritas MAT will ensure that staff are supported to understand and carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including knowing when and how to seek advice from the DSL.
- Staff will be supported by the DSL in their safeguarding role, including through advice, guidance, debriefing and opportunities to discuss concerns where appropriate.
- Veritas MAT recognises that safeguarding work can be complex and emotionally demanding. Any member of staff affected by issues arising from concerns about children's welfare or safety can seek support from the DSL, Headteacher or other appropriate senior leader.
- Where appropriate, the DSL or senior leaders may signpost staff to external sources of professional support. Staff may also seek support directly from organisations such as their union or other relevant professional support services.
- Where staff work within Early Years Foundation Stage provision, Veritas MAT will ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements are in place in line with EYFS requirements.

- Staff working within EYFS provision will have regular meetings with DSL or EYFS lead to provide opportunities to discuss children's development, safety and wellbeing; raise welfare or safeguarding matters; identify solutions to concerns; and receive support, coaching and professional development. Supervision will be recorded in accordance with the school's agreed procedures, and additional supervision will be provided where required. Safeguarding concerns must always be reported immediately through the school's safeguarding procedures and should not be held until a scheduled meeting.

8 Safer Recruitment and Allegations Against Staff

7.1 Safer recruitment and safeguarding checks

- Veritas MAT is committed to ensuring that we develop a safe culture and that all reasonable steps are taken to recruit, engage and deploy staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors, agency staff and other third-party staff who are safe and suitable to work with or around children. We recognise that people working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT must be suitable for their role, have the relevant qualifications, training and experience, and have completed any required safeguarding checks.

- Veritas MAT will follow Part three of Keeping Children Safe in Education and relevant guidance from the Disclosure and Barring Service when recruiting staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors, agency staff and others who may work with or around children.

- The Trustees and leadership team are responsible for ensuring that safe recruitment processes are followed in line with statutory guidance.

- Veritas MAT will ensure safer recruitment, safeguarding checks and related decision-making are carried out fairly, proportionately and in line with safeguarding duties, equality legislation and, where applicable, the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- At least one person involved in conducting interviews will have completed safer recruitment training.
- As part of its due diligence on shortlisted candidates, Veritas MAT will consider carrying out an online search in line with Part three of KCSIE, so that any publicly available incidents or issues identified can be explored with the applicant at interview.
- Veritas MAT will maintain an accurate Single Central Record (SCR) in line with statutory guidance. The SCR will record the required recruitment and vetting checks and will be maintained and reviewed by appropriately authorised staff in accordance with Trust procedures.
- Where required, Veritas MAT will complete relevant professional status, prohibition, restriction, sanction or direction checks, in line with Part three of KCSIE.
- Veritas MAT will consider and comply with relevant requirements relating to the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2018 and obligations under the Childcare Act 2006, where applicable.
- Veritas MAT will determine whether roles, including volunteer roles, are regulated activity in line with KCSIE, DfE Regulated activity in relation to children: scope supporting guidance and relevant legislation. Appropriate safeguarding checks will be completed before individuals start work or volunteering, as required by statutory guidance.
- All staff working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT are expected to disclose any information that may affect their suitability to work with children. This may include convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands, warnings or other relevant information and any information where their personal circumstances or associations may present a relevant safeguarding risk. This includes information arising during employment, not only at the point of recruitment. Any information shared will be considered proportionately and in line with safeguarding, HR, data protection and LADO guidance.
- Where Veritas MAT places a pupil with an alternative provision provider, we will obtain appropriate written safeguarding assurance from the provider before the placement starts. This will include confirmation that relevant safeguarding checks have been completed for individuals working at the provision. Further information about our safeguarding responsibilities for children attending alternative provision is set out in section 5.5 of this policy.
- Where Veritas MAT organises work experience placements, we will follow the relevant advice and guidance in Part three of KCSIE, including consideration of supervision arrangements, safeguarding responsibilities and any checks required for adults involved in the placement.
- Where Veritas MAT organises homestays or exchange visits, we will follow the relevant advice and guidance in Part three of KCSIE and other applicable national guidance.

7.2 Allegations or concerns about staff, including supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers and contractors

- Veritas MAT will ensure there are clear processes in place to manage any safeguarding concern or allegation, no matter how small, about any adult working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT. This includes staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors, agency staff and other third-party staff or organisations working with children.
- Veritas MAT will respond to any concern or allegation about an adult working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT in line with Part four of KCSIE and local Kent allegations management arrangements. This includes concerns or allegations that meet the 'harm threshold' and concerns that do not meet the harm threshold, sometimes referred to as 'low-level concerns'.

- Veritas MAT will work with relevant agencies, including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate. The LADO provides advice and oversight where concerns or allegations indicate that an adult working with children may have harmed a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, may have committed a criminal offence related to a child, or may not be suitable to work with children. In Kent, the LADO function is undertaken by the LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS).
- Detailed information about how concerns and allegations are managed is set out in this policy and the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct.
- Concerns or allegations will be recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring concerns are managed effectively protects children and also protects adults working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT from potential false allegations, misunderstandings or unsafe practice going unaddressed.
- If staff have a safeguarding concern or an allegation is made that another adult working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT has harmed a child, may have harmed a child, or may pose a risk of harm to children, this will be referred to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider whether an onward referral to the LADO is required.
- Where the concern or allegation is about the Headteacher, or where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the Headteacher this will be referred to the Chair of Trustees, who will contact the LADO. Where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the Chair of Trustees, the concern will be reported directly to the LADO.
- Where the Headteacher is unsure how to respond, including where it is unclear whether a concern meets the harm threshold, advice will be sought from the LADO in line with local Kent arrangements.
- Where a concern or allegation relates to a supply teacher, trainee teacher, contractor, volunteer, agency worker or other third-party member of staff, Veritas MAT will liaise with the relevant employer, agency, training provider, contractor or other organisation as appropriate. The Veritas MAT recognises that safeguarding responsibilities are shared with the relevant third-party organisation; however, this does not remove the Veritas MAT's responsibility to take appropriate safeguarding action, record decisions and involve the LADO where the concern meets, or may meet, the harm threshold.
- Where the concern relates to a trainee teacher, the Veritas MAT will consider the concern in line with Part four of KCSIE, local Kent allegations management arrangements and any relevant partnership arrangements with the training provider. Safeguarding action will not be delayed while responsibility for employment, placement or training arrangements is clarified.
- After resolving or concluding allegations or low-level concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT, the Headteacher, and the LADO where involved, will consider whether there are lessons to be learned and whether any improvements are required to safeguarding practice, policy, training, supervision or safer working arrangements.
- Where Veritas MAT receives an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using our premises for activities with children, such as community groups, sports associations or service providers, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform the LADO as appropriate.

7.2.1 Concerns that meet the 'harm threshold'

- Veritas MAT recognises that an allegation may meet the harm threshold where an adult working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT has:
    - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
    - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
    - behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children

- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

- Allegations against staff which meet this threshold will be responded to and managed in line with Part four of KCSIE, local Kent allegations management arrangements and the reporting process set out in section 8.2 above.

- The Veritas MAT is responsible for deciding whether a Request for Support to the Front Door Service is required for the child or any other children affected. This may be discussed with the LADO as part of allegations management, but the Veritas MAT will not delay appropriate safeguarding action and will act in line with KSCMP procedures, the Kent Support Levels Guidance and section 3 of this policy.

- If staff are concerned that appropriate safeguarding action is not being taken following an allegation about an adult working with children, they are advised to follow the Veritas MAT whistleblowing procedure and/or to contact the LADO directly themselves.

7.2.2 Concerns that do not meet the 'harm threshold'

Developing and implementing a low-level concerns policy'

- Veritas MAT recognises that concerns or allegations about adults working in or on behalf of Veritas MAT which do not meet the harm threshold, sometimes referred to as low-level concerns, must still be shared, recorded and responded to appropriately in line with Part four of KCSIE and the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct.

- A low-level concern does not mean that the concern is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, that an adult working in or on behalf of Veritas MAT may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with expected professional standards or the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct. This includes behaviour outside of work where this may affect the adult's suitability to work with children, and where the concern does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

- Low-level concerns may arise in a number of different ways, including through suspicion, complaint, disclosure, observation, allegations made by a child, parent/carer or adult, or information arising from vetting checks.

- Veritas MAT will promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT are shared responsibly with the right person and dealt with promptly and appropriately. This helps identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early, minimises the risk of abuse, and supports adults to understand and maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

- Low-level concerns should be shared confidentially with the Headteacher in line with the Veritas MAT Staff Code of Conduct and the procedures set out in this policy.

- The Headteacher will be informed of all low-level concerns and is the ultimate decision-maker in respect of the response to low-level concerns. Where low-level concerns are initially reported to the DSL or another nominated person, they will be shared with the Headteacher in a timely manner.

- Staff are encouraged to self-refer where they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, may appear compromising to others, or where, on reflection, they believe they may have behaved in a way that falls below expected professional standards.

- Low-level concerns about supply teachers, trainee teachers, contractors, agency staff, volunteers or other third-party staff will be shared with their employer, agency, training provider or relevant organisation as appropriate, so that any potential patterns of concerning or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and appropriate action taken.

- If the Veritas MAT is in any doubt as to whether a concern meets the harm threshold, advice will be sought from the LADO.

- Low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. Records will include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, the action taken and the rationale for any decisions made. Records will be kept confidential, held securely and managed in line with data protection laws and Veritas MAT record retention procedures.

- Low-level concern records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern is identified, Veritas MAT will consider appropriate action. This may include consulting with the LADO, taking advice from HR/personnel providers, reviewing safeguarding practice, providing additional training or supervision, revising relevant policies, or following disciplinary procedures.
- Information about low-level concerns will be handled in employment references in accordance with Part three and Part four of KCSIE. Low-level concerns will not be included simply because they are safeguarding concerns; where a concern relates to matters that would normally be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance, or where concerns have met the harm threshold and been substantiated, the Trust will follow KCSIE requirements.

- Veritas MAT will consider whether any wider cultural, supervision, training or policy issues may have enabled the behaviour to occur and will take appropriate action to reduce the risk of recurrence.

7.3 Safe Culture, including whistleblowing

- As part of our approach to safeguarding, Veritas MAT will create and maintain a culture of openness, trust and transparency. Our values and expected behaviours, as set out in our Staff Code of Conduct, will be lived, monitored and reinforced by all adults working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT, including staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, contractors, agency staff and other third-party staff.

- Veritas MAT will ensure that all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the Veritas MAT are taken seriously, shared responsibly, recorded and dealt with promptly and appropriately. This includes concerns that meet, or may meet, the harm threshold and concerns that do not meet the harm threshold.

- All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice, inappropriate behaviour, or potential failures in the Veritas MAT's safeguarding arrangements. The leadership team at Veritas MAT will take all concerns or allegations seriously.

- All staff will be made aware of the Veritas MAT whistleblowing procedure: Here It is a disciplinary matter not to report concerns about the conduct of a colleague or other adult working with children where this could place a child at risk.

- Staff can access the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line if they do not feel able to raise concerns about child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk. The NSPCC states that its Whistleblowing Advice Line supports people who are worried about how child protection issues are handled in their workplace.

- Veritas MAT has a legal duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where a person has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or where there is reason to believe they have committed one of the relevant offences and they have been removed from working in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.

- Where these circumstances arise in relation to a member of staff, volunteer or other adult working in or on behalf of Veritas MAT, a DBS referral will be made as soon as possible after resignation or removal, in accordance with statutory guidance and advice from the LADO and/or HR.

- Where a case involving concerns or allegations about an adult working in or on behalf of Veritas MAT has been concluded, the Veritas MAT will consider whether there are lessons to be learned and whether improvements are required to safeguarding practice, safer working arrangements, staff training, supervision, policy or culture.

9 Opportunities to Teach Safeguarding

- Veritas MAT will ensure that pupils are taught about how to keep themselves and others safe, including online, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum.

- Relevant safeguarding issues will be addressed through Relationships and Health Education and the Jigsaw, Twinkle, No Outsiders PSHE curriculum, alongside Computing, pastoral provision, assemblies, wider curriculum opportunities and other safeguarding education, as appropriate to pupils' age, developmental stage, needs and statutory requirements. statutory requirements.

- Veritas MAT recognises that we play an essential role in helping children to understand what safe and appropriate behaviour looks like, including in relationships with other children and adults. Our curriculum and wider safeguarding education will support pupils to recognise when they or others may not be safe, and how to seek advice, help and support.

- Our curriculum provides opportunities to develop self-awareness, self-esteem, social and emotional understanding, assertiveness, decision-making and help-seeking skills, so that pupils have a range of age-appropriate strategies to support their own safety and the safety of others.

- Veritas MAT recognises the crucial role we have to play in preventative education. Preventative education is most effective as part of a whole Veritas MAT approach which prepares pupils for life in modern Britain and creates a culture of zero tolerance for sexism, racism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, sexual violence, sexual harassment, derogatory behaviour and other forms of physical violence or conflict.

- Veritas MAT has a clear set of values and standards which are upheld and demonstrated throughout all aspects of Veritas MAT life. These are underpinned by our Relationships and Behaviour Policy, pastoral support arrangements and a planned programme of evidence-based Relationships and Health Education, delivered through the Jigsaw PSHE, Twinkle and No Outsiders curriculum. This programme is delivered through regularly timetabled opportunities and reinforced through the wider curriculum and Veritas MAT life.

- Our programme will be fully inclusive and age and stage of development appropriate. Veritas MAT recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach will not be appropriate for all children, and that some pupils may need a more personalised or contextualised approach. This may include children who are victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation, children with SEND, children with a social worker, children who are care experienced, young carers and children who may be more vulnerable to online harm or child-on-child abuse.

- Through the curriculum and wider safeguarding education, Veritas MAT will support pupils to learn about relevant safeguarding themes in an age, ability and developmentally appropriate way. This includes positive and respectful relationships, kindness, personal boundaries and consent, stereotypes, prejudice and equality, body confidence and self-esteem, recognising safe and unsafe situations, online safety and knowing how and where to seek help. These themes are principally taught through the Jigsaw PSHE curriculum, Twinkle, No Outsiders and My Happy Mind, alongside Computing, assemblies and wider safeguarding education. Where additional or emerging safeguarding risks are identified, schools will provide age-appropriate education on relevant issues, which may include online bullying, grooming and exploitation, sharing images, misinformation and disinformation, harmful online content and other risks relevant to the needs and experiences of pupils.

- Online safety will be addressed through the curriculum and safeguarding education approaches. This will support pupils to understand content, contact, conduct and commerce risks, safe and respectful use of technology, privacy, reporting concerns and where to get help. Further information about the Veritas MAT's wider online safety approach is set out in section 6 of this policy.

- Veritas MAT systems will support children to speak to a range of trusted staff. All children will be listened to and heard, and their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon as appropriate.

- Veritas MAT recognises the value of external organisations and speakers in enriching safeguarding education. External organisations and speakers will be assessed before they are given access to pupils. This may include considering the educational value of the input, the age and ability appropriateness of content, alignment with Veritas MAT values and curriculum aims, any safeguarding considerations, and whether relevant checks or supervision arrangements are required.

- When using external visitors or resources, Veritas MAT will remain responsible for ensuring that safeguarding education is accurate, appropriate, inclusive and delivered in a way that supports children's safety and wellbeing.

10 Physical Safety

9.1 Restrictive Interventions, including the Use of 'Reasonable Force'

- There may be circumstances when it is necessary for Veritas MAT staff to use restrictive interventions to safeguard children, staff or others from harm. This approach is informed by the DfE guidance Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools.

- 'Restrictive interventions' is an umbrella term that refers to any action, planned or reactive, that limits a pupil's movement, liberty or freedom. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - the use of reasonable force.
    - physical restraint.
    - non force restrictive practices.
    - seclusion, where a pupil is prevented from leaving a space for safety reasons.

- The Veritas MAT is committed to minimising the need for restrictive interventions through positive behaviour support, early intervention and de-escalation strategies.

- Restrictive interventions will only be used when necessary, never as a punishment, and only where there is a real risk of harm.

- Any use of reasonable force will be lawful, necessary and proportionate. It will involve no more force than is necessary, will be used for the shortest possible time, and will depend on the individual circumstances.

- Particular care will be taken when supporting pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities, recognising that these pupils may be disproportionately affected. Reasonable adjustments and preventative approaches will be considered where appropriate.

- In line with the DfE statutory guidance, all significant incidents involving restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, restraint or seclusion, will be recorded in writing as soon as practicable and reported to parents/carers as soon as practicable, unless doing so would place a child at risk of harm or compromise a safeguarding or criminal investigation.

- Records will be reviewed by Veritas MAT leaders and governors to support safeguarding oversight, identify patterns, consider any disproportionate impact and inform staff training, support and policy development.

- Further detail regarding behaviour management, de-escalation strategies, staff training and physical intervention can be found in the Relationships and Behaviour Policy, SEND Policy / SEND Information Report and Staff Code of Conduct. Policies can be found: Here

9.2 Safeguarding in physical spaces, sport and residential arrangements

- Veritas MAT recognises that safeguarding children includes ensuring that physical spaces, activities and accommodation arrangements are safe, appropriate and protect children's privacy, dignity and wellbeing.

- Veritas MAT will consider its safeguarding duties alongside its obligations under equality and human rights legislation when making decisions about toilets, changing rooms, showers, sport, physical education, residential accommodation, educational visits and other physical arrangements.

- Toilets, changing rooms, showers and other intimate or private spaces will be managed in line with KCSIE, relevant premises requirements, safeguarding duties and the Veritas MAT's local arrangements. The Veritas MAT will ensure that arrangements do not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child.

- Where a child requires an alternative arrangement in relation to toilets, changing rooms, showers, sport, residential accommodation or similar provision, the Veritas MAT will consider this through a careful, recorded and safeguarding-led process. This will include consideration of the child's needs and wishes, the safety and welfare of other children, relevant legal duties, practical arrangements and any relevant guidance. Where the request relates to a child who is questioning their gender, this will be considered in line with section 5.12 of this policy.

- Sport, PE and other physical activities will be organised with due regard to children's safety, fairness, supervision, privacy and individual needs. Where activities are organised by sex for reasons of safety, fairness or safeguarding, arrangements will be made in line with KCSIE, the Equality Act and relevant Veritas MAT policies.

- Where Veritas MAT arranges overnight visits, trips, camps, boarding, residential accommodation or similar activities, sleeping and accommodation arrangements will be risk assessed and planned to safeguard all children. This will include consideration of supervision, privacy, dignity, individual needs, SEND, medical needs, relationships between children, child-on-child abuse risks and any additional vulnerabilities.

- Where Veritas MAT provides boarding, residential accommodation or other overnight provision, safeguarding arrangements will reflect the additional risks and requirements associated with children living away from home, including relevant national minimum standards, regulations and guidance. The DSL will work with relevant staff, the host local authority and, where applicable, placing local authorities to ensure children are safeguarded and supported.

- Any decisions or individual arrangements made under this section will be recorded, reviewed as appropriate and shared with relevant staff on a need-to-know basis, in line with safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection requirements.

9.3 The use of Veritas MAT premises by other organisations

- Where Veritas MAT facilities or premises are rented or hired out to organisations or individuals, for example to community groups, sports associations, and service providers to run community or extra-curricular activities, we will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep children safe.

- Where those services or activities are provided under the direct supervision or management of our Veritas MAT staff, our existing child protection and safeguarding arrangements, including this policy, will apply.

- Where services or activities are provided separately by another organisation using the Veritas MAT facilities or premises, the Headteacher and Trust Board of Trustees will seek assurance that the provider has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place. This may include inspecting policies and procedures as needed.
- In carrying out this due diligence, Veritas MAT will have regard, where relevant, to the DfE non-statutory guidance Keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition.

- The Headteacher and Trust Board of Trustees will ensure that arrangements are in place for the provider to liaise with the Veritas MAT on safeguarding matters where appropriate.

- If appropriate safeguarding assurance is not achieved, an application to use the premises will be refused.

- Safeguarding requirements will be included in any transfer of control agreement, such as a lease or hire agreement, as a condition of use and occupation of the premises.

- Failure to comply with safeguarding requirements may lead to termination of the agreement.

- Where Veritas MAT receives an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using our premises for activities with children, we will follow our safeguarding policies and procedures and inform the LADO as appropriate.

9.4 Site security

- All members of staff have a responsibility for maintaining awareness of buildings and site security and for reporting concerns that may come to light.

- Veritas MAT will have arrangements in place to help keep children, staff and visitors safe on site.

- Appropriate checks and supervision will be undertaken in respect of visitors, volunteers and contractors coming into Veritas MAT as outlined within national guidance and local procedures.
    - School gates, external doors and other access points will be kept secure in accordance with each school's site procedures. Staff must not share access codes, keys or other security information with unauthorised individuals. Staff will wear appropriate identification, and all visitors and contractors will be required to follow the school's signing-in and identification procedures.
    - All visitors must report to the school office on arrival, sign in and out using the school's visitor management procedures, and wear the identification or visitor badge provided while on site. Visitors will be informed of relevant safeguarding and emergency procedures as appropriate to the nature and duration of their visit.

- For visitors attending in a professional capacity from partner agencies, such as social workers, Family Help practitioners, health professionals, police officers or other professionals, Veritas MAT will check their identity and purpose for visiting. The Veritas MAT will not routinely require these professionals to provide evidence of an individual DBS certificate before accessing children, as appropriate safeguarding checks are expected to have been undertaken by their employer. Where there are any concerns about identity, purpose, professional status or suitability, these will be clarified with the professional's employer or relevant agency before access is agreed, unless doing so would delay an urgent safeguarding response.

- Any individual who is not known or identifiable on site should be challenged by staff for clarification and reassurance. Children will be encouraged to report any concerns about unknown or unidentified adults to a member of staff.

- Veritas MAT will not accept the behaviour of any individual, including parents/carers, visitors or members of the public, that threatens site security or causes children, staff or others to feel unsafe. Such behaviour will be treated as a serious concern and may result in a decision to refuse access to the Veritas MAT site.

- Any site security concern which may indicate a safeguarding risk will be reported to the DSL and responded to in line with this policy.

11 Local Support

All members of staff in Veritas MAT are made aware of local support available.

- **Kent Family Help**
  - Kent Support level guidance: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/kent-support-levels-guidance
  - Make a Request for Support to the Front Door Service via Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal – select 'urgent' if there is an immediate risk/concern
  - Front Door Service Consultation: 03000 411111
  - Out of Hours Number: 03000 419191

- **Community Based Early Help and Family Hubs**
  - Early Help and Preventative Services - KELSI and Early Help contacts - KELSI
  - Kent Family Hubs - Kent County Council

- **Kent Police**
  - NPCC When to call the police - guidance for schools and colleges
  - Home | Kent Police
  - Telephone 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm

- **Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP)**
  - www.kscmp.org.uk
  - 03000 421126 or kscmp@kent.gov.uk

- **Adult Safeguarding**
  - Adult Social Care via 03000 41 61 61 (text relay 18001 03000 41 61 61) or email social.services@kent.gov.uk
  - Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board: Kent & Medway SAB website

- **Kent LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS)**
  - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership

- To refer to the LADO, complete a referral on the Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal.
  - To enquire if a LADO referral should be made, please use the LESAS enquiry form.
  - For strategic education safeguarding or online safety advice, or to enquire about LESAS commissioned services/support, please use the LESAS enquiry form.

Appendix 1: Categories of Abuse

Abuse, neglect, harm and exploitation are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In many cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Abuse: 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. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or by others. Abuse can be carried out both on and offline and can be perpetrated by men, women, and other children. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving 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 penetration with an object) 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 can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it and of the Veritas MAT's policy and procedures for dealing with it.

Signs that may indicate Sexual Abuse

- Sudden changes in behaviour and/or education performance.
- Depression/withdrawal.
- Regression to younger behaviour.
- Sexualised behaviour or displays of affection which are sexual and age inappropriate.
- Self-harm, self-mutilation, attempts at suicide
- Fire setting.
- Alluding to secrets which they cannot reveal, secrecy relating to use of technology, or unexplained gifts or money.
- Clinginess and/or need for constant reassurance
- Distrust of familiar adults or anxiety about being left with specific people.
- Fear of undressing, for example for PE.
- Sexually transmitted infection or pregnancy.

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse provides resources to help education professionals identify and respond to concerns of child sexual abuse and abusive behaviours.

Physical abuse: 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.

Signs that may indicate physical abuse

- Bruises, abrasions or injuries around the face, mouth, cheeks or soft areas of the body.
- Bi-lateral injuries, fingertip bruising, bite marks, strap marks, welts or injuries suggesting beatings.
- Burns or scalds, including unusual patterns, spread of injuries or deep contact burns such as cigarette burns.
- Injuries that cannot be accounted for, or explanations which are inadequate, inconsistent, excessively plausible, or where there is a delay in seeking treatment.
- Covering arms and legs even when hot.
- Inappropriate or harmful medication use.
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts.

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and 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 verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as 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 from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), 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.

Signs that may indicate emotional abuse

- Overreaction to mistakes.
- Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem.
- Excessive need for approval, attention and affection.
- Sudden speech disorders.
- Unwillingness or inability to play.
- Extremes of passivity and/or aggression.
- Self-harm, eating disorders.
- Fear of parents being contacted.
- Compulsive stealing or drug, alcohol or solvent misuse.
- Secrecy relating to use of technology.

Neglect: 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 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.

Signs that may indicate neglect

- Constant hunger.
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Inadequate clothing.
- Frequent lateness, non-attendance or running away.
- Untreated medical problems.
- Loss of weight/being constantly underweight.
- Poor relationships with peers, low self-esteem or withdrawn presentation.
- Compulsive stealing and/or scavenging.
- Rocking, hair twisting or thumb sucking.

Appendix 2: Support Organisations and Resources

KSCMP

- Worried about a child: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/worried-about-a-child
- Factsheets: www.kscmp.org.uk/training/factsheets
- Supporting resources: www.kscmp.org.uk/training/training-resources
- Video explainers: www.kscmp.org.uk/training/video-explainers
- Missing children: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/missing-children

NSPCC 'Report Abuse in Education' Helpline

- 0800 136 663 or help@nspcc.org.uk

National Organisations

- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- Barnardo's: www.barnardos.org.uk
- Action for Children: www.actionforchildren.org.uk
- Children's Society: www.childrenssociety.org.uk
- Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse: www.csacentre.org.uk

Support for Staff

- Education Support Partnership: www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk
- Professional Online Safety Helpline: www.saferinternet.org.uk/helpline
- NSPCC Whistleblowing helpline: www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line
- Shout: www.giveusashout.org

Support for pupils/students

- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- Papyrus: www.papyrus-uk.org
- The Mix: www.themix.org.uk
- Fearless: www.fearless.org
- Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation 'Shore Space': https://shorespace.org.uk

Support for Adults

- KCC Adult Safeguarding: www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/adult-social-care/adult-safeguarding
- Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board: https://kmsab.org.uk/
- Crime Stoppers: www.crimestoppers-uk.org
- Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood): www.napac.org.uk
- MOSAC: www.mosac.org.uk
- Report Fraud: www.reportfraud.police.uk
- Shout: www.giveusashout.org

Support for Special Education Needs and Disabilities

- Respond: www.respond.org.uk
- Mencap: www.mencap.org.uk
- Council for Disabled Children: https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk
- Kent Autistic Trust: www.kentautistictrust.org

- AFASIC: www.afasic.org.uk
- National Autistic Society: www.autism.org.uk
- Kent County Council: www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/support-for-parents-with-send-children
- Information Advice and Support Kent (IASK): www.iask.org.uk

Kent Resilience Hub

- https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk

Children with Family Members in Prison

- National information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO): www.nicco.org.uk
- Prisoners' Families Helpline - https://www.prisonersfamilies.org

Substance Misuse

- We are with you: www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/kent-for-young-people
- Talk to Frank: www.talktofrank.com

Domestic Abuse

- KSCMP: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse
- Domestic abuse services: www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk
- Refuge: www.refuge.org.uk
- Women's Aid: www.womensaid.org.uk
- Men's Advice Line: www.mensadviceline.org.uk
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- Respect Phoneline: https://respectphoneline.org.uk

Exploitation, violence and modern slavery and trafficking

- KSCMP: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/exploitation
- Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit: https://kentandmedwayvru.co.uk/
- It's not okay: www.itsnotokay.co.uk
- NWG Network: www.nwgnetwork.org
- County Lines Toolkit for Professionals: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/resources/county-lines-toolkit
- The Children's Society: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/preventing-child-sexual-exploitation
- Report modern slavery: www.modernslavery.gov.uk
- Unseen: www.unseenuk.org

Honour Based Abuse

- Karma Nirvana: https://karmanirvana.org.uk
- FGM Factsheet
- Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation: procedural information: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information
- Forced Marriage Unit: www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage
- The right to choose - government guidance on forced marriage: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-right-to-choose-government-guidance-on-forced-marriage

Radicalisation and hate

- Kent and Medway Prevent Team: www.kelsi.org.uk/child-protection-and-safeguarding/The-Prevent-Duty-In-Education
- Educate against Hate: www.educateagainsthate.com
- Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit: www.gov.uk/report-terrorism

- True Vision: www.report-it.org.uk

Child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence

- NSPCC Problematic and harmful sexual behaviour: https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/harmful-sexual-behaviour
- Rape Crisis: https://rapecrisis.org.uk
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation: www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/advice/creating-safer-places/help-and-advice-for-schools
- Stop it Now! www.stopitnow.org.uk
- Anti-Bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- Diana Award: www.antibullyingpro.com
- Kidscape: www.kidscape.org.uk
- Centre of expertise on Child Sexual Abuse: www.csacentre.org.uk
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation 'Shore Space': https://shorespace.org.uk/

Online Safety

- NCA-CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk and www.ceopeducation.co.uk
- Internet Watch Foundation (IWF): www.iwf.org.uk
- Childnet: www.childnet.com
- UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
- Report Harmful Content: https://reportharmfulcontent.com
- Marie Collins Foundation: www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk
- Internet Matters: www.internetmatters.org
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety
- Get Safe Online: www.getsafeonline.org
- Cyber Choices: https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/cyber-crime/cyberchoices
- National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC): www.ncsc.gov.uk
- Gov.UK: https://kidsonlinesafety.campaign.gov.uk/
- Molly Rose Foundation: https://mollyrosefoundation.org

Mental Health

- KSCMP: www.kscmp.org.uk/guidance/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health
- KSCMP: Navigate Wellbeing: Mental Health Signposting for Education Settings
- Kooth: www.kooth.com
- Kent & Medway Children & Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS): www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-kent-children-young-peoples-mental-health/
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- Moodspark:https://moodspark.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- We are with you: www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/kent-for-young-people/
- Anna Freud: www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/
- MindEd: https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/
- Kent Therapeutic Alliance and Therapeutic Support Service (KTATSS): https://ktatss.co.uk