



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

Pupil and Curriculum Governors  
Autumn 2014

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### **Child Protection Officer: Mrs H Nicholas**

Ferndale Community School is concerned about the welfare and safety of all its pupils and attempts to create an ethos in which pupils feel secure, valued and listened to and are taken seriously.

#### **Statutory Framework**

'Working Together Under the Children Act, 1989' requires all schools to follow the procedures for protecting children from abuse which are established by the Area Child Protection Committee. Schools are also expected to ensure that they have appropriate procedures in place for responding to situations in which they believe that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse – these procedures should cover circumstances in which a member of staff is accused or suspected of abuse.

The following are legal responsibilities placed on all schools.

- Staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they should report any concerns or suspicions.
- A designated teacher should have responsibility for co-ordinating action within the school and for liaising with other agencies.
- Staff with designated responsibility for child protection should receive appropriate training.
- Schools should be aware of and follow the procedures established by the Area Child Protection Committee.
- Schools should have procedures, of which all staff are aware, for handling suspected cases of abuse of pupils, including procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused of abuse.

It is a requirement that parents should be made aware of the school's child protection policy and the fact that this may require cases to be referred to the investigative agencies in the interests of the child'.

#### **The Designated Teacher**

The designated teacher for Child Protection is Mrs H Nicholas. Her role is to –

- Ensure that the All Wales Child Protection procedures are followed in the school;

- Ensure that all staff are aware of these procedures;
- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided to all staff;
- Ensure that the head teacher is kept fully aware of any concerns;
- Develop effective working relationships with other agencies and services;
- Decide whether to take further action about specific concerns e.g. refer to Social Services teams over suspected cases of child abuse;
- Ensure that accurate records relating to individual children are kept in a secure place and marked 'strictly confidential';
- Submit reports to, and attend, Child Protection Conferences;
- Ensure that the school effectively monitors children who have been identified as at risk;
- Provide guidance to parents, children and staff about obtaining suitable support.

### **The Nominated Governor**

Working together to Safeguard Children (NAFW Sept 2000) states that 'each school must have a nominated governor with responsibility for child protection'.

The nominated governor for Child Protection is the chairperson of the governing body.

This role is to –

- Take responsibility for liaising with the head teacher/ designated teacher over child protection matters.
- Ensure policies and procedures are in place which are consistent with local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) procedures.
- Have responsibility, for overseeing procedures relating to liaison between the Education and Children's Services Department and the Police including attendance at strategy meetings regarding any allegations made against the Headteacher.
- To ensure that an annual item is placed on the governors' agenda to report on any changes to child protection policy or procedures, training undertaken by the designated teachers and other staff on how child protection issues are dealt with in the school curriculum.

### **School Procedures**

- Any member of staff concerned about a child must inform Heather Nicholas immediately.

- The member of staff must record information regarding the concerns on the same day. The recording must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations.
- Mrs Nicholas will decide whether the concerns should be referred to the Social Services Department. If it is decided to make a referral to Social Services, this will be done without prior discussion with the parents.
- If a referral is made to Social Services, Mrs Nicholas will ensure that a written report of the concerns is sent to the Social Worker dealing with the case within 48 hours.
- Particular attention will be paid to the attendance and development of any child who has been identified as at risk, or who has been placed on the Child Protection Register.
- If a pupil who is on the Child Protection Register changes school, Mrs Nicholas will inform the Social Worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the receiving school.

### **When to be concerned**

- Staff should be concerned if a pupil:
- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's activities;
- Regularly has unexplained injuries;
- Frequently has injuries, even when apparently reasonable explanations are given;
- Offers confused or conflicting explanations about how injuries were sustained;
- Exhibits significant changes in behaviour, performance or attitude;
- Indulges in sexual behaviour which is unusually explicit and/ or inappropriate to his or her age;
- Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been significantly harmed.

### **Dealing with disclosure**

If a pupil discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the member of staff should:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief;
- Accept what is being said;
- Allow the child to talk freely;
- Reassure the child, but not make promises which it might not be possible to keep;

- Not promise confidentiality, as it might be necessary to refer the case to Social Services.
- Reassure the pupil that what has happened is not their fault;
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell;
- Listen, rather than ask direct questions;
- Ask open questions rather than leading questions;
- Not criticise the perpetrator;
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.

### **Record keeping**

When a pupil has made a disclosure, the member of staff should:

- Make some brief notes as soon as possible after the conversation;
- Not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court;
- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non- verbal behaviour and the words used by the child;
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising or other injury;
- Record statements and observations, rather than interpretations or assumptions.

### **Support**

Dealing with a disclosure from a child is likely to be a stressful experience. The member of staff concerned should consider seeking support for him/ herself and discuss this with Mrs Nicholas.

### **Allegations involving school staff**

If a child, or parent, makes a complaint of abuse against a member of staff, the person receiving the complaint must take it seriously and immediately inform the head teacher.

Any member of staff who has reason to suspect that a pupil may have been abused by another member of staff, either at school or elsewhere, must immediately inform the head teacher. A record of the concerns must be made, including a note of anyone else who witnessed the incident or allegation.

If the concerns are about the head teacher the Principal Education Officer must be contacted.

The head teacher will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but he/ she will assess whether or not it is necessary to refer to the local Social Services team. If the allegation constitutes a serious criminal offence, it will be necessary to contact Social Services before informing the member of staff.

If it is decided that it is not necessary to refer to Social Services the head teacher will consider whether there needs to be an internal investigation.

The procedures for responding to allegations of abuse involving staff in schools issued by the RCT Child Protection Committee are kept by Mrs Nicholas.

## **DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those they know or more rarely by a stranger. A child or young person up to the age of 18 years can suffer abuse or neglect and require protection via an interagency Child Protection Plan.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm 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. This situation may be described as fabricated or induced illness by carer.

#### ***What to look out for:***

- Unexplained or recurrent injuries.
- Improbable explanation of injuries.
- Refusal to discuss injuries.
- Untreated injuries.
- Excessive punishments.
- Fear of parents being contacted.
- Bald patches.
- Withdrawn from physical contact.
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather.
- Fear of returning home.
- Fear of medical help.
- Aggression to others.
- Chronic running away.

## **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### ***What to look out for:***

- Developmental lags.
- Becoming withdrawn or depressed.
- Attention seeking.
- Over-reaction to mistakes.
- Sudden speech disorders.
- Fear of new situations.
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations.
- Neurotic behaviour.
- Self-harming.
- Fear of parents being contacted.
- Extremes of passivity or aggression.
- Drug/solvent abuse.
- Running away.
- Compulsive stealing.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child or young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.



### **What to look out for:**

- Becoming insecure, clingy in a fearful way.
  - Show fear of a particular person.
  - Start wetting themselves.
  - Regress to younger behaviour patterns.
  - Have unexplained sources of money or gifts.
  - Say a friend has a problem.
  - Changes in behaviour, become withdrawn or aggressive.
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- Show discomfort when walking.
  - Draw sexually explicit pictures (age appropriate).
  - Play out sexual acts with dolls or on other children.
  - Repeat obscene words or phrases said by an abuser.
  - Act in a way sexually inappropriate to their age.
  - Have poor self-image, self mutilate.
  - Continually run away.
  - Say they are no good, bad, wicked or dirty.

### **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 provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

- Constant hunger.
- Stealing food.
- Poor personal hygiene.
- Constant tiredness.
- Inappropriate clothing for weather.
- Abnormally thin.
- Frequent lateness or absence from school.
- Untreated medical problems.
- Low self-esteem.
- Destructive tendencies.
- Neurotic behaviour (hair twisting, rocking).



- Poor social skills.
- Compulsive stealing.
- Chronic running away.
- Family pets neglected

### ***Supporting pupils***

We recognise that a child who is abused or witnesses violence may find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self worth and may feel helpless and humiliated. Our centre may provide the only sense of stability in the lives of pupils who have been abused or who are at risk of harm and we will support all pupils by;

1. Encouraging self esteem and self assertiveness
2. Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within our centre
3. Liaising and working together with all support services and those agencies involved in safeguarding children
4. Providing continuous support to a pupil about whom there have been concerns who leaves our centre by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded, under confidential cover, to the pupil's new school.

### **Supporting Staff**

We recognise that staff working in our centre who have become involved with a child who has suffered, or is at risk of suffering harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

We will support such staff by providing the opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the designated teacher and to seek further support as appropriate.

### **Confidentiality**

Staff cannot keep confidential a disclosure of abuse and must refer the matter to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

All referrals should be made with the knowledge that during any subsequent investigation, the source (i.e. the centre) will be made known to the family.

Other staff may need to be alerted to concerns about a child or young person, possibly in order to monitor the concern or to gather further evidence prior to a referral being made, or to assist in providing appropriate support to a child or young

person once a referral has been made. Information should only be shared on a strict need to know basis.

Ensure that only those with a professional involvement e.g. the designator teacher have access to the child protection records. At all other times they should be kept securely locked and separate from the child's young person's main file.