



MOULTON SCHOOL  
AND SCIENCE  
COLLEGE



**GUIDELINES FOR STAFF  
ON CHILD PROTECTION**

**2007-2008**



## **GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ON CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES**

These guidance notes will cover four main areas :

- (i) Categories of Abuse
- (ii) Possible signs of abuse.
- (iii) Dealing with disclosures
- (iv) Safeguarding one's professional integrity.

### **Categories of abuse**

#### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

#### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as fictitious illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

#### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

From : Working Together to Safeguard Children, DoH, DfES, Home Office 1999

### **Possible signs of abuse**

As form tutors, teachers and teaching assistants, we get to know individual pupils well. This means we are in a strong position to note possible signs of abuse. The following sections are taken from the Northamptonshire Area Child Protection procedures (2004):

### **Recognition**

Identification of child abuse is difficult

**The indicators must be regarded in the context of the child's life and should be considered in relation to the following:**

- Always listen to the child, particularly to what is said spontaneously
- Look at whether the normal behaviour of the child has changed;
- Note if there is any history or pattern of unexplained injury or illness;
- Note if there are uncharacteristic erratic absences;
- Be aware of any delay by the carers seeking medical assistance, or failure to meet medical needs;
- Be aware of explanations that are inconsistent with what you observe or know, especially of the child's development and mobility;
- Be aware children may present as compliant, unafraid and attached to their abusers;
- Take note of any inappropriate responses from carers;
- Remember that the records you keep should be made confidential and kept in a safe place.

### **General indicators**

The following may occur to any children being abused but are particularly important in cases of sexual or emotional abuse where outward physical signs may not be present:

- Onset of enuresis (bedwetting) and daytime wetting.
- Sleeping and eating disturbance
- Recurrent abdominal pains
- Recurrent headaches
- Social withdrawal
- Restlessness and aimlessness
- Inexplicable school failure
- Poor trust and secretiveness
- Indiscriminate and careless sexual behaviour
- Drug abuse
- Running away
- Self-mutilation and other forms of self-harm
- Hysterical fits, faints etc
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Unexplained bullying or aggressive behaviour to other children

**The indicators listed could be signs of OTHER concerns.**

**ALWAYS discuss your concerns with your Head of House or other person with designated responsibility for Child Protection.**

**Keep a confidential record of your concerns noting dates and incidents.**

## **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT**

Children who are:

- Not receiving the food they need for normal growth.
- Exposed to harmful substances through lack of supervision
- Living in inadequate, dirty and/or cold environments.
- Left in circumstances which put them in danger.
- Prevented by their carers from receiving appropriate medical advice or treatment.

## **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Bruises:

- To the eyes, mouth or ears
- Fingertip bruising (grasp mark)
- Bruises of different ages in the same place
- Outline bruises (prints of hands, belts, shoes etc)
- Bruises without obvious and verifiable explanations

Burns, bites and scars :

- Clear impressions of teeth (more than three cms, across likely to be adult)
- Burns or scalds with clear outlines
- Small round burns which may be from cigarettes
- Large numbers of different aged scars
- Unusual shaped scars
- Scars that indicate the child did not receive medial treatment

### **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

- Sexually transmitted infections
- Recurring urinary infections
- Genital and rectal itching and soreness
- Unexplained bleeding and discharges
- Bruising in the genital region
- Sexual play/masturbation which is judged to be inappropriate to a child's age, development and circumstances.
- Sexually abusive behaviour towards other children, particularly those younger or more vulnerable than themselves
- Unexplained pregnancy
- Young people who have unexplained amounts of money and who could be being sexually exploited by being involved in prostitution

### **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

- Abnormally passive, lethargic or attention seeking behaviour
- Specific habit disorders eg faecal smearing, excessive drinking, eating unusual substances, self-harm
- Severely delayed social development, poor language and speech development not otherwise explained
- Excessively nervous behaviour such as rocking or hair twisting
- Low self-esteem

We must not be overly suspicious or intrusive as teachers: we all have days when we are not our usual selves and we need to avoid jumping to premature conclusions about the reasons for a particular mood or piece of behaviour on the part of a child. Equally, we do need to be vigilant and remember that it is our responsibility to protect the child: we do not have to have **proof** of abuse, just reasonable grounds for suspicion. As our school policy states: "We need to err on the side of caution." This is a delicate balance to strike.

### **Dealing with disclosures**

The child may have been plucking up courage to speak to you for a long time; he/she has probably chosen you because you have built up a positive relationship with him/her. It is important that the member of staff to whom the disclosure is made reacts in a supportive and reassuring way; yet it is important to remember that we all have statutory responsibilities in this area and that the initial disclosure could end up with a criminal prosecution. The following notes aim to help you deal effectively with disclosures:

#### **Receive**

- Listen to the child. If you are shocked by what they tell you, try not to show it. Take what they say seriously. Children rarely lie about abuse and to be disbelieved adds to the traumatic nature of disclosing.

#### **Reassure**

- Stay calm and reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you. It's essential to be honest with the child, so don't make promises you may never be able to keep like, "Everything will be all right now."
- Do NOT promise confidentiality: you have a duty to refer a child who is at risk.
- Try to alleviate any feelings of guilt that the child displays. For example, you could say: "You're not to blame" or "You're not alone, you're not the only one this sort of thing has happened to."

#### **React**

- Do NOT ask "leading" questions such as "What did he do next?" (this assumes that he did!). Such questions may invalidate your evidence (and the child's) in any later prosecution in court. Instead ask open questions like: "Anything else to tell me?", "Yes?" or "And..?"

There is always the danger that the process of an investigation could become abusive in itself and we need to strike a delicate balance between eliciting sufficient information to make a referral and subjecting the child to a stressful interview.

- Make brief notes as soon as possible after the disclosure. Make them as objective and factual as possible. Remember they may be needed by the police.

- Do NOT ask the pupil to repeat everything to another member of staff as this will add to the trauma.
- Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk.
- Inform the designated teacher for child protection. This should be the disclosing pupil's Head of House; if s/he is absent, it is essential that concerns are passed on to another designated teacher. Speed is of the essence.
- Make it clear that, whatever happens, school staff will be there to offer support.

After the disclosure, you may well need to talk to someone else to unburden yourself and come to terms with the emotions and feelings you have been experiencing.

### **Safeguarding One's Professional Integrity**

The following section is based mainly on NEOST (National Employers Organisation for School Teachers and Staff) Guidance about conduct for all school staff which was issued in 2002.

Nationally, allegations of abuse against teachers have risen over the past few years and these guidelines try to point out potential areas of risk which need to be avoided as far as possible. Equally, we as members of staff are in a unique position to help and support certain vulnerable individuals and most concerned and caring staff will, at some time in their career, be taken into the confidence of a child and therefore automatically be involved in sensitive and potentially controversial areas. We should value this unique position whilst simultaneously recognising that it can place us in a potentially vulnerable situation.

### **Child Abuse**

All staff should be familiar with the school's child protection policy and the procedures to be followed.

### **Other procedures and guidance**

Staff should be familiar with the school's policies about the use of reasonable force to control or restrain pupils and the procedures that should be followed if a pupil needs first aid or medical attention.

## **GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

### **1. Private meetings with pupils.**

- a) Staff and volunteers should be aware that private meetings with individual pupils may give rise to concern. There will be occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary but, where possible, such interviews should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people, and another pupil or adult should be present

or nearby. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff should ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place.

- b) Meetings with pupils away from the school premises should only be arranged with the specific approval of the Headteacher.

## **2. Physical contact with pupils**

- a) Physical contact may be misconstrued by a pupil, parent or observer. Touching pupils, including well intentioned informal and formal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to serious questions being raised. As a general principle staff must not make gratuitous physical contact with their pupils. It is particularly unwise to attribute touching to their teaching style or as a way of relating to pupils.
- b) Any form of physical punishment of pupils is unlawful as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of restraint. It is particularly important that staff understand this both to protect their own position and the overall reputation of the school.

## **3. Where physical contact may be acceptable**

- a) There may be occasions where a distressed pupil needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Staff should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen to be by others present, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same pupil over a period of time. Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance he/she should seek the advice of the headteacher.
- b) Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with pupils from time to time in the course of their duties. Examples include showing a pupil how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment; demonstrating a move or exercise during games or PE, and contact activities at a youth club. Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.
- c) There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain a pupil physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or self-injury damaging property, or causing disruption. In such cases only the minimum force necessary may be used and any action taken must be to restrain the pupil. Where any employee has taken action to physically restrain a pupil he/she should make a written report of the incident in the form prescribed by the school's policy on restraint.

## **4. Caring for pupils with particular problems**

- a) Staff who have to administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact could be misconstrued.

- b) Wherever possible staff who have to help children with toileting difficulties should be accompanied by another adult and pupils should, wherever possible be encouraged to change themselves. It is accepted that there will be some situations where pupils will present particular problems for staff and the emphasis will be on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

## **5. Relationships and attitudes**

- a) All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in their dealings with pupils. Intimate or sexual relationships between staff and pupils will be regarded as a grave breach of trust and any sexual activity between a member of staff and a pupil under 18 years of age may be a criminal offence.
- b) All staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, and take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when members of staff of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.
- c) From time to time staff may encounter pupils who display attention seeking behaviour, or profess to be attracted to them. Staff should aim to deal with those situations sensitively and appropriately, but must ensure that their behaviour cannot be misinterpreted. In these circumstances, the member of staff should also ensure that the headteacher or a senior colleague is aware of the situation.

## **6. Where conversation of a sensitive nature may be appropriate**

- a) Many staff have a pastoral responsibility for pupils and in order to fulfil that role effectively there will be occasions where conversations will cover particularly sensitive matters. Staff must, in these circumstances, use their discretion to ensure that, for example, any probing for details cannot be construed as unjustified intrusion.
- b) Other staff in schools may, from time to time, be approached by pupils for advice. Pupils may also appear distressed and staff may feel the need to ask if all is well. In such cases staff must judge whether it is appropriate for them to offer counselling and advice or whether to refer the pupil to another member of staff with acknowledged pastoral responsibility for the particular pupil.

## **7. Inappropriate comments and discussions with pupils**

- a) As with physical contact, comments by staff to pupils, either individually or in groups, can be misconstrued. As a general principle, therefore, staff must not make unnecessary comments to and/or about pupils which could be construed to have a sexual connotation. It is also unacceptable for staff to introduce or to encourage debate amongst pupils in class, or elsewhere, which could be construed as having a sexual connotation that is unnecessary given the context of the lesson, or the circumstances. At the same time, it is recognised that a topic raised by a pupil is best addressed rather than ignored.
- b) Systematic use of insensitive, disparaging or sarcastic comments are also unacceptable.

## **8. Extra curricular activities**

- a) Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in extra curricular activities, or a residential setting such as a ski trip, outdoor education camp or extended visit away from home. Typically a less formal approach than usual is appropriate in these settings, but that can be open to misinterpretation. Although a more informal approach is usual in such circumstances, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school.
- b) Staff should take care in receiving or giving gifts to pupils which could be misunderstood. Gifts to individual pupils from staff will be exceptional and should be assessed against the school's policy or by a senior member of staff. Inappropriate gifts from pupils should be reported as described in paragraph 9.
- c) Giving lifts to pupils is not generally advisable without parental consent. The situation would leave you open to allegations that are difficult to refute. If you ever do give pupils a lift, you need to ensure that your car insurance covers "Business usage".

## **9. Reporting incidents**

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued he/she should discuss the matter with the headteacher. Where it is agreed with the headteacher the member of staff or volunteer should provide a written report of the incident. A detailed written report should always be made if a member of staff had been obliged to restrain a pupil physically, or where a complaint has been made by a pupil, parent or other adult.

## **10. Allegations against school based staff**

There is a booklet produced by Northamptonshire County Council which outlines the procedures which are to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse against a teacher, a member of the support staff or a headteacher .

### Allegations against member of staff – a flow chart

