

Ashgrove Primary School

Policy for  
**Child Protection**

9 April 2008  
Version 2:2

## **Child Protection Policy**

Having responsibility for children during a large part of every day the school is well placed to notice changes in their appearance, behaviour and achievement at an early stage. Our primary responsibility is the welfare of individual children and any concerns about their emotional or physical well-being will be raised with parents. Parents will be asked to update school information regularly, to disclose relevant advice on court orders, etc. and to inform the school about anything which would cause distress and change to a child, for example a bereavement, family disruption or social problem and so enable the school to be sensitive and supportive to the child's needs as a caring partner.

Where evidence, or disclosure from a child, raises concerns of abuse, the school will act quickly to follow child protection procedures.

### **Categories of Abuse**

Children may be abused by a stranger, a relative, an acquaintance, another child or a carer or other professional with responsibility. As defined by DENI (Circular 1997/4), abuse may be in a variety of forms.

#### **Neglect**

Actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

#### **Physical Injury**

Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. The involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family roles.

#### **Emotional Abuse**

Actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.

## **Procedures for Dealing with Cases of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse**

In line with advice from NEELB and NCPC, the school will ensure that specific procedures are followed in the event of a member of staff becoming concerned about the abuse of a child. There will be emphasis on early detection and swift intervention, but no member of the school's staff will investigate directly and the evidence in itself will not be considered by the school as proof of abuse.

### **1 Detection**

Members of staff may be informed by a child about abuse or become concerned as a result of observation.

### **2 Referral to Designated Teacher**

Staff will act promptly in referring the concern to the Designated Teacher. Together they will discuss the concern and complete form **Child Protection: Incident Report Form** (see Appendix 2).

### **3 Action Planning**

The designated Teacher meets with the Principal (or Chairperson of the Board of Governors in the absence of the Principal) and an appropriate course of action is planned (see paragraph 4: "Action").

### **4 Action**

One or more of the following actions will be effected as appropriate to the specific concerns:

- the teacher and/or Designated Teacher will talk further with the child in an attempt to reassure the child and simply clarify and record what has happened (this will not involve detailed investigation or interpretation; no promise of confidentiality will be given); the second section of the form **Child Protection: Record of Initial Interview** will be completed (see Appendix 3);
- where any suggestion of abuse remains, the Designated Teacher will inform the Principal who will refer the matter to the NEELB's Designated Officer and to Social Services;
- the Care Unit of the PSNI will be contacted if there is suspicion of physical or sexual abuse.

## **The Role of the Designated Teacher**

The Vice-Principal will be the Designated Teacher with responsibility for Child Protection. If the Designated Teacher is unavailable, the Head of Key Stage One will

fulfil the role as Deputy Designated Teacher. In the event of both being unavailable the Principal or Chairman of the Board of Governors will act in this capacity. In seeking advice from any agency, full confidentiality may be maintained provided that no child is identified by name. In deciding upon a course of action reference may be made to the following (with hypothetical questions at first if necessary):

Designated Officer with responsibility for Child Protection in NEELB  
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO)  
Education Welfare Officer (EWO)  
Educational Psychologist  
Social Services  
School Nurse  
Clinical Medical Officer

The school will co-operate fully with any agency involved with the care of an individual child, compiling such information and attending such case conferences as may be required. Reporting will be done to case conferences on **Report to Child Protection Case Conference Form**.

### **Record Keeping and Confidentiality**

The rapport and positive professional relationship between teachers and children is a key factor in developing children's full potential and while teachers would not wish to damage such relationships, it will be explained to any child about whom there is concern, that it may be necessary to tell the Designated Teacher and perhaps other agencies who will help. No promise of confidentiality can be given.

As outlined above in Procedures for Dealing with Cases of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse, detailed records will be kept of all concerns and actions relating to suspicions of abuse.

The Education (Pupil Records) Regulations (NI) 1990 exempts records relating to issues of suspected or actual child abuse from being disclosed to those persons normally entitled to see a child's school records. Their disclosure will therefore only be to anyone whose role relates to official investigation and/or care. All notes will be written objectively, without speculation and immediately following any incident that they record.

### **Parents and Child Protection**

The Child Protection Policy is made available to all parents annually. Advice will be given on procedures for reporting child abuse and a synopsis of the policy included in the school prospectus.

Parents should notify the school if other adults have been assigned to collect their child from school.

Parents are asked to give details of arrangements following any separation or divorce. Staff need to be aware of legal responsibilities, agreed access and any involvement of social services. Such information will be requested formally each September, but parents are encouraged to keep the school informed as necessary.

Parents will be made aware that staff may on occasions have to help change pupils' clothes when administering first aid, after toilet accidents, for PE and on other such occasions.

In the event of any parent making an accusation against another child, the accused child's parents will be informed. Discipline lies solely in the hands of the staff.

### **Staff Relationships**

Relationships between children and all staff are developed on trust and mutual respect. While their integrity is both professional and personal, it is essential that the potential for misunderstanding is acknowledged. Staff must ensure that their words and actions cannot be misconstrued as abuse in any form and so will ensure that all physical and verbal contact with children is irreproachable, particularly in a one-to-one situation. As a general principle members of staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils. It is, however, unrealistic to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular a distressed child may need reassurance that involves physical comforting (as a loving parent would provide).

Members of staff who have to administer first aid to a pupil will ensure, wherever possible, that another adult/child is present. **If no other person is available, emergencies will be attended to without hesitation.**

Our document, Safe Handling and the Use of Reasonable Force is intended to clarify school policy in relation to physical contact.

All staff in contact with children will have undergone a criminal record check upon appointment. Whether in a professional or voluntary capacity, only those persons whose credentials satisfy the principal or designated teacher will be given unsupervised access to children.

In the event of a complaint being made against a member of staff, the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Governors will clarify the situation and if the concern persists, will ask the NEELB's Designated Officer to carry out an investigation in line with DENI Circular 1997/4, namely:

- the alleged abuser will be informed of the allegations and progress of the investigation;
- investigation as per any other suspected abuser;
- regard to be shown in priority to the welfare of child, the efficient functioning of school; and the rights of the individual accused to be considered innocent until proven guilty; and

- where appropriate the member of staff will be suspended pending investigation (in law suspension is considered a neutral act).

### **NEELB Guidelines for Staff Self-Protection**

- 1 In the event of injury to a child, ensure that it is recorded and witnessed by another adult.
- 2 Keep records of any false allegations a child makes against you or other staff including – “You’re always picking on me”, “You hit me”, or “Don’t touch me”. Keep a record of dates and times. Get another adult to witness the allegation if possible.
- 3 If a child touches you or talks to you in a sexually inappropriate way or place, record what happened and tell another adult. As it could be totally innocent, do not make the child feel like a criminal. However, remember that ignoring this or allowing it to go on may place you in an untenable situation. Neither is it a good idea for the child to go on doing this as the next person might take advantage and then say the child instigated it.
- 4 If you take children on journeys, always have at least two along. If it is an overnight trip, always check the rooms in pairs.
- 5 Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with one child away from other people. If it is a one-to-one make sure the door is open. Tell another member of staff if you are going to see a child on your own.
- 6 If you are in a holiday or residential setting never, under any circumstances, take a child or children into your room.
- 7 Do give firm guidelines on sexually inappropriate behaviour to the child. Explain that the behaviour is unacceptable and could get the child into difficulty, but do not make the child feel guilty. The behaviour may be an imitation of the abuse the child has suffered and is not the child’s fault.
- 8 If you are in a care situation with children with special needs, try to have another person present when changing nappies or clothing or bathing a child.
- 9 Never do something of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves. This includes cleaning bottoms, etc. or any other activity that could be misconstrued.
- 10 Do not go into the toilet alone with children if possible.
- 11 Be mindful how and where you touch children. Never pat a child on the bottom. If you work with young children or children with special needs who sit on your lap, get a ‘lap cushion’ which they can sit on.

- 12 Be careful of extended hugs and kisses from children. This might be particularly relevant to those working with special needs. This guideline is important not only for your protection, but for the children as well.
- 13 When taking children on an outing, think of how you appear to the public – they may misunderstand your actions. It may mean that disruptive children cannot go on outings.
- 14 All members of staff should carry identification when on journeys with children.
- 15 If you must physically restrain a child for any reason, be aware that it could be misinterpreted as assault.
- 16 Do not make sexually suggestive comments about a child even in jest.
- 17 Never keep suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behaviour by a colleague to yourself. If there is an attempted cover-up, you could be implicated in the silence.
- 18 Ensure that you have the opportunity to discuss your own feelings, if possible, with other members of staff.