

Child Protection Policy

November 2009

Purpose

An effective child protection policy is one that gives clear guidance to staff and others about the appropriate response to child protection issues. This policy will help to ensure that child protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child.

Introduction

At St. George's, we fully recognise the part that we can play in safeguarding and promoting the health, safety and welfare of the young people entrusted to our care.

This policy has three main elements:

- *Prevention* through the promotion of a positive school atmosphere and the provision of careful and vigilant teaching and pastoral support.
- *Protection* by following agreed procedures and ensuring that all staff are appropriately recruited and then trained and supported to respond sensitively to child protection concerns.
- *Support* for all those pupils who may have been abused.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school including the governors.

Prevention

We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult will help to protect our pupils against potential abuse.

We will therefore:

- continue to maintain an ethos in which young people feel secure and know that their concerns will be taken seriously;
- ensure that the pupils know that there are adults in school who can be approached if they are worried or are in any kind of difficulty;
- include within the PSHE programme, sessions that will help our pupils to gain an awareness of the issues involved not only to promote their own safety, but also to help them develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life, particularly with regard to the care of children.

Roles and responsibilities

Schools do not operate in isolation. Child protection is the responsibility of all adults, especially those who work with young people. We will help to protect the children in our care by working consistently and appropriately with child protection agencies – primarily, *Servizi Sociale della Municipale Locale* and *Assistente Sociale*. These agencies provide locally agreed inter-agency procedures which we are bound by law to follow.

At St. George's, the Deputy Head of the Senior School (**Graham Wallace**) and the Junior School Heads (SGJS: **Chris Williams** and SGN: **Michael Barber**) and the Early Years Coordinator (SGJS: **Liz Gardiner** and SGN: **Sarah Alfano**) are the named Child Protection Officers. These named people get training every two years. The Deputy Head of the Senior School leads Child Protection in the whole school. They have special responsibilities which include:

- dealing with reports of child abuse;
- dealing with complaints against staff, volunteers and governors by children;
- making referrals to child protection agencies where appropriate;
- keeping the Principal fully informed of any child protection issues that arise;
- ensuring that all staff and governors receive basic child protection training every three years;

- ensuring that all new staff, volunteers and governors have child protection induction and are made aware of our arrangements;
- ensuring that non-teaching staff are made aware of our arrangements. This is a particular problem in our school as most non-teachers cannot speak or read English. They are briefed in Italian and, if they have any concerns, are told to immediately speak to the (bilingual) Estates Manager who will relay the message to the appropriate Child Protection Officer. Although, not an ideal situation, it is practical. Efforts are being made to teach the non-teaching staff English and the English staff are offered Italian lessons.
- ensuring that the Principal, the Chairman of Governors and the School Nurse receive appropriate training.
- all staff, where possible, must have an enhanced CRB check, conducted by COBIS on our behalf in the UK. This is not possible for staff who are not coming from the UK. If they are already in Italy, we demand the Italian equivalent. We also ask, where possible, for the equivalent from whichever country they are coming from.

The member of the Governors (**Moira Spence**) is kept fully informed of any issues that arise. She undertakes an annual review of the Child Protection policies and procedures and of the efficiency with which related duties have been discharged.

The School Nurse (**Susie Tisone**) can fulfil the role of independent listener and acts as a sympathetic adult that children can approach with their concerns. She should inform the Child Protection Officers of any child protection issues that may be drawn to her attention. However, it is recognised that pupils should be able to approach whichever member of staff s/he felt most comfortable with on any pastoral matter, and not just the designated Child Protection Officers.

Procedures

It is essential that one of the Child Protection Officers is informed immediately should any pupil be identified as being at risk. Staff, volunteers, governors, pupils, parents and others must act to share their concerns if:

- they have a suspicion that a child is being abused;
- there is evidence that a child is being abused;
- a complaint is made by a child against a member of the school.

The Child Protection Officer will keep a full record of reports made and make referrals to child protection agencies as necessary.

In the specific case of a suspicion being raised against any of the Child Protection Officers, this should be shared with the Principal (**Martyn Hales**) immediately

In the specific case of a suspicion being raised against The Principal, this should be shared with the Chairman of the SRL (**Steven Taylor**) immediately.

The person named above, most likely one of the Child Protection Officers, will then take immediate action. The nature of such issues is highly individualised and thus each case will be acted on depending on what needs to be done. It is likely that the local Italian Authorities (*Assistente Sociale*) might be called in. The Child Protection Officer will keep a careful confidential record of all aspects of the case.

Training and support

The Child Protection Officers, the Principal, the named governor and School Nurse will receive regular training appropriate to their role. This will include specific counselling support especially after particularly difficult or distressing cases. In addition, we will ensure that all staff, volunteers and governors are kept informed of child protection issues through the regular INSET programme.

Professional confidentiality

Confidentiality is an issue which needs to be understood by all those working with children, particularly in the context of child protection. Professionals can only work together to safeguard children if there is an exchange of relevant information between them. Normally, personal information should only be disclosed to third parties with the consent of the subject of that information. In some circumstances, obtaining consent may not be possible or in the best interests of the child and the law permits the disclosure of confidential information necessary to safeguard children. It should be made clear to the children involved that complete confidentiality cannot be promised.

Records and monitoring

Well kept records are essential to good child protection practice and we are clear about the need to record our concerns and to be ready to share them with other agencies as appropriate.

Attendance at child protection conferences

In the event of St. George's being invited to attend a child protection conference, one of the Child Protection Officers will represent the school and provide information relevant to the case.

Supporting pupils at risk

We recognise that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of the children at risk. It is possible that such children might exhibit challenging and defiant behaviour and their circumstances will influence the way in which these behavioural issues are resolved.

We also recognise that some children who have experienced abuse may in turn abuse others. Such situations will require a considered and sensitive approach so that appropriate help and support can be given.

We will endeavour to support all our pupils through:

- the development of self-esteem and self-motivation;
- the school ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all pupils and adults a sense of being respected and valued;
- the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policies by all staff so that, whilst poor behaviour is effectively challenged, the pupil's sense of self-worth is not damaged;
- regular consultation with other professionals and agencies who support pupils and their families;
- the commitment to develop supportive and constructive relationships with parents;
- the development and support of a knowledgeable and experienced group of key staff trained to respond appropriately to child protection situations.

Related policies and procedures

- Responding to an allegation of abuse
- Criminal records bureau checks
- Procedures related to the recruitment of staff

This policy will be updated every two years (minimum) by the Senior School Child Protection Officer Deputy Head Graham Wallace. The next time this must be done is November 2011.

However, any deficiencies or weaknesses in our arrangements should be shared with any member of Senior Management and will be remedied immediately