

CHILD PROTECTION

Purpose and Aim

Queen's College's whole-school child protection policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with child protection issues. The policy also aims to make explicit the school's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. The purpose of the policy is, therefore, to ensure that child protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.

Introduction

Queen's College fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect the children and support the pupils in its care. There are three main elements to Queen's College's child protection policy:

- Prevention (positive school atmosphere, careful and vigilant teaching, pastoral care, support to pupils, providing good adult role models);
- Protection (following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns);
- Support (to pupils and school staff and to children who may have been abused).

This policy applies to all employees of Queens College.

Framework

Schools do not operate in isolation. Child protection is the responsibility of all adults and especially those working with children. Queen's College aims to help protect the children in its care by working consistently and appropriately with child protection agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect children. Within Queen's College the following individuals have special responsibilities:

- Mrs Gill Watson (**Senior** child protection officer) and Justin Backhouse (**Junior, PrePrep and Nursery CPO**). Role: to co-ordinate all matters relating to child protection issues. These will include:
 - Dealing with reports of abuse against children;
 - Dealing with complaints against staff by children;
 - Making referrals to child protection agencies if appropriate;
 - Keeping the Headmaster fully informed of all child protection issues that may arise;
 - Ensuring all staff receive training in basic child protection;
 - Ensuring that all new staff are properly inducted apropos child protection;
- Mrs Helen Foster (independent listener). Role:

- Act as a sympathetic adult (outside of the school) whom children may approach with their concerns;
- To inform the child protection officer of any child protection issues that may be brought to his/her attention.

Procedures

The child protection officer will be informed immediately by an employee of the school, pupil of the school, parent of the school, other persons, in the following circumstances:

- Suspicion that a child is being abused;
- There is evidence that a child is being abused;
- In the event of a complaint made by a child against an employee of the School.

The child protection officer will keep a full record of reports made and make referrals to child protection agencies if necessary. The Headmaster will be kept informed at all times.

Training and Support

Queen's College ensures that the Headmaster, child protection officer and Chaplain receive training relevant to their role. The School also ensure that all its employees are kept informed about child protection issues through a programme of staff Inset.

Professional Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. Queen's College recognises that the only purpose of confidentiality in this respect is to benefit the child.

Records and Monitoring

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Queen's College is clear about the need to record any concerns held about a child or children within its care, the status of such records and when these records should be passed over to outside agencies.

Attendance at Case Conferences

In the event of Queen's College being invited to attend a child protection conference, the child protection officer will represent the School and provide information relevant to case conferences.

Supporting Children at Risk

Queen's College recognises that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. Queen's College may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of some of the children in its care. The School, therefore, recognises that such children might exhibit challenging and defiant behaviour and will take careful note of the context of such behaviour.

Queen's College also recognises that some children who have experienced abuse may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the child can receive appropriate help and support.

Queen's College will endeavour to support all its pupils through;

- Assembly and Chapel services;
- The curriculum and co-curriculum, to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation;
- The School's Christian ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all pupils and adults a sense of being respected and valued;
- A coherent management of behaviour;
- A consistent approach which recognises and separates the cause of behaviour from that which the child displays... This is vital to ensure that all pupils are supported within the school setting;
- Liaison with other professionals and agencies who support children and parents;
- A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents whenever it is in the child's interest to do so;
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff group whose role it is to respond appropriately in child protection situations.

Queen's College also recognises that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, children may also be vulnerable and in need of support and protection.

OVERVIEW AND GOOD PRACTICE

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002

Section 175 introduced new statutory duties for schools, governing bodies and LEAs. *Safeguarding Children in Education* (www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk) gives advice in line with the provisions of the act on the procedures involved in identifying young people suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and outlines the infrastructures that need to be in place to ensure the safety of children .

Understanding the Basics

Children trust and depend on adults to protect and safeguard them from harm. It is therefore our responsibility as adults who come into contact with children on a daily basis to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse which may have occurred or is occurring to a young person whether it is outside or inside school and whether we are a paid employee or volunteer (1998: 35,000 children throughout the UK on child protection registers).

Our Role

- To keep our eyes and ears open;
- To report;
- To be excellent adult role models.

NB. Identifying and investigating actual child abuse is the responsibility of child protection agencies.

Definition

The term 'child abuse' is used to describe a range of ways in which people (usually adults) harm children. This 'harm' can be in the form of physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect (failing to protect a child).

- **Physical abuse**

When adults deliberately inflict injuries on a child or, knowingly, do not prevent them. It includes hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning or biting. It also includes excessive force. Giving a child poisonous substances, inappropriate drugs or alcohol, and attempting to suffocate or drown a child are also examples of physical abuse.

Results: physical abuse can cause injuries including bruising, burns, fractures, internal injuries and brain damage. In extreme cases it can cause death.

- **Emotional abuse**

When adults continually fail to show affection, or when they threaten, taunt or shout at a child, causing him/her to lose confidence and self-esteem and to become nervous or withdrawn.

Results: emotional abuse damages children deeply – they feel unloved and unlovable and this can have serious effects on the child's personality, making it hard for him/her to form successful relationships.

- **Sexual abuse**

takes place when an adult forces a child to take part in sexual activity in order to satisfy his/her own sexual desires. It may involve sexual intercourse, fondling, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse or exposing children to pornographic videos, books, magazines or other material.

Results: can be very damaging and long term. Sexually abused children may become abusers themselves, they may suffer long term feelings of guilt, they may find subsequent relationships difficult to handle.

- **Neglect**

Where adults persistently and severely fail to care for children or protect them from danger

Results : children appear ill cared for or unhappy; may be withdrawn or aggressive; may have injuries or ongoing health problems

Child abuse can/does happen anywhere – in poor and in affluent homes; in rural, suburban or city areas – involving one or both parents, guardians or teachers.

Child abuse happens often – at least 5,000 cases of abuse are reported each year nationally. Many more occur but are never reported.

- Children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse;
- Abuse can take place at home, at school or anywhere where children spend time;
- It can happen to children and young people of any age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability;
- In almost all cases the abuser is someone know (and often trusted) by the child such as a parent, carer, teacher, relative or friend.

How to Respond if a Child Confides in You

It can take a great deal of courage for a child to talk to an adult about their abuse because the child is 'telling' on someone more powerful than they are. Therefore this should be kept in mind: The child may be having to betray a person who is not only close to them but also loved by them and they are risking a great deal in the hope that you will believe what they say.

Helpful responses:

- Do not panic. Try to be composed and sympathetic
- Listen carefully and keep on listening
- Do not ask questions and do not start to investigate
- Accept what you hear without passing judgment and reassure the child that he or she was right to speak to you
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that you will have to inform the **CPO or Headmaster**
- Stay with the child until they are reassured and comforted. Only leave the child once you have told them what you need to do next.

What to do next:

- You must make an immediate, careful record of what has been said, using the child's actual words wherever possible (not your interpretation of them). If you record opinions, ensure that these cannot be confused with facts;
- Immediately contact the child protection officer. The child protection officer will make a decision based on your report, judging whether the issue should be referred to outside agencies or not. In the absence of the child protection officer the Headmaster should be informed;
- Record in writing the fact that you have reported the situation to the child protection officer; this is for your own protection;
- Remain caring and supportive to the child.

In exceptional circumstance, where you fear for the immediate safety of a child, contact the policy or social services department stating that you are making a child protection referral. When you have done this, follow the normal procedures as laid down in the school's child protection policy.

If you have any doubts about making a report, remember the possible consequences of not reporting ie. Consequences for both the child and yourself. (Not to report may be construed as neglect of care and therefore itself constitute abuse).

It might happen that you become worried about a child's behaviour or injuries, but the child says nothing to suggest that he/she is being abused. What do you do?

- Be the sort of person a child can talk to;
- Be available and be prepared to listen;
- Discuss your concerns with the child protection officer;
- Do not rely on someone else to take action.

What to avoid:

If a disclosure is made to you;

- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show;
- Do not probe for more information than is being offered. You must not question the child or attempt to counsel the child;
- Do not speculate or make assumptions;
- Do not make negative comments about the alleged abuser;
- Do not make any promises that you cannot keep, such as promising that 'everything will be alright';
- Do not agree to keep the information a secret. Make sure that the child knows that the information will be passed on to the child protection officer.

Your role is to:

- Be vigilant and responsible;
- Report accurately and carefully to the child protection officer;
- Support the child by being caring.

There is no more to your role.

Sharing Concerns with Parents

Generally this is to be encouraged, but in cases that may come under the child protection umbrella such sharing of concerns will be done by the child protection officer after discussion with the concerned member of staff. (If, after having discussed a concern you might have about a child with his or her parents, you remain concerned, the issue may be a child protection one and should be reported immediately).

All non-academic members of staff should discuss their concerns immediately with the child protection officer.

When is it not appropriate to share concerns with parents?

Do not share concerns with parents if you believe that you may put the child at greater risk or if you suspect that abuse is occurring for which they appear to be responsible. Under these circumstances report immediately to the child protection officer.

Handling Inappropriate Behaviour from Colleagues

It is our responsibility to behave well in all our dealings with children and specifically with the children for whom we have a duty of care.

If, however, you believe that a colleague is behaving inappropriately, you must immediately follow the procedures laid down in the child protection policy; that is, report immediately to the child protection officer. Loyalty to colleagues should not and must not deflect us from our duty of care to the children within the School. The rule is: the safety and wellbeing of children must come first.

If you receive an allegation about any adult (or even about yourself) you must report this immediately to the Headmaster. Record the facts as you know them and follow the child protection procedures. Try to ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise and remember: Always refer, never investigate.

What Happens Next?

Once you have reported a concern to the child protection officer and that officer has made a decision about the status of the concern (whether it is a child protection issue or not), a referral may be made by the child protection officer and all further responsibility for gathering information and deciding what happens next will rest primarily with social services.

In some cases, a brief assessment might reveal the child to have needs which can be met by providing specific support. In other, more serious cases, the information provided to agencies by the child protection officer will trigger a full child protection investigation.

Social services will not normally report back to the School should any referrals be made to them.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Safety

- The school must ensure that the site is a clean and safe environment for children;
- All staff must have an up-to-date copy of the child protection policy and know who the child protection officer;
- The school must ensure that it has an accurate and up-to-date database detailing contact numbers and medical information. These databases are confidential and stored safely;
- The school must ensure that there are regular safety audits of all equipment (first aid kits, fire extinguishers, telephones etc.) and practise the fire drill;
- The school must ensure that a responsible adult is on site when children arrive and ensure the fully safety of children whilst on site.

Recruitment, General Supervision and Code of Conduct

- When recruiting staff and volunteers the school must ensure all appropriate checks are made;

- The school must keep a careful check on all visitors and guests whether their visit is by invitation or unsolicited;
- The school must ensure that there are sufficient staff (male/female balance) to run all activities;
- All school staff must be an adult role model for children and young people: courteous, friendly and kind. No member of staff should make suggestive or discriminatory comments;
- All school staff should respect children and young people at all times regardless of their sex, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation;
- No member of school staff must ever allow or engage in inappropriate verbal or physical contact of any description. It is easy for certain types of behaviour to be misinterpreted;
- All school staff should be firm and fair with children. Favouritism should be avoided, as should singling out troublemakers. All staff should keep in mind the distinction between bad behaviour and the child exhibiting the unacceptable behaviour;
- No member of school staff should allow children or adults to engage in abuse activities such as initiation rites, ridiculing or bullying;
- All members of school staff should redirect excessive attention-seeking behaviour into positive activity where possible;
- The school must develop an ethos that allows staff to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out any inappropriate attitudes or behaviour to each other;
- The school must encourage children to trust their own feelings about adult behaviour and to assert their right to determine (within sensible limits) the behaviour with which they are comfortable;
- All school staff should avoid unobserved one-to-one contact with a child or young person. When such a situation is unavoidable, the door must be left open and a colleague must be within sight and hearing;
- No male member of staff may enter an all-female room/dressing room etc. or vice versa;
- All school staff should report disclosures or concerns to the child protection officer;
- School staff should never trivialise child abuse issues;
- In cases where personal care tasks are required, school staff must carry out these tasks with the knowledge and agreement of parents;
- No member of school staff should drive or walk a young person home on their own unless the circumstances are exceptional. No member of school staff should ever take a young person to their home. In any one-to-one situation that is not a clear and proper part of your work you put yourself at risk of false allegations.

Allegations

- Never let allegations by a child or young person go unrecorded or unreported, including any made against you. In all instances the child protection officer must be informed;
- If you receive a disclosure it is important to reassure the child that what he/she says will be taken very seriously and everything possible done to help.

Protective Behaviours

Teaching 'protective behaviours' is part of the school's PSHE programme. Children and young people are therefore made aware of the following:

- Potential dangers and how to avoid them;
- That if in trouble they should find an appropriate person in authority such as a teacher or policeman;
- That sometimes it is alright to scream and shout to attract attention if they think they are in danger;
- That they should not have to accept touching, kissing or language that makes them feel uncomfortable;
- That sometimes secrets are wrong and should not be kept;
- That adults will listen to them if they reveal a secret;
- Their right to say 'No' if someone tries to touch them in a way that frightens or confuses them;
- That their bodies are their own, particularly their sexual organs.

Conclusions

- If you are concerned about a child or young person, or suspect that abuse is taking place, it is your statutory duty to act on it by reporting as directed by the school's child protection policy;
- You must always report your concerns immediately, whether this is inappropriate adult behaviour, a false allegation, a disclosure from a child or you merely having concerns about a child. Never wait to 'see what happens';
- Never question a child or try to investigate yourself. You could prejudice a case by proving for more information than is given. If an investigation is necessary it will be handled by child protection professionals;
- Ensure that your own behaviour is appropriate at all times and never believe that 'it won't happen to me';
- Make sure you have in your possession a copy of the school's child protection policy and that you are well acquainted with its contents. This is a requirement.

See ["Guidance for School Staff"](#) for children and young people which was given legal force in the Children Act 2004.