



# Vulnerable Children Policy

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AUTHOR	SLT
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This policy was revised in Autumn 2022 This version includes:

Further signposting of relevant policies.

In June 2022 the following amendments were made:

- Updated references to statutory documents
- Formatting and structural changes to the document
- Further information around definitions of vulnerability (those with no recourse to public funds and those who are in post-16 provision)
- Further inclusion of partner agencies
- Outlining further methods of support available
- Updates to linked policies
- Updates to abbreviations used.

# 1. Definition

## **DFE Guidance and distinctions between the term 'disadvantaged' and 'vulnerable':**

The DfE says that 'disadvantaged pupils' are:

- Pupils in year groups reception to year 11 recorded as 'ever 6 free school meals (FSM)'
- Eligible pupils in year groups reception to year 11 with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)
- Looked after children (LAC), defined in the Children Act 1989 as one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English local authority (LA)
- Children who have ceased to be looked after by an LA in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order
- In post-16 settings, students are 'disadvantaged' if they were in receipt of the pupil premium in their last year of Key Stage (KS) 4.

There is no set definition from the DfE for 'vulnerable' pupils. This is because it is subjective, and there are many different reasons why a child could be classed as vulnerable, which may vary depending on particular contexts.

The policy follows local and national guidelines and is updated to reflect current policy and procedure.

It is in line with:

- The latest Harrow's Strategic Safeguarding Partnership and threshold information
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2022)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)
- Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings (Revised version September 2018)
- London Child Protection Procedures (5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2017)
- Information sharing – advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (July 2018)

## **Contextual Information**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has identified further need in this academic year. In particular we may consider the following young people could be vulnerable due to this specific context:

- children who have been bereaved due to COVID-19
- children who have experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19
- children and families who have been specifically affected due to the impact of lockdown (i.e. families who have to self-isolate in difficult conditions, key worker families, those with limited access to technology etc.)
- from full school reopening, children and families effected by COVID-related issues (such as shielding families, those subject to multiple periods of self-isolation, difficulty accessing remote learning opportunities etc.)

Support in these cases may be very bespoke and on an individual basis. They may include:

- Laptop and internet support
- Hard copies of work to access
- School uniform support
- Free school meal hamper offer
- Academic support and school based intervention

- External agency or intervention support for emotional health and wellbeing specifically related to the impact of the pandemic

### **Park High School Definition and Guidance:**

At Park High School we define a child as vulnerable if their health, social or emotional well-being is being impaired in a way that then has an impact on their ability to learn and engage with the opportunities we provide. Additionally, it might prevent them achieving their full potential. We would also identify children as vulnerable if we had evidence to suggest that the transition from primary to secondary school or from key phases (foundation to examination years) could be difficult for them. This includes those at risk from future exclusion. Vulnerable children can also include students who have a special educational need and also some children who are emergent bilingual speakers. Research has shown that the following children may be vulnerable:

- children in care, children looked after (CLA) and care leavers
- children who have previously been looked after, adopted or are subject to special guardianship orders (SGO)
- children are subject to a child protection or child in need plan, or those who are no longer on a plan
- children subject to the effects of poverty including those eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those subject to the pupil premium grant
- children living in challenging circumstances (such as those affected by domestic abuse, substance misuse, those in families with mental health issues, those with complex needs and those in chaotic families)
- children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and/or complex needs
- young carers
- refugees and asylum seekers
- children who identify as LGBTQ+
- children with medical conditions
- children with housing difficulties or displacement
- children of service families and other highly mobile groups
- children missing education through prolonged or persistent absence
- children at risk of sexual exploitation
- children with mental health issues.
- children known to police or the criminal justice system.
- Children who are bereaved
- Children at risk of NEET

This is not an exhaustive list. A further list of vulnerabilities is provided in Appendix A.

Arguably, three broad categories of vulnerability may be identified:

- Additional or Special Educational Needs (SEND) and Disability
- children in care and young people at risk
- adverse family and socio-economic circumstances.

These categories often overlap one another: For this reason, vulnerable children and young people need to be able to draw upon support that crosses the traditional boundaries of the agencies that work with them.

## **2. Identifying Vulnerable Children and Families**

On entry to school the appropriate pastoral team meets with all families through planned induction. Parents are encouraged to speak to the SENCO or DSL about any of the above. Additionally, the pastoral team communicate with feeder or previous schools of our pupils to ensure that relevant information is shared and then disseminated to key colleagues.

Children who have not made the expected progress will be discussed and appropriate action taken on a regular basis, usually in line with the school's progress check system.

SLT and middle leaders analyse data after each assessment period to identify underachievement of children or groups of children. Whilst we monitor and track interventions for our vulnerable pupils, we do not track specific data for them as a group.

The school has strong links with partner agencies. Information passed to us from outside services enables us to update our vulnerable children register promptly and regularly.

Our main partner agencies include:

- Local primary and secondary schools
- Children's Services
- Social care
- Harrow School's Counselling Partnership
- Harrow Young Carers
- WISH
- Harrow Early Help team
- CAMHS
- School Nurses
- LSCB
- Safer School Police Officer
- Head's Up
- Ignite mentoring
- Harrow Prevent team
- Educational Psychology service
- Youth Offending Service
- COMPASS
- Harrow bereavement care

### **3. Formal and Informal Parent Meetings**

In addition to induction, formal parent meetings take place during the year. Parents of vulnerable children can request additional contact to ensure children's needs are fully met.

Our open door policy and good relationship with our families means that many informal discussions take place and we go out of our way to ensure that parents feel secure sharing information with us.

### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Any information or concerns received by class teachers, tutors or support staff should be recorded and passed to the Head of Year or their linked AHT. In turn this should be passed to the AHT with responsibility for vulnerable children. A determination will be made as to whether the child is considered vulnerable. If this has already been established and evaluated, further monitoring or strategies may be discussed and/or employed.

Staff working with vulnerable children will be informed in as much detail as is required. Confidentiality is very important and information is on a need to know basis. Staff may be asked to keep an eye on certain children, engage with them, and ensure they are safe.

Any safeguarding concerns must be taken directly to the DSL or member of the safeguarding team as stated in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

All information on children must be stored in a secure place.

### **5. Support for Vulnerable Children**

This could include:

- In-class support

- Break and lunchtime support
- Targeted support after school clubs
- Referral to outside agencies
- CAF support
- Engaging parents in support
- Allocation of learning mentor time
- PSA support
- Playground support by staff/children as buddies
- Quiet space inside with staff member
- Time-out card
- Reduced timetable
- Self-referral to 'The Space'
- Referral to boxing mentoring
- Referral to the CAMHS services
- Referral to in-school counselling service
- Referral to bespoke support an intervention within school such as Play or Equine therapy
- Referral to Forest School provision
- Parental referral to counselling support or workshops

## 6. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- EAL Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Children with Medical Conditions

## Appendix A – Vulnerability indicators

Children facing the following issues may be vulnerable- **please note that a child is not necessarily automatically considered vulnerable if they fall into one of these categories:**

- children excluded from school
- children with poor school attendance
- young offenders
- young carers
- children at risk from harm

- children living with ‘vulnerable’ adults (e.g. those in families with mental health issues – those with complex needs and those in chaotic families)
- children not fluent in English
  - children who are asylum seekers or refugees
- children in care / looked after children (LAC) and care-leavers
  - children requiring safeguarding
- children subject to the effects of poverty
- children living in challenging circumstances (Including those affected by domestic abuse, and or substance misuse)
- children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and/or complex needs
- children and young people with medical conditions
- children and young people for whom English is an additional language
- children and young people at risk of exclusion / persistent absenteeism
- Gypsy, Roma & Traveller heritage children and young people
- Ethnic minority children and young people
- those joining school at a different date
- children and young people who are socially disadvantaged
- economically disadvantaged children and young people
- children on a Child Protection Plan
- children and young people known to the police
- children and young people exiting criminal justice system
- homeless children and young people
- children and young people at risk of not being in education or training (NEET).

A child could also be seen as vulnerable due to a number of circumstances surrounding their parents and home life; these can include the following:

- mental health issues
- domestic abuse
- alcohol / drug abuse
- parent in prison
- not working
- working too much (not making time for the child)
- rurally isolated
- divorced / separated
- not engaging with agencies / school
- low income.

In addition, there are softer indicators that can be used in defining and identifying a vulnerable child; for example, those who come to school hungry and unclean or children who struggle to make friends easily. It is these children who are harder to identify and therefore don’t always get the services and help they may need.

## **Appendix B: Abbreviations used**

LA-Local Authority

EAL – English as an additional language

DFE- Department for Education

SENDCO- Special educational needs and Disability Co-Ordinator

FSM – Free school meals

SEN/D – Special educational needs and Disability  
SEMH- Social, Emotional and Mental Health  
CP – Child protection  
NEET – Not in education, employment or training  
CAF – Common assessment framework  
AHT – Assistant Headteacher  
SLT – Senior Leadership Team  
LSCB – local safeguarding children board  
CSE – child sexual exploitation  
FGM – female genital mutilation  
PSA – pastoral support assistant  
LGBTQ+- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and others