

Safeguarding Children Safe in Education September 2026

KCSiE 2026 'Key changes and points of revision, which schools should consider within their individual Child Protection Policy and 'safeguarding arrangements'.

The Department for Education published KCSiE 2026 on the 7th July 2026, which was circulated via the DSL email addresses to all schools. The electronic link is here: [Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564822/Keeping-children-safe-in-education-2026.pdf) (www.gov.uk). KCSiE 2026 becomes statutory guidance from 1st September 2026, Headteachers should be aware that there could be further changes in the final published document.

Please note: This guidance applies to all schools and colleges and is for:

- headteachers, teachers and staff
- governing bodies, proprietors, and management committees

It sets out the legal duties you must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18 in schools and colleges.

All school and college staff must read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Statutory guidance sets out what schools **must** do to comply with the law. Where the guidance states schools and colleges **should** do something, you should follow this unless you have a good reason not to.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Part one – Safeguarding information for all staff

Paragraph 13: Updated to distinguish between community-based early help and targeted early help delivered through Family Help. Early Help is support provided as soon as concerns **emerge** before problems escalate and before a child requires statutory social care involvement. It is often led by schools, health services, or other universal services and may involve a Quick-Thinking Plan. Family Help is a wider, integrated service developed through the Families First Partnership Programme. It brings together:

- Targeted Early Help
- Child in Need (Section 17) support
- Assessment functions
- Multi-agency family support

Paragraph 17: Expanded examples of issues staff should remain alert to, to include:

- is pregnant and/or is a parent themselves.
- has exhibited early signs of abusive, violent, and/or harmful behaviours.
- has been repeatedly removed from the classroom or is on a part-time timetable.
- is at risk of exploitation.
- is at risk of faith-based abuse.

Paragraph 18: Added “modern slavery.”

Paragraph 20: Added “including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, stalking” and “Financial exploitation.” have been added for teenage relationships, and financial abuse is added for all relationships.

Paragraph 24: Added additional sentence about child to parent or care giver abuse.

Paragraph 26: Clarified that emotional abuse may include verbal abuse (e.g., criticism, belittling, name-calling).

Paragraph 27: Expanded section on sexual abuse to provide clear examples of physical. Contact

Paragraph 29: Clarified that safeguarding issues often overlap.

All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues often overlap and that the following behaviours and indicators can be signs that children are at risk:

- drug taking and/or alcohol misuse.
- unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education
- serious violence, criminal exploitation (including that linked to county lines), radicalisation, and
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes or semi nudes.

Expanded child-on-child abuse content to emphasise that: it is a safeguarding issue for both victim and alleged perpetrator, it is preventable and it may involve serious physical harm or threats involving weapons. Expanded child-on-child abuse content to emphasise that it is a safeguarding issue for both victim and alleged perpetrator, it is preventable and it may involve serious physical harm or threats involving weapons. At LCC we direct schools to free resources and training video at the [Centre for Expertise of Child Sexual abuse](#).

Expanded Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation content: “This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and victims may identify as part of this group.” “This may constitute modern slavery...” and a reference to Modern Slavery statutory guidance, including referral expectations. Added a new footnote defining county lines and linking to Home Office guidance.

Paragraph 42: Added “This can be committed by an individual or an organised network...” and “Most sexual abuse is committed by individuals known to the victim.” Added clarification that victims may be criminalised for actions taken under coercion. Added a footnote defining “organised network” (from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse). Mental Health section: substantially updated. Serious Violence section: substantially updated.

Paragraph 58: Added additional info to bullet about managing any support for the child 191 internally.

Paragraph 42: Added “This can be committed by an individual or an organised network...” and “Most sexual abuse is committed by individuals known to the victim.” Added clarification that victims may be criminalised for actions taken under coercion.

Added a footnote defining “organised network” (from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse).

Mental Health section: substantially updated. All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This could include self-harm, suicidal ideation, or risk of suicide. They could also be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Serious Violence section: substantially updated. Serious violence is a continuing safeguarding concern. Staff should report any concerns about a child carrying or using a weapon (or expressing intent to do so). The designated safeguarding lead should assess the risk to both the individual pupil and others in the school, considering wider information or concerns. Depending on the risk, they should put in place a safety and support plan, and where relevant, consider action to de-escalate peer conflict. Staff should be alert to signs that a child may be at risk of or involved in serious violence. These risks are higher for children with disrupted education (e.g. suspensions, permanent exclusions, time in alternative provision) or a history of offending.

Paragraph 58: Added additional info to bullet about managing any support for the child internally. Clarifies that when child does not require the support of statutory children’s services, the DSL will generally lead the liaison with other agencies, they may also be required to support other agencies to include the assessments, in some cases this may mean they are the lead professional.

Paragraph 62: Updated header and clarified when non-social-worker practitioners may lead assessments.

Paragraph 66: Added expectations regarding local assessment protocols.

Paragraphs 75-77: Added references to “trainee teachers” with regards to allegation processes.

Paragraph 76: Added requirement to consider referral to the LADO.

Part Two- Management of Safeguarding

Data Protection: Updated to reflect the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, effective from January 2026.

Paragraphs 95-98: Added new section on “Sport”.

Paragraphs 95-98 confirm that schools and colleges can lawfully separate children according to their biological sex for sport. In cases where a gender questioning child makes a request relating to how they participate, if “there are no safety concerns”, settings should consider “whether supporting social transition is overall in the best interests of the child, as well as considering the impact on other children and the aim of creating safe and fair environments for children to participate in PE.”

Paragraphs 105-116: Added new section on “Regulations and safeguarding requirements relating to school premises.” Explain that when it comes to toilets, showers and changing facilities, children must not be allowed into the spaces “designated for the opposite biological sex.” In instances where a child does not want to use these spaces, “schools and colleges should consider whether they can provide an alternative.” Schools and colleges must keep a record of any such situations and “ensure they are communicated appropriately” and regularly reviewed.

Paragraph 127: Added expectations for robust DSL cover arrangements (e.g., confidential shared mailbox). To ensure safeguarding concerns can be addressed without delay, the need for robust cover arrangements for DSLs has been added. The guidance suggests that this could include “a confidential shared mailbox or equivalent system” to ensure issues can be dealt with immediately.

Paragraphs 138-150: Added more detailed information about sharing information. Expanded to provide clearer criteria for when and how to share information, ahead of a new statutory information sharing duty (currently at consultation stage). It explicitly links information sharing to serious violence risk, requiring receiving schools and colleges to risk-assess and prepare a safety plan in advance where a pupil has a history involving weapons. It also clarifies that, in cases where children move settings, the DSL may consider sharing information beyond the child protection file if it indicates that the student may be a risk to themselves or others.

Paragraphs 138-150: Expanded guidance on information sharing, including risk assessment.

Paragraph 158: Added “racism” and “derogatory behaviour or other forms of physical violence and conflict.”

Paragraph 160: Added details on PSHE Association approved resources.

Paragraph 163: On online safety, the definitions of the 4Cs of risk are updated to include: Content – “extreme sexual or physical violence”; Contact – “generative AI applications that simulate this”; Conduct – “sending and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI”.

Paragraphs 165-166: Added guidance and resources on safe and effective use of Generative AI in education.

Paragraph 168: Added new section on “Mobile phone policy”.
No access during the day: Pupils should not have access to their phones at any point during the school day. Includes all breaks, this rule applies to lessons, transitions between classes, morning breaks, and lunchtimes. Exceptions only: Anything other than a phone-free policy is only allowed under specific, strictly defined exceptions.

Paragraph 171: Paragraph 171: Updated wording “...ensure that a review of their effectiveness is carried out at least once every academic year. Reviews should be carried out by the SLT member responsible for filtering and monitoring, with the support of the school’s DSL and IT support. They should include checks that filtering is working appropriately on all internet-connected devices in all relevant locations, and a record should be kept of these checks...”

Paragraphs 176-178: Redrafted to improve clarity on information security. Emphasises the need for schools to strengthen their cyber security systems to “reduce the risk of disruption, prevent data breaches, and mitigate safeguarding risks.”

Paragraphs 186-189: Added references to “trainee teachers”.

Paragraph 191: Added reference to “misandry”, Updated the list of factors that a school’s child protection policy should include. The list of forms of child-on-child abuse that must be included in child protection policies now includes “physical assault and harm, or the threat of harm with a weapon” and harmful sexual behaviour “which may include misogyny/misandry.”

Paragraphs 197-202: Added new section on “Boarding and residential accommodation”, include new guidance that schools and colleges must not allow a child to share overnight accommodation with a child of the opposite biological sex. This must be considered when responding to a request for social transition, where the rule still applies. If a child does not want to share with a child of the same biological sex, alternative arrangements may be sought, but they “should not compromise the safety, comfort, privacy or dignity of any child.”

Paragraphs 203-205: Updated section on reasonable force to reflect new restrictive intervention guidance.

Paragraphs 208-213: Updated content relating to alternative provision. The Alternative provision section is expanded to include a reference to the National standards for non-school alternative provision, which may be used by local authorities to develop a register of approved settings for schools to use. This is intended to “strengthen safeguarding oversight for children educated outside traditional school settings.” The guidance reiterates that schools remain responsible for any provision they commission.

Paragraphs 224-232: Updated section on “Children requiring mental health support”. Significant revisions have been made to the Children requiring mental health support section (paragraphs 224-232). The updates focus on how mental health concerns can intersect with safeguarding duties, particularly around risks including self-harm, eating disorders and suicidal ideation.

While staff are not expected to diagnose or treat mental health issues, the guidance clarifies the important role they play in both mitigating and identifying safeguarding risks linked to mental health.

Paragraph 242: Highlighted the role of Virtual School Heads in improving attendance. The Virtual School Heads section includes a new responsibility: “Recognising attendance as a key factor in safeguarding, Virtual School Heads should work with local authorities to set and report on ambitious targets to improve their attendance.”

Paragraph 246: This a new section on young carers. Paragraph 246 states: “Schools and colleges should be alert to the needs of young carers, recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on their attendance, attainment, behaviour, and wellbeing. Early identification is essential to ensure young carers receive support at the right time and by the appropriate services.”

Paragraphs 247-249: Added further additional barriers that children with SEND may face. The list of additional barriers that exist when recognising abuse, neglect, or exploitation in children with special educational needs, disabilities (SEND) or health issues has been expanded. Paragraph 247 now includes “the need for intimate care or that these children are isolated from others” and “that these children are more likely to be dependent on adults for care” as barriers. It also clarifies that communication difficulties can mean that SEND children may not understand that what is happening to them is abuse.

Paragraph 250: Added new section on safeguarding children with medical conditions. A new section clarifies guidance on safeguarding children with medical conditions. Paragraph 250 explains that while such individuals do not necessarily require a referral to local safeguarding partners, one should be made when incidents suggest they may be at increased risk of neglect, abuse, or exploitation. For example, if they are repeatedly sent to school without essential medication. Further guidance on Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school and Allergy safety in schools is referenced.

Paragraphs 252-282: Updated content on children who are LGB or gender-questioning. provide a full decision-making framework for requests to support “social transition” – prioritising the school’s duty to all children, requiring active parental involvement (with a narrower risk exception), and treating social transition as an “active intervention” requiring caution, especially in primary schools.

The section introduces new legal obligations under the Equality Act and Human Rights Act, an explicit no-exceptions rule on toilets, changing rooms and accommodation, and new sections on documenting decisions, biological sex records, children “living in stealth,” and detransition support.

Given the scale and the legal obligations attached to this specific guidance, leaders and DSLs should read this section in full.

Part three – Safer recruitment

Paragraph 315: Updates the definition of regulated activity with children to remove the exemption previously available to supervised volunteers. Regulated activity section rewritten for clarity and to include volunteers.

Regulated activity table updated to remove the 'supervision exemption' from regulated activity. The Crime and Policing Act 2026 have made this change. Removed "DBS check types" section to avoid duplication.

Paragraph 325: Added new bullet on DBS checks for volunteers in regulated activity
Updated references from TRA Employer Access Service to DfE's Check a teacher's record. Several adjustments have been made to guidance on DBS processes:

- Previous references to the TRA Employer Access Service are now replaced with the DfE's Check a teacher's record.
- A 30-calendar-day window is added for updating service checks on new certificates.
- The DBS flowchart has been removed, as it is inaccurate following the removal of the supervision exemption.
- Clarifications are made on which DBS check types apply to self-employed staff (e.g. coaches, tutors, contractors).

Any recruitment guidance or induction materials referencing the old TRA service or flowchart should be updated.

Paragraph 370: Clarifies the type of DBS check a self-employed person is now eligible for.

Paragraph 375: Clarified categories of visitors to schools.

Professionals — educational psychologists, social workers etc.

Educational visitors — guest speakers, performers.

Site-related — contractors, children's family members, sports day attendees.

Paragraphs 403-407: Work experience supervision section rewritten for clarity and in response to the Crime and Policing Act 2026 change to the definition of regulated activity.

- If you are organising work experience placements you must ensure that the placement provider has policies and procedure in place to protect children from harm.
- Consider if the person providing the teaching or training in the work experience is in regulated activity.
- Other individuals in the work placement not providing the teaching or training are not in regulated activity.
- Schools and colleges cannot request that a work experience provider obtains an enhanced DBS check with children's barred list information for staff supervising children aged 16 to 17 on work experience
- If the student on work experience is aged 16 plus and the placement is in a setting which gives them access to children, then the provider may need to consider if this is regulated activity then they must consider the need for an enhanced DBS check.

Paragraphs 408-410: Moved former Annex D (homestay) into main body.

Paragraph 422: Existing staff paragraph updated to include volunteers.

Paragraphs 424-428: Duty to refer section rewritten to include referrals about volunteers.

Paragraph 429: Added reference to schools' duties under the PSED.

Summary: Part four – Safeguarding concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers, and contractors

“Trainee teacher” is now included throughout this section, to clarify that people in this position are subject to the same procedures, should an allegation be made against them.

Paragraphs 452-456: Updated supply teachers, trainee teachers, and all contracted staff section to make it clearer that schools and colleges share safeguarding responsibilities with third party organisations.

Paragraphs 452-456: New content setting expectations for handling concerns about trainee teachers.

Summary: Part five – Child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence

Part five substantially rewritten to highlight the progressive continuum from harmful sexual behaviour through to sexual violence.

Paragraph 527: Updated to clarify that all incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images require a safeguarding response, whether they are consensual or non-consensual.

Paragraph 531: Additional paragraph added on HSB (previously part of para 525). The umbrella term ‘harmful sexual behaviour’ (HSB) is widely used in child protection and applies to behaviour occurring online, face-to-face, or both HSB should always be considered within a child protection context.

Paragraph 532: Added link to NSPCC resource providing advice on stages of typical sexual development and behaviour for different age groups.

Paragraph 533: Added link to resource for advice on responding to children who display sexualized behaviour.

Paragraph 540: Added further information on consent

Paragraph 575-581: Updated header and expanded description of universal services and community-based early help. This replaces the section previously titled “Early Help.” The description (in paragraph 575) is expanded to explain that they are “Not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.”

Paragraphs 582-592: Added new section on “Referrals to Family Help”. This new section sits between community-based early help and statutory LA children’s social care. It refers to both targeted early help services and support and services delivered under s.17 of the Children Act 1989.

Targeted early help through Family Help is described as “coordinated by a local authority and/or their partners” and includes parenting support, mental health support, youth services, housing, and employment. It is a voluntary approach requiring the family’s consent.

Annex A – Further information

The removal of Annex A means what was Annex B (which provides further detailed guidance on a range of safeguarding issues) is now Annex A.

Cybercrime

The Cybercrime section is expanded to make schools and colleges aware that this issue “continues to represent one of the most significant and rapidly evolving threats within the United Kingdom’s (UK) crime landscape.”

Young people partake in such activity, “often without understanding the legal or ethical implications” and the impact “extends well beyond immediate financial losses, with scope to cause disruption to national infrastructure.”

Domestic abuse / Operation Encompass

This section is expanded to accommodate the new statutory duty requiring police to notify schools of domestic abuse incidents. New guidance on notification content, related DSL responsibilities and data protection has been added.

Temporary accommodation notification duty

A new section outlines the duty under the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act for local housing authorities to notify schools, colleges, health services and GPs when a child is placed in temporary accommodation (with appropriate consent), so schools can safeguard and support them earlier – though this doesn’t replace existing safeguarding duties or referrals to children’s social care where a child is at risk.

Serious violence

This section keeps the same structure but expands the risk-factor list to include suspension or time in Alternative Provision, early drug/alcohol use, and prior victimisation or perpetration of violence. It also adds new guidance encouraging schools to identify specific unsafe locations and times by listening to pupils and staff.

Online safety (parental support) now includes link to screentime guidance.

Additional section added on “Temporary accommodation notification duty.”

Additional info added to paragraph on Channel to include clarification that information should be shared with the police.

Serious violence content update

Links added to examples of support for DSLs.

Annex B – Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (previously Annex C in KCSIE 2025)

Added expectations around DSL cover arrangements when the DSL is unavailable.

Added further information to information sharing guidance. Updates on CCE/CSE indicators and Operation Encompass duties.

Annex C – Regulated activity (children) – Supervision of activity which is regulated activity when unsupervised (previously Annex E in KCSIE 2025)

Removed, Crime and Policing Bill Act 2026 made changes to regulated activity to remove the 'supervision exemption.' This means that any person volunteering in a school or college in a role that involves teaching, training, instructing or supervising children on more than 3 days in a month or overnight is now in regulated activity.