

GATEHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION

A SCHOOL POLICY DOCUMENT

March 2000

CHILD PROTECTION – a Policy Document for Gatehouse School

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INTRODUCTION

This document has been produced taking account of advice contained within Child Protection materials prepared jointly by Dumfries & Galloway Education Authority and the Faculty of Education, University of Paisley.

It establishes an in-school framework which itself develops upon in-service training which staff attended during autumn 1999 and spring 2000.

RATIONALE for a school Child Protection Policy

Parents of children in school must be confident that staff understand child protection procedures, which are in place within the Region, and that staff are confident in implementing them.

The Education Department, and other relevant agencies, will also expect that staff in school can operate the procedures with confidence.

External agencies also concerned with Child Protection matters, or who may be involved with Child Protection issues, need to know that staff will act appropriately and within agreed guidelines.

Staff within school must share aims, knowledge and values concerning the protection of children, and also that they share a common language. Working on an agreed policy, and following agreed guidelines about action to be taken where there is suspicion or concern, will help staff to be more effective. Staff must have confidence that school management will support their concerns.

A clear policy agreed by staff, and adhered to, will ensure that children are protected more effectively.

AIMS of the policy

The school's general aims exist to ensure that children in attendance live and work in a safe environment where they are respected and listened to by adults.

The school aims to provide an environment where children will feel confident and will be able to approach adults with their concerns.

The school aims to ensure that staff working in the school will have knowledge of child abuse matters, and will be sensitive to the signs of children in distress or under stress.

The school aims to enable children to be confident and have high self-esteem and respect. These aims link with curriculum approaches contained within the Social and Personal Development component of the 5-14 curriculum framework. Children need to be encouraged to be appropriately assertive.

The school aims to present children with appropriate role models of behaviour, and all pupils should have opportunities to be involved in decision – making where appropriate.

OBJECTIVES of the policy

The school seeks to ensure that children and adults are able to communicate openly.

The school seeks to ensure that children are listened to carefully and with respect.

The school seeks to ensure that staff are aware of internal procedures for dealing with suspicions of abuse and that they understand the Authority's child protection procedures. Staff need to understand their part in the effectiveness of these procedures.

The school needs to ensure that staff have access to child protection training opportunities provided in or out of school.

The school will issue details of its child protection policy and procedures to parents / guardians / carers.

PROCEDURES in the event of suspicion of abuse

1: Abuse is obvious/ the child discloses abuse/ the teacher has strong suspicion of abuse or other concern.

2: Teacher(s) make note of date, time, observations, what was reported, witnesses etc.

3: Teacher reports concerns to Head Teacher (or, if not available, to Senior Teacher).

4: Both confirm biographical information of pupil and discuss nature of disclosure / level of suspicion.

A decision would be taken at this point whether to proceed further or to continue monitoring.

5: Head Teacher (or Senior Teacher) contacts Social Work Department.

6: Discussion of appropriate action with social work department.

7: If agreed with them, social work department to take appropriate further action.

8: Head Teacher prepares confidential written report.

9: Information issued to other staff, as necessary, stressing confidentiality.

10: Seek clarification of progress.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- This document outlines written procedures for staff action. Procedures must be clear to ensure understanding.
- The Head Teacher is the designated member of staff responsible for issues regarding child protection, and has responsibility in school for carrying through all aspects including contact with outside agencies.
- Should cause for concern be identified, the Head Teacher will contact relevant outside supporting agencies for advice, if necessary, before contacting the Social Work Department.
- After contacting the Social Work Department, that agency will assume responsibility for further developments. Further discussion may be necessary with the initial identifier (person who initiated concern), and with other staff members where appropriate. Staff may be invited to attend initial and / or subsequent child protection conferences involving the case.
- A confidential written report will be prepared by both initiator and Head Teacher as soon as possible. A copy of this will be maintained by the Head Teacher on file.
- Each member of the school's teaching staff has a copy of Dumfries & Galloway guidelines for Child Abuse.

RECORD KEEPING

Clear, factual, accurate written notes are vital for sharing of information with appropriate agencies. Such notes must include details of what has happened, what has been said or done and by whom, and what action has been taken to date, as these notes will form the basis of any formal documentation by way of supporting evidence..

All written information in respect of any case must be kept in a central, secure location. Any notes used for short-term personal recall must be destroyed once their purpose has been served.

What to record:

Details are needed of :

Dates, times, witnesses, statements, *evidence of injuries*.

Staff need to distinguish effectively between gossip, hearsay and actual information or observation, and not to take account of the former of these.

Confidentiality of information is important – but it is appreciated that staff will need to engage in professional dialogue with fellow staff members in respect of issues relevant to any particular case.

It is the policy of this school that parents will have access to all information maintained in respect of their children. Accuracy of information is therefore important, as the Head Teacher has to be able to justify all that is written and maintained within school.

Any reports and other information must be kept confidential to school teaching staff and other appropriate outside agencies. All such reports will be maintained within individual pupil files, which are located in the Head Teacher's office.

INTER-AGENCY CO-OPERATION

Teaching staff need to know that when a concern has been raised with an outside agency, an appropriate investigation will be carried out in a professional and competent manner. That means that any outcome to a particular case should be shared with them.

After the parents of children, teachers have more contact with pupils than any other agency, and, as such, are best placed in respect of information about those children. When suspected abuse is reported, it can have consequences for the future upon relationships between teacher and parents. Because of this, staff are best served when they have an understanding of roles and procedures involving other agencies. This better helps to understand the 'wider picture' of the process as a whole.

Similarly, outside agencies need a confidence that school staff understand child protection procedures and that concerns will be reported if and when they arise.

It is not the role of the school or individual teacher to conduct any investigation. Such is the role of the Social Work and Police Departments, and care should be taken to ensure that any subsequent criminal investigations that may take place are not prejudiced by any involvement by the school.

Inter-Agency contacts will be in accordance with Dumfries & Galloway guidelines.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

All staff at Gatehouse school have a copy of, and have undertaken, the 5 unit (Dumfries & Galloway / University of Paisley) package designed to introduce them to a number of issues concerning child abuse, and, separately, attended the 1-day in-service course (also Dumfries & Galloway) as follow-up to this package.

Staff will be offered involvement with any further initiatives as they arise in the future.

This policy document will be continually up-dated to accommodate any future general changes in Regional policy, and in the light of experience.

The package mentioned above contains issues that merit further examination:

- Exploring different views of, and emphases placed upon, our daily lives, including possessions, leisure opportunities, education, among others;
- Male / female stereotyping – and how attitudes might be changed;
- Exploring raising of children in different cultures;
- The rights of children, and whether or not these are acknowledged;
- Ways in which self-esteem can be raised, and how children might be encouraged to be more assertive.

Gatehouse Primary School

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(Appendix to be included - pro-forma for initial recording of abuse/concerns)