

THE MEAD SCHOOL'S POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD ABUSE

Introduction

The Mead School fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection. All staff must be aware of the professional obligation laid upon them by the 1989 Children's Act and subsequent legislation. The Mead School has a "*duty to safeguard and promote children's welfare*" (Education Act 2002 Section 157).

Our policy applies to all staff, Directors and volunteers working in the school. There are five main elements to our policy:

- 1) Ensuring we practise in line with the statutory guidance set out in "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education" (DCSF January 2007) and with reference to the "Vetting and Barring Scheme" (October 2009) in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with the children and ensuring all staff have read the policy and understood the chain of command and their responsibility.
- 2) Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping pupils with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- 3) Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- 4) Supporting children who have been abused in accordance with their agreed child protection plan.
- 5) Establishing a safe environment in which Mead children can learn and develop.

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with children, the school staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. The Mead School will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where all children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure that all children within the school know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the PSHE curriculum and schemes of work for all children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse and harm.

What is Abuse and Neglect?

The following is taken from '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*' **HM Government 2006**'

"Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children."

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers), and ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Mead school is responsible for ensuring that all action taken is in line with Kent's child in need / child protection procedure. This process implemented in April 2001 follows the requirements of the central government guidance contained in The Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families and Working Together to Safeguard Children. The child protection process is now incorporated within a comprehensive policy and procedure for all children in need.

The role of the school within this procedure is to contribute to the identification, referral and assessment of children in need including children who have suffered, are suffering or who are at risk of suffering harm. The school may also have a role in the provision of services to children in need and their families.

All adults in school have a role to play in relation to;

- A) Protecting children from abuse
- B) Promoting the welfare of children
- C) Preventing children from being harmed

The role of the school in situations where there are child protection concerns is NOT to investigate but to recognise and refer.

**The Mead School's Designated Child Protection Co-ordinator:
Mrs Angela Culley**

The designated Child Protection Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- Co-ordinating child protection action within school
- Liaising with other agencies
- Ensuring that locally established procedures are followed including reporting and referring processes
- Acting as consultant for staff to discuss concerns
- Making referrals as necessary
- Maintaining a confidential recording system
- Representing or ensuring the school is appropriately represented at inter-agency meetings in particular Child Protection Conferences
- Managing and monitoring the school's part in childcare / protection plans
- Organising training for all staff
- Liaising with other professionals.

The Mead School will follow the guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills to:

- Ensure we have a designated senior person for child protection who has received appropriate training and support for this role. (see above)
- Ensure we have a nominated member of the Directors responsible for child protection and that the Directors undertake an annual review of the school's child protection policy and procedures and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. **The nominated member of the Directors is Simon Culley.**
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary and supply staff and volunteers) and all the Directors know the name of the designated person responsible for child protection and their role.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated senior person responsible for child protection.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the school and staff for child protection by making the school's policy on child protection and the school's procedures available to parents. A copy of the school's policy will be sent to parents on request and is posted on the school's website.
- 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.

- Follow DCSF guidance should an allegation be made against a professional working in the school on a paid, unpaid or voluntary basis.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed.
- Organise regular, whole school, professionally run staff training.

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. The 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. The school will endeavour to support the child through:

1. The content of the curriculum.
2. The School's ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives all children a sense of being valued.
3. The School will ensure that the child knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
4. Liaison with other agencies that support the child such as social services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.
5. Ensuring that, where a child on the child protection register leaves The Mead, their information is transferred to the new school immediately and that the child's social worker is informed.

Signs of Abuse

Staff are required to be vigilant at all times to the possible signs of abuse. These may include:

- unexplained bruising or marks
- changes in behaviour, such as excessive clinging or withdrawal
- reverting to immature patterns such as thumb-sucking
- lack of trust in familiar adults or running away
- onset of wetting or soiling
- inappropriate sexual knowledge, vocabulary, touching, or sexual play with dolls and toys
- onset of behaviour problems or unhappiness
- complaints of genital pain

If a child shows any one or a number of these signs, be aware and provide the child with a secure and understanding environment in which he or she may confide. Do not pressurise or 'jump to conclusions'. Register your concerns in writing to Mrs Culley.

Responding to concerns

Concerns for a child or young person may come to the attention of staff in a variety of ways for example through observation of behaviour or injuries or disclosure. Any member of staff who has a concern for a child or young person however insignificant this might appear to be should discuss this with Mrs Culley as soon as this is practically possible. More serious concerns must be reported immediately to ensure that any intervention necessary to protect the child is accessed as soon as possible.

If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to a member of staff they should:

- Allow the child or young person to make the disclosure at their own pace and in their own way.
- Avoid interrupting except to clarify what the child is saying (attentive listening / reflective feedback)
- Not ask leading questions or probe for information that the child or young person does not volunteer
- Stay calm, listen to the child, believe what the child says
- Ascertain the facts as clearly as possible: what happened, who was involved, when and where the incident take place
- Reassure the child that they were right to confide in you, that you were pleased to be told, and that steps will be taken to protect him/her
- Reassure the child or young person that they have been heard and explain what you will do next and to who you will talk
- Record the conversation as soon as possible
- Inform Mrs Culley

Record Keeping

Staff can play a vital role in helping children in need or at risk by effective monitoring and record keeping. Any incident or behavioural change in a child or young person that gives cause for concern should be recorded on an incident sheet copies of which are kept with the class teacher and Mrs Culley.

It is important that the records are factual and reflect the words that are used by the child or young person. Opinion should not be given unless there is some form of evidenced base which can be drawn upon and quoted.

Records must be signed and dated with timings if appropriate. It is important to remember that any issues are confidential and staff should know only on a 'need to know' basis.

Information to be recorded

- Child's name and date of birth
- Change in normal context, e.g. behaviour, attitude, (has there been an extreme change)
- The incident(s) which give rise for concern with date(s) and time(s)
- A verbatim record of what the child or young person has said
- If recording bruising/injuries indicate position, colour, size, shape and time on body map
- Action taken

These basic details are vital to the information gathering process and do not constitute an investigation. Written information should always be passed to Mrs Culley.

Storage of Records

Mrs Culley will ensure that all records relating to concerns for the welfare or safety of children are kept separate to the other school files and are stored securely. Information will be shared on a strictly need to know basis and inline with child protection policy.

Referrals to Social Services

It is the responsibility of Mrs Culley to decide when to make a referral to children's Social services. To help with this decision she may choose to consult with the area Children's Officer. Advice may also be sought from the Children's Social Services Duty Social Workers who offer opportunities for consultation as part of the child in need / child protection process.

Issues discussed during consultations may include the urgency and gravity of the concerns for a child or young person and the extent to which parents / carers are made aware of these. Some concerns may need to be monitored over a period of time before a decision to refer to Children's Social Services is made.

In all but the most exceptional cases parents / carers will be made aware of the concerns felt for a young child or person at the earliest possible stage and in the event becoming necessary, their consent to a referral to Social Services will be sought.

The Child Protection Register

Mrs Culley will inform the relevant pastoral / teaching staff for children or young people whose names are on the Child Protection Register. These children and young persons must be monitored very carefully and the smallest concern is recorded on an incident sheet and passed immediately to Mrs Culley.

Concerns involving members of staff

Any concerns that involve allegations against a member of staff should be referred immediately to Mrs Culley who will contact the Area Children's Officer (Child Protection) to discuss and agree further action to be taken in respect of the child and the member of staff

All staff need to be aware that it is a disciplinary offence not to report concerns about the conduct of a colleague that could place a child at risk.

CODE OF PRACTICE:

All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with relation to child protection. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.

Physical intervention should only be used when the child is endangering himself / herself or others and such events should be recorded and signed by a witness. Staff should be aware of Kent's Positive Handling policy and the School's own behaviour management policy, and any physical interventions must be in line with the School's agreed policy and procedure, alongside which appropriate training should be provided.

All Mead staff work towards providing an environment and atmosphere for children and young people to enable them to feel safe to talk. However staff must never promise a child to keep certain information confidential. It must be explained that staff have certain duties to help keep that child safe, which may require informing others.

Supervision and Support:

Any member of staff affected by issues arising from concerns over the welfare of any of the children at The Mead should seek support from Mrs Culley.

At The Mead School all NQTs and CAs have a mentor / liaising class teacher with whom they can discuss concerns including the area of child protection.

Training Opportunities

Mrs Culley is responsible for ensuring staff, including herself, receive training in all the areas of child protection. Whole staff training in the area of child protection is provided in a three yearly cycle.

The Child Protection Officer for West Kent for school:
Helen Windiate - 01732 525035

Child Protection Officer for West Kent for Early Years:
Claire Ray – 01732 525381

This policy is under yearly review and forms part of The Mead's whole school development plan.

October 2009, DOS/HM/Director/Bursar Mead School

Not on the website but available on request:

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form

Appendix 2 – DCPC Safeguarding Record of Action

Appendix 3 – Chronology

Appendix 4 – Incident/Event Record Continuation Sheet

Appendix 5 – Child Protection Record Front Sheet

Appendix 6 – DCPC Record of Action

Appendix 7 – Child Protection – Allegations against Staff – flow chart