

Safeguarding children and Young people with SEND

Why can children with SEND be more vulnerable?

They may be:

- Infantilised
- Dependent on adults and carers
- More vulnerable to being bullied or groomed
- Isolated

They may not:

- Understand that they are being abused
- Be able to express their worries or experiences
- Be believed if they speak up
- Know where to go for help

Also:

- Families may be isolated
- Families may be under additional stress
- Adults may be reluctant to challenge families and carers.

Reasons that signs of abuse might wrongly be dismissed or overlooked include:

- Wrongly attributing injuries, such as bruising, to disability equipment, mobility problems or self-harm
- Overly focused on the child's or young person's diagnosis, disability or condition and overlooking the possibility of abuse
- Wrongly attributing signs of abuse such as being withdrawn or reluctant to form relationships, repetitive behaviour or behaviour that challenges or inappropriate sexual behaviour, to the child's or young person's disability or condition.

It is important that you use your professional curiosity to ensure that we don't accept things at face value, or explain away possible indicators of abuse.

Safer Culture

We can ensure a safe culture by:

- Knowing our safeguarding policies and procedures
- Positive relationships
- Making school a safe space where there are no communication barriers
- Supporting staff emotionally and via school policies
- Including keeping safe messages in the curriculum – allowing time to discuss health, feelings and emotions.
- Listening to pupils and giving them opportunities to make choices and decisions.

All behaviour is communication

Children and young people with SEND might have limited mobility or communication, so you should pay attention to body language, moods, general behaviour and behaviour that challenges, especially if they change.

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How should you respond to concerns that a child or young person with SEND is being abused?

You need to respond to possible concerns that a child or young person with SEND is being abused, as you would to any child or young person. However, signs won't always be obvious.

- Make time for them
- Don't interrupt or make assumptions
- Don't mistake signs of abuse for a child's disability or condition

You are responsible for understanding and clearly recording what they say, so note down all concerns or changes in behaviour no matter how small they may seem.

In what ways can you better protect children with special educational needs?

- Know your pupils – knowing your pupils will mean you will be able to recognise any changes in behaviour and listening to them means that they will feel confident in expressing their feelings.
- Liaise with other professionals - multi-agency working is essential
- Work with parents

You must never single out any child or young person. It is important to treat all children and young people equally.