

Downlands Community School



Policy for Safeguarding

1) Introduction

The School recognises its legal duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 and the 1989 Children Act and takes seriously its responsibilities to protect and safeguard the interests of all children in line with the guidance 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education DCSF 2007. The School recognises that effective Child Protection work requires sound procedures, good inter-agency co-operation and a workforce that is competent and confident in responding to Child Protection situations.

This document provides the basis for good practice within the School for Child Protection work. It should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board Safeguarding Procedures which can be found via WSCC website and these are in-keeping with relevant national procedures which reflect what the Directorate considers to be safe and professional practice in this context. Child Protection has to be considered within professionals' wider "safeguarding" responsibilities that include a duty to co-operate under the Children Act 2004. Within the context of Every Child Matters, this takes account of the need for children "being healthy and staying safe".

This document also seeks to make the professional responsibilities clear to all staff, volunteers or visitors:

2) Underpinning Values

Where there is a safeguarding issue, the School will work in accordance with the principles outlined in the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Child Protection procedures:

- A child's welfare is paramount. Each child has a right to be protected from harm and exploitation and to have their welfare safeguarded;
- Each child is unique. Action taken by child welfare organisations should be child-centred, taking account of a child's cultural, ethnic and religious background, their gender, their sexual orientation, their individual ability and any special needs;
- Children, parents and other carers should be made aware of their responsibilities and their rights, together with advice about the power of professionals to intervene in their family circumstances;
- Each child has a right to be consulted about actions taken by others on his/her behalf. The concerns of children and their families should be listened to and due consideration given to their understanding, wishes and feelings;
- Individual family members must be involved in decisions affecting them. They must be treated with courtesy and respect and with due regard given to working with them in a spirit of partnership in safeguarding children's welfare;
- Open-mindedness and honesty must guide each stage of assessment and of operational practice. The strengths of individual family members, as well as their needs, should be given due consideration;
- Personal information is usually confidential. It should only be shared with the permission of the individual concerned, or unless the disclosure of confidential personal information is necessary in order to protect a child. In all circumstances, information must be confined to those people directly involved in the professional network of each individual child and on a strict "need to know" basis;

- Professionals should be aware of the effects of outside intervention upon children, upon family life and the impact and implications of what they say and do;
- Explanations by professionals to children, their families and other carers should be plainly stated and jargon-free. Unavoidable technical and professional terminology should be explained in simple terms;
- Sound professional practice is based upon positive inter-agency collaboration, evidence-based research and effective supervision and evaluation;
- Early intervention in providing support services under Section 17 of the Children's Act (1989) is an important principle of practice in inter-agency arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children.

3) **Guidance on 'Whether this is a Child Protection Matter'**

If staff have significant concerns about any child they should make them known to the School's Designated Child Protection Teacher who is Graham Odlin, SENCO or in his absence Matthew Ashdown, Deputy Headteacher or the relevant Head of Year. These concerns may include:

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 fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional abuse:

Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as over protection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, 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 maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

- Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (*including exclusion from home or abandonment*)
 - Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
 - Ensure adequate supervision (*including the use of inadequate care-givers*)
 - Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
 - It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Sexual Abuse:

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape, buggery or oral sex) or non penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Significant Harm:

It is not possible to rely on one absolute criterion when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the extent of the harm suffered, the context within which it occurred and its duration. It is the 'significant harm' threshold that justifies statutory intervention into family life and gives Local Authorities a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote welfare of a child who is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

4) Talking To and Listening to Children

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue that needs to be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of Child Protection. This is a complex area and involves consideration of a number of pieces of legislation. You can never guarantee confidentiality to a child as some kinds of information may need to be shared with others.

If a child chooses to disclose, you SHOULD:

- be accessible and receptive;
- listen carefully and uncritically at the child's pace;
- take what is said seriously;
- reassure the child that they are right to tell;
- tell the child that you must pass this information on;
- make a careful record of what was said.

You should **NEVER**:

- take photographs or examine an injury;
- investigate or probe aiming to prove or disprove possible abuse – never ask leading questions;
- make promises to children about confidentiality or keeping 'secrets';
- assume that someone else will take the necessary action;
- jump to conclusions or react with shock, anger or horror;
- speculate or accuse anybody;
- confront another person (*adult or child*) allegedly involved;
- offer opinions about what is being said or about the persons allegedly involved;
- forget to record what you have been told;
- fail to pass the information on to the correct person;
- ask a child to sign a written copy of the disclosure.

For children with communication difficulties or who use alternative/augmented communication systems, you may need to take extra care to ensure that signs of abuse and neglect are identified and interpreted correctly, but concerns should be reported in exactly the same manner as for other children.

5) Recording and Reporting Concerns about the Safety and Welfare of a Child

All staff, volunteers and visitors have a responsibility to take prompt action if they are concerned about the safety and welfare of a student. All concerns about the safety and welfare of a student must be taken seriously. If you have any concerns you must speak with the School's Designated Child Protection Teacher Graham Odlin, SENCO or in his absence Mark Hill Assistant Headteacher or the relevant Head of Year as soon as possible.

Well kept records are essential in situations where it is suspected or believed that a student may be at risk from harm.

Records should:

- state who was present, time, date and place;
- use the child's words wherever possible;
- be factual/state exactly what was said;
- differentiate clearly between fact, opinion, interpretation, observation and/or allegation;
- be signed by the recorder.

Non-urgent or Low Level Concerns

All concerns about a student should initiate some form of action. Concerns that are of a non-urgent or low-level nature should still be recorded. Parents or carers should be informed of the concern, **unless** informing them would put the child at risk of harm.

6) Protecting Yourself Against Allegations of Abuse

You should seek to keep your personal contact with children under review and seek to minimise the risk of any situation arising in which misunderstandings can occur. The following sensible precautions can be taken:

- do not touch a student. Resist a comforting hug or pat on the back. There is a fine line in a student's perception of where comfort stops and harassment/assault starts;
- do not spend any time alone with a student in a room. If this is unavoidable, work in a room where there is a glass panel in the door or leave the door open;
- make sure that other adults visit the room occasionally;
- avoid working in isolation with students unless thought has been given to safeguards.
- do not make jokes about students' personalities, gender, ethnic status, appearance, family, religion, etc;
- do not give out personal mobile phone numbers or private e-mail addresses
- do not give students lifts home in your cars
- do not arrange to meet them outside of college hours
- do not chat to students on the social websites

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is a criminal offence for anyone working in an education setting to have a sexual relationship with a student even when the student is over the age of consent.

Any use of physical force or restraint against students will be carried out and documented in accordance with the relevant physical restraint policy. If it is necessary to use physical action to prevent a child from injury to themselves or others parents will

be informed. Children will not be punished by any form of hitting, slapping, shaking or other degrading treatment.

7) Allegations of Abuse Against a Professional

Children can be the victims of abuse by those who work with them in any setting. All allegations of abuse of children carried out by any staff member or volunteer should therefore be taken seriously.

If an allegation is received by the Principal or Chair of Governors the following will be taken into consideration as to whether the member of staff, volunteer or visitor:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a student;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a student;
- behaved towards a student or students in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children and young people.

Allegations of abuse made against staff, volunteers or visitors, whether historical or contemporary, will be dealt with by the Headteacher not the designated Child Protection teacher (*if the allegation is against the Head then it should be dealt with by the Chair of Governors*). The Headteacher will contact Education Personnel to discuss the allegation.

The fact that a member of staff offers to resign will not prevent the allegation procedure reaching a conclusion.

8) Recruitment, Supervision and Training for Staff

When recruiting new members of staff the School follows the guidance given in the DCSF publication *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (Jan 2007)*. There is a rigorous interview process with appropriate vetting checks undertaken from start to finish. The School's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is clearly identified. The School ensures that ID, Qualification Checks (*including QTS*), DBS checks and Barred Lists are carried out for adults whether paid or unpaid.

Newly appointed staff will have initial training in Child Protection as part of their induction programme and will be given a copy of this Safeguarding Policy.

9) E-Safety

The growth of different electronic media in everyday life and an ever developing variety of devices including PC's, laptops, mobile phones, webcams etc place an additional risk on our children.

Internet chat rooms, discussion forums or social networks can all be used as a means of contacting children and young people with a view to grooming them for inappropriate or abusive relationships. The anonymity of the internet allows adults, often pretending to be children, to have conversations with children and in some cases arrange to meet them.

Access to abusive images is not a 'victimless' act as it has already involved the abuse of children. The internet has become a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs of children and should be a concern to all those working with students at this College.

Students can engage in or be a target of bullying using a range of methods including text and instant messaging to reach their target. Mobile phones are also used to capture violent assaults of other children for circulation (happy slapping!). The best protection is to make students aware of the dangers through curriculum teaching particularly PDC and sex education.

Protection is Prevention

Software is in place to minimise access and to highlight any person accessing inappropriate sites or information. Students are encouraged to discuss openly their use of technology and anything which makes them feel uncomfortable. *(If this results in child protection concerns the College's designated Child Protection teacher should be informed immediately).*

Clear policies outline the use of digital, video, cameras, webcams and mobile phones and students must agree to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy *(this is written into the ICT Schemes of Work together with Student Cyber Safety)*. The School employs a Teacher of ICT who has received CP training.

Students should **not** give out their personal details: phone numbers, home or School's address, computer passwords etc.

The Police will be involved if there is any criminal element to misuse of the internet, phones or any other form of electronic media.

10) Photographs and Images Published in the Media

The use of images of students in publications and the School website can be positive in the promotion of a happy and enriching learning environment, and motivating those whose achievements are recorded. There are however, potential dangers in the identification of students to an audience outside the School community. The School ensures that images used are suitable and this means that in the main, students under the age of 16 are wearing correct school uniform. Before publication, all parents of students photographed are asked for their consent and no names are identified.

When the Press take photographs, they have a legal right to name students in the published media unless the article is about an issue that involves the welfare of a child. Under these circumstances the permission of parents and carers are obtained in advance.

11) Extended Schools

The School operates as an Extended School from 8:00 to 17:00 during term time with a full programme of extra-curricular activities outside these hours and during school holidays.

When activities are directly under the supervision or management of the staff then the School's arrangements for Child Protection apply. Where services or activities are provided separately by another body, then the School seeks assurance that the body concerned has appropriate policies and procedures in place in regard to safeguarding students and Child Protection and there are arrangements to liaise with the School on these matters where appropriate.

Extended Services may include for example:

- behaviour support;
- family support for children in need;

- child and adolescent mental health services;
- (for young people) sexual health advice and information.

Useful Link

Local Safeguarding Children Board Safeguarding Procedures

This procedures document should also be considered within the context of other policies and documents relating to our work with children and young people. These might include, for example, documents concerning drug and alcohol abuse.

Key Documents are:

DCSF Safeguarding Children: Safer Recruitment in Education: January 2007

Every Child Matters