



HABERDASHERS' AGINCOURT SCHOOL

Pupil Protection Policy

This policy ensures all staff in our school 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 lay down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of child protection.

Pupil Protection Procedures

1. When a member of staff sees signs in the behaviour or attitude of a pupil which causes him or her concern the member of staff responsible for Pupil Protection (the Head of Agincourt) must be informed.
2. When a member of staff suspects that a pupil has been abused she / he must consult with the Headteacher. In the Headteacher's absence then they should consult Mr Wren.
3. If in the judgement of the Headteacher a referral needs to be made he / she will inform, in writing, either the Police or the Social Services Department and the Chairman of the Governors.
If urgent action needs to be taken then the Police should be notified at the earliest possible opportunity.
4. If a member of staff is accused of child abuse then this must be reported to the member of staff responsible for pupil protection (the Head of Agincourt).
5. If the cause for concern is the member of staff responsible for Pupil Protection (the Head of Agincourt) then the member of staff should inform the member of staff responsible for pupil protection at Monmouth School (the Second Master).
6. Never think abuse is impossible in your school.

The member of staff responsible for Pupil Protection has the responsibility for raising staff awareness of pupil protection matters. This will include giving a copy of the Pupil Protection Procedure to new staff, making current staff aware of changes in the procedure and meeting with new staff to explain and answer questions on the procedure. The Pupil Protection Officer will receive training and all relevant information will be imparted to all members of staff.

The following guidelines should be observed. Further information and advice on these matters is available from the Headteacher.

Child Protection

It is now widely accepted that it is the responsibility of every adult to protect children from abuse. All children have a right to be protected from all forms of abuse and discrimination and to be treated equally regardless of age, gender, racial origin, culture, religious belief, language, disability or sexual identity.

Child abuse and particularly child sexual abuse can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation and it is important to understand those feelings and not allow them to interfere with your professional judgement.

Child abuse may come to light in a number of ways:

- A child may tell you what has happened to them
- From a third party (eg. Another child)
- Through the child's behaviour
- A suspicious, unexplained injury to the child

These notes are intended to provide a guide to help you identify signs of possible abuse and know what action to take in such cases.

The main Forms of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This is where adults physically hurt or injure children. Hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting are all forms of physical abuse. Giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison is classified as physical abuse. Attempted suffocation or drowning also comes within this category.

Sexual Abuse

Girls and boys are abused by adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs. Showing children pornographic magazines or videos is also a form of sexual abuse.

Emotional Abuse

Persistent lack of love and affection damages children emotionally. Being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted can make the child very nervous and withdrawn.

Neglect

This is where adults fail to meet a child's basic needs, like food or warm clothing. Children might also be constantly left alone unsupervised. Sometimes adults fail to, or refuse to, give their children love and affection. This is emotional neglect.

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child of any age. The effects can be so damaging that they may follow an individual into adulthood.

Identifying Signs of Possible Abuse

Recognising abuse is not easy, even for individuals who have experience working with child abuse. Most children will receive cuts, grazes and bruises from time to time and their behaviour may give reason for concern. There may well be reasons for these factors other than abuse, but any concern should be immediately discussed with the Head of Agincourt School to assess the situation.

Warning signs which may alert teachers to the possibility of abuse can include:

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or burns on the child, particularly if these are on parts of the body not normally injured in accidents
- An injury which a parent or carer tries to hide or for which they might have given different explanations
- Changes in behaviour such as the child suddenly becoming very quiet, tearful, withdrawn, aggressive, or displaying severe tantrums
- Loss of weight without a medical explanation
- An inappropriately dressed or ill-kept child who may also be dirty
- Sexually explicit behaviour, for instance playing games and showing awareness which is inappropriate for a child's age
- Continual masturbation, aggressive and inappropriate play
- Running away from home, attempted suicides, self-inflicted injuries
- A lack of trust in adults, particularly those who would normally be close to the child
- Disturbed sleep, nightmares and enuresis particularly if a child has previously been dry
- Eating problems including over-eating or loss of appetite

Remember, the above signs do not necessarily mean that a child has been abused. If you are concerned about the welfare of a child, however, you must act. Do not assume that someone else will help the child: they might not.

Listening to the Child

Remember that the child's welfare is paramount and this must be the most important consideration.

Listen carefully to any complaint or allegation by the child and tell and show the child that you are taking them seriously.

If a child's behaviour or your observations give rise to concern then talk to the child sensitively to find out if there is anything worrying them.

Keep questions to a minimum but make sure you are absolutely clear about what a child has said so that you can pass on this information to professionals who are trained and experienced in investigating possible abuse.

Acknowledge how difficult and painful it must have been for them to confide in you and reassure the child, stressing that they are never to blame.

Stay calm: don't take hasty or inappropriate action.

Don't make promises which you may not be able to keep.

Don't take sole responsibility: consult the Head of Agincourt School so that together you can begin to protect the child and also so that you can get some support for yourself in what could be a difficult situation.

As soon as possible after talking with the child make a written record of what the child said, how they were behaving, and what you did in response.

Talking to Parents and Carers

There may be circumstances, however, when it is not appropriate for parents to be informed immediately of the concerns you have, as this may prejudice any investigation any may place the child at even greater risk.

Always discuss your concern first with the Headteacher: contact with parents should be delayed until you have sought advice from one of the professional agencies who have been notified (see below).

Responding to Child Abuse: What to do if you are concerned

Remember that it is not your responsibility to decide if child abuse has occurred, but it is your responsibility to take action, however small your concern.

Inform the Headteacher who will take responsibility for seeking any additional advice and for contacting the local Social Services Department, the Police or the NSPCC who are trained to deal with such situations and have the necessary legal power to protect the child. In the Headteacher's absence then inform Mr Wren.

If the Headteacher and Mr Wren are not available and concerns for the child remain, then you must contact the local Social Services Department, the Police or the NSPCC yourself. You do not have to give your name, although this will be helpful to the agency making enquiries into the matter and who may need to talk to you again.

The agency receiving your referral will take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate investigations are undertaken and the child protected.

The Headteacher and the main school office have the contact details of the local area Child Protection Committee. The Headteacher liaises with the Child Protection Coordinator.

Avoiding Allegations of Abuse

1. Physical contact with pupils

A teacher can never take the place of a parent in providing physical comfort, and should be very wary of any demonstration of affection.

2. Sporting activities

Where exercise or procedures need to be demonstrated extreme caution should be used if the demonstration involves contact with pupils and, wherever possible, contact should be avoided. Young children need to be supervised while getting changed, though care should be taken that they do not feel that they are being watched.

3. Force used to avert an immediate danger

If immediate action needs to be taken to protect a child (eg. in the case of fighting) and physical intervention proves necessary, it should involve the minimum force required to prevent injury to persons and damage to property. A sole teacher is advised not to intervene unless absolutely necessary, but to raise the alarm and summon assistance.

4. Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment has been abolished in all schools and should never be used.

5. Teachers and one-to-one situations

Where teachers perform a pastoral, disciplinary or tutorial task, or give music lessons, this may involve them being in one-to-one situations. If this is the case, it is safer if these meetings take place within school time and in the vicinity of other teachers and pupils, although away from immediate earshot. If possible, doors should remain open (or have glass panels) and there should be the equivalent of a desk or small table width between pupil and teacher.

6. Extra-curricular activities

It is normally inadvisable for a teacher to give a lift in a car to a child alone, as allegations have arisen from this situation. Similarly it would normally be inadvisable for a teacher to invite single or very small groups of children home, unless another adult were present.

While it is recognised that these guidelines do not cover every situation, and that there will be many occasions on which teachers will have to use their own professional judgement and discretion, it is hoped that the above gives some indication of potential problem areas, and how to minimise risks.