

What does this mean for UK schools?

All staff working in schools need to be aware of the changes, even if they do not feel they relate to their role. In particular, all staff need to be aware of the new definition of safeguarding and particularly, the renewed focus on getting in early to support children and families.

School staff need to be aware that safeguarding and behaviour are inter-connected and that children experiencing multiple exclusions, attending Alternative Provision or at risk of permanent exclusion are all vulnerable to different forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Continuing on from the focus on safeguarding and attendance over the last few years, staff should be aware that with the change in terminology comes a different perspective – we must not assume that children with unexplained absence and/or persistent absence are deliberately missing education.

Staff making Prevent referrals need to keep in mind the need to outline the journey a child has been on to be radicalised, and to clarify what could have made them susceptible to radicalisation in the first place.

Staff should be aware that children placed within Alternative Provision or transfers to other schools remain the responsibility of their original school until they are taken off roll. This means that the school is responsible for ensuring their SEND and/or wellbeing and pastoral needs are provided for.

Read the full report here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2024.pdf

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New Definition

Paragraph 3 has a revised Definition of Safeguarding which aligns with the definition in “Working Together to Safeguard Children”. This new definition emphasises the importance of early intervention, protection from both online and offline harms and promoting the best outcomes for all children: ‘Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge’.

Emphasis on Early Help

Paragraphs 18 and 497 widen the focus of EH including implementing EH for mental health concerns, young carers, risk of exploitation, the impact of parental circumstances and pupils who have “experienced multiple suspensions, [are] at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit.” There is also an emphasis on the importance of Early Help at any stage in a child’s life: “Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family’s resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.”

LGBTQ+

The ‘Supporting LGBTQ+ Children’ section is under review pending the outcome of the consultation on the draft guidance on Gender-questioning children. The guidance emphasises caution when supporting gender-questioning children and highlights the importance of involving parents in decision-making.

Witnessing Abuse

Paragraph 24 expands the definition of abuse to include that witnessing the ill treatment of others is harmful to children, (particularly in cases of domestic abuse for example).

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Alternative Provision and SEND

Paragraph 171 outlines schools’ ongoing responsibility for the safeguarding of pupils in alternative provision (AP), with an emphasis on providing additional pastoral support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Children in Court

Annex B now includes links to two child-friendly guides or support children who have to give evidence in court.

Terminology Changes

“Unexplained and/or persistent absences from education” replaces “deliberately missing education”
“Abuse, neglect and exploitation” rather than just “abuse and neglect”.

Radicalisation

Annex B, entitled ‘Preventing Radicalisation’ is under review following the March 2024 new definition of extremism. Potential indicators of radicalisation should be considered alongside other factors and the overall context. We know from changes to the Prevent Duty in 2023 that there is an increased focus on the journey to radicalisation and what has made the child susceptible to this.

Handling Information

Paragraph 92 reinforces the importance, when handling personal information, of compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

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