

“We live, love and learn His way”

*Holy Family R.C. Primary School, Limeside,
Oldham*



Child Sexual Exploitation and Grooming Policy

This policy has been developed in response to growing concerns about the scale of sexual exploitation and the recognition that any child might be targeted for grooming and exploitation.

Policy aims:

The aims of this policy are to:

- show our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils
- raise awareness about sexual exploitation and grooming
- help staff to identify warning signs and vulnerable children
- explain the school's procedures to be followed if sexual exploitation and grooming are suspected
- stress the importance of multi-agency cooperation.

This policy should be followed by all staff, volunteers and governors.

Definitions:

Sexual exploitation is a form of abuse whereby children are deliberately persuaded to enter into situations where they receive something (for example, gifts, money, food, accommodation) in exchange for sexual activity. Most victims are female, though there is thought to be considerable underreporting by male victims, who may be confused about their sexuality and be unwilling to draw attention to themselves. Most perpetrators are male, though women may also be involved. Children may be exploited by an individual, several individuals working as an organised group, or by a gang.

Grooming is the process of 'preparing' a boy or girl for a sexual purpose. Grooming is often slow and subtle, continuing for several weeks or months and lulling the child into a false sense of security. It always involves manipulation and deceit.

Two types of grooming are recognised: street grooming which occurs in the community, and online grooming using technology including the internet and mobile phones.

(Note: references to children, young people or pupils mean all individuals under the age of 18. References to parents mean parents, carers and others with parental responsibility.)

The complexity and challenge of sexual exploitation and grooming:

It can be difficult to identify children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation. The grooming process draws children in to what they initially perceive as a new and caring relationship with an exciting older boyfriend or girlfriend. Attempts to explain the risks to the child may be met

with derision and hostility. By the time the child realises the reality of the 'relationship' they may have been seriously sexually and physically abused, threatened with the distribution of indecent photographs or videos of their abuse and warned that they will put themselves or their family in danger if they speak out. Unsurprisingly, the child will be reticent to disclose their abuse, particularly to people in positions of authority such as teachers, social workers or police officers. The child may find it impossible, for a number of reasons, to speak to their parent and their abusers will have sought to isolate them from their family and friends. Some children may have developed drug or alcohol addictions and rely on their abusers for supply.

A fundamental learning point to emerge from cases of sexual exploitation such as those in Derby, Rochdale and Oxford and the Jimmy Saville case is that many children who try to disclose their abuse are not believed, or value judgements are made by professionals about the young person, suggesting they are 'willing partners' in a lifestyle they have 'chosen'. Remarkably, some young people's concerns and disclosures have been dismissed as groundless because of their challenging behaviour, involvement in crime or history of going missing from home, school or care.

As a school we have a responsibility to do all we can to raise awareness of sexual exploitation and grooming and to identify and support any pupil who is at risk of abuse.

School Action:

School staff are the only professionals in daily direct contact with children and we play an important role in keeping pupils safe and supporting them when things go wrong. To help keep our pupils safe from sexual exploitation and grooming we will:

Promote healthy and safe relationships

Raise pupils' awareness of sexual exploitation and grooming at an age appropriate level.

Raise staff awareness of sexual exploitation and grooming

Help parents to understand the issues

Contribute to multi-agency safeguarding and child protection arrangements

Sexually active young people:

In law, a child is a person under the age of 18. Not all sexual activity involving a child is criminal, nor is it always abusive. The law is very clear on certain aspects of sexual activity, but schools and other agencies are expected to use professional judgement to determine whether a concern about sexual activity involving a child over the age of 13 is exploitative or abusive and should be referred to children's social care or the police.

The age of consent:

The age of consent to sexual activity throughout the UK is 16. The age of consent to homosexual activity has gradually been reduced from 21 to 18 and is now 16. Heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual children are all able to consent once they reach 16. Children of this age, although above the age of consent, may be victims of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or rape.

Sexual activity involving a child under 13 is always a criminal offence and school will always refer such concerns to children's social care.

School staff should report any concern about under-age sexual activity to the Designated Lead, who will decide on the most appropriate course of action. The school will follow Oldham Local Safeguarding Children Board Advice guidance on dealing with under-age sexual activity.

Any concerns should be raised with the MASH Team 0161 770 7777

School staff who are approached by a pupil wishing to discuss sexual matters must make it clear to the pupil that they cannot guarantee confidentiality but will act in the child's best interests.

The Legal Framework:

Sections 175 and 157 of The Education Act 2002 require the governing bodies of all schools and colleges and the proprietors of independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.

The statutory child protection guidance for schools is Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment. This guidance was replaced by Keeping Children Safe in School in 2013. The new advice document explains the role of the school.

'It is important that children receive the right help at the right time. For that to happen, everyone who comes in contact with children in school has a role to play in identifying concerns early, sharing information and taking prompt, informed action. Therefore all professionals in schools should be vigilant and act quickly when they suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm.'

The multi-agency child protection guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) emphasises that:

'... professionals working in universal services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and work together to provide children and young people with the help they need. Practitioners need to continue to develop their knowledge and skills in this area. They should have access to training to identify and respond early to abuse and neglect, and to the latest research'

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 covers sexual offences against children, including offences involving grooming and the internet and trafficking.

Warning Signs:

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse and the range of indicators of sexual abuse can be found in the school's child protection policy.

Procedures to be followed when sexual exploitation or grooming are known or suspected:

Early identification of risk is known to be a crucial factor in reducing harm so the vigilance of school staff is critically important. Staff should not attempt to manage concerns about sexual exploitation or grooming in isolation. The Designated Lead must always be informed and school leadership will enlist the advice and support of children's social care and the police as appropriate.

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