

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The health, safety and welfare of all our children are of paramount importance to all the adults who work in our school. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school.
- 1.2 Child abuse takes a variety of forms:
- Physical abuse involves the hitting, shaking or other treatment of a child that can cause actual bodily harm.
 - Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware what is happening. This includes non-contact situations, such as showing children pornography.
 - Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of children, such as frightening them, or putting them in positions of danger. It is also an abuse to convey to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.
 - Children are abused also if they are neglected. This could involve failure to provide proper food and warmth, but it might also be failure to see to the emotional well-being of the child.
- 1.3 In our school, we respect our children. The atmosphere within our school is one that encourages all children to do their best. We provide opportunities that enable our children to take and make decisions for themselves.
- 1.4 We recognise that abuse and neglect can result in underachievement. We strive to ensure that all our children make good educational progress.
- 1.5 Our teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship, as part of the curriculum, helps to develop appropriate attitudes in our children, and makes them aware of the impact of their decisions on others. We also teach them how to recognise different risks in different situations, and how to behave in response to them.
- 1.6 This policy is based on DfES Circular 10/95 – Protecting Children from Abuse: The Role of the Education Service. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 introduced a new duty requiring governing bodies and LAs to have appropriate child-protection procedures in place. This policy takes account of the requests set out in the Children Act 2004 ('Every Child Matters'). As an independent school without Governors we aim to comply with the same regulations.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 Our aims are:
- to provide a safe environment for children to learn in;

- to establish what actions the school can take to ensure that children remain safe, at home as well as at school;
- to raise the awareness of all staff to these issues, and to define their roles and responsibilities in reporting possible cases of abuse;
- to identify children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm;
- to ensure effective communication between all staff on child protection issues;
- to set down the correct procedures for those who encounter any issue of child protection.

3 Staff responsibilities

3.1 It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure all of the following:

- that this policy is implemented by all staff
- that sufficient resources and time are allocated for staff to carry out their responsibilities effectively
- that all staff and adult helpers in the school are able to voice their concern if they feel that a child is vulnerable, or that there are any particular practices that are unsafe

3.2 There is a named person designated as the Safeguarding Children Coordinator. This is the Headteacher, who is guided by two principles:

- In accordance with the Children Act, the welfare of the child is always paramount.
- Confidentiality should be respected as far as possible.

A key role of the Coordinator is to be fully conversant with the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Board (LSCB) and to ensure that the school takes action to support any child who may be at risk. The Coordinator must also make sure that all staff, teaching and non-teaching are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection. The Coordinator will work closely with Social Services, as well as the LSCB, when investigating any allegations of abuse. All parties involved will handle such investigations in a sensitive manner, remembering all the time that the interests of the child are of paramount importance.

3.3 All staff have a responsibility to report to the Headteacher any concern they have about the safety of any child in their care.

4 Employment and recruitment

4.1 We will do all we can to ensure that all those working with children in our school are suitable people. This involves scrutinizing applicants, verifying their identity and obtaining references, as well as the mandatory check of List 99 and CRB checks. We follow the DfES guidance set out in Child Protection: Preventing Unsuitable People from Working with Children and Young Persons in the Education Service, DfES 2002/0278.

5 Procedure to be followed if an adult has concerns about a child

- 5.1 Any action taken by the named Safeguarding Children Coordinator when dealing with an issue of child protection must be in accordance with the procedures outlined in the LA's Child Protection guidelines.
- 5.2 All adults in our school share responsibility for keeping our children safe. We may on occasion report concerns which, on investigation, prove unfounded.
- 5.3 If teachers suspect that a child in their class may be a victim of abuse, they should not try to investigate, but should immediately inform the Safeguarding Children Coordinator about their concerns. Abuse can be of a physical, sexual or emotional nature. It can also be the result of neglect. Staff must not keep to themselves any information about abuse which a child gives them; they are required by law to pass this information on.
- 5.4 If a child alleges abuse, the school will usually make a referral to the LA without first informing parents. However, in some circumstances parents will be informed first.
- 5.5 If a referral is made, a case conference will be held within eight working days. Case conferences offer the opportunity to share information and formulate a plan of action. Staff are expected to attend and participate in all case conferences and meetings held.

6 Physical restraint

- 6.1 There may be times when adults, in the course of their school duties, have to intervene physically in order to restrain children and prevent them from coming to harm. Such intervention will always be the minimum necessary to resolve the situation. We follow the guidance given in the DfES circular 10/98 on The Use of Force to Control or Restrain Pupils. The Headteacher will require the adult(s) involved in any such incident to report the matter to her immediately, and to record it in the Interventions Book.

7 Allegations against staff

- 7.1 If an allegation is made against a member of the school staff (or a volunteer helper); it will always be investigated by the Headteacher, or, in the case of the allegation being against the Headteacher, by the Directors of Happy Child. If it is felt, after these initial investigations, that a further enquiry is needed, then the member of staff will be suspended. Suspension is a neutral act, and in no way implies that the person is guilty of any wrongdoing. However, it is acknowledged that this would be distressing for the person concerned, and the school will do all it can to balance the interests of any individual with that of the need to keep children safe.

8 Staff training

- 8.1 All adults in the school receive regular training to raise their awareness of abuse, and to improve their knowledge of the child protection procedures that have been agreed locally. The maximum period of time before refresher training must take place is three years.

9 Confidentiality

9.1 We regard all information relating to individual child protection issues as confidential, and we treat it accordingly. We pass information on to appropriate persons only.

9.2 We comply with the government requirements set out in DHS Circular LA 83/14, and by the LA, with regard to confidentiality. The files we keep on children are open to those children's parents. Information from third parties will not be disclosed without their prior consent. Access to these files may be withheld in certain prescribed cases where there are instances of actual or alleged abuse (see DfES Circular 16/19). Working notes are not subject to disclosure, but will be summarised and then kept on file. These guidelines of ours are in line with the safeguards on disclosure of information set out in the Education (School Records) Regulations 1989.

10 Monitoring and review

10.1 This policy is reviewed annually.