



BEECHWOOD

Sacred Heart School

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

This policy is made available to parents of all new students, day and boarding, on the School website and on request from the School Office. It is available to the Staff at the School from the School website, in the Staff Handbook (electronic) and on request from the School Office. Content of this policy is directly discussed with new staff upon induction into the School.

This policy has been authorised by the Governors, is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and is available to parents on request. It applies wherever staff, temporary staff or volunteers are working with pupils even where this is away from the school, for example at an activity centre or on an educational visit.

1. Policy Statement

The statutory framework for Child Protection was established in the *Children Act (1989)*. The duty of independent schools' proprietors and/or Governors to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the School was explicitly stated in the *Education Act (2002)*. Independent schools are also recommended to follow the DCSF guidance published in *Safeguarding Children in Education (2004)*, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)* and *Safeguarding Children: Safer Recruitment and Selection in Education Settings (2007)*, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)*, *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2007, revised 2010)* aligned with the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools*. The School's policy has been drawn up with reference to all of these guidelines to ensure that we practise safe recruitment. As part of the ethos of the school, the staff and Governors are committed to:

- listening to, relating effectively with and valuing each individual pupil in our care
- encouraging and supporting parents/carers/guardians and working together in partnership with them
- ensuring that all members of staff, both teaching and support, full-time and part-time, are properly trained and supported.

As such, Beechwood School will take all reasonable measures to:

- ✓ Ensure that we practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of Staff and volunteers;
- ✓ Ensure that we carry out all necessary checks on the suitability of people who serve on the School's governing body in accordance with the regulations and guidance above
- ✓ Ensure that where the school ceases to use the services of any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or student) because the person was

considered unsuitable to work with children, a prompt and detailed report is made to the Department for Education;

- ✓ Follow the local inter-agency procedures and advice as set out the *Children, Families and Education Department at Kent County Council*
- ✓ Protect each pupil from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another pupil;
- ✓ Be alert to signs of abuse both in the School and from outside;
- ✓ Deal appropriately with every suspicion or complaint of abuse;
- ✓ Design and operate procedures which promote this policy;
- ✓ Design and operate procedures which, so far as possible, ensure that teachers and others who are innocent are not prejudiced by false allegations;
- ✓ Support children who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan;
- ✓ Be alert to the medical needs of children with medical conditions;
- ✓ Operate robust and sensible health & safety procedures;
- ✓ Take all practicable steps to ensure that School premises are as secure as circumstances permit;
- ✓ Operate clear and supportive policies on drugs, alcohol and substance misuse;
- ✓ Consider and develop procedures to deal with any other safeguarding issues which may be specific to individual children in our schools or in our local area;
- ✓ Have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in accordance with *Section 157 Education Act 2002* and associated regulations.

Every complaint or suspicion of abuse from within or outside the School will be investigated and in all proper circumstances will be referred to an external agency such as Kent County Council (West Kent Children, Families and Education), the Child Protection Unit of the Police (**CPU**) or the NSPCC. In each case, the matter should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer who is **Helen Windiate** whose contact number is: **01732 5250350**. If any deficiencies or weaknesses in the school's child protection arrangements become apparent at any time, they will be remedied without delay.

2. Signs of Abuse

The school recognises that some children today are the victims of neglect and/or physical, sexual or emotional abuse and that staff of the School, by virtue of their day-to-day contact with and knowledge of the children in their care, are well placed to identify such abuse and offer support to children in need. The Law defines someone as a child until he or she is 18.

Abuse can be:

- ✓ **PHYSICAL** – for example beating or punching;
- ✓ **EMOTIONAL** – for example rejection and denial of affection;
- ✓ **SEXUAL** – for example sexual assault or encouraging a child to view sexually explicit material
- ✓ **NEGLECT** – for example a failure to provide appropriate care including warmth, medical attention or adequate supervision

Possible signs of abuse include (but are not limited to):

- ✓ the pupil says he/she has been abused or asks a question which gives rise to that inference;
- ✓ there is no reasonable or consistent explanation for a pupil's injury; the injury is unusual in kind or location; there have been a number of injuries; there is a pattern to the injuries;
- ✓ the pupil's behaviour stands out from the group as either being extreme model behaviour or extremely challenging behaviour; or there is a sudden change in the pupil's behaviour;
- ✓ the pupil asks to drop subjects with a particular teacher and seems reluctant to discuss the reasons;
- ✓ the pupil's development is delayed;
- ✓ the pupil loses or gains weight;
- ✓ the pupil appears neglected, e.g. dirty, hungry, inadequately clothed;
- ✓ the pupil is reluctant to go home, or has been openly rejected by her parents or carers.

Any member of staff who receives a disclosure of abuse or suspects that abuse may have occurred should follow the procedure as laid out in this document – **see '4. Procedures'**.

3. The Role of the Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

3.1 - The Designated Child Protection Officer

The school has appointed a senior member of staff (the Deputy Head) with the necessary status and authority to be responsible for matters relating to child protection and welfare. The main responsibilities of the Designated Child Protection Officer are:

- ✓ to be the first point of contact for parents, pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff and external agencies in all matters of child protection;
- ✓ to co-ordinate the child protection procedures in the school;
- ✓ to maintain an on-going training programme for all school employees;
- ✓ to monitor the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to child protection;
- ✓ to liaise with the Designated Person responsible for Child Protection appointed by Kent County Council

3.2 The Designated Child Protection Officer at Beechwood Sacred Heart School is **Mr Peter Fisher** (Deputy Head) who may be contacted on **01892 532747 Ext:8604**.

He will:

- ✓ advise and act upon all suspicion, belief and evidence of abuse reported to him;
- ✓ keep the Headmaster informed of all actions unless the Headmaster is the subject of a complaint. In this situation, the DCPO will consult with the Governor responsible for Child Protection at Beechwood who is **Mr Patrick Holland**;
- ✓ he will ensure that the school is represented at any relevant child protection conferences or, failing that, that a report is submitted to the conference from the School as required. He will also ensure that any recommendations made by the conference which involve school staff are carried out as agreed.

3.3 If the DCPO is unavailable or is himself the subject of a complaint, his duties will be assumed by the Headmaster who has received appropriate training which is updated every two years.

3.4 All staff will receive Child Protection training which is updated at least every two years, but certainly within 3 years.

3.5 The DCPO has undertaken child protection training and training in inter-agency working and will attend refresher training at two yearly intervals.

3.6 The Headmaster ensures that there are sufficient resources and time allocated to allow the DCPO to properly discharge his responsibilities.

4. Procedures

4.1 An Initial complaint - A member of staff suspecting or hearing a complaint of abuse:

- ✓ must listen carefully to the child and keep an open mind. Staff should not take a decision as to whether or not the abuse has taken place;
- ✓ must not ask leading questions, that is, a question which suggests its own answer;
- ✓ must reassure the child but not give a guarantee of absolute confidentiality. The member of staff should explain that they need to pass the information to the Designated Person who will ensure that the correct action is taken;
- ✓ the member of staff must keep a brief but sufficient written record of the conversation. The record should include the date, time and place of the conversation and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence. The record should be signed by the person making it and should use names, not initials. The record must be kept securely and handed to the Designated Person. Record Forms are located in the Staffroom.
- ✓ Access to these records is on a 'need to know' basis and decisions about access will be made in consultation with the Headmaster.
- ✓ When a pupil who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan leaves the school the DCPO will inform the child's new school immediately and discuss with the child's key worker the transfer of any confidential information the school may hold.

4.2 Preserving evidence - All evidence - for example, scribbled notes, mobile phones containing text messages, clothing, computers - must be, as far as is possible, be safeguarded and preserved.

NB: The School should not do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking a child a leading question or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse.

4.3 Reporting - Allegations against staff (see also Section 7 ‘Allegations Against Staff’ and ‘Procedures when a Member of Staff, Volunteer, Child Protection Officer or Headmaster faces Allegations of Abuse’) volunteers or the designated person with responsibility for safeguarding should be reported to the Headmaster. It is also advised that the DCPO should be contacted (unless he or she is the object of the allegation) since the DCPO will have received higher level safeguarding training.

If the Headmaster is absent, the allegation should be passed on to the Governor with responsibility for Child Protection. If the allegation concerns the Headmaster, the person receiving the allegation should immediately inform the Governor with responsibility for Child Protection (Mr Patrick Holland) without notifying the Headmaster first. In case of serious harm, the Police should be informed from the outset.

4.4 Whistleblowing: All staff are required to report to the Headmaster or the Chair of Governors any concern or allegations about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put students at risk of abuse or other serious harm. In exceptional cases such reports should be made to Ofsted. There will be no retribution or disciplinary action taken against a member of staff for making such a report provided that it is done in good faith. In doing so, the reporting staff member is provided with immunity from retribution or disciplinary action for ‘whistleblowing’ in good faith.

5. Action by the DCPO: The action to be taken will take into account:

- ✓ the local inter-agency procedures of Kent County Council – specifically the West Kent Children, Families and Education Department;
- ✓ the nature and seriousness of the suspicion or complaint. (A complaint involving a serious criminal offence will always be referred to the West Kent Children, Families and Education Department or the Police without further investigation within the School.);
- ✓ the wishes of the pupil who has complained, provided that the pupil is of sufficient understanding and maturity and properly informed. However, there may be times when the situation is so serious that decisions may need to be taken, after all appropriate consultation, that override a pupil's wishes;
- ✓ the wishes of the complainant's parents, provided they have no interest which is in conflict with the pupil's best interests and that they are properly informed. Again, it may be necessary, after all appropriate consultation, to override parental wishes in some circumstances. If the DCPO is concerned that disclosing information to parents would put a child at risk, he or she will take further advice from the relevant professionals before making a decision to disclose:
 - duties of confidentiality, so far as applicable;
 - the lawful rights and interests of the school community as a whole including its employees and its insurers;

5.1 If there is room for doubt as to whether a referral should be made, the DCPO may consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (Helen Windiate) or other appropriate professionals on a no names basis without identifying the family. However, as soon as sufficient concern exists that a child may be at risk of significant harm, a referral will be made without delay. If the initial referral is made by telephone, the Designated Person will confirm the referral in writing to Kent County Council – specifically the West Kent Children, Families and Education Department or the Kent’s Safeguarding Children’s Board within 24 hours. If no response or acknowledgment is received within three working days, the DCPO will contact the above agencies within 24 hours.

5.2 Referral guidelines: A referral to Kent County Council (West Kent Children, Families and Education) or the Police will not normally be made where:

- ✓ the complaint does not involve a serious criminal offence; and
- ✓ a referral would be contrary to the wishes of a pupil complainant who is of sufficient maturity and understanding and properly informed, and contrary also to the wishes of the complainant's parents; and
- ✓ the case is one that can be satisfactorily investigated and dealt with under the school's internal procedures, the parents being kept fully informed, as appropriate.

However, if during the course of the internal procedures it appears that the situation is more serious, the DCPO will again consider whether a referral should be made in accordance with section 4.4 above. The Police will be called wherever a child is considered to be in a position of immediate risk.

6. Working with External agencies:

6.1 Beechwood recognises that it is an agent of referral and not investigation. It fully accepts that the investigation of child abuse is the responsibility of the Social Services Department and the Police and will do everything possible to support and assist them in their task. The local contact is: **Helen Windiate contactable on 01732 525035.**

6.2 We will endeavour to build relationships with other agencies so that understanding trust and confidence can be built which will help to secure effective co-operation in cases of actual or suspected abuse.

6.3 Whether or not the School decides to refer a particular complaint to the Social Services Department or the Police, the parents and pupil will be informed in writing of their right to make their own complaint or referral to any of the aforementioned external agencies being provided with all the appropriate names, addresses and telephone numbers.

7. Allegations against staff:

7.1 The school procedures for dealing with allegations against staff (and volunteers who work with children) aim to strike a balance between the need to protect children from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded allegations. These procedures are outlined in the ‘Procedures when a Member of Staff, Volunteer, Child Protection Officer or Headmaster faces Allegations of Abuse.’

7.2 As per the *Procedures when a Member of Staff, Volunteer, Child Protection Officer or Headmaster faces Allegations of Abuse* suspension will not be an automatic response to an allegation. Full consideration will be given to all the options, subject to the need to ensure:

- the safety and welfare of the students or student concerned; and
- the need for a full and fair investigation.

7.3 If a member of boarding staff is suspended pending a child protection investigation, arrangements will be made for alternative accommodation away from children.

7.4 Where an allegation or complaint is made against the DCPO or any other member of staff or a volunteer, the matter should be reported immediately to the Headmaster.

7.5 Where an allegation or complaint is made against the Headmaster, the person receiving the allegation should immediately inform the Governor responsible for Child Protection (Mr Patrick Holland), or in his absence the Deputy Head, without first notifying the Headmaster.

7.6 Detailed guidance is given to staff to ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place students or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a student. This guidance is contained in this Policy, is in this School's Handbook and is an integral feature of Child Protection/Safeguarding INSET provided by the school.

7.7 If the school ceases to use the services of a member of staff (or a governor or volunteer) because they are unsuitable to work with children, a compromise agreement will not be used and there will be a prompt and detailed report to the **Independent Safeguarding Authority**. Any such incidents will be followed by a review of the safeguarding procedures within the School, with a report being presented to the Governors without delay.

8. Allegations against students:

8.1 A student at Beechwood against whom an allegation of abuse has been made may be suspended from the school during the investigation and the School's Behaviour Policy will apply. The school will take advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on the investigation of such allegations and will take all appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved including the student or students accused of abuse. If it is necessary for a student to be interviewed by the Police in relation to allegations of abuse, the school will ensure that, subject to the advice of the LADO, parents are informed as soon as possible and that the student is supported during the interview by an appropriate adult.

In the case of students whose parents are abroad, the student's Education Guardian will be requested to provide support to the student and to accommodate him/her if it is necessary to suspend him/her during the investigation.

8.2 Suspected harm from outside the school: A member of staff who suspects that a student is suffering harm from outside the school should seek information from the child with tact and sympathy using 'open' and not leading questions. A sufficient record should be made of the conversation and if the member of staff continues to be concerned he or she should refer the matter to the DCPO.

8.3 Missing child procedures: All staff are informed of the separate procedure to be used for searching for, and if necessary, reporting, any boarder missing from school. The procedure includes the requirement to record any incident, the action taken and the reasons given by the student for being missing.

8.4 Informing parents: Parents will normally be kept informed as appropriate of any action to be taken under these procedures. However, there may be circumstances when the DCPO will need to consult the LADO and/or the Headmaster before discussing details with parents.

9. Early Years Foundation Stage provision

- 9.1 The DCPO will take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within the EYFS setting and for liaising with local statutory children's agencies as appropriate.
- 9.2 The school will inform Ofsted, as soon as is reasonably practicable and at the latest within 14 days, of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether that allegation relates to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere), or any other abuse which is alleged to have taken place on the premises, and of the action taken in respect of these allegations.

10. Support for Children/Staff/Families

- 10.1 For any child undergoing a child protection referral and investigation the need for support will be great and quite often such support will be limited to what the School can offer. We aim at least to provide a secure classroom environment in which the child feels valued and protected and will make other support, such as accommodation in the boarding area, available where appropriate.
- 10.2 The DCPO and the Headmaster will, whenever possible, make themselves available to discuss individual children or situations with concerned members of staff.
- 10.3 The school will offer support where possible to the family of a child or children involved in a child protection investigation within the time and expertise constraints of its role and always remembering the limits of confidentiality and the fact that it is the welfare of the child that is paramount.

11 The Role of the Governing Body

- 11.1 The Board of Governors will nominate a Governor to be responsible for child protection issues. In the absence of the nominated Governor, any urgent matter should be brought to the attention of the Chair of Governors.
- 11.2 The nominated Governor will ensure, in liaison with the Headmaster, that the school has appropriate child protection policy and procedures in place which are known to all members of staff.

- 11.3 He/she will liaise when necessary with the DCPO and/or the Headmaster regarding any allegations of abuse.
- 11.4 Should a complaint be made to any Governor about action by the Headmaster or any other member of staff of a child protection nature, it should be passed immediately to the Governor responsible for Child Protection who will seek appropriate advice from external agencies.
- 11.5 The Governors will receive annually a report on changes to the Safeguarding Children Policy and/or any associated procedures; training undertaken by the DCPO, Headmaster and other staff; and the number of incidents/cases (without details or names).

This document replaces the *'Procedures for Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse Policy'*

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed:

Date: 19/08/2011

Position: Governor