

THE OLD SCHOOL HENSTEAD

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

Safeguarding Children in Education (Sept 2004) places a general duty on schools to co-operate with other agencies in the protection of children. It also requires that schools have in place policies and procedures, which should be shared with parents and be in accordance with locally agreed inter-agency procedures and made, to address concerns about the safety and protection of children.

The school is concerned that all pupils remain safe and free from harm and is committed to playing a full and active part in the multi-agency response to child protection concerns. This document sets out School's position with regard to DCSF guidance Safeguarding Children and safer recruitment in Education, in relation to all aspects of the child protection process.

The Old School Henstead fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the school. There are five main elements to our policy:

- Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Supporting pupils who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with children, school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the PSHE curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

We will follow the procedures set out by the Area Child Protection Committee or Local Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance issued by the Department for children, schools and families to:

- Ensure we have a designated senior person for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role, including bi-annual updates.

- Ensure we have a nominated governor responsible for child protection.
- Ensure we have a designated person within the EYFS responsible for child protection.
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary and supply staff and volunteers) and governing body knows the name of the designated senior person responsible for child protection and their role. Training must be undertaken at least every three years.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated senior person responsible for child protection.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the school prospectus.
- Notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure all records are kept securely, separate from the main pupil file, and in locked locations.
- Follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.
- Ensure that there is an annual review of the school's child protection policies and procedures and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged by the governing body.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as social services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.
- Ensuring that, where a pupil on the child protection register leaves, their information is transferred to the new school immediately and that the child's social worker is informed.

Appendix

The following principles underpin the school's approach to Safeguarding Children at School

Partnership

The school believes that the best outcomes for children generally are achieved when professionals can work effectively in partnership with parents/carers. This belief holds equally in relation to child protection concerns. School believes in open and honest communication and will always share with parents/carers any information or concerns that they have about their children at the earliest opportunity. The only exception to this would be where it was felt that such communication might compromise the child's safety.

If a child is felt to be in need of protection and becomes the subject of a child protection plan, parents/carers should regard School as a source of help and support.

Prevention

The school takes seriously its duty of pastoral care and will be proactive in seeking to prevent children becoming the victims of abuse or neglect. It will do this in a number of ways:

Through the creation of an open culture which respects all individuals' rights and discourages bullying and discrimination of all kinds.

By identifying a member of staff (The Headmaster) and a governor who have overall responsibility for child protection matters. They have received training in this field and acts as a source of advice and support to other School staff.

By informing children of their rights to be free from harm and encouraging them to talk to school staff if they have any concerns.

Through PSHE and an ongoing programme of support, at an age appropriate level, which promotes self-esteem and social inclusion and address the issue of child protection in the wider context of child safety in general.

Responding to concerns

If the school receives information about a child which suggests that he/she **has** been actually abused or neglected or that this is likely, it has a **duty to refer** these concerns to the Social Services Department or Police. The school has no discretion in this matter. In these circumstances the Social Services Department's child abuse investigation procedures apply.

In the course of an investigation the Social Services Department or Police might wish to speak to a child, without parental knowledge or consent. The Headmaster, acting 'in loco parentis' has discretion to agree this to allow the authorities to explore concerns and determine whether there are grounds for further action. In these cases the

Headmaster will ensure that the child's welfare is secured and he/she has access to a trusted adult.

The Headmaster will **not** allow a child to be removed from School premises without either:

- Parental consent
- An order of the Court or a Police Protection Order

If the school receives information which suggests a child **may** have been abused or neglected or abuse or neglect **may** be likely, then it will **consult** with the Social Services Department.

In these circumstances the Social Services Department may decide to begin a child protection investigation in which case its procedures will apply.

In either case parents will be informed of what has happened at the earliest opportunity consistent with the child's best interests.

NB

It is important to remember that a referral or consultation with the Social Services Department is an **expression of concern** about a child's welfare. It is not an accusation or a presumption of responsibility about a parent/carer.

If the school has general concerns about a child's welfare these will be raised with parents/carers at an early stage in an attempt to work together to remedy the situation. If concerns persist over a period of time, School may consult with the Social Services Department to discuss a way forward.

In all of the above circumstances School will keep a confidential record of its concerns and actions (see later).

Child/child abuse

In the event of physical or emotional abuse of one child by another this will be taken seriously and dealt with through the school's anti-bullying policy.

If it emerges that a child is being bullied by a sibling who may not be a pupil then the school in the first instance will inform the children's parents of its concerns. If the problem persists and the pupil continues to be the victim of abuse then School will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

In all matters of suspected sexual abuse, either victimisation or perpetration, the school will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

Child protection conferences

If pupils become the subject of child protection conferences then the school will be represented and will provide information about the child and his/her family. Usually this will be in the form of a written report, the contents of which will be shared with parents/carers prior to the meeting. Where School provides a verbal report, again parents/carers will be informed what is to be said prior to the conference.

Occasionally the school may have information which is confidential and which will be shared in a closed section of the conference. If this is necessary the Chair of the conference will discuss the matter with parents/carers.

When any child becomes the subject of a conference, local procedures require all the other children of the family are considered. It may well be therefore that the school will be required to provide information on children about whom there appear to be no direct concerns. In these situations the same procedure on prior disclosure of information will apply.

The school will contribute to the process of risk assessment and the decision about registration of children.

Child protection registration

When a pupil's name is added to the Child Protection Register the school will be represented on the core group and will play an active part in the creation and implementation of the child protection plan.

For as long as a child's name appears on the Register he/she will be supported by the school and his/her progress will be monitored. The school will keep a confidential record of the child's progress and any further concerns (should they arise) and share this information with other members of the core group in order to evaluate the progress of the child protection plan.

If the school receives information that a child whose name appears on the Register already has suffered further abuse or neglect, this will be referred immediately to the child's key worker.

Confidentiality

If the school receives information from any source that a child has suffered abuse or neglect or may suffer in this way, whether the child is a pupil or otherwise, it has a duty to pass this information to the Social Services Department.

If parents/carers wish to share such information with the school they must be aware that it will not be possible to guarantee confidentiality. The school can reassure parents/carers however that if they wish, the source of the information can remain anonymous.

When a pupil's name is added to the Child Protection Register this information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis with the minimum number of staff necessary to ensure the child's safety and welfare. These people will receive the minimum amount of information they need to enable them to implement the child protection plan. They will not have access to all the information shared at the initial child protection conference.

The school will ensure that the confidentiality of information is maintained by keeping records in a safe and secure place with access strictly limited. All records of a child's progress while the subject of registration will be kept similarly secure.

Transfer of records

If a child whose name appears on the Child Protection Register transfers to another school then the key worker will be notified of this change and School will arrange for the transfer of the child's records including information about registration. The key worker will then notify the new school of the next core group meeting so that the responsibility for monitoring the child's progress can be officially transferred.

If a child whose name has appeared on the Register in the past, but is no longer the subject of registration, transfers to another school then information about past registration will **not** be transferred. The information relating to this child will be retained in line with the policy on retaining records.

De-registration

A child's name can only be removed from the Child Protection Register by a child protection review conference. The school will be represented at these meetings and will play an active part in the process of risk re-evaluation and the decision regarding de-registration.

In line with the policy above, the school will share with parents prior to any review the information they intend to present.

Allegations against staff

All allegations against any member of staff which have implications for the safety and welfare of children will be taken seriously and investigated in line with agreed Child Protection and Disciplinary Proceedings Policy.

When concerns come to the attention of school staff they should refer to the procedures on how to progress these.

Members of the public who have concerns should speak to the Headmaster.

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