

4.6a

PROCEDURES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

(As advised by Bromley Social Services and the London Child Protection Procedures and in accordance with the locally agreed inter-agency procedures, as established by the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board)

See also Code of Conduct, Staff Induction in Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Policy

Each school designates a senior member of staff for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies according to Bromley's procedures. This member of staff is referred to as the Designated Child Protection Officer. At Eltham College this is Mr Cavendish (Pastoral Deputy) who will act in close liaison with the Headmaster, and the Deputy Child Protection Officer is Mr Roberts (Head of Lower School); in the Junior School the Designated Child Protection Officer is Mrs Wrafter and the Deputy is Mr McIntyre

Because they are in regular and frequent contact with children, school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, or unexplained changes in behaviour or performance which *may* indicate abuse. Bruises, lacerations and burns may be apparent, particularly when children change their clothes for physical education and sports activities. Possible indicators of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition, and of emotional neglect, such as excessive dependence or attention-seeking, may be noticeable. Sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs, or lead to a substantial behavioural change including precocity or withdrawal. These signs and others can do no more than give rise to suspicion - they are not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred. But as part of their pastoral responsibilities teachers should be alert to all such signs. The designation of a Designated Child Protection Officer should not be seen as diminishing the role of all teachers in being alert to signs of abuse.

It is expected that teachers should ask a child or parent how an injury happened, but if the answer does not correspond with the injury it is not the responsibility of school staff to make investigative enquiries of parents or guardians, as in some cases it could be counter-productive for them to do so. It is for the statutory agencies, Social Services and the Police, to investigate suspected abuse.

In any case, where a child discloses abuse to a teaching or non-teaching member of staff, that person will report immediately to the school's Designated Child Protection Officer. Questioning of the abused child by any member of staff should not be necessary and may further harass the child. The Designated Child Protection Officer should consult with the Social Services at the appropriate Area Office and make a referral.

Teaching or non-teaching staff noticing bruising or other injuries to a child, or having other cause to suspect abuse or neglect for which no satisfactory account is given must immediately inform their Designated Child Protection Officer who will, straight away, take the following action:

The Designated Child Protection Officer will telephone the Social Services at the appropriate Area Office (refer to the social services contacts to check for the correct area), making it clear that a possible case of child abuse is being reported; outside office hours there is an emergency duty team on call, or the Police. Always confirm your referral in writing within 48 hours (using the referral form – remember to keep a copy). Social services should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard back within 3 working days, contact social services again.

If the allegation involves **a member of the child's family**, generally the Social Services Department will contact the parents but, in reporting the suspicion, the Designated Child Protection Officer should clarify with the recipient of the referral what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.

If the allegation involves someone **other than a member of the child's family**, the school should still report the matter immediately to Social Services, but as the child may not remain at immediate risk the Social Services Department may not need to respond so urgently. The child's parents must however be informed and the Designated Child Protection Officer should agree with the Social Services, who will contact the parents.

If an allegation of child abuse is made against **another child**, the school should investigate the nature of the allegation immediately and if it is deemed appropriate it will be reported to Social Services. Initial investigations should only be to ascertain the nature of the allegation and should not risk compromising any further official enquiry. Social Services can advise if the school is uncertain about whether to make a formal report to them or not. If the matter is reported, then both sets of parents must be informed and the Designated Child Protection Officer should agree with the Social Services, who will contact the parents. Social Services can advise on whether the police need to be informed.

If an allegation of child abuse is made against **a member of staff or a volunteer**, the matter must be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer immediately, who will inform the Headmaster at the earliest stage.

The Lead Officer for Education Safeguarding (LOES) should be informed of ALL allegations meeting the following criteria, i.e. that an adult working with children has:

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

The LOES (Denise Partridge) should be informed of such allegations within 1 working day.

The Designated Child Protection Officer will question the child, in the presence of the School Nurse, for clarification of the allegations and to see whether they meet the above criteria. This questioning should be kept to a minimum, and a written record kept.

This will then be reported to the Headmaster and if he considers that there is a genuine case to answer, then the LOES will be contacted. If there is any doubt about whether the allegations meet the criteria above, then the LOES can be consulted.

The Headmaster must consider to what extent the Disciplinary Procedure for Teachers should be invoked with special regard to the section on Suspension. The Chairman of Governors will be informed at this stage.

If the Social Services involve the Police, and they decide to take the matter further, then the member of staff should be suspended immediately, or where circumstances warrant it, dismissed. Suspension should also be considered if there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm or the allegation is so serious that it might be grounds for dismissal.

If the matter is not deemed appropriate to report to the LOES or if the LOES has advised that the matter should be dealt with by the school, then the school disciplinary procedures should be followed.

If the allegation is against the Headmaster then it should be reported to the most Senior member of the Senior Management Team (normally the Designated Child Protection Officer), who will carry out the investigation and who will liaise with the Chairman of

Governors. If the allegation is against the Designated Child Protection Officer then it should be reported to the Headmaster.

During the process parents/carers of a child/ren involved should be;

- Informed of the allegation (providing this does not impede the enquiry, disciplinary or investigative processes)
- Kept informed of progress
- Told of the outcome where no criminal prosecution

Children and their parents/carers should:

- Be helped to understand processes
- Told the result of enquiry/disciplinary process
- Helped where necessary to understand outcomes

The accused person should be:

- Treated fairly and honestly
- Kept informed of progress
- Given appropriate support during the case
- Kept informed about workplace developments if suspended
- Advised to contact the union or professional association at the outset

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being investigated/considered.

If there is to be no criminal investigation/prosecution then the school must consider what further action is required. This may involve formal disciplinary action (in which case a hearing should be held within 15 working days) further investigation (which should be completed within 10 working days) or other non-disciplinary action (which should be instituted within 3 days).

Disciplinary action may result in options ranging from no further action to summary dismissal or not using the person's services in future.

If the allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or the employer ceases to use the person's services then the LOES should discuss with the employer whether a referral to the POCA list of DCSF list 99 is required and also whether a referral to a professional body is required.

If the allegations prove to be unfounded then the matter should be referred to Children's Social Care CSC. If the allegation may have been deliberately invented, or malicious, then contact the police.

Every effort should be made to reach a conclusion in all cases and "compromise agreements" must not be used i.e. where a person agrees to resign with no disciplinary action and an agreed future reference. Accurate and detailed records should be kept. A comprehensive summary of the allegations, follow up and resolution, decisions reached and actions taken should be kept on the individual's confidential file and given to the individual. It should be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if longer.

It should be the responsibility of the school to inform parents of other pupils at the school: this information should be kept to a minimum. The anonymity of the pupil should be maintained at all times. If a member of staff is dismissed or resigns because he or she is

considered unsuitable to work with children, this will be reported to the DCSF within one month.

All cases of child abuse reported to Social Services should be confirmed in a short written note to the principal Education Welfare Officer (if applicable to the case).

In all cases anyone with any concerns or worries about abuse, or harm to any child, should discuss the case with the appropriate colleague (usually Mr Cavendish or the School Nurse) or the Social Services, and make written records of all observations and concerns, regardless of whether any further action is taken.

(Children Act Guidelines: If, having reported an incident and having discussed it with the Designated Child Protection Officer and the Headmaster, a member of staff feels that inappropriate or insufficient action has been taken in this case, the local Social Services Department should be informed immediately).

- Eltham College operates safe recruitment procedures (including enhanced CRB checks). CRB checks are also made on staff working at the Eric Liddell Sports Centre and on any other adults involved in school activities including trips and expeditions or other voluntary activities. Such volunteers should have a clear job description or equivalent and be given basic child protection training.
- Staff are advised during their Induction and through the Code of Professional Conduct to be aware of protecting themselves against allegations of abuse, by avoiding meetings in closed rooms on their own, and inappropriate use of physical contact or force.
- Training in child protection and inter-agency procedures is provided every two years for the Designated Person(s) and every three years for the Headmaster and all others who work with children, including volunteers and part-time staff.
- Any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay.
- The Governors undertake an annual review of the school's child protection policy and procedures and of the efficiency with which they have been implemented.

CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD ABUSE

TEN KEY POINTS TO FOLLOW IF YOU SUSPECT, OR ARE TOLD, OF ABUSE

Adults looking after children or young people in schools (or in residential establishments or youth organisations), should be aware of the risks of abuse (by adults or other young people) and take steps to reduce those risks.

Adults (staff or volunteers) in charge of children or young people should know what to do if they suspect that someone is being physically or sexually abused, or if someone tells them that this is happening. The following key points give a guide on what to do and not to do:

1. Take time to familiarise yourself with the section in the staff handbook on Child Protection, Child Abuse, Categories and Recognition.
2. Be vigilant for the risk indicators which may indicate child abuse or neglect.

3. Do not be afraid to ask a pupil about something you have noticed that is causing you concern.
4. If you are concerned that a pupil may be suffering from abuse or neglect do not hesitate to discuss your concerns with the Designated Child Protection Officer.
5. Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse.
6. If you can write brief notes of what they are telling you while they are speaking, or make notes as soon as possible afterwards. REMEMBER always keep your original notes.
7. DO NOT give a guarantee that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. Explain that you will need to get help with this problem and who you will tell. Being open and honest about your actions, with a pupil who is suffering abuse, may enable the pupil to feel they can continue to trust you.
8. Do not ask leading questions (e.g. "did he do X to you?") just ask "what do you want to tell me?" or "is there anything else you want to say?"
9. Report immediately to the Designated Child Protection Officer. DO NOT discuss the information with anyone else in school. Confidentiality in child protection cases is paramount. (Please see section 4.4b 'A Flow Chart for Action' for the next step)
10. NEVER think abuse is impossible, or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.

Important:

These points are no substitute for the proper selection and training of adults trusted to look after children and young people, or for schools having their own clear "child protection," procedures for their particular setting, which should be agreed by the local Area Child Protection Committee (contactable through the headquarters of the local Social Services Department).