Bourne Alliance
Multi Academy Trust

Policy document for: **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) including upskirting**

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 pages 16/17 & 156- for full details

All schools in BA-MAT recognise that CSE is a form of child abuse that occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power (such as age, gender, intellect, physical strength or other resources) to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into **any** sexual activity. The child may be *knowingly* or *unknowingly* coerced into sexual activity inappropriate for their age. The victim may have been exploited even if the activity appears consensual. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim which increases as the exploitative relationship develops.

HM Government guidance defines sexual abuse as-

'Involving, forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.'

This can also occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition e.g. persuasion to post sexual images on the internet or via mobile phones/social media with no immediate payment or gain. The use of technology and social media & gaming platforms is getting younger which places more children at risk of CSE online. Latest statistics in 2024 show this grew by 6% from the previous year to almost 123,000 offences recorded by Police. Online incidents rose by 26% in 2024 which represents at least 42% of all recorded offences. Commonly identified platforms were SnapChat, WhatsApp and Instagram.

The exploitation may be:

- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, **and/or**
- in exchange for the financial advantage **and/or**
- in exchange for increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator **and/or**
- through violence or the threat of violence

This could be through performing, or allowing others to perform on them sexual acts. CSE can affect all genders and can include children who have been trafficked for the purpose of exploitation. Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child perpetrator is also recognised as a victim.

Sexual activity is a broad term but includes

- Non contact activities such as watching sexual acts, inciting sexual activity and penetrative sexual acts as well as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to watch sexual images or activities
- Grooming a child in preparation for abuse including online
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

- penetrative sexual acts such as rape or oral sex
- non penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, touching outside clothing

Although the age of consent is 16, CSE applies to all children up to the age of 18 due to its abusive nature. Sexual activity which involves children under the age of 13 is unlawful as they are deemed not to have legal capacity to consent to such activity.

CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media. CSE can affect any child who has been coerced into engaging in sexual activities and includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children do not realise they are being exploited and may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship.

Grooming

In CSE, the term grooming describes the process abusers use to manipulate a child. This includes physical and mental manipulation in order for the perpetrator to take advantage of the child sexually. Such perpetrators are often patient and develop the grooming process over a long period of time to achieve their aim.

Typical grooming tactics are:

- Making the child feel special;
- Pretending to feel like or have similar experiences of the child;
- Careful construction of the relationship to get to know all about the child;
- Pretending the relationship is friendship or support - non-sexual;
- Giving the child things they need or want;
- A gradual increase in physical contact or pressuring for exploitative activity;
- Construction of the need for secrecy;
- Using other children or young people to help groom.
- Using threats to create, obtain, or share sexual images including AI generated ones as blackmail or control
- Normalising sexualised content through dares or challenges, 'rating' requests or image editing 'jokes' that escalate
- Pressuring a child for additional images or information such as selfies, school details, locations, sibling images etc to increase leverage and fear

Models of grooming also include systems where groups of young people are targeted, typically by other young people already targeted by and under the control of the perpetrators. Perpetrators collectively work to groom large groups of young people. This involves repeated invitations to parties at various venues with the intention of exploitation. In this model, young people are regularly encouraged and have access to free drugs and alcohol. Once the young people are regularly participating, the perpetrators then demand repayment for the drugs and alcohol consumed. Unable to fund, young people are then sexually exploited to repay the debt.

Perpetrators can threaten victims and their families with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. Children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves which can mean their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised (particularly older children) and they are not treated as victims, despite the harm they have experienced. The experience of girls who are criminally exploited can also be very different to that of boys.

Online CSE

The prevalence and availability of technology provides a further medium where abusers can exploit children. It is illegal to take, possess or share indecent images of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture. The term indecent applies to images of a naked person, a topless girl or if genitals or sex acts (including masturbation) are displayed.

Due to the prevalence of children using online services, the risks to children are higher. This access to technology, social networking sites and mobile devices offers the abuser further mediums to groom, coerce, blackmail and exert control .

Threatening to share an intimate image without consent, whether or not the image exists carries a maximum penalty of 2 years imprisonment. Where an intimate image is shared, with the intent to cause distress, humiliation or alarm or for the purposes of sexual gratification, carries an increased sentence and possible addition to the sex offender requirements.

Deepfakes

The definition of intimate images has been expanded to include digitally created or altered images. Threatening to share or create AI generated sexual images without consent is treated as image based sexual abuse including in circumstances where no original image of the victim was ever taken or shared. This includes 'nudification' or deepfake sexualised images.

Any such incident is treated as a safeguarding concern and Police referral will be considered even when the content is wholly AI generated.

https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/professionals/guidance/ai-guidance-for-professionals/

see **Deepfakes** policy.

Dark web sites

These sites use anonymity software to encrypt web traffic and deep web databases and web services, which cannot be indexed by conventional search engines, elevates internet risk as it enables people to keep their activities hidden. Whilst there are legitimate uses for the dark web e.g. providing internet anonymity for people living in countries where they can be arrested or tortured for online activity, it also enables on-line criminal activity including CSE.

Upskirting

Upskirting 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.

If staff are concerned that a child may be at risk of CSE or CCE, immediate action should be taken by speaking to the DSL or a deputy.

Factors which make children more vulnerable to CSE

- Chaotic dysfunctional home life;
- Poor or problematic parenting, including parental mental health issues;
- A history of abuse or neglect;
- Domestic abuse in the home;
- Bereavement;
- Low self-esteem or self-worth;

- SEND, especially vulnerable are those with low cognitive ability and communication difficulties
- Uncertainty of sexual orientation;
- Association with children who are or have been sexually exploited;
- Homelessness or living in residential care;
- Where the child is a young carer;
- Gang association.

In BA MAT, we recognise that our SEND children are particularly vulnerable, especially those at Aspire school who frequently have communication barriers due to the context of the school.

Indicators that a child may be already exposed to CSE

These may include:

- Absence from education;
- Reduced contact with friends and or family;
- Frequently going missing from home or care;
- Association with gangs;
- Self-harming;
- Poor mental health;
- Physical injury;
- Sexually transmitted infections;
- Pregnancy and terminations;
- Substance misuse;
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts;
- Having unexplained items or possessions;
- Sexual activity with someone of an older age;
- Inappropriate relationships evident on social media;
- Encouraging others into exploitative relationships / situations.
- Fear, distress or withdrawal linked to threats around images including claims that sexual images will be created with AI or made to look real
- Sudden changes in online behaviour such as deleting accounts, refusing devices, panic about being photographed or intense anxiety following messages

Actions staff should take around any type of CSE concern

If a child discloses concerns around CSE

- Inform a DSL immediately by speaking to them directly
- Log all concerns, including the words of the child on CPOMS