

23. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

' Because of their day to day contact with individual children during school terms, teachers and other school staff are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour or failure to develop'.

(Working Together under the Children Act 1989)

Purpose and Aim

The policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others in dealing with child protection issues. An effective policy also makes explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. This ensures that child protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.

Introduction

Our school fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect children and support pupils in school.

- a) Prevention (positive school atmosphere, teaching, pastoral care, support to pupils).
- b) Protection (following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns.
- c) Support (pupils and school staff and to children who may have been abused).

This applies to all pupils, staff, governors and visitors to Cator Park School.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff Members

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. If a member of staff suspects may be at risk or hears a disclosure from a student the CPLO (Child Protection Liaison Officer) must be informed. The member of staff will then be asked to provide an accurate account of any discussions or observations regarding the student concerned. Any records are then passed to the CPLO, as they are confidential documents.

Child Protection Liaison Officer

Each school designates a senior member of staff for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies according to Bromley's procedures.

The designated CPLO for Cator Park School is Sue Murray.

The role of the CPLO is to: -

- ensure child protection procedures are in place and updated as appropriate
- ensure all staff are aware of both Bromley and the schools policy and procedures
- be available to provide advice/support to staff and for confidential discussion about concerns
- be available to provide support to students
- liaise with the Head teacher to keep her informed regarding child protection procedures
- liaise with Social Services and other relevant agencies
- ensure records are kept of any concerns/suspected cases of abuse/referrals
- coordinate arrangements for monitoring of students on roll who have been identified as being in need of protection

When the CPLO has been informed of a case of suspected abuse or of a young person who may be at risk of abuse they will straight away refer the matter to Social Services. Social Services will then advise the CPLO regarding any contact with the family, as it is the responsibility of the Social Services Department to inform the parents if the allegation involves a member of the child's family. If the allegation involves someone other than a member of the child's family the matter should still be reported to Social Services but as the child may not be at immediate risk the Social Services Department may not need to respond so urgently. The child's parents must be informed

All cases of child abuse reported to the Department of Social Services should be confirmed in a short written note to the Principal Education Welfare Officer (within 3 days)

If the allegation of child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Head teacher must consider to what extent the Disciplinary Procedure For Teachers should be invoked, with special regard to the section on suspension. If a member of staff is suspended, the Head of Pupil and Student Services Division should be informed. All allegations against school staff are to be reported anonymously to the Principal Education Welfare Officer.

Multi-agency partnership

In accordance with Bromley's procedures we are required to liaise with Social Services in all cases of abuse or suspected abuse. This multi-agency approach enhances the effectiveness of identifying and dealing with child abuse issues that may arise.

School Procedures

Any member of staff having concerns that a student may be at risk of abuse should always discuss them the CPLO. Staff may be asked to complete a written record of their concerns, which is then given to the CPLO. If appropriate, it is the responsibility of the CPLO to seek further advice The CPLO would then share relevant information confidentially with the member of staff who had raised the concern and the student's key workers on a need-to-know basis.

Handling Disclosures

If a girl begins to confide any matter involving alleged abuse, whether physical, emotional or sexual, to a member of staff, they should follow the following guidelines:

- don't make any promises to the student
- stay calm and re-assuring
- explain that you cannot promise to keep what they tell you as a secret, in their own interest. You may have to inform the CPLO
- listen to the child rather than directly question them
- do not press them for details
- ask the student if they have told anyone else
- write a detailed account, in the student's own words, dated, timed and signed
- inform the CPLO and hand them the detailed account as this may be needed as evidence in court
- assure the student that she has done the right thing and you know how difficult it is to talk about such experiences

The welfare of the student is paramount; therefore all situations must be treated with sensitivity. The teacher should not reveal his/her own feelings to the student.

Confidentiality

If a student requests confidentiality they must be told that this cannot be promised and it should be explained that staff have a responsibility to share information with those adults who will be able to help protect them from harm. They should be reassured that only staff who need to know about it will be told. This could result in the student not continuing the conversation, in which case do not pursue the matter and report concerns to the CPLO.

Staff have a professional duty to share confidential information about the protection of children with Social Services via the CPLO.

Staff should take care not to discuss information given in confidence outside the appropriate professional contexts.

Recording

All concerns about or disclosures regarding any form of abuse or risk of being abused must be recorded. The record includes stating the time, date, circumstances and who else was present as well as giving exact details of what the student said quoting the exact words used. Signs of physical injury should also be recorded.

All records should be given to the CPLO and may be passed to Social Services when a referral is made. In cases, which are taken to court, the school may be required to provide these records. All child protection records are placed in a sealed envelope in the students file. These files are kept in lockable filing cabinets in the office.

PSHEE Curriculum

The school's pastoral system encourages the students to seek help when they are worried or have concerns. The V1th form also runs a 'listening service' for all students. The V1th form has been trained by the Samaritans and are familiar with school procedures.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scolding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm can also be when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after.

This is commonly described using terms as factitious illness by proxy or Munchausen syndrome.

Emotional Abuse

This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse affects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that

they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all cases of ill treatment of a child, though it can occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

This involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or 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.

Neglect

This is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. 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, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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