

SOUTHWOOD INFANT SCHOOL

Safeguarding

Recognising Patterns of abuse

This is not intended to be a complete list of all aspects of patterns of abuse. Staff using this handout may find it useful to add to the list as part of training and awareness raising processes. The DfE document [‘What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners’](#) (March 2015) should also be referred to, which contains information on understanding and identifying abuse and neglect.

Most incidents of abuse by staff towards children, when seen with hindsight, contain prior indications of the potential for abuse that have been missed, ignored or overlooked by the school. Sexual abuse in particular is likely to be characterised by a process of **grooming** of one or more children prior to a specific act. This will often consist of blurring of boundaries with pupils to allow opportunities for abuse to take place. It is essential that managers in schools are fully aware of this possibility and are alert to indications of conduct that could be part of a grooming process.

“Grooming” can constitute an offence and applies to specific behaviour towards children up to 16 years. Further, whilst the age of consent for sexual activity is 16, any sexual activity between a pupil/student up to the age of 18 and a member of staff, even if perceived to be with the consent of a pupil, is an ‘Abuse of Trust’ offence and should be brought to the immediate attention of the Headteacher, who will liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Activities that might arouse suspicion or merit further investigation, especially when conducted in a clandestine manner, and are contrary to school policy, and which **occur in combinations in relation to the same member of staff** might include:

- meeting or visiting pupils out of school
- offering extra support to individual pupils
- placing themselves in closed rooms or inappropriate situations with a pupil
- a series of minor concerns about physical contact
- inappropriate behaviour/conduct/boundaries with pupils
- use of inappropriate and/or familiar language
- texting or e-mailing pupils
- underperforming in their job linked to other behavioural concerns
- requests to withdraw pupils from a specific class
- has a history of frequent moves from school to school
- constantly ignoring the rules about safe levels of staff to pupil ratios

Inappropriate behaviour, relationships and boundaries might include:

- selecting pupils for additional one to one support
- taking photographs of pupils
- making gifts to pupils
- receiving gifts from pupils
- ascribing adult values to children

Any potentially inappropriate conduct towards children not reported to management, and failure to seek management approval for certain activities with pupils, may raise further suspicion.