

Gower House School Child Protection Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1** The health, safety and well-being of all children at school are of paramount importance. Children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe at school.
- 1.2** We respect children. The atmosphere within the school is one that encourages all children to do their best. We provide opportunities that enable children to take and make decisions for themselves.
- 1.3** Teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship, helps to develop appropriate attitudes and makes children aware of the impact of their decisions on others. We also teach them how to recognise different risks in different situations, and how to behave in response to them.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1** This policy ensures that staffs are clear about the actions necessary with regard to a child protection issue. Its aims are:
- to raise the awareness of all staff and identify responsibility in reporting possible cases of abuse;
 - to ensure effective communication between all staff when dealing with child protection issues;
 - to lay down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of child protection.

3 General Procedures

- 3.1** There is a named person who is the Child Protection Co-ordinator. This is Mr Keane the head teacher but he delegates this responsibility in some circumstances to Mrs Hammond.
- 3.2** If any teacher suspects that a child may be a victim of abuse, they immediately inform the named person about their concerns. Abuse can be of a sexual, emotional or physical nature. It can also be the result of neglect.
- 3.3** It is important to keep records of concern. Isolated indicators of abuse can be meaningless but patterns of changed behaviour, injuries or absence can build into a fairly clear picture of something being amiss. Children rarely present only one or two indicators of abuse. It is much more usual to see a number of changes in a child's behaviour, manner, appearance, attendance and achievement.
- 3.4** The school's named co-ordinator works closely with the Social Services Department and the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) when investigating any allegations of abuse. All parties involved handle such investigations in a sensitive manner, but the interest of the child is of paramount importance.

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- 3.5 If a child alleges abuse, the school usually makes a referral without communicating with parents first. However, in some circumstances we inform parents first. See further details below.
- 3.6 All information relating to individual child protection issues is confidential. Information is shared only with appropriate persons.
- 3.7 Employees are vetted through the Criminal Records Bureau in order to ensure that there is no evidence of offences involving children or abuse.
- 3.8 Occasionally, there may be times when staff, in the course of their duty, uses physical intervention to restrain children. The head teacher requires the staff member involved in any such incident to report this to him immediately.
- 3.9 All staff receives current training to raise their awareness of abuse and their knowledge of agreed local child protection procedures.

Specific Policy and Procedures

- 4.1 Child protection is provided by the Social Services Department, which supplies support for families whose children are in need of safeguarding to promote their welfare and upbringing. It is through regular, varied observations in all areas of a child's development that any cause for concern may be identified.

All staff members should be aware of possible indications of abuse or neglect and of the procedure for dealing with suspected cases.

Child abuse should never be dealt with solely by one person. In this school you need to know

- The designated person responsible for Child Protection.
- Who you are directly responsible to.

4.2 Referrals of Child Abuse

A. If a child arrives with injuries the staff should:

- Ensure immediate medical attention, if necessary.
- If possible ask the parent/carer how the injuries occurred.
- Explanations, however puzzling, should be accepted and accusations should not be made. Make a written record, including diagrams, of observations and explanations given. Have a witness wherever possible. This recording of information is to ensure that reasonably full and clear information is obtained in order to be able to make an appropriate referral first to the Head teacher and then if necessary Social Services.

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- If you suspect that the injuries have been caused by assault or failure to protect the child you must tell the member of staff in charge, usually the head teacher or designated Child Protection Officer. That person will contact, without delay, the Duty Social Worker in the Social Services Office for the district in which the child resides or the Emergency Duty Team out of office hours. The member of staff in charge should also contact the Under Eights Officer who will offer advice and support wherever possible.

B. Suspicion of Abuse – Responding to a Child’s Disclosure

If a child does disclose abuse to you, your immediate response is very important in both helping the child through what might be a painful and upsetting story and in gathering information that will assist a possible subsequent investigation.

- Listen to what the child says. Be comforting and sympathetic. Ensure that the child feels as little responsibility as possible and let the child tell the story in their own time.
- It is particularly important not to make any suggestions to the child regarding how the incident may have happened, therefore do not question the child except to clarify what he/she is saying.
- Write down exactly what the child says or what actions concern you, and what you said in response. Sign and date it.
- Do not make assumptions about who the allegation might concern. If a member of staff maybe involved, appropriate steps must be taken to ensure the safety of the child and other children.
- Do not promise not to tell anyone. Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in telling you and that you will take steps to help although this will involve telling other people about what has happened.
- Do not photograph or video marks or injuries on a personal camera or phone.
- Inform the member of staff in charge of your suspicions and that person will contact without delay the Duty Social Worker in the Social Services Office for the district in which the child lives, or the Emergency Duty team of out of office hours. The member of staff in charge should also contact your Under Eights Officer who will offer advice and support to you wherever possible, although they will not be responsible for conducting enquiries into allegations/suspicion
- Once a child is referred to Social Services they and the Area Child Protection Committee will make an assessment of the child’s needs.

Subsequent Action

Following such a referral, enquiries will be undertaken by Social Services and possibly the Police. Staff may be required to provide statements and attend an Initial Child Protection Conference.

Confidentiality

The school has the right and duty to share any information regarding child protection with other childcare professionals. All information will be kept confidential.

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C. Record the Disclosure Accurately

Once the disclosure has taken place or there is suspicion of abuse the following information must be recorded:

- Date and time
- Full name of child
- Address
- Parents name – if separated address of both parents
- Age of child
- Who has seen the abuse / who the information was disclosed to.
- Who else knows
- Complete body chart – fill in where marks are and date it
- Exactly what child said / exactly what you said
- Previous concerns and allegations
- If it is ongoing what the parent has said
- Any other relevant information

* For a full disclosure – DO NOT INVOLVE THE PARENTS

ALL CONCERNS SHOULD BE RECORDED – EVEN IF IT IS A MINOR INCIDENT WITHIN 24 HOURS IN ORDER FOR IT TO BE LEGALLY ADMISSABLE.

Example of Observations

- Appearance when they arrive
- Language they use – is it age appropriate?
- Eating patterns
- Interaction between peers – children and carers – staff
- Does child cry or show signs of distress when collected
- Reaction to people who drop off and collect
- If change in behaviour when changing or being changed (P.E, nappies, swimming etc)
- ONCE YOU HAVE RECOGNISED ANY SIGNS OF ABUSE – YOU MUST RECORD IT A.S.A.P

D. Recognising a Disclosure of Abuse

Types of Disclosure

FULL DISCLOSURE: When a child actually says what has happened to them. The child will tell of the history of abuse including the name of the abuser.

PARTIAL DISCLOSURE: When a child may have hinted something that has happened or they start to say something but then stopped. The child may miss out the name of the abuser or other important details.

DIRECT DISCLOSURE: The child will tell a staff member verbally what has happened to them.

INDIRECT DISCLOSURE: When a child is acting out some sort of abuse through role play such as during time in the home corner – drawing pictures or other artwork, playing with dolls etc. A child may be exhibiting signs of anxiety or stress through their play indoors or in the playground.

Signed:

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