

ANNEX 9

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

This policy has been updated in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (dated 2006) and the consolidated guidance contained in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, which came into force in January 2007. It includes:

- The Welfare Team and their responsibilities
- Our policy statement
- Guidelines for all staff for dealing with cases of suspected child abuse
- Procedures for dealing with cases of suspected child abuse
- An outline of current legislation

Welfare Team

The Welfare Team comprises a small group of staff who work together to deal with Child Protection issues across Vinehall School. Members of the Welfare Team will meet on an ad hoc basis for discussion and to agree action / monitoring of concerns. Meetings will be convened by the CPO, who directs the Welfare Team, although the Head takes ultimate responsibility for child protection matters. Members:

Head: Julie Robinson

Deputy Head / Child Protection Officer (CPO): Mr Geoffrey Whitehead

Deputy Child Protection Officer: Mrs Quelli Coles

Head of Pre-Prep: Tessa Richardson

School Nurse: Victoria Barwick

Designated Governor responsible for overseeing Child Protection: Mrs Moy Gammell

Responsibilities of Members of the Welfare Team

Head

The Head takes ultimate responsibility for child protection (CP) referrals and oversees the Welfare team.

Deputy Head / CPO

The Deputy Head / CPO will convene Welfare Team meetings in September each year and on at least a termly basis, according to need. The Deputy Head / CPO will oversee referrals and play an active part in decision-making in child protection matters. In particular he will:

- Liaise with the Head and keep the Head informed of developments.
- Ensure that there is always CP cover at school.
- Recognise the thresholds for appropriate referral and will understand the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Attend and contribute effectively to Child Protection Conferences as required.
- Ensure that staff induction and training includes CP awareness.
- Ensure that CP paperwork is effective.
- Access resources and refresher training and will ensure that parents are aware of school CP policy and CP procedures.
- Review and update CP policy annually with the designated Governor for Child Protection.
- Ensure that CP information is passed on to next schools as appropriate.
- In liaison with the Deputy CPO, check the East Sussex Children's Services Index when children come to Vinehall and monitor personal histories.

Deputy CPO

The Deputy CPO will:

- Maintain CP files.
- Keep the CPO aware of current issues and will attend relevant training.
- Organise training for members of the Welfare Team (and ongoing advice)
- Assist the Director of Studies in organising training for the whole staff every three years.
- Assist the CPO in checking children on the Children's Index.

Head of Pre-Prep

The Head of Pre-Prep will:

- Collect CP-related information from the Pre-Prep department from staff, parents and children and will pass all CP notes to the Deputy CPO for filing separately.
- Liaise with the Welfare Team and between the Welfare Team and parents/staff in the Pre-Prep.
- Ensure that Pre-Prep staff are aware of CP procedures and practices at Vinehall.

School Nurse

The School Nurse will liaise between the Welfare Team and parents/pupils.

Governors

There is an annual policy review meeting which the Governor designated with CP responsibility will attend. Minutes of the meeting will be sent to Governors through the Risk Committee.

Policy Statement

In all of the work that we do at Vinehall, we see the rights, safety and welfare of children as paramount. This means that sometimes we have to take actions which some parents/carers could find threatening. In such cases we will work towards mutual understanding. We will explain our professional responsibilities and we will give every reassurance as to our motives but we will always stress that, for us, children's needs have to come first.

Our policy applies to all staff and governors working in the school, all of whom have a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and for ensuring that they are protected from harm. There are five main elements to our policy:

- Ensuring that we practise safe recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that all staff and volunteers have been appropriately screened prior to appointment and are suitable to work with children.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Supporting pupils who have been abused (in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan).
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with children, staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse, particularly in a boarding school setting. We will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure that children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.

- Include opportunities in the PSHE curriculum for children to develop the skills that they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

We will follow the procedures set out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) (previously the Area Child Protection Committee) and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) / Department for Schools, Families and Children (DCSF) to:

- Provide a designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) and Welfare Team who have received appropriate training in child protection and inter-agency working and support for this role together with training updates every two years.
- Designate a school governor to be responsible for overseeing child protection; reviewing the school's policies and procedures annually; reviewing, annually, the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged.
- Ensure that every member of staff and governor knows the name of the CPO, his deputy and their roles.
- Provide training in child protection for the Head and all staff (including Support Staff), with updates every three years.
- Ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the CPO.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the Parents' Handbook.
- Notify Social Services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on the child protection register.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written, dated and signed records of concerns about children, even when there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Keep records in a locked drawer, separate from the main pupil file (CPO and Deputy CPO only to have a key).
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff (see Staff Handbook Appendix 2 to Annex 8: Crisis Management Procedures in cases of Suspected Child Abuse and Chapter 5 of Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education dated Nov 06, held by the CPO).
- Ensure that safe recruitment and selection practices are always followed (see SOP 002 below).
- Follow the agreed inter-agency procedures set out in the Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures.
- Ensure that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are rectified without delay.

We recognise that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. School may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. We will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum (for example PSHE lessons).
- The school ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will aim to ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as social services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.
- Ensuring that, where a pupil on the child protection register leaves, their information is transferred to the new school immediately and that the child's social worker is informed.

All staff and parents should be fully aware of the school's Child Protection Policy and to whom they should report any concerns. Pre-Prep staff should report any concerns to Head of Pre-Prep, who will

discuss with the CPO. The policy will be available on the School website.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL STAFF FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Children

At the beginning of term, form teachers should ensure that their class understand that if they have any problems or complaints they should feel able to tell one of the following:

- Class / Form teacher
- Subject teacher
- School Nurse
- Matron
- Houseparent
- Deputy Head
- Head / Head of Pre-Prep
- Any other member of staff (including Pre-Prep Teaching Assistants / Individual Learning support Assistants).

The children should feel assured that the staff will listen sympathetically and non-judgementally and that:

- If they do not feel able to talk to a member of Vinehall staff that they may see the School Doctor at surgery time.
- There is an option of seeing a female Doctor if required.
- They have access to the pay phone and to Childline. The phone numbers for Childline and Social Services are posted in the pay phone box.

Parents

Parents are encouraged to share minor problems with their child's form teacher or appropriate member of staff. If appropriate, the problem will be taken to and dealt with by a Head of Department. Problems of a more serious nature should be raised either orally or in writing with the Head, as set out in the Prep Parents' Handbook.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Abuse may happen at home or at school. All staff (and in particular the School Nurse, matrons, boarding and PE staff) have opportunities to observe evidence of abuse or neglect. All staff must be aware of the possibility of abuse and be vigilant. Suspicions of abuse may arise through observation or from information from parents, children, or other staff.

If any member of staff has suspicions of abuse having taken place whether physical, sexual, emotional or neglect, they have an ABSOLUTE DUTY to report their suspicions to the School's CPO or deputy, immediately (unless the CPO is accused or absent, in which case the Head / Head of Pre-Prep should be approached, as appropriate). Any allegations made against the Head must be reported immediately to the CPO, who is to inform the designated Governor responsible for overseeing Child Protection immediately. The latter is to inform the Chairman of Governors as soon as possible.

The CPO and Deputy CPO have a 24-hour phone number available to all. (CPO: (M): 07813 153533 and Deputy CPO: (H): 01424 838486 or (M): 07941 183365) It is essential for the CPO to keep clear, factual notes, dated and signed for the school records. The School Nurse keeps a record of physical injuries and is informed from any A & E Department if a Vinehall School child attends and the reason for attending.

The CPO will follow the procedures set out in the Common assessment Framework (CAF), contained in the Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures.

See also Appendix 2 to Annex 8 which explains how situations of suspected child abuse should be

dealt with from a Crisis Management perspective.

Signs and Monitoring

Regular meetings of staff who are responsible for the care and welfare of the children are encouraged, and it is hoped that any unhappiness, distress or abnormal behaviour in a child would come out at these meetings. Staff have a RESPONSIBILITY to share information that is relevant to the welfare of pupils.

Staff are encouraged to look out for any of the following:

Any abnormal behaviour, including changes in character or performance

- Any aggressive behaviour such as sudden onset of bed-wetting
- Changes in eating pattern loss of appetite or excessive preoccupation with food
- Loss of self-esteem
- Onset of attention seeking, disobedience or aggression
- Severe sleep disturbances and nightmares, especially with sexual content
- Any words or actions indicating any problems, other than minor ones, at home or in school, including inconsistencies between parental explanations and those from children
- Any physical sign such as bruising, unexplained bleeding, difficulty in any normal bodily functions and any aches or pains which seem to have no physical cause
- Inconsistencies between parental explanations and those from children
- Any hints from children about sexual activity or abuse of any kind amongst the children or from a member of staff on a child must be reported to the Head / Head of Pre-Prep and CPO.

If staff are concerned about a child's well-being but feel that it is not a child protection issue, they should discuss their concerns with the CPO and Head / Head of Pre-Prep first. Consideration should then be given to sharing that concern with the child's parents and whether to advise counselling from a qualified child counsellor.

WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD APPROACHES YOU

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989 states: "It shall be the duty of 'the school' to cause enquiries to be made into the case unless they are satisfied that such enquiries are unnecessary."

If a child approaches you:

- Always stop and listen straight away to someone who wants to tell you about incidents or suspicions of abuse.
- If possible, write brief notes of what they are telling you while they are speaking (these may help later if you remember exactly what was said) – and keep your original notes, however rough and even if you wrote on the back of something else (it's what you wrote at the time that may be important later – not a tidier and improved version you wrote up afterwards). If you don't have the means to write at the time, make notes of what was said as soon as possible afterwards. Always date the notes. Good record-keeping underpins future action.

Do not give a guarantee that you will keep what is said confidential or secret – if you are told about abuse you have a responsibility to tell the right people to get something done about it. If asked, explain that you are going to be told something important that needs to be sorted out;

- that you will need to tell the people who can sort it out; but that you will only tell people who absolutely have to know.
- Don't ask leading questions that might give your own ideas of what might have happened (e.g. "Did he do X to you?"); ask instead questions like "What do you want to tell me?" or "Is there anything I ought to know?" or "Can you tell me when... who...?"
- Immediately tell the CPO, unless he/ she is accused or suspected of abusing, in which case you should tell the Head. Make sure that when you do so you distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion. The CPO will inform the Head. You should not tell other adults or children what you have been told.
- Discuss with the CPO whether any steps need to be taken to protect the person who has told you about the abuse (this may need to be discussed with the person who told you).
- Never attempt to carry out an investigation of suspected or alleged abuse. Social services and police are trained to do this; you could cause more damage and spoil possible criminal proceedings.
- As soon as possible (and certainly the same day) the CPO should refer the matter to the Duty and Assessment Team. The Duty Officer there will give advice and, if the CPO decides to make an official referral he will, within 24 hours, complete and fax to the Social Services a referral form. The Social Services Child Protection team will then decide whether to set in motion any investigations. A full and careful investigation may follow. This will result in contact with any or all of the following: School Nurse, matrons, doctors, the LEA Welfare Service, the parents of the child, the adult implicated, the child (if appropriate) and the Chairman of the Governing Body.
- Never think abuse is impossible at Vinehall, or that an accusation against someone you know well and trust is bound to be wrong.
- Children often tell other young people, rather than staff or other adults, about abuse. It is therefore important to make sure that prefects and other older pupils are aware of relevant points on this sheet. This is included in the Year 8 PSHE programme.

Final Important Points

The Head will ensure that NO adult is given substantial unsupervised access to children without being satisfactorily checked through the DfES/DCSF procedure. Any prospective member of staff will first be CRB checked.

Bullying can develop into physical and sexual abuse – as can idiosyncratic punishments introduced by individuals. Our school practices must be effective in countering and monitoring bullying and the misuse of discipline.

We must be vigilant for early warning signs of inappropriate behaviour of staff: for example favouritism, development of excessive one-to-one contact and increased involvement with showering and changing. Any member of staff with any suspicion or concern must talk to the CPO about this. It is important to raise such issues to create the right, safe climate in school.

Open discussion with pupils should be encouraged regarding issues such as times of day or week and locations in school that are high risk for bullying or illicit activities.

If an allegation or suspicion occurs, the CPO will consult Social Services on issues such as informing parents, other children or staff and seeking medical help.

The school aims to co-operate as fully as possible with Police and Social Services investigations – and will participate in their planning meetings if appropriate.

A plan for handling media interest and the aftermath of any investigation is available from the Head.

This is described in the School's Crisis Management Procedures at Annex 8.

The Head will consider suspension of staff without prejudice during any child protection investigation involving them. Guidance should be sought from the Police or Social Services about the timing of any suspension or disciplinary action. Should a member of the boarding staff be suspended pending investigation, alternative accommodation will be found for them away from the school.

The School will inform the Secretary of State, via the DCSF in Darlington, within one month of leaving the school of any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) who resigns or is dismissed or whose services are no longer used because s/he is considered unsuitable to work with children. It is important that reports include as much evidence about the circumstances of the case as possible. Note: failure to make a report constitutes an offence and the school may be removed from the DCSF register of independent schools.

Procedures are in place for managing allegations against a member of staff's conduct or competency regarding child protection issues (see Appendix 2 to Annex 8). If there is a child protection issue, this must take precedence over any other action the School might wish to take.

ROLE OF CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER AND WELFARE TEAM AT VINEHALL SCHOOL

All cases of suspected abuse should be reported to the CPO in the first instance.

The CPO is responsible for:

- Acting as a source of advice, support and expertise within the school and be responsible for co-ordinating action regarding referrals by liaising with Social Services and other relevant agencies over cases of abuse and allegations of abuse, regarding both pupils and members of staff.
- Ensuring each member of staff has access to and is aware of the School's child protection policy. This is essential in respect of staff that are perhaps part time or work with more than one school (e.g. trainee or supply teachers).
- Liaising with the Head to inform her of any issues and ongoing investigations and ensure there is always cover for the role.
- Ensuring the School's child protection policy is updated and reviewed annually and work with the designated governor for child protection regarding this.
- Keeping detailed, accurate, secure, written records of referrals or concerns.
- Where pupils leave the School, ensuring that their file is transferred to the new school as soon as possible. If a pupil leaves and the school is not known, the DfES should be alerted so that these children can be included on the database for lost pupils.
- Having training in how to identify abuse and know when it is appropriate to refer a case, together with having a working knowledge of how Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) operate and the conduct of a child protection case conference; and be able to attend and contribute to these when required.
- Monitoring all child protection training undertaken across the school. (Records of all child protection training are to be maintained by the Director of Studies).
- Attending any relevant or refresher training courses and then ensure that any new or key messages are passed to other staff and governors.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CASES OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

In ALL cases where abuse is suspected or a sustainable allegation is made members of staff should report the information to the CPO.

The CPO should refer these cases to or discuss them with the investigating agencies according to the procedures established by the local LSCB and by the LEA, as appropriate.

If the CPO is unsure about whether a case should be formally referred or has a general concern about a pupil's health or development, she can seek advice and support from the local Social Services, the NSPCC, or the LEA's child protection co-ordinator. The Education Welfare Officer may also be able to offer advice.

Whether or not to make a referral, which could activate a child protection investigation, is a serious decision and will require careful judgement.

When referring a case of suspected or alleged child abuse, the CPO should ask to be informed of the timing of the strategy discussion between the statutory agencies which will decide whether and how to investigate. The CPO may wish to clarify with the investigating agencies when, how and by whom the parents and the pupil will be told that a referral has been made.

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) [previously Area Child Protection Committees APCs]

- LSCBs have the primary responsibility for promoting the safeguarding of children in the local community.
- They review local child protection policies and promote effective co-operation between the agencies involved.
- They should play an active role in training school staff in child protection.
- LSCB membership is determined locally and should include representatives of the main agencies responsible for working together to safeguard children.

Records and Reports for Child Protection Conferences

Child protection records should include the DATE, EVENT and ACTION taken. Reports prepared for child protection conferences should focus on the pupil's:

- Educational progress and achievements
- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Participation
- Relations with other children and young people
- Appearance, where appropriate
- Interaction with other children and adults.

If relevant, reports should include what is known about the pupil's relations with his or her family and the family structure. Reports should be objective and based on evidence. They should distinguish between fact, observation, allegation and opinion.

The School should:

- Make reports available to the pupil's parents prior to the child protection conference UNLESS TO DO SO WOULD PLACE THE PUPIL AT RISK OF SIGNIFICANT HARM.
- Provide written reports to the child protection conference.
- Arrange for an appropriate person from the school to attend the child protection conference.
- Ensure that child protection records are held securely with limited access and separate from the main school pupil file.

Transfer any child protection records if the child moves schools.