

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & GUIDELINES

Reviewed April 2010

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- To protect the interest of the child at all times.
- To take all disclosures seriously.
- All disclosures or suspicions of child abuse will be referred to Social Services and their advice acted upon.
- To record the disclosure accurately and as soon as possible.
- Not to make promises of confidentiality to the child that cannot be kept.
- Not to keep a disclosure to you once it has been made but to inform the DMS at once followed up by a written report.
- To respect the privacy of the child.
- To monitor the child carefully following a disclosure.
- Not to question the child in any way.
- To support staff and the family following a disclosure.

Definition of Child Abuse

There are four categories of Child Abuse –

Category 1 – NEGLECT

This involves persistent or severe neglect or the failure to protect a child from danger e.g. cold, starvation, warmth, etc. Outward signs are poor/inadequate clothing, poor, growth and hunger.

Category 2 – PHYSICAL INJURY

This includes actual physical injury or the failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. Outward signs are bruises, lacerations and burns.

Category 3 – SEXUAL ABUSE

This is actual or likely sexual exploitation in sexual activities that the child does not comprehend, to which he/she does not give informed consent or which violate social norms. This will include incest, sexual intercourse not covered by incest e.g. step-children, foster/adopted children, or other such exploitation. Outward signs are substantial behaviour changes (precocity or withdrawn).

Category 4 – EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This is an adverse effect on the child's emotional and behavioural development by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. This can occur while physical care may be good. This category could include coldness, hostility, constant criticism or ridicule. Outward signs excessive dependence or attention seeking.

NB All school adults must be alert to these signs and should report any suspicions of child abuse to the DMS at once. School adults should not investigate suspected abuse but follow the procedures laid out.

GUIDELINES – SIGNS & SYMPTONS

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Untreated injuries
- Admission of punishment that appears excessive
- Hair loss – bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others

SIGNS OF NEGLECT

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing
- Emaciation
- Frequent lateness or non-school attendance
- Untreated medical problems
- Destructive tendencies
- Low self-esteem
- Neurotic behaviour
- No social relationships
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Sudden changes in behaviour or school performance
- Displays of affection in a sexual way inappropriate to age
- Tendency to cling or need reassurance
- Regression to younger behaviour, such as thumb sucking, playing with discarded toys
- Acting like a baby
- Complaints of genital itching or pain

- Distrust of familiar adult or anxiety about being left with a relative, baby sitter or lodger
- Unexplained gifts of money
- Depression and withdrawal
- Apparent secrecy
- Wetting day or night
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Chronic illness, throat infection, venereal disease
- Anorexia or bulimia
- Unexplained pregnancy
- Fear of undressing e.g. for sport
- Phobias or panic attacks

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Physical, mental and emotional development lags
- Admission of punishment, which appears excessive
- Continued self-deprecation
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)
- Self mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression, drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing or scavenging

WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES TO YOU

A Disclosure

- Once a child has made a disclosure to you, you must make contact with the Designated Member of Staff or Headteacher.
- It must be impressed upon the child, before disclosure that the information given will have to be passed onto the DMS and possibly Social Services.
- The child must be assured that they are taking the correct action.
- Do not question a child – this can prejudice a potential court case.
- Do not ask the child to write an account of the incident.

What to do in case of a disclosure

- **DO** take what the child says seriously, it is rare for a child to lie about abuse.
- Thank them for telling you.
- Reassure the pupil that what has happened is not their fault and does happen to other children.
- Tell them who you must inform and why.
- Ask them not to discuss this with others, it needs to be kept private.
- Make notes as soon as you can.
- Give the pupil telephone numbers of other confidential support agencies (e.g. Childline).

- Talk to a trusted colleague about your feelings though no specific detail, this must remain confidential.

When a child discloses to you

DO NOT

- Make promises you cannot keep
- Interrogate the child. It is not your role to investigate or make suggestions. This action can void material should it be taken to court.
- Cast a doubt on what the child tells you. It has taken great courage to talk to you.
- Say anything which makes them guilty about what has happened e.g. "Why haven't you told someone before?").
- Communicate feelings of anger, the child may feel you are angry with them.
- PANIC! When faced with a disclosure there is often a feeling of **needing to act at once**. This can be counter productive.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality is about preserving privacy.
- Staff will only be told what they need to know.
- Staff need to understand that they will possibly be the only one the disclosure has been made to. Feedback and a **written account** needs to be given to the DMS or Headteacher as soon as possible.
- Staff need to record the time, place and who was present as well as what was said.
- Staff need to accept that feedback may be limited if any given at all.
- In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may inform the Chair of Governors.

Record Keeping

- The information recorded following a disclosure will be stored, by the DMS, in a file separate from the child's general file.
- The school will give Social Services copies of all notes made.
- Once a disclosure has been made, the adult must record time, place, those present and the actual wording used as quickly as they can after the event.
- The record must be in ink and signed.
- The Child Protection Register must be kept up to date.

Monitoring following a disclosure

- Monitoring and record keeping will start after the disclosure.
- Where appropriate staff involved with the child will monitor and inform the form tutor.
- The form tutor will collate information and pass on to the head of year.
- The form tutor and head of year will discuss any relevant information with the DMS.
- If Social Services are involved, an official log needs to be established to monitor the progress of the child.
- Records must be written in ink and signed.

What to monitor and record

- Changes of behaviour
- Changes in relationships
- Physical signs.
- Information from other sources.
- Child's comments.
- Other pupil's comments.
- Attendance.
- Changes in family circumstances.
- Changes in the standard of work.
- Information on siblings in the same school.
- Only **FACTS** not opinions.
- Keep any significant pieces of the child's work.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND FAMILY

Staff

- Staff may need support if they have been involved in a disclosure. This can be done without naming the pupil or giving details.
- Staff must be aware of the procedures to follow. If a disclosure is made, the procedures must be followed exactly.
- Follow precisely the Do and Don't list in the guidelines.

Family

- The school will respect and respond to the feelings of the family of the abused child.
- The staff will be non-judgemental and non-confrontational when dealing with the family, ensuring the child's welfare is paramount.
- Liaison with other agencies can give support.
- Continued support is given to siblings in support.
- Advice can come from – School Nurse, Educational Welfare Officer.
- Named persons –

Headteacher
Chair of Governors
DMS

Mr Scutt
Mrs Ulliott
Mr McCrainor
Miss Chagger