



Child Protection – Safeguarding and Welfare of Pupils Policy

Child Protection Policy Statement

'We at Ardingly College are committed to a practice which protects children from harm. Staff at the school accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of issues which cause harm to children'.

“An abused child is a boy or girl under the age of 18 years who has suffered from, or is believed to be at significant risk of physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse or sexual abuse” (Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures, 2006)

The school aims are:

- To adopt child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct in accordance with The Children Act 1989, Human Rights Act 1998, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Every Child Matters and Ofsted guidelines.
- To ensure that staff are able to identify children at risk.
- To ensure that children considered to be at risk receive the necessary care and support they need.
- To work with individual practitioners and agencies concerned with child protection.
- To establish an ethos of mutual support amongst all staff, so that any questions and concerns may be shared.
- To observe safeguards for the selection and appointment of staff in accordance with Protection of Children Act 1999 and The Police Act 1997.
- To ensure that all member of staff are provided with opportunities to receive training by the Deputy Headmaster in order to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse every three years.
- To ensure that all members of staff, volunteers and governors know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse, and the procedure to be followed in appropriately sharing a concern of possible abuse or a disclosure of abuse.
- To ensure that all parents/guardians are made aware of the school's responsibilities in regard to child protection procedures through publication of the school's Child Protection Policy, and reference to it in our prospectus/brochure and home school agreement.
- To ensure that all adults, including supply teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers new to our school will be given a written statement about the school's policy and procedures and the name and contact details of the Designated Person and have these explained as part of the induction into the school.

- Children and young people often tell other young people, rather than staff or other adults, about abuse: make sure that your senior students know the main points on dealing with allegations of abuse.
- To review our policy and good practice at regular intervals.
- To display information about how children can get support and guidance in prominent places around the College.

The four main recognised forms of abuse are:

- (i) Physical abuse – caused through a deliberate act or through omission or failure to act to protect;
- (ii) Emotional abuse – treatment which causes severe or persistent adverse effect on emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone;
- (iii) Sexual abuse – taking part in sexual activities or involving children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways;
- (iv) Neglect – leading to serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Recognising Abuse

Recognising abuse is not easy and it is not our responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk. We do, however, have a responsibility to act if we are concerned.

Possible outward signs of abuse may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained physical injury or an injury that is inconsistent with the explanation;
- Sudden changes in behaviour/demeanour and/or deterioration of academic performance;
- Anxiety and/or low self-esteem;
- Knowledge of sexual matters beyond what would normally be expected.

The above are only possible indicators of abuse and not in themselves proof that abuse has occurred.

If any member of staff suspects that any student may be at risk from whatever cause (including from another student) - he/she should contact the Deputy Headmaster (DHM) immediately either direct or through the appropriate HoMM. The DHM is the 'Designated Teacher' (formerly known as the Child Protection Officer). The DHM will then inform the Headmaster and follow the procedures outlined in the 'Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures' (2006) a copy of which is kept in his office and available for any member of staff to read and consult. There are also copies in the Common Room and the Medical Centre. This may result in the police, parents and Social Services becoming involved.

In the event of allegations or suspicions of abuse, a referral must be made within 24 hours (in writing or with written confirmation of a telephoned referral) of allegations or suspicions of abuse to the local social services department to carry out child protection investigations, rather than internal investigation by the school.

If a child discloses abuse to a member of staff, the member of staff should:

- Always stop and listen straightaway to someone who want to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse;
- Limit any questioning to the minimum necessary to seek clarification only, strictly avoiding 'leading' the pupil or adult who has approached them by making suggestions or asking questions that introduce your own ideas about what may have happened. (Do not ask questions like 'Did he do x to you?', using instead a minimum number of questions of the 'Tell me what has happened' type);
- House prefects and School prefects are instructed on the appropriate action to take should they receive any allegations of abuse as part of their induction. They are briefed and asked to read this document;
- Allow the child to continue at his or her own pace. Do not rush them;
- Never make a promise that you will keep what is said confidential or secret. If you are told about abuse, you have a responsibility to report it, so that action can be taken. Give reassurance that only those who need to know will be told
- Stop asking any more questions as soon as the pupil or adult has disclosed that he or she believes that something abusive has happened to him or her, or to someone else;
- Tell the informing pupil or adult that the staff member will now make sure that the appropriate people are brought in to follow the problem up (these will include a specialist social worker, and that worker may need to involve the police);
- Ask the informing pupil or adult what steps they would like taken to protect them now that they have made an allegation, and assure them that the school will try to follow their wishes;
- Reassure all concerned that they have done the right thing by reporting their concerns;
- Refer the matter the same day, with all relevant details, to the Designated Officer (the Deputy Head);
- Make a handwritten record (including time, place and the people present when the child disclosed) as soon as possible of what they have been told and make a copy of this available to the Designated Officer.

It is important that the child concerned does not have to repeat the disclosure to more people than necessary. Where possible the staff member to whom the disclosure was made should remain with the child to offer support pending advice from the Police/Social Services of the investigative process. No further questioning of the child or any further enquiries should be attempted. Staff should not interview the alleged perpetrator or take any action that may alert them.

If any member of staff or volunteer or any person on the school's payroll is suspected then the Headmaster must be contacted in the first instance; this procedure also includes HoMMs and the Deputy Headmaster.

If it is felt that the Headmaster is suspected then contact must be made direct with the Chairman of the School Council, through the Clerk to the Governors, Patrick McGahan.

If a member of staff who is resident in boarding accommodation is suspected, arrangements may be made for alternative accommodation pending the investigation.

The school will report to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) within one month of leaving the school any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unable to work with children. The ISA's address for referrals is PO Box 181, Darlington DL1 9FA (tel: 0300 1231111).

The Designated Teacher, currently the Deputy Headmaster, is fully trained in inter-agency working and child protection. This training should be undertaken at two yearly intervals. Similarly members of staff including the Headmaster should receive Child Protection Training every three years. Revd Christina Bennett is currently the member of the Governing Council who has responsibility for Child Protection and the Council reviews College Child Protection policies and procedures annually.

Part-time staff, volunteers and other persons on the school's payroll are briefed both on the contents of this document and the essential content delivered to staff as part of their Child Protection Training.

All staff and volunteers will follow the College procedures in conjunction with the following policies:

- Equal Opportunities Policy – all children regardless of ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, gender, religion or disability have equal rights to protection from harm and may be vulnerable to abuse;
- Complaints and Grievance Policy – commitment to providing high quality, fair and safe services;
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure – guidelines and codes of conduct describe appropriate and acceptable behaviour and what may happen if these guidelines are not followed;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Missing Students Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy (note that there is immunity from 'whistle blowing' in good faith);
- Restraints Policy (note that this makes clear that corporal punishment is not permitted at the school and is against the law)

If Social Services need to be contacted their telephone number is: 01243 771000. Concerns may also be addressed to Ofsted (Tel No: 08456 404045).

Never think abuse is impossible in your school or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.

Reviewed: January 2010