

# STEPHENSON SCHOOL



## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

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## **POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING**

*'The curriculum needs to be delivered in a school with an ethos which empowers children; a school which allows them to voice ideas, feelings and opinions, treats them with respect, values their contribution and lets parents make a contribution to the educational process.'*

From **'Responding to Child Abuse'**

### **General Introduction**

It is recognised that all staff<sup>1</sup> play an important role in identifying potential cases of child abuse. It is also important that all relevant agencies involved in child abuse cooperate together for the benefit of the child. All schools have a designated person or people for child protection, who liaises with Social Service departments and with all staff in school. For this procedure to work, it relies on the skills and expertise of every member of staff and adult within school to recognise or report concerns.

At Stephenson School, the Head (Mrs Helen Powell) is the designated person for child protection along with the governor responsible for Safeguarding. In some cases the Chair of the Governors (Mr Rick Williams) may also be informed. All staff should have total commitment to safeguarding children.

At Stephenson School we are not able to prevent child abuse, but by following safeguarding procedures, we are trying our best to protect all our children and this is our first and only responsibility.

All staff, through their care of children, try to ensure that children keep safe, remain healthy and are able to say "NO". Suspected cases are reported, procedures adhered to and subsequent actions are left to the appropriate agencies. We also care for children who have been abused and understand their problems.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Act 1989; and in line with government publications: "Working Together to Safeguard Children" 1999, "Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families" 2000, "What to do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused" 2003, *"Safeguarding Children: Child Protection: Guidance about Child Protection Arrangements for the Education Service" 2004 AND Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment 2007.*

The Governing body takes seriously its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm.

All staff believe that our school should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

<sup>1</sup> Wherever the word staff is used it covers **all** staff on site including, ancillary and supply staff, and volunteers working with children

## **Aims**

The aims of this policy are:

- To support the child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- To provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident, and know how to approach adults if they are in difficulties, believing they will be effectively listened to.
- To raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse.
- To provide a systematic means of monitoring children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure we, the school, contribute to assessments of need and support packages for those children.
- To emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff.
- To develop a structured procedure within the school which will be followed by all members of the school community, in cases of suspected abuse.
- To develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially the Police and Social Services.
- To ensure that all adults within our school who have substantial access to children have been checked as to their suitability.

## **Guidelines**

In reporting concern or suspicion, all staff in school must follow the following procedures. The Head, will then follow the local authority, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Safeguarding and Interagency Procedures. (See end of policy for useful addresses and contact details).

## **Procedures**

- Our school procedures for safeguarding children will be in line with the Safeguarding: Essential Guidance for Education Staff procedures. We will ensure that:
  - All members of the governing body understand and fulfil their responsibilities.
  - We have a designated member of staff, Mrs Helen Powell, our designated Safeguarding person, who has undertaken the 'Kidscape' Advanced Child Protection Training.
  - All members of staff are provided with opportunities to receive Child Protection training to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse.
  - All members of staff and the designated child protection governor know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse.
  - We will seek to ensure the suitability of adults working with children on school sites at any time.
  - We will ensure that our selection and recruitment of staff includes checks for their suitability with the Criminal Records Bureau.
  - We will ensure that any member of staff found not suitable to work with children will be notified to the appropriate bodies.
  
- All new members of staff receive a copy of our Safeguarding Policy in their staff handbook. The booklet "What to do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused", with the CPO's name is clearly displayed in the Head's Office.

## **Responding to Concerns**

If a child decides to make a disclosure to a member of staff it is very important that certain steps are taken. It is not our job to interrogate the child or investigate what has happened, as this may prejudice further enquiries.

Listen to the child. S/he should be reassured, and the allegations should be taken seriously. It should be explained that, as a result of disclosure, you are concerned for the child's well-being.

The child must be allowed to disclose at his/her own pace, without questioning or prompting.

Do not ask the child leading questions or probe for information that the child or young person does not volunteer.

If possible staff should write brief notes as the child makes disclosure. These original notes should be kept, no matter how rough, as they may have important information that could be lost in a later, neater transcript of the events.

Do NOT give a guarantee of confidentiality to the child. Reassure the child that they have been heard and explain what you will do next and to whom you will talk. Explain that you

might have to share the information that the child has given you with another responsible adult. Tell the child that you have a responsibility to get something done to help keep the child safe.

Discuss with the CPO whether the child is at risk of significant harm and if immediate steps need to be taken to protect him/her.

As soon as possible, and certainly within 24 hours, the Head/Designated Safeguarding Office should notify the Social Services department. They will set up their own investigations.

### **Record Keeping**

Staff can play a vital role in helping children in need or at risk by effective monitoring and record keeping. Any incident or behavioural change in a child that gives cause for concern should be recorded. It is important that records are factual and reflect the words used by the child or young person. Opinion should not be given unless there is some form of evidence base which can also be quoted. Records must be signed, dated and timed, if appropriate. It is important to remember that any issues are confidential and staff should know only on a *need to know* basis.

Information to be recorded:

- Child's name
- Date of birth
- Child in normal context – eg behaviour, attitude (has there been an extreme change?)
- The incident(s) which give rise for concern with date(s) and time(s)
- A verbatim record of what the child or young person has said
- If recording bruising/injuries indicate position, colour, size, shape and time on a body map
- Action taken

These basic details are vital to the information-gathering process and do not constitute an investigation. Written information should be passed to the CPO. The Head should always be kept informed of any significant issues.

### **Storage of Records**

The CPO will ensure that records relating to concerns for the welfare or safety of children are kept separate from other school files and are stored securely. Information will be shared on a strictly need to know basis and in line with child protection policy guidance.

### **Reasons for Following Procedures**

- It protects the child to the best of our ability
- It avoids delay
- It provides consistency
- It protects all staff
- It ensures that, if further action is taken by another agency, then the school has followed the protection procedures

Staff are in contact with children all day and are in a position to detect possible abuse. They must not think that by voicing concern they are necessarily starting procedures. The criteria

should be that they have '*reasonable suspicion*' and under the Children's Act, 1989, this definition has been extended to include '*or may suffer in future*'.

If a child discloses abuse or staff are suspicious, it is very important in these cases that prompt and correct procedures are followed.

The way in which a member of staff talks to a child who discloses abuse could have an effect on the evidence that is put forward if there are subsequent proceedings, and it is important that staff do not jump to conclusions, ask leading questions, or put words in a child's mouth. If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff s/he should write a record of the conversation as soon as possible, distinguishing clearly between fact, observation, allegation and opinion, noting any action taken in cases of possible abuse and signing and dating the note.

Children may feel they will not be believed, or that they will be punished. Staff will need to say that whatever has happened, it is not their fault. Fear of the consequences of telling is very common. It can be very tempting to offer a promise of confidentiality to the child. This is not realistic. The child needs to hear the truth about what will happen, together with a commitment to support the child. It is crucial not to ask leading questions. Our role is to enable the child to speak and then know what to do next.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

This is intended as a guide. Please remember that the presence of one or more factors does not necessarily give proof that child abuse has occurred. It may, however, indicate that investigation should take place.

- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment which is needed
- Incompatible explanations
- Constant minor injuries
- Unexplained bruising:
  - Bruise marks in or around the mouth
  - Black eyes, especially if both eyes are black and there are no marks to forehead or nose
  - Grasp marks
  - Finger marks
  - Bruising of the ears
  - Linear bruising (particularly buttocks or back)
  - Differing age bruising
- Bite marks
- Burns and scalds
- Cigarette burns
- General physical disability
- Unresponsiveness in the child

- Soiling and wetting
- Change in behavioural patterns
- 'Frozen' look
- Attention seeking
- Apprehension
- Antisocial behaviour
- Unkempt appearance
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Sudden poor performance in school
- Poor self-esteem
- Self-mutilation
- Withdrawal
- Running away
- Reluctance to return home after school
- Resistance to PE (undressing)
- Resistance to school medicals
- Difficulty in forming relationships
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Poor attendance – repeated infections etc.

## **Definitions**

### **Child Abuse**

An abused child is a boy or girl under the age of 17 who has suffered from physical injury, physical neglect, failure to thrive, emotional or sexual abuse, which the person who has had custody, charge or care of the child either caused or knowingly failed to prevent. Having custody, charge or care includes any person, in whatever setting, who, at the time, is responsible for that child.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented this includes female genital mutilation (it cannot be justified as a cultural or religious practice).

### **Sexual Abuse**

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent; or they violate the social taboos of family roles. Abuse is not just an adult crime. Children can pose a threat either physical or sexual to other children

### **Neglect**

The persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example by exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

### **Domestic Abuse**

The effect of domestic violence on children is such that it must be considered as abuse. Either witnessing it or being the subject of it is not only traumatic in itself but is likely to adversely impact on a child and it should be treated as physical or emotional abuse as appropriate.

### **Abuse of Trust**

All education staff need to know that inappropriate behaviour with or towards children is unacceptable. In particular, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is an offence for a person over 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual. This applies where the child is in full-time education and the person works in the same establishment as the child, even if he/she does not teach the child.

## Responsibilities

- The designated teacher, CPLO is responsible for:
  - Referring a child, if there are concerns about possible abuse, to the Children's Services Assessment Team, and acting as a focal point for staff to discuss concerns. A written record of the referral will be faxed to the Assessment Team within one day of making a referral by telephone.
  - Keeping written records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral.
  - Ensuring that all such records are kept within the Head's Office.
  - Liaising with other agencies and professionals.
  - Ensuring that either they or the member of staff attends case conferences, core groups, or other multi-agency planning meetings, contributes to assessments, and provides a report.
  - Ensuring that any pupil currently on the Safeguarding register who is absent without explanation for two days is referred to their key worker's Social Care Team.
  - Organising Safeguarding training for all school staff.
  - Providing an annual report for the governing body, through the school Chair of Governors detailing any changes to the policy and procedures; training undertaken by the CPO, and by all staff and governors; number and type of incidents/cases, and number of children on the Safeguarding register (anonymised).
  - If the child is in Reception (and is therefore within a registered EYFS setting) Ofsted will be informed within 14 days of any allegations of serious harm or abuse to children by those looking after them, and of the action taken by the school.

## Supporting Children

- We recognise that a child who is abused or witnesses violence may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame themselves, and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self worth.
- We recognise that the school may provide the only stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.
- We accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.

Our school will support all pupils by:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness, through the curriculum as well as our relationships, whilst not condoning aggression or bullying.
- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within the school.
- Liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.
- Notifying the Assessment Team as soon as there is a significant concern.
- Providing continuing support to a pupil, about whom there have been concerns, who leaves the school, by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded under confidential cover to the pupil's new school.

### **Confidentiality**

- We recognise that all matters relating to Safeguarding are confidential where this is practicable and lawful
- The Head/CPO will disclose any information about a pupil to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only.<sup>1</sup>
- All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children.
- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.
- We will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to Children's Services with their parents /carers unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, we will consult with the Duty Manager at the Assessment Team on this point.

### **Code of Practice for Staff**

All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with relation to child protection. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.

Whenever possible, staff should avoid occasions where a single adult is in the company of a lone child, particularly where there is little or no possibility of the activity being supervised or observed.

Activities which involve a single child working with one adult, should ideally take place in a room which can be easily observed by others. Doors should be left open if there is no other means of seeing the child and adult together.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance about sharing information, pending the outcome of the Bichard Committee, can be found in the booklet "What to do if You are Worried a Child is being Abused" DoH 2003

Keep physical contact to a minimum. This should only occur where there is genuine reason for contact in relation to the activity eg Physical Education, Music, First Aid.

Never use verbal interactions that are demeaning or belittling. Jokes should never be made at the expense of children. Extreme care should be taken so that what is said is not misconstrued and innuendo should be avoided.

Staff should be careful about the sharing of information with pupils via electronic messaging devices such as e-mail and text messaging. E-mail is useful for relaying information about school-related matters but it should not be used for sharing personal data. The giving and receiving of presents between staff and pupils should be done openly and within an appropriate setting.

Outings with children should be staffed appropriately.

### **Supporting Staff**

- We recognise that staff working in the school who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm may find the situation stressful and upsetting.
- We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the CPO and to seek further support as appropriate. All newly-qualified teachers and classroom assistants will have a mentor with whom they can discuss concerns including the area of child protection.

### **Allegations against staff, pupils and volunteers**

- All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.
- All Staff should be aware of the school's own Discipline Policy.
- We understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff.
- If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Head.
- The Head on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the Chair of Governors, and Safeguarding Governor.
- If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the Head, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Chair of Governors of NMS.
- The school will follow the school's own policy and procedures for managing allegations against staff.
- Suspension of the member of staff, excluding the Head, against whom an allegation has been made, needs careful consideration, and the Head will seek the advice of the Chair of Governors.

- In the event of an allegation against the Head, the decision to suspend will be made by the Chair of Governors.
- If the occasion arises where there is an accusation of one pupil against another, this will be taken seriously and both pupils will make statements to the Head/CPO and Child Protection Governor.

The school is required to report to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) within one month of leaving the school any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used because s/he is considered unsuitable to work with children. In this context, ceasing to use a person's services includes: dismissal; non-renewal of a fixed-term contract; no longer engaging/refusing to engage a supply teacher provided by an employment agency; terminating the placement of a student teacher or other trainee; no longer using staff employed by contractors; no longer using volunteers; resignation and voluntary withdrawal from supply teaching, contract working, a course in initial teacher training, or volunteering. It is important that reports include as much evidence about the circumstances of the case as possible.

The ISA commenced operation on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009. The address for referrals is PO Box 181, Darlington, DL1 9FA (Tel: 0300 123 1111).

Proprietors of independent schools have a new legal duty to respond to requests from the ISA for information that they hold already, but will not have to find it from other sources.

The ISA will decide on:

- any new referrals on or after 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009
- existing referrals at 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009 in cases where barring is not automatic, and the Secretary of State has not yet written to the person inviting representations against being included in the barred list.

The ISA will not provisionally bar a person whilst considering a referral. Therefore it is even more important for employers to take up references and look into career history, to ensure that it is known why a job applicant left previous employment.

Failure to make a report to the ISA constitutes an offence and the school may be removed from the DCSF register of independent schools. The document *Safeguarding Children in Education: Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff*, provides comprehensive guidance on how to proceed if this situation arises.

## **Parents**

Stephenson School will work with parents to support the needs of their child.

The school aims to help parents understand that it has a responsibility for the welfare of all pupils and that in some cases it has a duty to refer to the Social Services when acting in the best interests of the child.

Parents should be aware that in some special circumstances the school cannot guarantee to always alert them before taking appropriate action to safeguard their child.

This policy is available to parents on request and in response to regulations introduced in February 2009, via the school website.

## **Whistleblowing**

- We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so.
- All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues.

## **Physical Intervention**

- Our policy on physical intervention by staff is set out separately, in the staff handbook, and acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, when a child is endangering him/herself or others, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person.
- We understand that physical intervention of a nature which causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under Safeguarding or disciplinary procedures.

## **Anti Bullying**

- Our Anti-Bullying Policy document in the Staff Information Handbook acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under Safeguarding procedures. This includes homophobic and gender related bullying.

## **Racist Incidents**

- Our policy on racist incidents is set out in a separate policy in the Staff Handbook (Racial, Religious and Gender Equality Policy) and acknowledges that repeated racist incidents or a single serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

## **Prevention**

- We recognise that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children by providing children with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The school community will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to.
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Include across the curriculum, including SMSC/PSHE opportunities which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to know to whom they should turn for help.

## **Health & Safety**

- Our Health & Safety policy, set out in the Health and Safety Policy in the Staff Information Handbook, reflects the consideration we give to the protection of our children physically, both within the school environment, and for example in relation to internet use, and when away from the school when undertaking school trips and visits.
- All visitors to school have to be accompanied around the premises.

## **Policy Review**

The policy should form part of the school development plan and must be reviewed annually by the school.

In September 2004 it became the responsibility of the governors to oversee the Safeguarding of Children in Schools. As a statutory duty the governing body will review this policy annually.

Any deficiencies in the policy must be remedied without delay.

Last reviewed by Helen Powell, April 2010  
Next review due May 2011