

## **Benenden School**

### **Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy**

Benenden School is concerned to promote the care and welfare of its pupils in all circumstances and all staff are recruited according to the most recent Safe Recruitment guidelines. All new staff are given training in Child Protection procedures and awareness.

The work of the Child Protection team in School, including training and recruitment checks, is monitored annually in March by the Deputy Chairman of Council with the Deputy Head and CPO.

### **Child Protection**

All members of the School staff should be alert to the possible signs of abuse of a pupil. Abuse may take several forms, which are not mutually exclusive.

***Physical abuse*** results from the actions of others, which cause injury to the child. Bruises, burns, scalds and abrasions should be of concern to staff.

***Neglect*** involves not providing the basic necessities: food, warmth, shelter, caring, supervision or reasonable cleanliness.

***Emotional Abuse***, which is harder to detect or define, may result from locking the child away, excessive shouting, teasing or humiliation, the denial of love, affection, interest or friendship, or overprotection so as to deny the child the normal experiences of life.

***Sexual Abuse*** is the involvement of emotionally immature young people in sexual activity usually with an adult or significantly older person, to which they cannot give informed consent or which breaks social taboos. It is more common than was previously believed and can have serious long-term damaging effects on the victim.

There will be other circumstances, not amounting to abuse, which give cause for serious concern about the welfare of pupils. Questions of the young persons being in moral danger, being uncared for, engaging in anti-social or inappropriate behaviour and so on, may be referred to the Child Protection Officer (CPO), the Deputy CPO or the Deputy Head, as the Head's representative and, through them, to the Social Services Department.

Members of staff have the obligation to report all suspicions of abuse either to the CPO, DCPO, the School Doctor, or to the Deputy Head, who make up the School's Child Protection Team. It then becomes the responsibility of the CPO, working with the Deputy Head, to pass these concerns on to the Social Services, where appropriate. **Reporting such observations is an inescapable personal and professional responsibility for the protection of children from harm. If there is any doubt, report the concern.**

**Staff must report to the Deputy Head or the Head of Boarding any concern or allegation about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues which is likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other serious harm. Staff will be provided with immunity from retribution or disciplinary action for whistle blowing in good faith. See the Whistleblowing Policy (at Section B.1.15 in this Handbook) for further advice and alternative reporting structures.**

It may also be appropriate to refer concerns to the local representative of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board. (Currently: Mr Kel Arthur, Safeguarding Policy and Standards Manager, 08458 247247) This decision will be taken by the Headmistress.

### **The Child Protection Officer**

This member of staff liaises with the outside agencies in cases of suspected abuse, and can advise on the appropriate procedures. In addition, s/he will arrange (and keep a record of) induction meetings for all new staff. The member of staff designated as Child Protection Officer is currently Mrs Barbara Scopes. In her absence, Alison Steven deputizes for her.

### **Procedures**

Any adult to whom abuse is reported by a pupil has a duty to listen to the pupil, to provide reassurance, and record the pupil's statements. S/he must not press the pupil, ask probing questions or suggest answers. The situation should then be discussed with the CPO or the Deputy Head who will be guided by the *Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures* (Current edition, September 2007). It may be helpful to refer to the following checklist:

- 1. Listen** sympathetically.
- 2. Write** notes. If possible this should be done during the interview, using the child's actual words and noting the location and the names of everyone present. If it is not possible during the interview, it should be done as soon as possible afterwards. In either case, the original notes should be retained.
- 3. No guarantee of confidentiality** should be given. If a child asks that what she is about to say be kept secret, explain that, in order for her to receive the help and support she needs with a serious problem, it may well be necessary for you to speak to someone else. Do emphasise that no one will be told who does not need to know.
- 4. Don't ask** leading questions.
- 5. Tell** a member of the Child Protection Team as soon as possible.
- 6. Discuss** any action that may be required immediately (e.g. the child may need to be protected).
- 7. Don't investigate.** This is the province of outside agencies.

8. **Don't assume** abuse is impossible in the context (“I know the family really well...” / “I've worked with him for 10 years...”).

**Action to be taken by the CPO or her deputy:**

1. Asses the seriousness of the accusation in consultation with the Head or Deputy Head and takes any immediate action necessary to protect individual pupils.
2. Any concerns should be reported to the Kent Safeguarding Children Board within 24 hours.
3. Any telephone referrals will be followed up in writing with 24 hours of the call.
4. Follow up on any advice given by the Kent Safeguarding Children Board.
5. Make a written record of all actions and deposit these in the secure locked cupboard in CPO's office.
6. Twice annual review of all concerns with the Vice-chairman of Council and the school's child protection supervisory group.

**Cases where abuse may have been inflicted by staff**

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, there is an obvious need to act immediately and with the utmost discretion. The informant should be told that the matter will be referred in confidence to the Head, who will then co-ordinate the work of the Child Protection Team following the advice set out in **Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education** (DCFS, effective from 1 January 2007, see especially pages 57-67). In the event of the allegation involving the Head, any concern should be expressed promptly and confidentially to the Deputy Head, or the CPO, who will refer the matter to the Chairman of Council.

The School recognises the requirement to report to the Secretary of State, via the DCSF in Darlington, within one month of leaving the school any person (whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or a student) whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. In this context, ceasing to use a person's services includes: dismissal; non-renewal of a fixed-term contract; no longer engaging/refusing to engage a supply teacher provided by an employment agency; terminating the placement of a student teacher or other trainee; no longer using staff employed by contractors; no longer using volunteers; resignation, and voluntary withdrawal from supply teaching, contract working, a course of initial teacher training or volunteering.

## **Training**

All new staff receive a briefing at the start of their first term with us from the CPO or the DCPO. Whole staff training takes place every 3 years (the last whole staff InSeT on CP issues was in September 2008). The CPO and the DCPO are asked to attend off-site professional training sessions at least every two years or more often if there is new legislation.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The School's Safeguarding Committee comprises the Vice-chairman of Council, the Deputy Head and the CPO and her Deputy. That committee meets twice yearly and reviews any cases which may have arisen since the last meeting. It also reviews this policy annually at its meeting in November.

(Reviewed by the Child Protection and Safer Recruitment Committee,  
December 2007; revised May 2009; for review November 2009)