

KING EDWARD VI HANDSWORTH SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION

KEY RESULT AREA

Pupil Guidance and Welfare

To promote the happiness and security of each pupil within a caring environment where she is encouraged to become a confident and morally responsible citizen, aware of her spiritual and cultural heritage.

POLICY

All staff employed by the school must exercise a duty of care towards pupils. Any member of staff concerned that a pupil may have been abused or may be at risk of abuse must report their suspicion to the designated senior person (the Deputy Head, or in her absence the Headmistress or Assistant Head) who will on the same working day contact the Social Services to request advice or to make a formal referral. The school's procedures comply with the Children Act 1989, DfES Circulars 10/95, 11/95 and the Birmingham Child Protection Procedures.

PRACTICE

The welfare of the pupil shall be the paramount consideration at all times; concerns regarding child protection will be given immediate priority.

Issues of Confidentiality

Because of the responsibilities they have to pupils in their care, staff should never give an absolute guarantee of confidentiality. This does not mean being dismissive of a pupil seeking help.

What to do if a pupil requests confidentiality

- Explain that, whilst every effort will be made to respect the desire for confidentiality, if serious concerns arise about a pupil's welfare, it may be necessary for that information to be shared with other parties or appropriate authorities who can help.
- Reassure the pupil that information will be given only to those who need to know.
- If the pupil clams up and you suspect that she is at risk, suggest that she might wish to seek advice from Childline 0800 1111; the call is free and will not show up on a telephone bill. Childline's approach is to listen to the pupil, discuss options and encourage the pupil to seek help from a trusted adult.
- Report your concerns to the designated senior teacher **without delay**.

What to do if a pupil discloses abuse

The role of staff is to receive, record and report.

- Listen with care.
- Do not interrogate the pupil; this is distressing for the pupil and may prejudice an eventual court hearing. An open ended question such as "Tell me what happened" may allow the pupil to say what she wants until enough information has been gained to decide whether or not a referral to the designated teacher is appropriate.
- If the pupil discloses abuse, reassure the pupil that she is not to blame.

- Take the allegation seriously; do not show disbelief, shock or appear judgmental.
- Affirm the pupil's feelings as expressed; do not tell the pupil how he/she should feel.
- Refer the matter to the designated senior teacher **immediately**.
- Record in detail what you have seen and heard (time, place, persons present, pupil's statement), sign and date and pass on to the designated teacher without delay. Remember to separate fact from opinion when writing an account.
- Do not share information you have gained with any colleagues other than the designated senior teacher.

What will happen if you refer a pupil to the designated senior teacher?

- The designated senior teacher will telephone the Social Services stating our concerns regarding the pupil and the basis for them. The Social Services will check the Child Protection Register, liaise with the Police and decide whether to proceed with a Child Protection Investigation.
- In cases where there is suspected abuse within the family, the Social Services or the Police should make initial contact with parents.
- The central concern of the Social Services is to ensure the safety of the pupil; this may entail removing a suspected abuser from the home or removing the pupil.
- The Social Services will co-ordinate all other agencies and will keep the school informed. Representatives of the school will be asked to attend case conferences.
- Support within school will be given to the pupil and to any staff or other pupils involved in the case.
- Information regarding the case will only be divulged to other staff on a "need to know" basis.

Records

Written records concerning child protection issues must be kept in a locked cabinet and separate from the pupil's main school records, which must only contain an indication that such information exists. Access to child protection records will be given only to the designated senior teacher.

What to do if a pupil alleges abuse by a member of staff

Such allegations must always be taken seriously and, although the welfare of the pupil will always be paramount, extreme care must be taken that long-term damage to a teacher's health or career does not occur in those cases where an allegation may be malicious and without foundation.

- Refer the matter to the Headmistress immediately (where allegations are made against the Headmistress, the Chairman of Governors should be informed) and make a written, dated record.
- If more than one pupil is involved care should be taken to ensure that they are kept apart and that statements are recorded separately in order to avoid possible collaboration.

What will happen if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff?

- The Headmistress will make an urgent, initial consideration of whether or not there is sufficient substance in the allegation / prima facie evidence to warrant investigation by the appropriate agencies. She will interview the pupil and member of staff separately.
- If the Headmistress concludes that there is no substance to the allegation, the decision to take the matter no further will be recorded together with the reasons for it and placed in a confidential file in a locked cabinet separate from the member of staff's main personnel record. Access to such records will be given only to the Headmistress. She will also inform the Social Services of the alleged abuse and the action taken.
- If the Headmistress concludes that there is a disciplinary case rather than a child protection issue the matter will be dealt with under the Teacher Disciplinary Procedures.
- If the Headmistress concludes that the allegation needs to be investigated she will make a formal referral to the appropriate agencies, inform the Chairman of the Governors and seek legal advice.
- Only after the appropriate agencies have been consulted and legal advice taken will the teacher involved be informed that an allegation has been made.
- The Headmistress will decide whether to remove the teacher from access to the children or formally suspend him/her.
- The parents of the pupil concerned will be informed that their child has made an allegation of misconduct against a teacher (the teacher will not be identified and no details will be given at this point).
- During the course of a child protection investigation the Headmistress will, after taking legal advice, have regard to informing and providing support for all interested persons.

Guidance on Teacher Conduct towards Pupils

The conduct of members of staff towards pupils shall be professional at all times and appropriate to the age and gender of the pupil; demeanour and language need careful thought especially when working with adolescents. It is particularly important to bear this in mind when dealing with pupils outside the normal school context (visits, field trips, holidays).

- On occasions where confidential interviews take place, members of staff should use a room with visual access, open door and in an area frequented by other people.
- A colleague should be informed that the interview is taking place and where.
- Physical contact should always be justifiable, limited to what is appropriate (restraining a pupil from hurting herself or others, giving instruction, first aid) and within sight of others.
- Physically comforting a distressed pupil should only be done by standing at her side and placing an arm around her shoulder; members of staff should not behave in any way that causes obvious discomfort to the pupil.
- If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is becoming inappropriately attached to him/herself or to a colleague or that his/her actions may have been misconstrued, he/she should share these concerns with the Headmistress.

Related policies: Attendance, E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy will be updated in line with DfE Circulars and local guidance. The Headmistress, as designated senior teacher, will monitor any cases that arise.

Reviewed by EVI/EW September 2010
Approved by Governors' Pupil Committee