



# Indicators of abuse

## (to be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures)

### Introduction

All professionals need to be aware of and alert to the indicators of abuse. However, some of these indicators can also be traits of autism.

This can make it more difficult to identify abuse. As part of your induction programme, you will have completed Safeguarding Training, which covers the indicators of abuse. You will also receive training on which indicators can also be traits which may be displayed by our pupils.

You must also be familiar with and have read "Safeguarding children with autism" by Wade Tilbury which has been developed by the NSPCC and NAS and gives guidance on issues of safeguarding and child protection with specific reference to children with autism.

When considering signs of possible abuse, you need to be aware of and identify changes in a pupil's behaviour and the reasons that may lie behind this. If you have notice any changes in behaviour, you should discuss this with the BA. Changes in behaviour may be communicating an unmet need, puberty or medical reasons, but could, in some circumstances be indicators of abuse.

Many of the indicators can also be behaviours we see in pupils, so it is important to be aware of **changes** to behaviour and to always question and report.

If your concerns are not answered, you should discuss this immediately with a DSL.

The following signs may or may not be indicators that abuse has taken place, but the possibility should always be considered. Only by constantly questioning can we be alert to the needs of our pupils.

### Signs of possible physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or rough games
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Bruises, bites, burns and fractures, for example, which do not have an accidental explanation
- The child gives inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries
- Frozen watchfulness

### Signs of possible sexual abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse

- The child has an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour for their age, or regularly engages in sexual play inappropriate for their age
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- The child is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares which sometimes have overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia.

### **Signs of possible emotional abuse**

- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety, changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration
- Seeking adult attention and not mixing well with other children
- Sleep or speech disorders
- Negative statements about self
- Highly aggressive or cruel to others
- Extreme shyness or passivity
- Running away, stealing and lying

### **Signs of possible neglect**

- Dirty skin, body smells, unwashed, uncombed hair and untreated lice
- Clothing that is dirty, too big or small, or inappropriate for weather conditions
- Frequently left unsupervised or alone
- Frequent diarrhoea
- Frequent tiredness
- Untreated illnesses, infected cuts or physical complaints which the carer does not respond to
- Frequently hungry
- Overeating junk food