

Policy document for: **Breast Ironing**

Updated: Autumn 2025

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and gives specific school actions in relation to their context.

Linked guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education

Staff must remember contextual safeguarding

When considering safeguarding incident or behaviour concerns, all assessments must consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. This is an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. This includes online abuse.

Breast ironing

Form of physical abuse – pounding of breasts using hard or heated objects to make them stop developing or disappear. Usually carried out by elder female family members on girls aged 9-15 – the practice is performed to make them appear child-like for longer with the rationale that this will protect them from sexual harassment, rape, pregnancy and forced marriage. This can lead to infection, abscesses, chest pain, breast malformation and future breastfeeding difficulties. It is practiced in African countries and is particularly prevalent in Cameroon.

The practice can be carried out by African communities who are resident in the UK.

Indicators include:

- Chest pain or discomfort;
- Changes in behaviour;
- Withdrawal;
- Reluctance to undress in front of others

Remember

- If there is a disclosure, or visible evidence which raises concerns report it immediately to a DSL
- Record the concern on CPOMS – Category Safeguarding and complete the incident and concerns. This will then be triaged by the DSL team and categorised.