

Ashgrove Primary School

Policy for
Child Protection

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Version 3:1

Child Protection Policy

Ethos

A key role of Ashgrove is to ensure that all children feel safe and protected within the premises and community of school. Our primary responsibility is the safeguarding of individual children and any concerns about their emotional or physical well-being must be addressed appropriately. Having responsibility for children during a large part of every day, we are well placed to notice changes in appearance, behaviour and achievement; to confirm their welfare or to raise concerns. Parents are asked to work with us by updating school information regularly, disclosing relevant advice on court orders, etc. and by informing the school about anything which would cause distress and change to a child, such as a bereavement, family disruption or social problem. Within this partnership the school will be sensitive and supportive in meeting its safeguarding duties.

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

Children are encouraged to be aware of child protection issues themselves and the school's preventive approach includes teaching and learning that is age-appropriate.

Rationale

This policy has been written with reference to "The Children (NI) Order" (1995), "Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (POCVA) Order" (2003), "Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection" (DENI, 1999), "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" (1990) and "Safeguarding Children" (Office of the First and Deputy-First Minister, June 2009).

The policy has been updated following the government's decision to defer implementation of the "Vetting and Barring Scheme" (HM Government Guidance, October 2009).

Other school policies that outline the school's approach to related areas of safeguarding children include:

- Anti-Bullying
- Pastoral Care
- Intimate Care
- Reasonable Force & Safe Handling
- Attendance
- Guidance for Volunteers
- Fieldwork & Educational Visits
- Photography
- Staff Code of Conduct (under revision)

Categories of Abuse

Children may be abused by a stranger, a relative, an acquaintance, a carer, another child or a professional with responsibility. As defined by Department of Education for Northern Ireland (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.

Potential Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

A marked deterioration in a child's performance and/or increased absenteeism will normally raise the concerns of staff. Although there may be medical, psychological or social explanations for the following signs, their presence would give further cause for anxiety:

- Bruises, particularly bruises of a regular shape which may indicate the use of an implement such as a strap, or the mark of a hand, lacerations, bite marks or burns, particularly when children change their clothes for physical education, swimming and other sports activities, or when very young children or children with special educational needs are helped with toileting;
- Possible indicators of physical neglect, such as inadequate clothing, poor growth, hunger or apparently deficient nutrition;
- Possible indicators of emotional abuse, such as excessive dependence, or attention-seeking;

- Sexual abuse may exhibit physical signs, or lead to a substantial behavioural change including precocity, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour;

Procedures for Dealing with Cases of Suspected or Disclosed Abuse

In line with advice from NEELB, 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. Emphasis will be placed on both early detection and swift intervention, but no member of the school's staff will investigate directly and signs of possible abuse will not be considered by the school as proof.

1 Detection

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

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**.

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.

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 him/her and simply to clarify and record what has happened (this will not involve detailed investigation or interpretation and no promise of confidentiality will be given); the second section of the form **Child Protection: Record of Related Conversation during Clarification Process** will be completed;
- 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; parents will be informed unless advice suggests that this action might leave the child more vulnerable;
- the Social Services Gateway Team and/or the Care Unit of the PSNI will be contacted if any suspicion of physical or sexual abuse remains;

- any abuse that is ultimately confirmed will be followed up with support for the victim and an appropriate combination of discipline and support as advised by the confirming outside agency and agreed by the principal and governors.

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 Foundation Stage and 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.

The Designated Teacher will ensure that all staff are kept up-to-date with requirements and advice.

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 that 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.

In accordance with guidance from DENI, governors will receive termly updates on child protection and a formal report annually, which will include the following, with anonymity maintained:

- a report on the school's maintenance of child protection records, eg concerns of abuse, any referrals to social services, any complaints against staff
- child protection training
- policy review/update
- safeguarding initiatives

Parents and Child Protection

The Child Protection Policy will remain available to all parents via the school's website. A summary will be distributed annually in print. Advice will be given on procedures for reporting child abuse and a synopsis of the policy will be included in the school prospectus.

Parents are asked to supply the school with the names of all persons who have permission to collect their child from school (or to confirm that their child may leave the grounds unaccompanied). They are asked to inform the school of any change in this routine.

Parents are asked to brief school about arrangements following any separation or divorce. Members of staff need to be aware of legal responsibilities, agreed access or exclusion 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. The school's Intimate Care Policy applies.

In the event of a parent making a complaint about a member of staff, volunteer or student, the school's complaints procedure should be followed and the complaint addressed directly to the principal. If the complaint is against the principal it should be addressed to the chairman of the governors. If a complaint should include an accusation against another child, the accused child's parents will be informed. Discipline must remain solely in the hands of the staff.

Staff Conduct

The staff of Ashgrove Primary demonstrate natural instincts for safeguarding children. This ensures that the recommended child protection procedures are followed with empathy and professionalism. Staff members will continue to adhere to the school's code of conduct.

The duty to safeguard the welfare of children in their care rests with all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, and so the conduct of school staff towards their pupils must be beyond reproach, regardless of the children's age, sex and maturity. Relationships between children and all staff are developed on trust and mutual respect. While their integrity is both professional and personal, the potential for misunderstanding is acknowledged, but staff will 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.

Members of staff will avoid behaviour which may be perceived as emotional abuse, and will refrain from persistent or vindictive sarcasm, verbal bullying, or severe and persistent negative comment or actions.

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

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.

NEELB and school ensure that all staff supply two good references and submit to a criminal record check upon appointment. The school ensures that volunteers meet the same standards. Criminal record checks are carried out by AccessNI.

In the event of a complaint being made against a member of staff, the principal or chairman 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;
- where appropriate, the member of staff will be suspended pending investigation (in law suspension is considered a neutral act).

Training

Governors, Principal, Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection will receive update training in line with the education authority's programme. This will then be cascaded to all staff and any volunteers or students who may wish to attend.

Child Protection & the Curriculum

An awareness of “stranger danger”; an understanding of how to respond to perceived threats; care in regard to e-safety; and the development of standards of behaviour that are appropriate for primary school children are all reinforced through the school’s work on Personal Development and Mutual Understanding within the Northern Ireland Curriculum. They are also the focus of assemblies, visits from outside professionals and ongoing guidance as opportunities for such teaching and learning arise naturally.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.