



Ysgol Uwchradd Y Frenhines Elisabeth
Queen Elizabeth High School

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Dealing with Child Abuse is a complex, multi-agency procedure which is defined within a legal framework. The school will follow the recommended procedures as set out in LEA guidelines. Because of the length and close proximity of contact with children, teachers are often the best placed to identify the symptoms of abuse. The role of staff is basically defined as:

- (a) Assisting in the identification of abuse.
- (b) Providing support to children who have experienced abuse.

The school is not an investigation or an intervention agency for child protection but it has an important role to play in the recognition and referral stages.

A child may be at risk from any combination of the following four categories:

1. Physical Abuse

This involves physical injury to the child, including deliberate poisoning and forcing a child to consume drugs such as tobacco and alcohol. It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after (sometimes described as Munchausen syndrome by proxy). Symptoms may include:-

- (a) Bruising - especially about the face and head.
- (b) Slap marks.
- (c) Cuts and abrasions.

2. Sexual Abuse

This is illegal sexual activity involving a child or young person or, in the case of young people over the age of 16, sexual activity carried out without the person's consent, including coercion, threat and intimidation. Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or producing pornographic material, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Pupils with special education needs and/or with behavioural and emotional problems, are particularly vulnerable to such abuse. Symptoms are more difficult to define but may include:

- (a) Precocious and/or promiscuous behaviour.
- (b) Sexual references in interactions with others.

- (c) Sudden changes in behaviour - withdrawal, avoidance of social contact, truancy, aggression.
- (d) Abnormal response to particular teaching situations e.g. lessons/discussions on sex and health education and inter-personal relationships.
- (e) Sudden deterioration of performance.
- (f) Anxiety and/or low self-esteem.
- (g) Knowledge of sexual matters beyond what would be expected.
- (h) Strong need for affection, sometimes expressed in physical terms.
- (i) Difficulty in trusting or defiance of teacher.
- (j) Fear of school medical examinations.
- (k) Vague pains or aches, possibly arising from psychosomatic illness.
- (l) Threat of, or actual self-harm.

3. Emotional Abuse

This is persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child which causes severe and long-lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or cause children to feel frightened or in danger. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child. Symptoms may include:

- (a) Withdrawal, fear of people or situations, a reluctance to participate in lessons.
- (b) Inappropriate responses to situations e.g. excessive aggression to a mild reprimand, no or little response to shocking news.
- (c) Expressions of low self-worth and low self esteem.
- (d) Lack of self-confidence, nervousness in group situations.
- (e) Distorted views of other people (the English teacher hates me).
- (f) Negative attitudes and views of significant others (my father is a pig, my family is no good, etc.).
- (g) Failure to make lasting, secure relationships.

4. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. Some symptoms are:

- (a) Small physical size, poor growth.
- (b) Dirty, unkempt appearance.
- (c) Poor awareness of personal hygiene.
- (d) Symptoms of physical illness in school.
- (e) Evidence of poor care outside school e.g. the child is seen wandering the streets late at night, or is in the company of older children/young people.
- (f) Poor eating habits, an unbalanced diet, constantly asking for food or money to buy food from others, stealing food or money to buy food.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

1. Be aware of pupils' physical condition and behaviour in terms of the criteria listed above.
2. Report any concerns immediately to the Child Protection Officer [Ms Jayne Johnson]. Make a dated note of your concerns and observations. In Ms Johnson's absence please report to the Head teacher.
3. Do not engage the child in a discussion on a suspected problem - this may exacerbate the situation. Direct intervention with a child requires great skill and tact and should only be undertaken by a trained member of the Child Protection Team.
4. You may ask a child to explain an obvious physical injury e.g. a bruise or black-eye as this may have a simple and innocent cause. However, it is crucial that a physical injury is reported if:-
 - (a) It has a number of similar antecedents.
 - (b) The explanation given does not match the nature of the injury.
5. Report the following immediately to the CPO:
 - (a) Statements made directly to you by a child which allege or suggest abuse.
 - (b) Statements made to you by others, including children, siblings, even members of the public.
 - (c) Comments overheard by you made by suspected victims or others.
 - (d) Unusual statements made in pupils' written work e.g. references to close relationships with particular individuals or descriptions of unusual situations.
6. It is possible that (5) above may relate to a member of staff or another person known to you. Under no circumstance should your own relationship influence your response. You are obliged by law to refer any allegation or information on possible abuse to the nominated staff.
7. It is important that if a child reports any form of abuse, that it is believed in the first instance. The NSPCC report that children rarely retract their original disclosures and when they do, it is more likely to be because of pressures upon them. This also applies to reports made by friends.
8. In any interaction with a child, you should never ask leading questions as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas into the child's mind.
9. Treat any information given by the CPO in the strictest confidence - never discuss it with anyone else, including colleagues.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

1. To be familiar with legislation and LEA policies on Child Protection.
2. Based on (1) above, keep the school's policy and procedures up-to-date.
3. Provide guidance and training to staff.
4. Represent the school at all meetings and case conferences which deal with Child Protection issues.
5. Keep all reports and records in a safe, secure place and ensure their total confidentiality.
6. Liaise with other agencies, including receiving and preparing reports.
7. Monitor pupils on the Child Protection Register in terms of attendance, behaviour, physical appearance, academic progress and general welfare. This will involve close liaison with the Head of Learning, Form Teacher and Pastoral staff.
8. Give teachers the information necessary for them to respond in the most appropriate way to pupils at risk bearing in mind, at all times, the need for maximum confidentiality. Information will be given only on a 'need to know' basis.
9. Children with SEN are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Designated teachers will work closely with the SENCO. This is especially important when children have poor communication skills.
10. In collaboration with the P.S.E. Coordinator, arrange for learning experiences which help pupils acquire relevant information and attitudes to resist abuse in their own lives.

SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

We recognise that pupils who experience abuse will need support. Support is available at school and pupils are informed of how to access help. There is a team of pastoral support staff who are available to pupils throughout the school day. Our School Health Nurse provides pupils with invaluable support. The School Health Nurse will refer pupils to outside agencies for further, specialised support when needed. There is a school based counsellor assigned to the school and pupils may access counselling when requested.

PROTECTION OF PUPIL IDENTITY

As a school, we work hard to protect children. This includes identity protection.

In this respect, we issue parents with a letter seeking their approval for taking and using images of children.

We also have a procedure for verifying phone calls from parents. When a parent phones with a message for a child [for example, about travelling home] a member of the office staff will phone the contact number for the child to ensure that the caller was who they said they were, and a request is made for confirmation of the message.

A SUMMARY OF OUR CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE

❖ What is child abuse?

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

❖ Keeping your eyes open

- Disclosure
- Allegation
- Suspicion

❖ What to do

- Report to designated person
- Put what you have heard in writing
- Try to use the exact words used by the pupil if possible
- Offer reassurance to the pupil

❖ What not to do

- Do not ask the pupil questions
- Do not try to investigate
- Do not promise confidentiality

❖ Guidelines for all staff

- Never touch pupils except for their safety
- Corporal or physical punishments are unlawful
- Think about how you talk to pupils

❖ Abuse could be

- Excessive restraint
- Rough handling
- Verbal bullying
- Frequent shouting
- Touching a pupil except for their safety

❖ If an allegation of abuse is made

- The following MUST be told:
- Social Services
- Local Education Authority
- Educational Welfare Services

If such an allegation involves a member of staff, additionally the Chair of the Board of Governors must be told and action taken in relation to the school's Staff Discipline Policy

❖ Consequences

- Social Services may pursue it as a Child Protection issue
 - Police may become involved
 - A criminal charge may follow
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- Parents can bring a civil action
 - Disciplinary action

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