

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

How referrals should be made

Referrals of abuse come from many different agencies and individuals. Staff, **in consultation with the Head Teacher** and the SENCO must adhere to the following procedures.

Direct Description of Abuse by a Child

If a child talks about something, which indicates that abuse may have taken place:

- Listen to what the child says. Be comforting and sympathetic. Ensure that the child feels as little responsibility as possible. Tell the child that you are pleased he/she has told you and that this should help you to make them safe. (It can be valuable to have another adult present).
- Do not make the child tell anyone else because he/she may have to be formally interviewed later. It is important to minimise the number of times information is repeated.
- It is particularly important not to make any suggestions to the child regarding how the incident may have happened. Do not question the child except to clarify what they are saying. Do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Do not promise to keep the information secret. Make it clear to the child that you will have to refer the matter on. **Inform the Head Teacher**
- Write down exactly what the child says and what you have said in response. Sign and date what you have written.
- Do not assume that the parent/carer is not part of the abuse. Inform the Social Services District Office **via the Headteacher** who will advise you what steps they will take and what information if any, you may give to parents at this stage. If the child has to go home (e.g. at the end of the school day), inform the Social Services Department in as much time as possible for them to be involved.
- Bear in mind that if the parent/carer is said to be involved in abuse and knows that the child has told someone, threats or other pressures may be applied to encourage the child to retract.
- Prepare a written report in the expectation that you will be invited to a planning meeting or Initial Child Protection Conference.

N.B. The Police and Social Services may identify you as a trusted adult and may decide to ask you to support the child through the investigation or invite you to contribute to the investigation.

No Direct Evidence of Abuse

If you suspect that a child is being abused, but there is nothing directly stated:

- Raise the issue at 'Cause for Concern' meetings or make a note in the 'Cause for Concern' book
- Seek an explanation for your concerns as appropriate, usually from parents/carers and/or the child without raising the question of abuse.
- **Inform Head Teacher** who will evaluate your assessment with you and advise on the appropriateness of a referral.
- If you remain suspicious you have a personal responsibility to refer to the Social Services of the Police.

In All Cases

- Ensure that any allegation or suspicion of abuse, with details of names and addresses, is passed immediately to the appropriate District Social Services Office, Emergency Duty Team or to the Police.
- Provide (as soon as possible) a carefully written record (signed and dated) to the investigating officers confirming the allegation/suspicion. In cases where marks to the body are observed these may be recorded by using a copy of the body map.

For further details refer to the Inter-agency Guidance on the Assessment of Children in Need and the ACPCs Child Protection Procedures.

Possible signs of abuse include -

- Unexplained injuries
- Improbable reasons for injuries
- Refusal to explain or discuss injuries
- Keeping arms, legs covered
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Discussion of excessive punishments
- Missing hair
- Untreated injuries or medical problems
- Aggression towards others
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Fear of going home
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Fear of medical help
- Poor social skills
- Running away
- Self-harming
- Changes in behaviour
- Needing constant reassurance
- Stealing, especially of food
- Age inappropriate sexual affection
- Complaining about genitals hurting
- Distrust of familiar adult
- Unexplained gifts
- Secrecy
- Poor personal hygiene
- Bedwetting or soiling
- Nightmares
- Lack of friends