



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

*'The curriculum needs to be delivered in a school with an ethos which empowers children; a school which allows them to voice ideas, feelings and opinions, treats them with respect, values their contribution and lets parents make a contribution to the educational process.'*

From **'Responding to Child Abuse'**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

It is recognised that teachers play an important role in identifying potential cases of child abuse. It is also important that all relevant agencies involved in child abuse co-operate together to the benefit of the child. All schools have a designated teacher for child protection, who liaises with external agencies and with teachers in school. For this procedure to work, it relies on the skills and expertise of every class teacher and adult within school to recognise or report concerns.

At John Logie Baird primary school the head teacher is the designated person for child protection. The class teachers also know the procedures. All staff have total commitment to child protection. They raise children's awareness about themselves through personal and social development, health education, and

develop a trusting climate so that children feel able to talk and share their thoughts and feelings.

John Logie Baird primary school has a policy of partnership between home and school, but with child abuse, or suspicion of child abuse, our first and only responsibility is to the child. This means that parents are not informed or consulted in some instances. This is clearly laid out in Argyll and Bute council, education department's standard circular on child protection. This standard circular is discussed with all staff, teaching and non-teaching at **least once a session**.

We may not be able to prevent child abuse, but by following child protection procedures, we are trying our best to protect all our children and this is our first and only responsibility.

All teachers attempt, through their care of children, to ensure that children keep safe, remain healthy and are able to avoid inappropriate behaviours. Suspected cases are reported, procedures adhered to and subsequent actions are left to the appropriate agencies. We also care for children who have been abused and understand their problems.

## **AIMS**

By following child protection procedures we:

- Care for the child
- Care for our school
- Care for the community we serve

- Respond to the guidelines and procedures of other agencies

## **GUIDELINES**

In reporting concern or suspicion, all adults in school must adhere to the following procedures. The head teacher will then follow the Argyll and Bute child protection procedures.

## **REASONS FOR FOLLOWING PROCEDURES**

- It protects the child to the best of our ability
- It avoids delay
- It provides consistency
- It protects all staff
- It ensures that, if further action is taken by another agency, then the school has followed the protection procedures

Staff are in contact with children all day and are in a position to detect possible abuse. They must not think that by voicing concern they are necessarily starting procedures. The criterion should be that staff have '*reasonable suspicion*' and, under the Children Act, 1989, this definition has been extended to include '*or may suffer in future*'.

If a child discloses abuse or staff are suspicious, there are three things to do:

- Report immediately to the head teacher (designated child protection officer)
- Do not speak to the parents
- Do not promise the child that it will be kept a secret

It is very important in such cases that prompt and advised protocols are followed under Argyll and Bute child protection procedures.

The reporting teacher will be told of any further action taken ie social work referral, continued monitoring 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 will be informed.

Staff have an important role in listening carefully to what children have to say. The school can provide a secure place where the child feels it is safe to talk. Sensitivity to the disclosure is vital. Staff must listen carefully to what the child is saying, treat it seriously, and value what they say.

Children may feel they will not be believed, or that they will be punished. Staff will need to reassure youngsters that whatever has happened is not their fault. Fear of the consequences of telling is very common. It can be very tempting to offer a promise of confidentiality to the child. This is not realistic. The child needs to hear the truth about what will happen, together with a commitment to support the child. It is crucial not to ask leading questions. Our role is to empower the child to speak and then know what to do next.

Records of children causing concern are kept in the secure filing cabinet in the office. This includes all children, who, for whatever reason, need to be monitored. Staff are kept informed of any child in their class who is on this register. Teachers must inform the head teacher of any changes/additions so that this list can be kept up to date.

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

This is intended as a guide. Please remember that the presence of one or more factors does not necessarily give proof that child abuse has occurred. It may, however, indicate that investigation should take place.

- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment which is needed
- Incompatible explanations
- Constant minor injuries
- Unexplained bruising:
  - Bruise marks in or around the mouth
  - Black eyes, especially if both eyes are black and there are no marks to forehead or nose
  - Grasp marks
  - Finger marks
  - Bruising of the ears
  - Linear bruising (particularly buttocks or back)
  - Differing age bruising
- Bite marks
- Burns and scalds

- Cigarette burns
- General physical disability
- Unresponsiveness in the child
- Soiling and wetting
- Change in behavioural patterns
- 'Frozen' look
- Attention seeking
- Apprehension
- Antisocial behaviour
- Unkempt appearance
- Sexually precocious behaviour
- Sexualised drawings and play
- Sudden poor performance in school
- Poor self-esteem
- Self-mutilation
- Withdrawal

- Running away
- Reluctance to return home after school
- Resistance to PE (undressing)
- Resistance to school medicals
- Difficulty in forming relationships
- Confusing affectionate displays
- Poor attendance - repeated infections etc

## **DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE**

An abused child is a boy or girl under the age of 17 who has suffered from physical injury, physical neglect, failure to thrive, and emotional or sexual abuse. The abuser is the person who has had custody; charge or care of the child and either caused or knowingly failed to prevent the abuse. Having custody, charge or care includes any person, in whatever setting, who, at the time, is responsible for that child.

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, is where definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend, and to which they are unable to give informed consent; or activities which violate the social taboos of family roles.

## **NEGLECT**

The persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example by exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation) which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

## **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child of persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment; this category should be used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.

## **ARGYLL AND BUTE CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

These procedures are to be followed in reported abuse cases or suspicion of abuse. Copies of the procedure are in the school office.

The police investigate sexual abuse cases and social workers may be present to assist them when interviewing a child.

JLB Staff / Reviewed May 2010