



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The school has a responsibility and duty to always put the needs of the child first and the "Child Protection Policy" should help to enable cases of suspected or identified abuse to be properly considered and pursued. Staff at JMHS are expected to put this policy into practice in their work with students at all times. Staff inset should annually refresh staff on child protection and safeguarding.

1. Recognising the indicators of abuse

Staff and Governors should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of abuse (see separate checklists) while also being aware that the signs are ambiguous and could have many causes. There may be no outward signs at all but a combination of factors can build up a picture of a child at risk.

2. Definition of Abuse

- Neglect: The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- Physical: Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy.
- Sexual: Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature.
- Emotional: Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe ill-treatment or rejection. *All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment.*

3. How to deal with Disclosure

Members of staff and Governors are in a unique position to observe children's behaviour over time, and often develop close and trusting relationships with the young people in their class/groups. Teachers may well be the first to suspect that something is amiss when an individual behaves atypically, withdraws from social contacts with others, exhibits anxiety or stress symptoms in school, appears unusually distressed, confused or disturbed. Children who show very disturbed behaviour may have experienced something very disturbing in their lives. Teachers need to involve other professionals when children's behaviour causes concern.

Teachers may also find themselves being sought out by a child, a parent or relative, neighbour or family friend, as the focus for disclosure of potential abuse.

Members of staff do not have an investigative brief and therefore should not ask leading questions or promise a child confidentiality as they have a professional responsibility to share information (Section 3 (5) Children Act. The chief task is to listen and to make a note of the discussion to pass on to the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher. If the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher is not available information should be passed to the appropriate House Leader.

The note should record the time, date and people who were present as well as what was said.

4. Procedures

After a member of staff reports a case of suspected abuse or a sustainable allegation the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher will first discuss the matter with appropriate members of staff. The situation should then be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher. Initially advice would be sought from the Local Authorities child protection co-ordinator and/or other professionals before formal referral.

All staff at John Masefield High School must operate a risk free policy and should raise any concern about child protection to the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher treating such a referral as urgent.

In cases of intra family abuse, the school should not notify parents of the action they are taking, nor discuss the disclosure with them until advised by the Social Services Department. This ensures that Social Services or Police enquiries are not jeopardised.

5. Recording and Keeping Information

Child protection records are kept in the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher's office in a locked file. Access to them will be through the Schools Designated Child Protection Teacher on a 'need to know' basis. However, it is envisaged that staff having most contact with the child concerned, are kept informed and involved in the on-going

monitoring process. Staff who have any questions or concerns should contact the Designated Child Protection Teacher who will provide any additional information where required and appropriate.

6. Monitoring

Form tutors will monitor the children in their groups using: patterns of attendance, changes of mood, changes in classroom functioning, relationships (with peers, adults), behaviour, comments, general demeanour and appearance, potential interest and comments, home/family changes, medicals, response to P.E./sport, injuries/marks, past and present. Concerns should be taken to House Leaders and notes taken and passed to The Designated Child Protection Teacher.

Considerations to bear in mind:

- If the child is a Looked After Child, all staff closely involved with him/her should know this, as it may affect practical matters such as who meets the child from school, permission to go on outings, parent's evenings, etc. Few children however want to talk about their changed circumstances so there is a need for sensitivity and discretion in handling such matters. The Designated Child Protection Teacher has responsibility for liaising with relevant agencies for LAC students.
- Older student's feelings and concerns should be taken into account and respected if possible. They may prefer teachers not to know about traumatic events in their lives, even at the expense of less sensitive handling of any difficulties in school.
- Staff who attend Case Conferences are likely to hear detailed information about family circumstances and abusive incidents and to receive minutes which record these. This information should remain confidential and passed to the Designated Child Protection Teacher for filing in the Child Protection Records.
- When abuse has been disclosed or discovered in school, it is likely that many people know something about it. It is important that all staff use discretion to reduce gossip and speculation in both the school and the local community.
- Staff may pick up worrying information about children from other parents, neighbours, or other children. This should be passed onto the Designated Child Protection Teacher but should be regarded with caution unless further substantiated. No disclosure or information should be ignored, however.
- Only threats to a child's safety and welfare can justify setting aside normal principles of confidentiality. This may be the case where abuse of a child is suspected but not proven, or where the child is still with a known perpetrator, resulting in the need for all staff dealing with a child to be alerted to watch for signs of abuse.
- Poor feedback from Social Services or other agencies is sometimes inevitable as these agencies also have to respect confidentiality of information they possess about families, where it does not directly affect a child's safety.

The Designated Child Protection Teacher will visit the primary schools during the summer term to discuss the entry of Y6 students. He will check if any students are on the child protection register. The school should monitor students whose names are on the child protection register in line with what has been agreed in the child protection plan.

7. Case Conferences

If a case conference is called the most appropriate member of staff should attend i.e. Form tutor, House Leader, SenCo, Key Stage Manager or The Designated Child Protection Teacher. However, details of the meeting should be noted and passed to The Designated Child Protection Teacher to place in child protection file. They should not be placed in the student file)

Inter Agency Guidelines are kept in the Designated Child Protection Teacher's office for staff reference.

8. Support for Staff

Coping with child abuse requires not only knowledge of signs, symptoms and procedures but also an awareness that involvement in the process can bring heavy practical and emotional burdens. Teachers are more likely to cope with the additional stresses if they know what to do and know they have support from colleagues. Support can be shown by the following

- Recognition that staff may need extra time to deal with a child and a place for an uninterrupted talk.
- Awareness of the emotional impact upon staff and the need for them to express their views to a trusted colleague without infringing confidentiality.

9. Support for the family:

The school's responsibility is to put the needs of the child first however this does not preclude support for the family. The school can show support in the following ways :

- Development of a school ethos, which respects both parents' and children's needs for privacy and confidentiality.

- Reassurance that the information will be kept private, or an honest explanation if another member of staff needs to know some part of it in order to help the child.
- Whatever the outcome of disclosure or investigation, resumption of a normal, non-judgemental attitude to parents, will help to overcome their own feelings of guilt and shame and re-establish a co-operative relationship with them.
- If the child's progress or behaviour needs to be discussed with parents, a matter-of -fact review of all aspects of the child's functioning which neither denies nor over-emphasises the experience of abuse is likely to be most helpful.
- Awareness of and respect for different cultural patterns of child rearing and family life is important to avoid narrow judgements on 'good' or 'bad' ways of bringing up children.

10. Curriculum approaches to prevention

Child protection is much more than knowing what to suspect and how to respond if disclosures of abuse are made. The school has a vital role to play in preparing youngsters to resist abuse and to become responsible, caring and confident adults. Through the school's PSHE curriculum, children are taught about risks of different kinds of child abuse and helped to become equipped with the skills they need to help them stay safe.

Contact phone numbers :

Designated LEA Officer for Child Protection: Dennis Longmore (01432 260816)
Social Services Duty Team (01432 260000)

AWC - February 2010

Signed:

Signed:

Spencer Lane (Chair of Governors)

Headteacher

Date:

Date: