



Child Protection Policy

This policy has been compiled from several extensive documents on Child Protection, which have been issued by Central government, "What To Do If A Child Is Being Abused "and also the local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines. It applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school, and governors.

Philosophy and the Law

West House School's (henceforth WHS) policy is founded on the philosophy that the welfare of the child is paramount and that a civilised society should have the protection of children from significant harm as a top priority. Section 175 of The Education Act 2002 states that schools have a legal obligation to report concerns to the Social Services.

Ethos

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted adult can aid prevention. The school makes every effort to produce and maintain an ethos in which the children feel secure. At the same time WHS recognises that some children may be victims of neglect, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. As WHS is a small school, all members of staff have day-to-day knowledge of, and contact with, all pupils. They are, therefore, well placed to identify possible abuse and offer support to children in need. Staff must at all times be vigilant to the signs and symptoms of child abuse. The school ensures that all children know that they may approach a member of staff if they are worried or in difficulty.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse can be divided into several categories:

- **Persistent or severe neglect**
Lack of the basic care that children need to survive. This can include the failure to protect the child from danger, cold, starvation and the failure of care resulting in significant impairment of health or development. It includes leaving children unsupervised, for unnecessarily long periods of time or in potentially dangerous circumstances.
- **Physical abuse or injury or the failure to prevent physical injury**
This can include hitting, shaking, squeezing, scalding, biting, giving children poisonous substances, inappropriate drugs and alcohol, suffocation and drowning.
- **Sexual abuse**
Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child by any person able to exercise dominance. This may include all forms of actual or attempted sexual intercourse and involvement in the production of pornographic material and importuning.

- Emotional abuse
Caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection in which children are made to feel unwanted, ugly, worthless or unloved. It can include threats, verbal attacks, taunting, shouting, or a constant lack of love or affection, which lead to a child's loss of confidence or self-esteem. As all abuse involves some form of emotional ill-treatment, this category should be used when it is the main or sole form of abuse.
- Institutionalised abuse
A generic term which covers abuse which may involve a number of abusers, a number of children, and may encompass different forms of abuse. It involves, to a greater or lesser degree, an element of organisation.

Responsibilities

The school and the Board of Governors are committed to:

1. Ensuring that a Child Protection Officer is appointed and appropriately trained: Jackie Cockerill CPO (Sharon Griffiths Deputy CPO Nursery). The CPO will receive training every two years.
2. Ensuring that all staff and governors know the name of the designated person.
3. Ensuring that parents are made aware that a copy of this document is available for inspection in the school office and in the Parents' Area on the school website.
4. Ensuring that all members of staff are properly trained and supported. All members of staff, including trainees, volunteers etc. will have access to this policy, via the staff handbook, and the appropriate training and briefings. All new members of staff will receive a copy of this document and a briefing on Child Protection as directed by the Headmaster. Members of staff will receive training every three years.
5. Keeping written records of concerns about children (noting the date, the event and action taken) in a secure locked location.
6. Ensuring that the duty of care towards pupils and staff is promoted by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and unwise behaviour and assisting staff to monitor the own standards and practice.

Members of the Board of Governors will be made aware of the school's protection procedures.

The Board of Governors will receive a report of any training undertaken by members of staff.

The Board of Governors will be informed of any incident involving the use of child protection procedures.

A member of the Board of Governors will be responsible for undertaking an annual review of this policy and will be required to undertake training in child protection every three years.

Curriculum

WHS recognises that the school has an educational role to play in child protection. RE and PSHE lessons all include topics which develop knowledge and understanding about families and the right of children to be safe and well cared for. (In Nursery the same issues are covered in Topic of the Week and Knowledge of the World). These topics should encourage pupils to keep themselves safe and develop good caring skills for the future. Staff should be aware that such subjects could cause distress and need to be approached with sensitivity.

Practical Guidelines for Detecting Signs of Abuse

These are important for people in regular contact with children. However, the possible indicators below are not fool-proof. Great care must be taken not to jump to hasty conclusions. Staff noticing such signs should discuss them with the school's CPO. Staff are reminded that the absence of obvious physical signs or symptoms of distress does not itself indicate that abuse has not occurred.

Possible Signs of Neglect

Constant hunger; tiredness; emaciation; destructive tendencies; poor personal hygiene and clothing; frequent lateness, earliness or non-attendance at school; compulsive stealing; no carer at home; low self-esteem.

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

- **Physical signs:**
Unexplained injuries or improbable explanations for injury; untreated or recurrent injuries; injuries with a pattern e.g. hand or finger injuries, belt marks; cigarette or other burns or scalds; bite marks; admitted injuries caused by excessive punishment.
- **Behavioural signs:**
Fear of adult or carer including fear of going home; refusal to change for P.E., keeping limbs covered; fear of medical help; self destructive tendencies; aggression towards others; sudden unexplained changes in behaviour; learning difficulties; very low self-esteem, including failure to respond to praise; inhibitions; cowering.

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

Developmental delay; admission of seemingly excessive punishment; overreaction to mistakes; sudden speech disorders; rocking, hair twisting or pulling; self mutilation; extremes of passivity or aggression; drug/solvent abuse; attention seeking; bedwetting.

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

- **Physical signs:**
5-12 years: urinary infections; chronic ailments; stomach pains; frequent headaches; eating disorders.

- Behavioural signs:
Hints about secrets; saying a friend has a problem; beginning to lie, steal or blatantly cheat; unexplained sources of money; reluctance to undress for P.E.; excessive dislike of or refusal to see a particular person(s); refusal to go home; drawing of pictures depicting abuse; poor self-image; self-mutilation; taking over parenting role at home; regular running away; acting in a sexually inappropriate way for age.

Disclosure – Staff Responsibilities

In the event of confidences being shared or offered to someone, staff should be aware that, legally, a child can be interviewed only once over child protection issues. We will never initiate an investigation. Usually, Police or Social Services try to ensure that the interview takes place under video conditions or, at the minimum, in the presence of an expert witness. If a child reveals that he has already been interviewed by a teacher, then the evidence may be regarded as contaminated. Therefore staff must be clear about what constitutes listening to a disclosure and what constitutes an interview.

Should a child wish to make a disclosure, the teacher should be receptive and an opportunity to do so should be given priority. A child may never summon up the courage to approach an adult again if the opportunity is lost.

The teacher should never promise confidentiality beforehand as, legally, this may prove impossible. A compromise could be to say, "Naturally, I would not gossip about your secret, but, if we need help to sort it out, I may need to involve someone else." If a pupil refuses to go along with only that reassurance, the disclosure should not take place. The teacher can only suggest that the pupil takes a time to think and then comes back or contacts a help-line.

A situation like this, where disclosure does not take place, should be mentioned to the CPO.

If disclosure does occur, staff should:

- Stay calm and reassuring.
- Listen quietly and believe what the child says.
- Avoid judgmental reactions and protestations, either in expression or verbally.
- Encourage the child by telling him/her that he/she was right to confide in someone, and that you will try to help him/her.
- Make it clear that you realise that what he/she is doing is hard for him/her and that you are pleased that he/she trusts you.
- Try to let the child tell his story as free narrative. Questions should be linked and open-ended, for example:
 - Has something happened to you?
 - Can you tell me what happened?
 - Where did it happen?
 - When did it happen?
 - Was anyone else present?
 - Can you tell me about it using your own words?
 - What upset you? (After being told the child was upset.)
- Make no promises.
- Find out whether they have told someone else.

- Do not press for details; these will have to be given later.

(In terms of the younger Nursery children, if a staff member notices an injury, or someone reports an incident or a child says something significant then they must refer to the CPO who may decide to make a referral).

Following any such disclosure, advice should be sought from the CPO. It is the duty of the CPO to speak directly to the Social Services Department Area Office. However, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to speak directly to the SSD, if the CPO does not feel there is any cause for concern, but the member of staff disagrees.

Voluntary Workers

Workers joining the school in a voluntary capacity will receive a minimum of one hour training in issues relating to child protection from the Child Protection Officer or the Headmaster.

Should training be arranged for the school staff during the period of voluntary work, volunteers will be invited to attend.

Record Keeping

Staff must be aware that their evidence may be vital in the event of a CP investigation. Therefore notes on the disclosure should be made as soon as possible, giving details of time, place and the number of people present. If, at any time, worrying changes are observed in a pupil, a specific and confidential record will be set up. This will include the name, age, address of the pupil, with timed and dated observations describing the pupil's behaviour/appearance objectively, without added comments or interpretations. If possible, the pupil's exact words will be recorded. The record will be signed and dated by the recorder.

Any such record will be kept in a separate file not accessible to the general staff.

Staff should assist in the monitoring of particular pupils when requested to do so by the Headmaster.

Staff should follow any relevant school policies intended to give general support to pupil's welfare or which lay out guidance to staff on particular issues.

CP investigations are very tough on the child and all others involved, so a lot of support will be needed to follow through from here, for both pupil and staff.

Any CP allegation has serious consequences for family units and WHS is aware of the need to deal objectively with parents. It is recognised that care may be needed in releasing a child into the care of any adult (including parents/carers) following allegations of abuse. The school is legally responsible in these circumstances. Parents must be aware both that the school has a CP policy that reflects the Local Authority policy and of the legal obligations laid upon the school to be in touch with the Social Services regarding such matters.

The school cannot refuse to allow a child back into the parents care, but we would refer the matter immediately to the police and social services.

Although the parent would normally be the first point of contact in cases where we have concerns, parents will not be informed that we are making a referral if by doing so we are likely to put the child at greater risk of harm, or if we are likely to put ourselves at risk of harm.

Child Protection Policy – Key Issues and Principles

1. Children's welfare should be paramount at all times.
2. Child Protection concerns should always be given immediate priority. Delay is unacceptable and may lead to serious harm to children.
3. Child Protection concerns must be taken seriously by individual members of staff, who should refer any concerns to the CPO, in confidence, without delay. Confidential records of any concerns (noting dates, times, specific observations and any relevant verbal statements) will be maintained.
4. Pupils are entitled to protection whatever their gender, race, culture, language or religion.
5. The Social Services Department is the lead agency for child protection investigations and key worker support after a child is identified as being potentially at risk. The school will support the Department in preventative work, identification of concern and post-investigation support to pupils.
6. The Social Services Department is responsible for contacting parents. The Headmaster will discuss with Social Services how and when contact is made with parents and how to respond to parents.
7. Confidentiality for the child, family (and any other individuals named in allegations) will be maintained. However, the duty to protect children overrides other principles with regard to confidentiality and children cannot be guaranteed absolute confidentiality when making a potential disclosure to a member of staff.
8. Applicants for any post at WHS are made aware that the school is exempt from the provisions of the 1974 Rehabilitation of offenders Act.
9. Applicants who are interviewed for any post will be required to provide at least two references that will be followed up.
10. Applicants for any post at WHS will be required to obtain an enhanced certificate from The Criminal Investigations Bureau.
11. In a case where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation or a child protection concern, he/she should be guaranteed support and to have the matter fairly considered under the established procedures. The school will suspend without prejudice, but will not disclose to them any information regarding the allegation. If, after investigation, the services of an individual are no longer used because he/she is considered unsuitable to work with children, the name of the person in question will be reported to the Secretary of State within one month of leaving the school. This applies to employees, contractors, volunteers and students. Any disciplinary action taken will be in line with the school's disciplinary procedures.
12. Any trainee or student under the age of eighteen is afforded the protection of this policy.

Supporting the Pupil at Risk

The school recognises 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 self-blame.

The school will endeavour to support the pupil through:

1. The content of the curriculum to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation.

2. The school ethos which promotes a secure, positive, supportive environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
3. The school's behaviour policy which emphasises the importance of supporting vulnerable pupils.
4. Record keeping and notifying Social Services of concerns.

Staff Relationship with Pupils

Members of staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care as to how their conduct may be interpreted. Demeanour and language require care and thought.

Situations where risk of possible concerns are raised:

- Provision of physical comfort to pupils.
- The use of necessary restraint.
- Sports and other subjects involving demonstration which requires touching.
- Administration of medicine and first aid.
- Private interviews with pupils.
- Individual or small group lessons.
- Transporting individual pupils (under no circumstances should a pupil be transported alone by a member of staff).
- Out of school activities.

Physical contact should be restricted to what is appropriate to the activity (P.E., games, drama etc.) and should be as visible as possible to others.

Avoid accidental/unnecessary physical contact. Innocent intentions may be misinterpreted, causing distress.

Any apparently sexualised behaviour exhibited by younger children should be discouraged in a sensitive, low-key but non-reinforcing manner-tone of voice, facial expression and physical distance.

Staff should use their discretion when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance that may include physical comfort.

Concerns about Persons in a Position of Trust

- If a concern arises against any person in a position of trust, that raises a query as to their suitability to work with children (this may include a cleaner, cook, gardener, student, staff member, Headmaster or volunteer) the school will immediately take the person to one side and inform them an allegation has been made against them. In the case of an allegation being made against either the Headmaster or the CPO, the member of the Board of Governors with responsibility for child protection will be informed by the Secretary to the Board of Governors.
- The school will not at this point tell the person the nature of the allegation.
- The school will remove said person from any direct contact with children (this may mean suspension without prejudice).

- The school will ensure someone is designated to offer support to the member of staff.
- If the parent of the child is not already aware of the concern they will be informed immediately with due consideration to confidentiality.
- If appropriate, the school will contact the child protection officer for the Early Years and childcare team – Marie Foster 0121 303 6754. In her absence, the school will contact the child protection and review unit at Sheldon on 0121 303 8454, and ask to speak to a principle officer.
- The school will fully co-operate with any external investigation, which may include a multi agency 'Position of Trust Co-ordination Meeting', and will take on board any advice given in relation to the allegation.
- If the allegation is founded, the school will take the person through a disciplinary process and dismiss them in line with policy. Their name will be referred to the Secretary of State for possible inclusion in the list of people banned from working with children.
- If not proven, the school will follow advice given by the principal officer for Social Care Services and the child protection officer for early years, if appropriate.

Children and Young People Who Abuse Other Children

The school recognises that children are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse by adults and is subject to the same child protection procedures. Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.

In such instances, the needs of the victim and the needs of the alleged aggressor will be considered separately. The Child Protection Officer will carry out an initial investigation and take appropriate action, which may involve consultation with an outside agency. This may be the case if the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim or where the aggressor has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children.

In addition to safeguarding the identified victim, the Child Protection Officer will request that appropriate external agencies consider whether the alleged aggressor poses a risk to any other children.

In the event of the school becoming aware of a pupil engaging in sexual activity, the Child Protection Officer will immediately notify social care services.

All staff have a duty to inform the Child Protection Officer should they have concerns relating to potential and perceived abuse of any pupil by another young person.

Statutory Obligations

The Children's Act of 1989 lays a duty on the local authority to provide services for children in need. WHS is aware of these Social Services and will endeavour to build up good relationships with them in order to secure effective co-operation in cases of actual or suspected abuse. There is a duty on behalf of the school to inform the Social Services Department at all times. The Social Services Department may chose to

investigate such cases in order to prevent significant harm. The term "significant harm" covers ill-treatment and impairment of health or development. This may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- neglect
- physical injury
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse

A discussion on each of these categories appears below.

WHS recognises that significant harm may take place:

- within the family
- in a peer group
- from a carer
- from a teacher

Staff should be aware that any allegation should produce the same quality of response.

This policy should be read alongside:

- Recruitment and Retention of Staff Policy

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