Policy document for: **Serious violence**

Updated: Autumn 2026

This policy forms part of the Trust Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and reflects the latest KCSIE guidance. Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026) See page 19 & page 169-for full details

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 requires schools to take a proactive, preventative, whole-school approach to serious violence. Serious violence is recognised as a form of child-on-child abuse, often linked to criminal exploitation, gender-based violence, online harm, and contextual safeguarding risks.

All staff must read KCSIE Part 1 as a minimum. DSLs and senior leaders must be familiar with Parts 2, 5 and Annex B.

This policy aligns with:

- KCSIE 2026 (Part One, Part Two, Part Five, Annex B)
- Serious Violence Duty (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022)
- Home Office Serious Violence Strategy (2018)
- Youth Endowment Fund guidance
- Local safeguarding arrangements including MACPTs and Family Help

Definitions

Serious violence includes but is not limited to:

- Carrying, using, or **expressing intent** to carry or use a weapon
- Threats or intimidation involving weapons or harmful items
- Violence linked to gangs, criminal networks, or exploitation (including county lines)
- Gender-based violence, misogyny, coercion and intimidation
- Online threats, coercion, or sharing violent content
- Violence occurring on the way to/from school, in the community, or online
- Violence linked to harmful sexual behaviour or group-based harm

Weapons include (but are not limited to):

- Bladed articles (including prohibited knives, machetes, zombie knives)
- Corrosive substances
- Firearms, imitation firearms, BB guns, replica weapons
- 3D-printed weapons or components
- Any item used or intended to be used to cause harm

Immediate reporting duty (staff)

All staff **must immediately report** any concern that a child is:

- carrying a weapon,
- using a weapon, or
- **intending** to carry or use a weapon, even when no weapon has been seen.

Staff must **verbally inform a DSL immediately**. Staff **must not** log the concern on CPOMS until instructed by the DSL.

This reflects KCSIE 2026 requirements that intent alone may indicate criminal exploitation or imminent risk.

Indicators and vulnerability factors

Staff must be aware to indicators which may signal children are at risk from or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include:

- unexplained gifts or new possessions
- increased absence from school
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- a significant decline in educational performance
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing
- signs of assault or unexplained injuries.
- Online threats, violent content, or coercion
- Gender-based harassment or misogynistic behaviour
- Mental health deterioration linked to trauma or exploitation
- Involvement in harmful sexual behaviour
- Increased aggression, fearfulness, or withdrawal
- Association with older peers or known risky individuals
- Evidence of grooming, coercion, or initiation rituals
- Use of social media to coordinate conflict or violence
- Association with known risky individuals

Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of CCE.

Other possible indicators and vulnerability factors include:

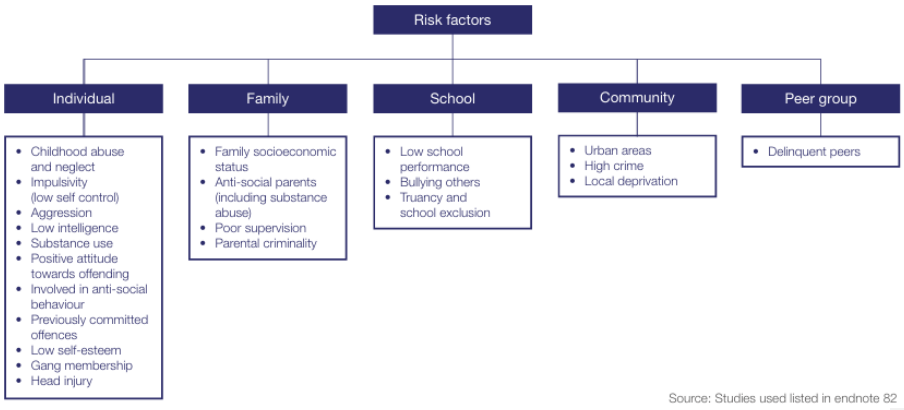
- Troublesome / high daring behaviour;
- A change in friendships / relationships with older individuals or groups;
- Unexplained injuries / non plausible explanations of injuries;
- Unexplained gifts / new possessions;
- Gang involvement;
- Involvement in anti-social behaviour;
- A disrupted / dysfunctional family;
- Poor family supervision;
- Children experiencing mental health challenges
- Children affected by domestic abuse
- Children with SEND (especially SEMH and learning disabilities)
- Children experiencing gender-based violence
- Children targeted online
- Children transitioning between schools or into AP/PRU
- Children with previous involvement in child-on-child abuse cases

Increasing risk factors include:

- Being male;
- having been frequently absent, suspended or permanently excluded, from school
- children who have spent time in Alternative Provision

- having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery
- having used drugs or alcohol in early adolescence
- Children with learning disabilities;
- Peer involvement in anti-social behaviour / crime
- History of offending
- Having previously been a victim or previous perpetrated violence

Another key factor to note is that Kent was identified in 2021 as being an area of high violence (measured by hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object) which is similar to Thames Valley and Essex and a Violence Reduction Unit was set up which still is in action today [Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit - Preventing Violence Together]



See also [Home Office – Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018] for more risk factors and guidance

Online serious violence risks

Staff in our schools recognise that serious violence can be facilitated online which could be through:

- threats or intimidation
- sharing violent imagery
- AI-generated violent content including sexual/abusive imagery, deepfakes and nudification apps
- arranging fights or weapon carrying
- coercion by gangs or older peers
- livestreaming violence

Staff must report online concerns in the same way as physical concerns.
The school based filtering and monitoring systems are intended to catch and alert DSLs to any inappropriate content searches. This is in line with the main safeguarding & child protection policy and online safety (includes filtering and monitoring) policy.

Gender-based violence and misogyny

KCSIE 2026 emphasises Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) as part of serious violence. Staff must:

- recognise misogyny as a risk factor
- respond robustly to gender-based threats
- ensure curriculum coverage of respectful relationships
- provide targeted support for girls and gender-diverse pupils

Early Help and Multi-Agency Working

In line with KCSIE 2026 and Working Together 2023, staff and DSLs must consider Early Help where indicators of serious violence or exploitation emerge.
DSLs must:

- Consider Early Help assessments and community-based support
- Work with safeguarding partners (MACPT, VRU, police, Family Help)
- Share information lawfully and confidently, including without consent where a child is at risk
- Contribute to multi-agency plans and contextual safeguarding assessments

Site security and supervision

Each of the schools risk assesses and mitigates:

- Arrival and departure times – staff at each school are available to greet children and families as they arrive. Children are dismissed by staff to their family or taxis.
- The schools ensure that there are limited blind spots in the environment and where these are unavoidable, these are supervised during playtime and lunchtimes
- Pupils do not have mobile phones during the day at school. Where a child brings a phone to school, these are handed in to staff in line with school expectations
- Staff accompany children during transitions where children move around the school

Acting on concerns

- Any member of staff who is **concerned about a child carrying, using or intending** to use a weapon (even when no weapon has been seen) must report it immediately to the DSL. Once a DSL has been informed, the incident can then be logged on CPOMS
- The child must not be left unsupervised if the risk is imminent
- Do not log on CPOMS before telling a DSL. Immediate action is needed to inform a DSL verbally. This enables more rapid risk mapping and facilitate immediate and preventative action

DSL actions

- Immediately assess risk to the child and others.
- Consider contextual safeguarding information (school, home, community, online).
- Determine whether immediate protective action is required.
- Initiate a Safety and Support Plan where needed.
    a. Consider referral to:
    b. Police (including via 999 if immediate danger)
    c. Front Door / Family Help referral
    d. MACPT
    e. Youth justice or VRU partners
- Record the incident on CPOMS once safe to do so.
- Record verbatim disclosures
- Consider whether the child is a victim, perpetrator, or both.
- Review whether safer recruitment or staff conduct concerns are relevant.
- Consider site-security implications (arrival/departure supervision, hotspots).
- Consider whether online safety measures need to be activated.
- DSLs must consult KCSIE Annex B for referral thresholds and police involvement.

If a child expresses an intent to carry a weapon, the DSL should investigate:

- Self protection – is the child being bullied or threatened outside school?
- Coercion – is the child being tested or groomed by a gang to carry a weapon as an initiation?

Support for the children

Using 'teachable moments' as a core safeguarding responsibility for all staff is vital to prevent escalation into serious violence. This moves practice away from punitive measures such as suspension to a model where every conflict is seen as a critical window to prevent future serious violence.

A teachable moment is the immediate period following the incident or disclosure where the child is most open to reflection and change before a counter-narrative such as gang loyalty or desire for revenge takes hold. The schools use restorative justice which is a key supporter of such reflections and enabling staff to talk to the child about being safe at school as some children carry a weapon to make them feel safe.

- The initial response to child victims is important and staff will take any allegations seriously and work in ways that support children and keep them safe. This is in line with our procedures in the **child protection and safeguarding** policy.
- DSLs and staff will also consider that the child themselves may be a victim themselves and so support must also be given to the perpetrator.
- It is important to talk to the child and find out where and when they feel most unsafe since serious violence can peak in the hours just before or just after school/college, when pupils are travelling to and from school and these may be particularly risky times for children involved in serious violence.

Early support for those considered at risk is vital. This includes:

- Using restorative conversations with trusted, safe adults
- Supporting children to reflect before harmful narratives take hold through teaching and restorative justice conversations
- Ensuring victims and perpetrators receive support
- Avoiding punitive responses where they increase risk
- Ensuring sanctions do not replace safeguarding action
- Providing social and emotional skills support
- Where possible targeted intervention such as mentoring or therapeutic support.

More information is in KCSIE part 5 which must be followed in any such incident.

See also

- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK
- Self assessment tool Education Practice Insight Creator | Youth Endowment Fund
- Education, Children and Violence | Youth Endowment Fund practical advice

How we teach children to have healthy relationships

In line with KCSIE Part 2, our schools teach safeguarding. The curriculum at our mainstream schools includes Relationships and PSHE teaching to focus on developing skills and knowledge on how to resolve conflict. This is based on Kapow scheme of work alongside the No Outsiders programme. Elements included are:

- Conflict resolution
- Healthy relationships
- Recognising coercion and exploitation
- Online safety
- Gender equality and anti-misogyny
- Emotional regulation and help-seeking

Commented [SJ1]: Is there value in sharing where the curriculum is from e.g. We follow the Kapow scheme of work for relationships and PSHE which has a key strand focused on relationships....

This is delivered in an appropriate way to children at Aspire school with regard to their stage of development and cognition.

Core competencies for staff

Home Office guidance recommends the competencies for staff:

- Developing skills and knowledge to resolve conflict as part of the curriculum – this is also part of the restorative processes used in the schools as well as being part of the PSHE/SRE curriculum;
- Confidence to challenge aggressive behaviour in ways that prevent the recurrence of such behaviour;
- Understanding the risks for specific groups, including those that are gender-based, and targeting appropriate interventions;
- Safeguarding and organising child protection measures when needed in a timely way;
- Carefully managing individual transitions between educational establishments, especially into Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or Alternative Provision;
- Working with local partners to prevent anti-social behaviour or crime.

Information Sharing

In line with KCSIE 2026:

- GDPR is not a barrier to safeguarding
- Information must be shared without consent if a child is at risk
- Staff must understand the lawful basis for sharing information
- DSLs must maintain accurate, timely, secure records

Record Keeping and Transfer of Files

KCSIE requires:

- Accurate, factual, timely records by all staff
- Verbatim recording of disclosures – in line with Safeguarding & Child Protection policy
- Chronologies of concerns
- Secure storage on CPOMS
- Transfer of safeguarding files to new schools **within five days**

Child-on-Child Abuse (Part Five)

Serious violence is a form of child-on-child abuse. DSLs must consider:

- Patterns of behaviour
- Group-based harm
- Online child-on-child abuse
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Power imbalance, coercion, and exploitation

Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns

All staff must follow the Trust's **Whistle Blowing** policy and KCSIE Part 2. Staff must report:

- Concerns about staff behaviour
- Low-level concerns
- Allegations
- Whistleblowing concerns

DSLs will follow the Allegations against staff policy.

Legal powers

Teachers have a number of legal powers to manage pupil behaviour and impose discipline. These include:

- Statutory power to discipline pupils including giving sanctions
- A statutory power to use reasonable force to control or restrain pupils
- A power to search pupils without consent for a number of 'prohibited items'. These include:
    - Knives and weapons;
    - Alcohol, illegal drugs and stolen items;
    - Tobacco and cigarette papers;
    - Fireworks;
    - Pornographic images;
    - Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property;
    - Any item banned by the school rules that has been identified in these rules as an item that may be searched for.

See the **screening, searching & confiscation** policy.

Additional guidance

- Home Office – Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/

DSL flowchart

