



Child Protection Policy

Ratified: September 2018

Review: September 2019

Introduction

The health, safety and welfare of all our children is of paramount importance to all the adults who work in our school. Our children have the right to protection, regardless of age, gender, race, culture or disability. They have a right to be safe in our school.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility. All staff play a critical role in recognising potential concerns of abuse and taking prompt action to prevent concerns from escalating. It is important that all relevant agencies involved in safeguarding children co-operate together for the benefit of the child. Early information sharing is vital for effective identification and assessment, and to provide appropriate help for children and their families. Therefore, staff are expected to report any concerns they may have regarding a child's welfare immediately with the designated safeguarding lead and not keep it to themselves. The school is committed to safeguarding and it aims to create a culture of vigilance.

Duty to Refer

All staff members who have a concern about a child's welfare has a duty to refer immediately, whether it is known to have occurred or is suspected. No member of staff has the right or responsibility to withhold information or to respect a child's / young person's wish for confidentiality.

At West Thurrock Academy, Mrs J Pitcher is the designated person for child protection and in her absence the Headteacher, Mrs S. Cook and in her absence the Deputy Headteacher, Miss D. Davies. The nominated Governor for Safeguarding is Mrs S. Stronach.

All staff are aware of the safeguarding procedures, receive regular training and have total commitment to child protection. Children's self-awareness is raised through Personal and Social Education, and Health Education, to encourage them to talk and share their thoughts and feelings. All staff try to ensure that children keep safe, remain healthy and can say "NO".

West Thurrock Academy encourages partnership between home and school; however, in order to fulfil our responsibilities effectively we ensure that our approach is child-centred. This means that at all times we consider what is in the best interests of the child. This may mean that in some instances parents are not informed or consulted first by the school regarding safeguarding concerns involving their child. When safeguarding concerns are reported to outside agencies, procedures are adhered to and subsequent decisions and actions are made by the appropriate agencies.

Guidelines

Staff are in contact with children all day and can detect possible abuse. Voicing concerns do not necessarily lead to initiation of procedures. The criteria for referral is '*reasonable suspicion*' and under the Children Act, 1989, this definition has been extended to include '*or may suffer in future*'.

When reporting a concern or suspicion, the designated child protection leader/senior leader will follow The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures 2018 and the Department of Education's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2018.

Significant Harm

The threshold for statutory intervention is Significant Harm, whereby a child's development is or is likely to be severely impaired. This harm needs to be attributable to the care offered by parents / carers. This can be through acts of commission, for example physical abuse, or by omission, for example by failing to protect a child from the threat of violence.

Children Act 1989

Children at Risk (Section 47)

*The Local Authority **shall make enquiries** where there is **reasonable cause to suspect** that a child or young person living in the area is suffering or is likely to suffer **significant harm**.*

Procedure for Disclosures

If a child discloses abuse or staff are suspicious, do:

- ❖ Listen carefully
- ❖ Clarify concerns
- ❖ Make accurate notes using the child's words
- ❖ Report **immediately** to the designated Child Protection Person or the Headteacher/ Deputy Head teacher if she is not available
- ❖ Tell the child that they have done the right thing by telling you and offer reassurance about how the child will be kept safe

Things not to do:

- ❖ Do not ask the child leading questions
- ❖ Do not use your own words to describe events
- ❖ Do not promise the child confidentiality
- ❖ Do not investigate
- ❖ Do not interview the parents

It is very important in these cases that prompt and correct procedures are followed under The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures 2018 Guidelines.

The reporting teacher will be told of any further action taken i.e. Social Service referral, monitor etc. If the reported case is taken up and investigated by an external agency, then any meetings, case conferences or action taken will be followed through and the teacher concerned informed.

A list of children who have been referred is kept by the school. This includes all children, who, for whatever reason, need to be monitored. Staff are kept informed of any child in their class who is monitored.

All staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) with regard to any concerns about female genital mutilation (FGM); however, there is a specific legal duty on teachers. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, the teacher must report this to the police.

Categories of Child Abuse

Abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse and neglect and are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection. All staff are aware of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm and of environmental factors which may impact on a child's welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding).

Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve:

- ❖ Conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- ❖ not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- ❖ Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction

- ❖ Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another e.g. where there is domestic violence and abuse
- ❖ Serious bullying (including cyberbullying), 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 types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence and abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender and sexuality. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

In addition, sexual abuse includes abuse of children through sexual exploitation. Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of similar age, consenting partners is not usual. However where a child is under the age of 13, it is classified as rape.

Neglect

Neglect 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues. Where there is domestic abuse and violence towards a carer, the needs of the child may be neglected. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to:

- ❖ Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- ❖ Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ❖ Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ❖ Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional, social, health and educational needs.

Peer on Peer Abuse

School may be the only stable, secure and safe element in the lives of children at risk of, or who have suffered harm. Nevertheless, whilst at school, the behaviour of some children may be challenging and defiant, or they may instead be withdrawn, or display abusive behaviours towards other children.

Peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, sexual violence/sexual harassment, 'sexting' or initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. West Thurrock Academy does not tolerate any harmful behaviour in school and will take swift action to intervene where this occurs. Lessons and assemblies are used to help children understand, in an age-appropriate way, what abuse is and children are encouraged to tell a trusted adult if someone is behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. The Behaviour Policy and the Friendship (Anti-Bullying) Policy details how the school responds to peer on peer abuse. The school will seek advice and support from other agencies as appropriate.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. This can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability, without further exploration
- That they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others
- The potential to be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs
- Communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers

Children missing from education

All children, regardless of their age, ability, aptitude and any special education needs they may have are entitled to a full-time education. A child missing education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect; therefore, the school's procedures will be followed for unauthorised absence and for children missing education. Parents should always inform the school of the reason for any absence. Where contact is not made, a referral may be made to another appropriate agency (Missing Education and Child Employment Service, Social Care or Police). Parents are required to provide at least two emergency contact numbers to the school. The local authority must be informed of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur using technology.

Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines

Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. If a teacher, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, there is a specific legal duty for that teacher to report this to the police.

Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriages

So-called 'honour-based' violence (HBV) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage.

Radicalisation and Extremism

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to British fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy.

Headteacher: 

Chair of Governors: 