

# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Designated Teacher**

**Mrs P Rothwell**

**Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs H McCracken**

December 2011

## **Rationale**

We in Ballyholme Primary School have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge. We will carry out this duty through our Pastoral care policy, which aims to provide a secure and caring environment which is conducive to learning and to the development of self-esteem, and in which all members of the school feel respected, valued and supported.

This policy is also based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with particular reference to Article 19 which states that, 'Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.'

## **Purpose of procedures on Child Protection**

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school – teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers – has clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. Child Protection procedures apply to all children and young people under the age of 18. The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

All our staff have been subject to appropriate background checks. The staff of our school have also adopted a Code of Conduct for behaviour towards pupils. This code is set out in the Appendix to this policy statement.

## **What is abuse?**

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and children may

suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this policy are intended to safeguard children who are a risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards the child.

The abuse may take a number of forms including:

**NEGLECT** - is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. 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, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** - is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

**SEXUAL ABUSE** – involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve sexual contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** - is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child as to cause severe and persistent adverse on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. \*Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

\*Knowledge that any of these are happening within a child's family should be reported to the Designated Teacher

## **Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse**

**The designated teacher for child protection is Mrs P Rothwell.** In her absence Mrs H McCracken (Deputy Designated Teacher), will assume responsibility for child protection matters. In the event that neither the DT, DDT nor the principal are available please contact the DT on the emergency number which is located in Mrs Field's office.

### **Disclosure by child / Staff Concerns**

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, **the member of staff must act promptly.**

He/she should not investigate – this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with him/her and make full notes.

The designated teacher will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action, and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services. **If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral.** Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Board's Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. **The safety of the child is our first priority.**

Where there are concerns about possible abuse, the Principal will inform:

- the Social Services
- the Education and Library Board's Designated Officer for Child Protection

**Please refer to the flow diagram included in this policy**

## **Complaint against a member of staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the designated teacher, if he is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with the pupils, and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

## **Complaint against the Principal**

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher (or her deputy, if she is not available) must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

## **Staff Concerns**

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

## **Information sharing**

It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held in 'confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told. When a child transfers to a new school, information on pupil welfare will be shared with the Designated Teacher of the receiving school.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Safeguarding policies:

- Pastoral Care
- Anti-bullying
- Acceptable Use of the internet
- Health and safety
- Supporting children with medication needs
- Guidelines for Volunteers/Parent helpers

The Child Protection policy will be reviewed annually and a copy shared with parents at least every two years.