

St Patrick's RC Primary School



Love and Service

Pastoral Care - Section C Policy for Child Protection

SECTION C

POLICY FOR CHILD PROTECTION

'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'**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At school we recognise 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 for the benefit of the child. Schools have a designated teacher for child protection, who liaises with Social Service departments 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.

1.2 At our school, the Head Teacher and Associate Head Teacher are the designated persons for child protection. All staff has total commitment to child protection. Children's awareness about themselves can be highlighted through Personal and Social Education, Health Education and developing a trusting climate so that children feel able to talk and share their thoughts and feelings.

1.3 At school we are aware of the need of a close partnership between home and school, but with child abuse, or suspicion of child abuse, our first and only responsibility is to the child. This may mean that parents are not informed or consulted in some instances. 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.

1.4 All teachers make sure, through their care of children, to try to ensure that children keep safe, remain healthy and are able to say "NO". Suspected cases will be 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.

2.0 Aims

By following child protection procedures we:

2.1 Care for the child

2.2 Care for our school

2.3 Care for the community we serve

2.4 Respond to the guidelines and procedures of other agencies

3.0 Guidelines & Procedures

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

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

3.2.1 Report immediately to the Head Teacher or Associate Head Teacher

3.2.2 Do not speak to the parents

3.2.3 Do not promise the child that it will be kept a secret

3.3 It is very important in these cases that prompt and correct procedures are followed under the Rochdale Children's Safeguarding Board Procedures. A copy of the Procedures is available in the Safeguarding Policy stored on the 'O' drive and on Rochdale Safeguarding Board Website www.rscb.org

3.4 In reporting concern or suspicion the Head Teacher, Associate Head Teacher it is vitally important that **the person reporting the concerns or suspicion maintains strict confidentiality**.

3.5 The reporting teacher will be told of any further action taken i.e. CAF, Children's Services referral, monitor 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 informed. Any records are maintained in a confidential file under the direction of the Head Teacher.

3.6 Staff have an important role in hearing what children have to say. The school can provide a neutral 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.

3.7 Children may feel they will not be believed, or that they will be punished. Staff will need to say that whatever has happened it 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 enable the child to speak and then know what to do next.

3.8 A list of children causing concern is kept in the Head Teachers office. This includes all children, who, for whatever reason, need to be monitored. Teachers must inform the Head Teacher or Associate Head Teacher of any changes or additions to information so that this list can be kept up to date.

3.9 In the unlikely event of the designated teacher; the Head Teacher or the Associate Head Teacher not being available to deal with an emergency involving Child Protection issues, then the teacher must speak to a member of the Senior Management Team, who will deal with the matters. This would only occur in extreme circumstances.

4.0 Reasons for Following Procedures

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

5. 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.

6. Definitions of Child Abuse

6.1 Abused Child

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

6.2 Physical Abuse

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

6.3 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 they violate the social taboos of family roles.

6.4 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.

6.5 Emotional Abuse

The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child by 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.

7. Rochdale Child Protection Procedures

7.1 These procedures are to be followed in reported abuse cases or suspicion of abuse. Copies of the procedure are recorded in the Safeguarding Policy available on the 'O' drive and displayed in the staffroom

7.2 Central to all procedures for child abuse is a case conference. The following people and agencies may be invited to attend:

- Rochdale Children's Services
- Health Professionals
- Associated Children's Services i.e. Barnardos, NSPCC
- Probation Service
- Housing
- Police

7.3 Other agencies may be involved:

- Clinical or Educational psychologist
- Consultant Psychiatrist (if hospital is concerned)
- Senior Educational Welfare Officer
- Head Teacher or designated teacher
- Head Teacher from siblings' school
- Community worker if appropriate
- Housing Department
- County Council Chief Executive/Clerk's Department
- Recognised voluntary organisations
- Emergency duty team (Social Service)

7.4 The Child Protection Register is held at Rochdale Social Services Department, Child Protection Management Unit. This contains information about confirmed and suspected cases of child abuse. The contact number is 01706 345275 (office hours).

7.5 The Police investigate sexual abuse cases. Social Services can be present to assist the Police when interviewing a child.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by staff and governors in line with the timetable set out in the school's annual improvement plan.