

## Oliver House Preparatory School Child Protection Policy

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The health, safety and well-being of all our children are of paramount importance to everyone who works in our school. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture, religion or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school.
- 1.2 A number of policies are in place to ensure the safeguarding and welfare promotion of pupils at Oliver House. The main ones are policies on Child Protection; Anti-Bullying; Behaviour & Discipline; Health, Safety & Welfare and Safer Recruitment.
- 1.3 In our school we respect our children. The atmosphere within our school is one that encourages all children to do their best. We provide opportunities that enable our children to take and make decisions for themselves.
- 1.4 We recognise that abuse and neglect can result in underachievement. We strive to ensure that all our children make good educational progress.
- 1.5 Our teaching of PSHE (personal, social and health education, including citizenship) as well as our Character Development Programme and other curriculum work, helps to develop appropriate attitudes in our children, and makes them aware of the impact of their decisions on others. We also teach them how to recognise different risks in different situations, and how to behave in response to them.
- 1.6 This policy is based on the Department for Children, Schools & Families ("DCSF") Guidance *Safeguarding Children & Safer Recruitment in Education*. In 2003 the Government published a green paper entitled '*Every Child Matters: Change for Children*' which lists the following aims for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

Be healthy  
Stay safe  
Enjoy and achieve  
Make a positive contribution  
Achieve economic well-being

In reviewing this policy, the following documents published in March 2009 were also taken into account: The Government's response to Lord Laming's report *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report* and Sir Roger Singleton's report *Keeping our School Safe (Review of Safeguarding Arrangements in independent schools, non-maintained special schools and boarding schools)*.

- 1.7 Child abuse can be defined as the term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18. Abuse takes a variety of forms:
- Physical abuse involves the hitting, shaking or other treatment of a child that could cause actual bodily harm.

- Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware about what is happening. This includes non-contact situations, such as showing children pornography.
- Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of children, such as frightening them, or putting them in positions of danger. It is also an abuse to convey to children the feeling that they are worthless or unloved.
- Children are abused also if they are neglected. This could involve failure to provide proper food and warmth, but it might also be failure to see to the emotional well-being of the child.

Signs of abuse can include significant changes in a child's behaviour, repeated minor injuries, deterioration in their general well-being (ie. dirty, smelly, poorly clothed or who appear underfed), unexplained bruising, marks or signs of neglect, children who have lingering illnesses which are not attended to, children who are reluctant to go home or are kept away from school for no apparent reason, depression or withdrawal and comments children make which give cause for concern. These signs are not evidence themselves, but may be a warning, particularly if a child exhibits several of them or a pattern emerges.

## **2 Aims**

**2.1** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all our staff are clear about the actions necessary with regard to a child protection issue. Our aims are:

- to raise the awareness of all staff, and to identify responsibility for reporting possible cases of abuse;
- to ensure effective communication between all staff on child protection issues;
- to set down the correct procedures for those who encounter an issue of child protection.

## **3 Procedures**

**3.1** Miss Susan Turner (Deputy Head Pre-Prep School and member of the SMT) is the primary Child Protection Officer ("CPO") and designated EYFS practitioner. Mrs Maureen Fields (Head of Pre-Prep School and member of the SMT) and Miss Lisa Newbould (Deputy Head Prep School and member of the SMT) are the deputy CPOs. They are guided by two main principles:

- In accordance with the Children Act 2004, the welfare of the child is always paramount.
- Confidentiality should be respected as far as possible, however it cannot be promised to a person giving evidence.

A key role of the CPOs is to be fully conversant with the procedures of the Area Child Protection Committee ("ACPC") and to ensure that the school takes action to support any child who may be at risk. They must also make sure that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection.

**3.2** If teachers suspect that a child in their class may be a victim of abuse, they should not try to investigate, but should immediately inform one of the named persons (see 3.1) about their concerns. Abuse can be of a physical, sexual or emotional nature. It can also be the result of neglect. Staff must not keep to

themselves any information about abuse which a child gives them; they are required by law to pass this information on.

**3.3** The following points give guidance on how to deal with an allegation of abuse:

- The child should be listened to but not interviewed or asked to repeat the account. Avoid questions, particularly leading questions;
- The child should not be interrupted when recalling significant events;
- All information should be noted carefully, including details such as timing, setting, who was present and what was said, in the child's own words. The account should be obtained verbatim or as near as possible;
- Care should be taken not to make assumptions about what the child is saying or to make interpretations;
- Listened to means just that; on no account should suggestions be made to children as to alternative explanations for their worries;
- The written record of the allegations should be signed and dated by the person who received them as soon as practicable; and
- All actions subsequently taken should be recorded.

No member of staff should promise confidentiality to a pupil who makes an allegation, however they should be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

**3.4** Any action that the named persons take when dealing with an issue of child protection must be in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Local Safeguarding Children Board ("LSCB") guidelines. Our LSCB is located in Wandsworth ("WSCB") and they can be contacted on 020 8871 662, after 5pm weekdays or on weekends 020 8871 6000.

**3.5** The school's named officers work closely with the Social Services department and the ACPC or WSCB when investigating any allegations of abuse. Contact will be made within 24 hours of such a disclosure or suspicion of abuse. All parties involved handle such investigations in a sensitive manner, but remembering that the interest of the child is of paramount importance.

**3.6** If a child alleges abuse, the school usually makes a referral without communicating with parents first. However in some circumstances we may inform parents first.

**3.7** If a child protection referral is made, a case conference is held within eight working days of the decision to refer. The case conference offers the opportunity to share information and formulate a plan of action. Staff are expected to attend and participate in all case conferences and meetings held under the LEA guidelines. Persons attending a case conference could include family members (including solicitors), children's services staff, professionals involved with the child (eg. GP, health visitors, childminders, teachers, psychologists), professionals involved with the parents (eg. family support services, mental health services), those involved in investigations (eg. police), and possibly local authority legal services.

**3.8** We regard all information relating to individual child protection issues as confidential, and we treat it accordingly. We pass information on to appropriate persons only.

- 3.9** We inform the child at all stages of who is involved and what information we have given them.
- 3.10** We require all adults seeking employment at this school to have their application vetted by the police, in order to ensure that there is no evidence of offences involving the abuse of children (also see the school's Safer Recruitment Policy). Members of staff who joined the school prior to the CRB system being introduced were vetted by the DCSF via List 99. Copies of CRB approvals for all members of staff are kept on file in the Head's office.
- 3.11** Assurance is obtained that appropriate child protection checks and procedures apply to any staff employed by another organisation and working with the school's pupils on another site (for example attending sports fixtures which are not held at the school or the Year 6 residential trip).
- 3.12** There may be times when adults in our school, in the course of their duty, use physical intervention to restrain children. The Head requires the adult involved in any such incident to report this to him/her immediately, and to record it in writing in an incident book kept in the school office.
- 3.13** The main CPOs will receive the minimum statutory training every year. All other full-time members of staff in the school will receive relevant training as and when required. Training courses serve to raise staff awareness of abuse and provide knowledge of the child protection procedures that have been agreed locally. Part-time and voluntary staff who work with children are to be made aware of these arrangements.
- 3.14** All the adults in our school share responsibility for keeping our children safe. They are alert to the signs of abuse and will refer any concerns to the designated senior members of staff responsible for child protection. We may on occasion report concerns which, on investigation, prove unfounded. It is better to be safe than sorry and we trust that parents, while they will naturally be upset by any investigation, will accept that the school acted in the child's best interests.
- 3.15** Any deficiencies or weaknesses in the school's child protection arrangements will be remedied without delay.

#### **4 Allegations against staff and/or volunteers and/or the Head**

- 4.1** The member of staff or volunteer receiving the allegation of abuse against another member of staff should report this immediately to the Head or Deputy Head, unless they are the person against whom the allegation is made. An allegation against the headteacher or one of the CPOs should be reported to the Deputy CPO or the nominated governor.
- 4.2** Where an allegation (anonymous or otherwise) is made against a member of staff, there should be urgent consultation by the Head or Deputy Head (who is also one of the deputy CPOs) with the LEA lead officer as to how to take the matter forward.

**4.3** There are four possible outcomes of the initial assessment:

- i) Where the pupil has suffered, is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, there should be an immediate referral under local child protection procedures established by the ACPC;
- ii) Where the child has alleged that a criminal offence has been committed, then again this will be referred under local child protection procedures and the police may carry out a criminal investigation;
- iii) The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by a member of staff (which does not fall within the above categories) that needs to be considered under local disciplinary procedures; and
- iv) That the allegation is apparently without foundation.

**Only if the allegation is trivial or demonstrably false, will further investigations not be warranted.**

**4.4** Where the initial assessment by the LEA lead officer and the Head or Deputy Head (or, where the allegation is against the Head or one of the Child Protection Officers or the nominated governor) concludes that the allegation warrants investigation, there will be either:

- i) A referral to one or more of the agencies with statutory responsibilities to make enquiries; or
- ii) Where wholly satisfied that the child is not at risk of significant harm or that a potential crime has not been committed, an investigation under the school's disciplinary procedures.

**4.5** There are 3 possible types of investigation:

- i) enquiries by social services under local child protection procedures;
- ii) related police investigations into possible criminal offences; and
- iii) the school's disciplinary procedures

Any disciplinary process should be clearly separated from child protection enquiries and criminal investigations. Decisions as to suspensions and/or disciplinary action are for the headteacher and governing body. Any investigation by the police or child protection agencies will take priority over an internal disciplinary investigation by the school.

**4.6** As stated in the school's disciplinary procedures (which form part of the staff contract), where the facts of the case warrant disciplinary action, the nature of the action will be determined by the severity of the offence and length of service and any other relevant factors, except in cases of gross misconduct, where summary dismissal will apply. Before any disciplinary action takes place, there will be an investigation into the circumstances of the alleged offence. This investigation will be undertaken by the Head, Deputy Head and a member of the governing body.

**4.7** Wherever possible, staff should ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil (for example, in one-to-one tuition or tutorials, sports coaching, conveying a single pupil by car, engaging in inappropriate electronic communication with a pupil, etc.)

- 4.8** For those children who fall under the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working or looking after children at the premises (whether that allegation related to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere) or any other abuse which is alleged to have taken place on the premises, and of the action taken in respect of these allegations. This will be done as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of an allegation being made.
- 4.9** The school undertakes to report to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used because they are considered unsuitable to work with children within one month of any such person being told that he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. Such reports should contain as much evidence as possible. The school recognises that failure to make a report constitutes an offence.

## **5 Confidentiality**

- 5.1** We comply with the government requirements set out in DHS Circular LA 83/14 and by the LEA with regard to confidentiality. The files we keep on children are open to parents. Information from third parties will not be disclosed without their prior consent. Access to these files may be withheld in certain prescribed cases where there are instances of actual or alleged abuse (see DCSF circular 16/19). Working notes are not subject to disclosure, but will be summarised and then kept on file. These guidelines of ours are in line with the safeguards on disclosure of information set out in the Education (school records) Regulations 1989.
- 5.2** Parents should be aware that information gathered both prior and during any investigation will be kept in a secure location, however this file will be passed on to a new setting should the child leave our school. Any information will be sent to the designated Child Protection Officer in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential'.

## **6 Monitoring and review**

- 6.1** The PACT governing body regularly monitors and reviews any recorded incidents, including the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. Dr Tony Newman-Sanders is the named governor who deals with all child protection matters.
- 6.2** This policy is reviewed on an annual basis by the PACT governing body, and this is minuted accordingly at a PACT Board meeting.

**Signed:**           **C Candia**

**Date:**             **10 December 2009**