

THE RIDGEWAY SCHOOL
Child Protection Procedures

Review - Consultation History

| Governors / Staff | Date |
|---|-------------|
| Pupils Committee | 10 09 03 |
| ADM JMW | 10 09 03 |
| Key Stage Directors & Heads of Year Guidance Meeting | 06 10 03 |
| Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff | 13 10 03 |
| Union Reps (Paras 12 - 15) | Sept 03 |
| Education Welfare Officer, Principal EWO, LEA Child Protection Officer | Sept 03 |
| Executive | Dec 03 |
| Full Governing Body | |

Policy

The policy and procedures support the four main principles governing the Children's Act 1989 and are in accordance with Part V, Section 47 of the Act:

The four main principles are:

- Safeguarding pupils' welfare and promoting their development
- Working in partnership with other agencies
- Considering the wishes and feelings of those with parental responsibility
- Due consideration of pupils' religions, racial origins, cultural and linguistic backgrounds

Section 47 of the Children's Act states:

47. —(1) Where a local authority—

(b) have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the authority shall make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

The policy and procedures aim to ensure that the local authority is able to meet its legal requirements in respect of the care, welfare, health and safety of all children at the school.

The policy and procedures are in accordance with the Area Child Protection Committee's Recommendations.

Thus the protection of young people is a primary professional concern and a matter for constant vigilance. The issue of child abuse is a sensitive area for all staff in

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schools. If any member of staff has concerns or worries over a pupil, the correct Child Protection Procedures must be followed. The procedures are intended to meet the

Child abuse can take many forms, but is usually divided into four categories:

1. Physical Neglect
2. Physical Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Linked Policies

Pupil Behaviour Policy; Pastoral Care Policy; Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy; Positive Handling

Procedures

The following procedures apply to all teaching and non-teaching staff at The Ridgeway School, permanent, contract and supply. The Headteacher is legally required to designate a teacher for Child Protection.

The designated Child Protection Co-ordinators are:

Mr Adrian Matthews (ADM) and Mrs Julie White (JMW)

1. In the case of any disclosure of abuse, or of any suspected abuse, staff **must immediately:**
 - either inform a designated Child Protection Co-ordinator, ADM / JMW
 - or contact the relevant Head of Year, who will liaise with ADM / JMW
2. The information is then considered by the designated Child Protection Co-ordinators, who make a decision, always in consultation with the Deputy Head (Pupil Development). The Deputy Headteacher keeps the Headteacher informed of all child protection referrals and of the progress of the procedures. There are a number of options: to contact Social Services, the Police, another outside agency, and to make a decision on the involvement of parents.

Social Services must be contacted if there is any suspicion of abuse

Further points on the teacher's role

3. It is important that teachers accept responsibility for ensuring that a referral is passed on to the Child Protection Co-ordinators, who will take action in liaison with the Deputy Head (Pupil Development) and with the full support and agreement of the Headteacher.

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4. There may be occasions when teachers will be required to give evidence in court. It is important that any teacher in this position should be adequately supported by the School or by other agencies appropriate to the circumstances of the situation. Where members of staff have listened to disclosures, they are thanked for supporting the pupil and reassured that they have acted in the pupil's best interests. They are also informed that standard procedures are being followed, thus the disclosure is being dealt with in an appropriate way.

5. A confidential log of all incidents is maintained in the Key Stage Office. This is locked and is available for access upon request only to current Child Protection Co-ordinators, the Deputy Headteacher (Pupil Development) and the Headteacher. No confidential child protection information is ever stored in a pupil's standard file. If a pupil who has been the subject of child protection procedures moves to another school, these are sent to the new school and marked 'strictly confidential'. When a pupil who has been the subject of child protection procedures leaves the school, the record is archived securely.

Guidelines for school procedures, which will vary according to the case being considered:

6. When a pupil is interviewed by a member of staff about a disclosure of child abuse it is important that only the basic facts or allegations are established in order to reach *a threshold of information for referral to Social Services*. Under no circumstances should there be an 'investigation' and pupils should not be asked to give written statements. It needs to be remembered that investigations into child abuse are undertaken by professionally trained police personnel and nothing must be done to prejudice any future investigation.
7. No member of staff, in any role, should guarantee a pupil complete confidentiality over matters of child abuse; it always needs to be made clear that there are procedures which follow any disclosure or allegation of abuse. It is advisable for staff to protect themselves at the outset of any disclosure discussion that they may have to pass on the information.
8. If a pupil is referred to the designated Child Protection Co-ordinators a threshold investigation is established as a matter of urgency, with cover for lessons immediately provided if necessary. Flexibility is applied with regard to which members of staff attend the interview: it may be that a pupil who has already confided in a trusted tutor, subject teacher or other member of staff may feel more comfortable in the continued presence of that person.
9. It is frequently the case that abuse comes to light from the reports of other pupils or friends. Although as a general rule the threshold interview/discussion is held with staff, the presence of a friend to support the individual should not necessarily be ruled out.
10. A judgement needs to be made about informing **parents**. As a general principle, it is important to be open and honest when responding to parents. Parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children and, in most cases, should be

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informed of concerns. However, caution should be exercised. There may be circumstances where this might prejudice subsequent investigations. In cases of alleged sexual abuse, the investigating agency should **always** be contacted before contacting parents. In other cases of alleged abuse, this procedure is **advisable**. If there is any doubt the matter is discussed with Social Services.

11. Information about any absences or pastoral concerns related to any pupil involved in Child Protection procedures is strictly confidential and no substantial information is disclosed through the school's normal communication procedures. For example, reference may be made in a communication for staff to a child 'experiencing personal difficulties' or 'please treat sympathetically for personal reasons', but there must be no comment on the reasons.

Guidelines for Handling Incidents of Allegations Within School

12. In the event of an allegation made by a pupil or parent of an assault on a pupil by a member of staff in school, similar procedures are followed.
13. If the allegation is made in school by a pupil, an initial threshold investigation is undertaken, the purpose being only to establish that there is sufficient evidence that a critical incident has taken place. It is essential that this investigation does not subject pupils to detailed interviewing and they should not be required to write witness statements. The reason for this is that there may be a subsequent police investigation which would be conducted in line with standard procedures and must not be prejudiced.
14. If the allegation is made by a parent (i.e. the school has not known about an incident) there are two possible courses of action:
 - if the complaint is to the school (school or Governors) only (i.e. no complaint to the police) an initial threshold investigation is undertaken as described in Para 11
 - if a complaint has been made by the parent to the police, there is no investigation in school.
15. When a threshold investigation produces evidence that there may have been an incident requiring further investigation, or when a parent has filed a complaint with the police, a Strategy Meeting is arranged at Swindon Borough Council to consider the case and decide upon action points. The school is represented at this meeting by a senior member of staff. If there is a police investigation, the school undertakes no further internal investigation until the outcome is known.

Training and Dissemination

16. Training for all staff is arranged in the following ways:
 - for **existing teaching staff**, attention is drawn in staff meetings to any changes in the policy and procedures and the relevant sections of the policy published;

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- for **new teaching staff** Child Protection procedures are covered on the induction programme;
- for **non-teaching staff** there is a briefing meeting held during the early part of the Autumn Term with summary notes distributed to any member of staff unable to attend.

17. The policy is published in the Staff Handbook and any revisions or amendments are published separately.

Links with the Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy

18. Child Protection procedures have a particularly important link with the Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy. It is essential that all key staff - tutors, heads of year, Attendance Liaison Assistant, Deputy Head (Pupil Development), Education Welfare Officer - take appropriate action to ascertain the reasons for unauthorised periods of absence. The Education Welfare Officer is informed of any concerns at an early stage.

Pupils At Risk Register

19. An 'At Risk' Register is drawn up in the first Key Stage Directors and Heads of Year Guidance meeting in the Autumn Term and is updated and amended at the start of each term. This is a confidential register: the information is recorded and retained only by the Child Protection Officers, The Deputy Headteacher (Pupil Development) and the Headteacher.

Attendance at Case Conferences

20. On all occasions when required the school makes adequate provision, including cover for lessons, for Heads of Year or other appropriate staff to attend case conferences for pupils involved in child protection procedures.

Appendices

21. The appendices contain a summary of useful guidelines about principles for good practice in Child Protection.

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Appendix 1 CHILD ABUSE - IMPORTANT REMINDERS

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| 1. | There is a need for AWARENESS of the possibility of child abuse - know the indicators that should encourage professionals to BE ALERT |
| 2. | But ... DO NOT PRESUME child abuse has taken place. Do not become "locked in" to an assumption. |
| 3. | COMMUNICATE with fellow and related professionals. |
| 4. | RECORD so that patterns of behaviour can be identified (e.g. repeated "accidents"). |
| 5. | GAIN SUPPORT from colleagues - particularly your line manager - and from other professionals. |
| 6. | ACT APPROPRIATELY . Be aware of what you should and should not do (actions, for instance, that might prejudice subsequent police action). |
| 7. | Be conscious of the importance of your immediate response to the child. |
| 8. | Be clear about the extent and the limits of your role - have a clear understanding of the role boundaries. |
| 9. | Respect the interests and rights of the child's parents, BUT be cautious and careful how you respond to them. |
| 10. | REMEMBER that the child's interests are paramount. |

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Appendix 2 THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN POSSIBLE DISCLOSURES

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| 1. | Being sensitive to possible indicators of abuse, in the classroom |
| 2. | Recognising signs and symptoms |
| 3. | Reassuring the child |
| 4. | Supporting the child during enquiry / investigation by other agencies |
| 5. | Taking what the child says seriously |
| 6. | Ensuring suspected abuse is referred on |
| 7. | Recording incidents, but only at the 'threshold' investigation level |
| 8. | Monitoring the child, in particular reasons for absence |
| 9. | Attending case conferences |

Appendix 3 HOW TO HELP THE CHILD WHEN ABUSE IS DISCLOSED

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| 1. | Be prepared to listen and comfort. |
| 2. | Do not show revulsion or distress, however distasteful the events may be. |
| 3. | Stay calm and controlled. |
| 4. | Do not make false promises, i.e. I will not tell a social worker or the police what you tell me. |
| 5. | Let the child know at once , that it was not his or her fault, and keep restating this. |
| 6. | Follow internal and inter-agency procedures. |

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| 7. | Be aware of your own feelings in relation to sexual abuse. |
| 8. | Stay with the child if you can, while procedures are being followed. |
| 9. | Reassure the child that you still care for him or her, that the disclosures have not made you lose any respect for him or her. |
| 10. | Reassure the child that they were right to tell now, even though the abuse may have happened or started a long time ago. Children usually feel guilty for not having told earlier, so need to know that people tell when they feel ready and safe. They may also feel guilty for just telling. |

Appendix 4 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF PHYSICAL NEGLECT

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| 1. | Constant hunger |
| 2. | Poor personal hygiene |
| 3. | Constant tiredness |
| 4. | Poor state of clothing |
| 5. | Emaciation |
| 6. | Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school |
| 8. | Destructive tendencies |
| 9. | Low self-esteem |

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| 10. | Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking; hair-twisting; thumb-sucking) |
| 11. | No social relationships |
| 12. | Chronic running away |
| 13. | Compulsive stealing or scavenging |

Appendix 5 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

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| 1. | Unexplained injuries or burns, particularly if they are recurrent |
| 2. | Improbable excuses given to explain injuries |
| 3. | Refusal to discuss injuries |
| 4. | Untreated injuries |
| 5. | Admission of punishment that appears excessive |
| 6. | Fear of parents being contacted |
| 7. | Bald patches |
| 8. | Withdrawal from physical contact |

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| 9. | Arms and legs kept covered during hot weather |
| 10. | Fear of returning home |
| 11. | Fear of medical help |
| 12. | Self-destructive tendencies |
| 13. | Aggression towards others |
| 14. | Chronic running away |

Appendix 6 POSSIBLE SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

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| 1. | Being chronically depressed |
| 2. | Being suicidal |
| 3. | Use of drugs or drink to excess |
| 4. | Self-mutilation or showing signs of self-hatred |
| 5. | Unexplained pregnancies |
| 6. | Experience of memory loss |
| 7. | Becoming anorexic or bulimic |
| 8. | Running away frequently |
| 9. | Being inappropriately seductive |
| 10. | Being fearful of certain people like relatives and friends |
| 11. | Assuming the role of parent in the house |
| 12. | Not being allowed to go out or have friends around |

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| 13. | Finding excuses not to go home |
| 14. | Being unable to concentrate, seeming to be in a world of their own |
| 15. | Vicarious transfer - Having a "friend" who has a problem, and then telling about abuse of the friend |
| 16. | Having chronic ailments such as stomach aches and headaches |
| 17. | Exhibiting a sudden change in school habits, becoming a truant |
| 18. | Being withdrawn, isolated, or excessively worried |
| 19. | Having outbursts of anger or irritability |
| 20. | Being fearful of undressing for games |
| 21. | Possessing unexplained sums of money |
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