



Birchwood High School Child Protection Policy

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1 Introduction

Safeguarding is defined as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health and/or development, ensuring that children grow up in the provision of safe and effective care and optimising children's life chances.

This Child Protection Policy forms part of a suite of documents and policies which relate to the safeguarding responsibilities of the school.

In particular this policy should be read in conjunction with the Safer Recruitment Policy, Behaviour Policy and AntiBullying Policy.

Purpose of a Child Protection Policy

To inform staff, parents, volunteers and governors about the school's responsibilities for safeguarding children.

To enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Inter-agency Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures

The school follows the procedures established by the Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Committee - a guide to procedure and practice for all professional staff in Hertfordshire who work with children.

School Staff & Volunteers

All school staff and volunteers are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour and failure to develop because they have daily contact with children.

They should be aware of the important role the school has in the early recognition of the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect and the appropriate referral process.

Mission Statement

To establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to when they have a worry or concern. To ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.

To Include opportunities in the PD curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

2 Statutory Framework

In order to protect children from harm the school will act in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

The Children Act (1989)

The Children Act (2004)

Education Act (2002), section 175

HSCB Inter-agency Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures (2010)

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfES 2006)

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (1999 DoH)

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (HM Government 2010) requires all schools to follow the procedures for protecting children from abuse which are established by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. 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 are at risk of abuse - these procedures should also cover circumstances in which a member of staff is accused of, or suspected of, abuse.

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfES 2006)

- Schools should be aware of and follow the procedures established by the Area Child Protection Committee
- Staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they should report any concerns or suspicions
- 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, or suspected of abuse
- A Designated Senior Person should have responsibility for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies
- Staff with designated responsibility for Child Protection should receive appropriate training

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfES 2006) also states: "All parents need to understand that schools and FE colleges have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are their pupils or students, that this responsibility necessitates a child protection policy and procedures, and that a school or FE college may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare."

3 The Designated Senior Person

The Designated Senior Person for Child Protection in this school is Melinda Mulley. The Deputy Designated Senior Person for Child Protection in this school is Graham Handy.

It is the role of the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection to:

- Ensure that the school operates within the legislative framework and recommended guidance
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the Hertfordshire ACPC procedures
- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided to all staff
- Ensure that the headteacher is kept fully informed 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 Children, Schools and Families Social Work Team)
- Liaise with Social Work Teams over suspected cases of child abuse
- Ensure that accurate records relating to individual children are kept separate from the academic file in a secure place and marked 'Strictly Confidential'
- Submit reports to, and ensure the school's attendance at Child Protection Conferences
- Ensure that the school effectively monitors children about whom there are concerns
- Provide guidance to parents, children and staff about obtaining suitable support

4 The Governing Body

The Governing Body has an overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient measures in place to safeguard the children in their establishment. It is recommended that the nominated governor for child protection is appointed to take lead responsibility.

The nominated governor for child protection is David Nicholas.

In particular the Governing Body must ensure:

- Child protection policy and procedures
- Safer recruitment procedures
- Relevant safeguarding children training for school/staff volunteers is attended
- Safe management of allegations
- Deficiencies or weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements are remedied without delay
- A member of the Governing Body (usually the Chair) is nominated to be responsible in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against the Headteacher
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed annually and information provided to the local authority about them and about how the above duties have been discharged.

5 School Procedures

If any member of staff is concerned about a child he or she must inform the Designated Senior Person.

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.

The Designated Senior Person will decide whether the concerns should be referred to Children, Schools and Families. If it is decided to make a referral to Children Schools and Families this will be done with prior discussion with the parents, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of harm

Particular attention will be paid to the attendance and development of any child about whom the school has concern or who has been placed on the Child Protection Register and a written record will be kept

If a pupil who is/ or has been the subject of a Child Protection Plan changes school, the Designated Senior Person will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the receiving school, in a secure manner, to a named person, and separate from the child's academic file.

6 When to be Concerned

All staff and volunteers should be aware that the main categories of abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

All staff and volunteers should be concerned about a child if he/she presents with indicators of possible significant harm:

- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's injuries
- Regularly has unexplained injuries
- Frequently has injuries (even when apparently reasonable explanations are given)
- Gives 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.
- Any other cause to believe that a child may be suffering harm

7 Dealing with a Disclosure

If a child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the member of staff / volunteer 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 – it might be necessary to refer to Children Schools and Families
- Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell
- Listen, rather than ask direct questions
- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told
- Make a written record (see Record Keeping)
- Pass information to the Designated Senior Person without delay

Support:

Dealing with a disclosure from a child, and a Child Protection case in general, is likely to be a stressful experience. The member of staff/volunteer should, therefore, consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the Designated Senior Person.

8 Confidentiality

Child Protection raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all staff/volunteers in schools.

- All staff in schools, both teaching and non-teaching staff, have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies (CSF social care and the Police).
- If a child confides in a member of staff/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff/volunteer tell the child sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies for the child's sake. Within that context, the child should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.
- Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts.

9 Record Keeping

When a child has made a disclosure, the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Make 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.

All records need to be given to the Designated Senior Person promptly. No copies should be retained by the member of staff or volunteer.

10 Allegations Involving School Staff/Volunteers

An allegation is any information which indicates that a member of staff/volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child
- Behaved toward a child in a way which indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

This applies to any child the member of staff/volunteer has contact with in the personal, professional or community life.

The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. S/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification, it is important not to make

assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

Actions to be taken include making a written record of the allegation using the informant's words - including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, what was said and anyone else present. This record should be signed and dated and immediately passed on to the Headteacher.

If the concerns are about the Headteacher, then the Chair of Governors should be contacted. The Chair of Governors at this school is Pauline Mackenzie.

In the absence of the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair should be contacted. The Vice Chair at this school is David Nicholas.

The recipient of an allegation must **not** unilaterally determine its validity, and failure to report it in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

The Headteacher will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but will assess whether it is necessary to refer the concern to CSF social care in consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (07920 283106/07795 288271/01992 556986).

If it is decided that the allegation meets the threshold for further action through the HSCB Inter-agency Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures, the Headteacher must immediately make a referral to CSF social care on 0300 123 4043.

If it is decided that the allegation does not meet the threshold for referral to CSF social care, the Head Teacher and Local Authority Designated Officer will consider the appropriate course of action, e.g. joint evaluation meeting, internal investigation.

The Headteacher should, as soon as possible, **following briefing** from the Local Authority Designated Officer inform the subject of the allegation.

For further information see:

HSCB Inter-agency Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Procedures (2010)
Section 4.1.1 Managing Allegations Against Adults who work with Children and Young People

Indicators of Possible Significant Harm

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent
- Injuries not typical of accidental injury
- Frequent injuries even with apparently reasonable explanations
- Improbable or conflicting explanations for injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Bald patches
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather
- Fear of returning home
- Fear of medical help / parents not seeking medical help
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Chronic running away
- Frequently absent from school

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

Probably the most difficult type of abuse to recognise.

- An emotionally abused child is often withdrawn, introverted and depressed.
- Admission of punishment which appears excessive
- Over-reaction to mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Neurotic behaviour (eg, rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)
- Self mutilation
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Chronic running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Scavenging for food or clothes
- Continual self depreciation
- Air of detachment – ‘don’t care’ attitude
- Social isolation – does not join in and has few friends
- Desperate attention-seeking behaviour
- Eating problems, including over-eating or lack of appetite
- Depression, withdrawal

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Demonstrate sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate to age/stage of development, or that is unusually explicit
- Wetting or other regressive behaviours eg, thumb sucking
- Inexplicable changes in behaviour, such as becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Stop enjoying previously liked activities
- Be reluctant to undress for PE
- Become fearful of, or refuse to see, certain adults for no apparent reason; show dislike of a particular baby-sitter, relative or other adult
- Draw sexually explicit pictures
- Urinary infections, bleeding or soreness in the genital or anal areas
- Soreness or bleeding in the throat
- Chronic ailments, such as stomach pains or headaches
- Take over the parental role at home; seem old beyond their years

- Develop eating disorders, such as anorexia or bulimia
- Depression, suicidal thoughts
- Poor self-image, self-harm, self-hatred
- Physical discomfort
- Use drugs or drink to excess
- Unexplained pregnancy
- Memory loss
- Frequent running away
- Restricted social activities
- Find excuses not to go home or to a particular place
- Have recurring nightmares/be afraid of the dark
- Be unable to concentrate; seem to be in a world of their own
- Have a 'friend who has a problem' and then tell about the abuse of the friend
- Sudden changes in school work habits, become truant
- Withdrawal, isolation or excessive worrying
- Outbursts of anger or irritability
- Unexplained sums of money
- Act in a sexually inappropriate/harmful or seductive way towards others

Possible Signs of Neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing, clothing in a poor state of repair
- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
- Untreated medical problems
- Low self-esteem
- Poor social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Constant tiredness
- Emaciation
- Destructive tendencies.
- Neurotic behaviour (eg, rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)
- Chronic running away
- Scavenging for food or clothes

In addition to all the above signs a child may disclose an experience in which he/she may have been harmed, or there may be any other cause to believe that a child may be suffering harm.