

Gower House School Safeguarding Children, Policy and Procedures

The Headteacher is ultimately responsible for child protection in school and will review this policy at least annually.

The designated teacher for child protection is **Mrs Hammond** her deputy is **Mrs Jobe**, who is the designated teacher for Child Protection in Early Years.

If the designated teacher or her deputy are not in the school, any matter arising should go directly to the Headteacher or in their absence to the deputy Headteacher.

Copies of the handbooks "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment" are kept in the office and in the staffroom.

If you observe what you consider to be unusual behaviour or suspect abuse whether it be emotional, physical injury, sexual or neglect, your observations should be recorded, signed and dated. You must consult your designated teacher, named above with your suspicions.

If a child or young person makes a disclosure to you, record the conversation as factually as possible, sign it and date it. Then inform the designated teacher as a matter of urgency. If the designated teachers are not available, inform the Headteacher immediately.

Strict confidentiality is essential. The Headteacher, deputy and designated teachers will be made aware of children and young people whose names are on the Child Protection Register. They will inform others only on a 'need to know' basis, e.g. the class teacher.

Recognising abuse

Staff should bear in mind that many of the signs and symptoms are characteristics shared by all children experiencing a special need which may not be as a result of abuse.

Possible signs of abuse

Possible Physical Abuse

- Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are normally exposed to falls or rough games.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in games or swimming
- Bruises, bites, burns and fractures, for example, which do not have an accidental explanation
- The child gives inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries.
- Frozen watchfulness

Possible Sexual Abuse

- Allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- The child has an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour for their age, or regularly engages in sexual play inappropriate for their age.

- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained stomach pains
- The child is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares which sometimes have overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia

Possible Emotional Abuse

- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety, changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration
- Seeking adult attention and not mixing well with other children
- Sleep or speech disorders
- Negative statements about self
- Highly aggressive or cruel to others
- Extreme shyness or passivity
- Running away, stealing and lying

Possible neglect

- Dirty skin, body smells, unwashed, uncombed hair and untreated lice
- Clothing that is dirty, too big or small or inappropriate for weather conditions
- Frequently left unsupervised or alone
- Frequent diarrhoea
- Frequent tiredness
- Untreated illnesses, infected cuts or physical complaints which the carer does not respond to
- Frequently hungry
- Overeating junk food

Supporting the child who tells

If a child tells about incidents that may have occurred recently or some time in the past then they should be listened to very carefully and taken very seriously.

Children may talk about what has happened to them or another child, at home or outside the home and may describe behaviour of a family member or another child, or make an allegation against a teacher, social worker or other professional worker, a foster carer or other adult.

Staff are faced with the complex task of listening and responding to the child and the child's possible distress, coping with their own response and remembering and recording as much as possible of what the child has said and what they said to the child.

Care should be taken in asking, and interpreting children's responses to questions about indications of abuse. Staff need to be aware that the way in which they talk to the child may have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings.

It is also important to be aware that depending on what the child is saying a referral may need to be made to Children's Social Work and that where any allegation is made about possible sexual abuse, the designated teacher will be expected to discuss the allegation with the Headteacher and make an immediate referral.

Children need to know that the school has a responsibility to refer alleged abuse to Children's Social Services and that a formal interview may need to be undertaken by a social worker and the

police.

Listen to the child or young person

Offer the child time to talk. If it is not possible at that moment then agree an alternative time with the child or young person. If the school has a system for alerting another member of staff to provide cover for the class, it may be appropriate to use it if it feels that this would be helpful for the child. Staff are advised to:

- Be attentive
- Stay calm
- Not make any promises that what has been said by the child can be kept secret
- Explain to the child that there will be a need to speak to another person within the school and that they will be kept informed of who this is and when this will happen.
- Explain that a record will need to be made.
- Be reassuring and non-judgemental and keep an open mind.
- Be careful not to question the child.
- Make notes at the time on any piece of paper that comes to hand and keep them.
- Tell the child what is going to happen next.
- Write up the notes as soon as possible. Record the date, time, place and circumstances, who else was present, what the child said and what was said to the child.
- Inform the designated teacher or her deputy. In the absence of both teachers inform the headteacher.
- It is imperative that in the absence of the designated teachers, the headteacher or deputy head, a senior member of staff within the school is informed as a matter of urgency.
- Try to see the matter through and keep in contact with the child or young person. (They probably selected the person they spoke to for a very good reason)

Dilemmas

Most people find this situation very difficult and need to talk to someone about their own feelings and how they responded to what the child was saying. This is particularly so if the child's account in any way corresponds to adult's own experiences as a child. In such circumstances staff may feel that they want to talk to someone outside the school. Any information given by the child is highly confidential and it is important that in seeking personal support staff are careful not to divulge any facts relating to the child.

Teachers may feel uncertain about what to do next where there is no doubt. Remember, child protection is an issue for the whole school. Records need to be made and concerns reported to the designated teacher. Do not expect the child to go through the whole process again with another teacher. That would be very unfair to the child.

Parents and other family members

Staff must also report any concerns that arise from discussion with parents and other family members where it appears that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Parents need to be advised that what they say to staff cannot be treated as confidential in these circumstances and that staff are required to report their concerns to the designated teacher and that a referral may be made to Children's Social Services.

Observation of possible injury

If staff notice marks on a child they are advised to to:

- Ask open minded questions as to how the marks happened. Ask the questions as naturally as possible.
- Do not ask the child to undress for the purpose of inspecting injuries. School staff have no right to ask a child to undress for any reason other than timetables school activities.
- Make enquiries of the parent or carer as discreetly as possible.
- Follow the suggested format for recording the observation and the responses received from the child or the parent or carer
- Report their own concerns to the designated teacher

Observation of a possible injury

If minor injuries are noted on 3 separate occasions for which there are no satisfactory explanations then these must be reported to the designated teacher without hesitation with a record and the designated teacher must refer to Children's Social Services.

Remember

All staff are part of a team protecting the welfare of all children and young people. All staff have a duty to refer concerns to the designated teacher.

Referrals of Child Abuse

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 headteacher and then if necessary Social Services.
- 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 headteacher or designated Safeguarding children officer. That person will contact, within 24 hours, 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will offer advice and support wherever possible. The school will take no further action until the Advice of LADO has been obtained.
- The school will, as required, inform Ofsted as soon as practicable but no later than 14 days of any actual abuse or allegations of abuse on the premises.

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 Local Authority Designated 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 Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) 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 Safeguarding 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. However, the school is required to report to the Independent Safeguarding Authority within one month of leaving the school any person whose services are no longer used because they are considered unsuitable to work with pupils.

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

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:

January 2012