



CROYDON METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

This College recognises its legal duty relating to section 162a inspections *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (SC&SRE - DCSF January 2007)* statutory and recent Ofsted guidance.

The staff seek to adopt an open and accepting attitude towards children and young people as part of their general responsibility for pastoral care. Staff hope that parents and children will feel free to talk about any concerns or worries which may affect educational progress and that they will see the College as a safe place if there are any difficulties at home. Children will be taken seriously if they seek help from any member of staff.

'Children in Need' and 'Children in need of Protection'

Parents will normally be consulted and their consent obtained before any referral is made to an agency outside the College under local *Children in Need* procedures. Many family problems can be handled in this way. However, staff cannot guarantee to consult parents first, or to keep children's concern confidential, if referral must be made to the appropriate agencies in order to safe guard the child's welfare.

If College staff have significant concerns about any child which **may** indicate

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse or
- Neglect

They are **required** to discuss them with the outside agencies responsible for investigation and child protection.

Signs of emotional abuse/neglect may be difficult to detect. The following list may be helpful for staff.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Developmental delay (physical, mental, emotional)
- Admission of punishment which seems excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Rocking, hair twisting, pulling etc
- Self mutilation
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Repeated running away
- Scavenging for food or clothes
- Extreme attention seeking
- Bedwetting

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF NEGLECT

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor clothing
- Emaciated
- Frequent lateness, earliness or non-attendance at College
- Destructive tendencies
- No social relationships
- Compulsive stealing
- Scavenging for food or clothes
- No carer at home
- Very low self esteem

Staff who observe injuries, which appear to be non-accidental, or who are told anything significant by a child, **must** report their concerns to the designated staff, Ajmal Shah, Director of studies or Muhilan Mohan, Director.

College staff do not, however, carry out investigations, nor decide whether children have been abused. That is a matter for the specialist agencies.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

All staff will be familiar with the College's internal procedures for keeping a confidential written record of any incidents. Further information is available on request to the Director of Studies (Ajmal Shah). Advice may be sought from the local authority, the Social Services department or the Police if staff are unsure how to proceed.

1. Any teacher, at any time, who has good reason to believe that a child might have been or might be a target of abuse or a victim of neglect **MUST** report his/her concern immediately.

2. If Ajmal Shah is not immediately available then the matter should be reported to Muhilan Mohan.
3. It cannot be emphasised strongly that these messages must be passed on within minutes of your suspicion that something is wrong. **THIS IS YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A MEMBER OF STAFF.**
4. As soon as possible write down the relevant details and action taken, make a photocopy for yourself, keep the hard copy and hand the original to Ajmal Shah or Muhilan Mohan. (see appendix 1)
5. Please note carefully that the College is obliged to report to the appropriate authorities in this area. Failure to do so may have serious professional or legal repercussions.
6. Details of referral are private and confidential. They should ONLY be discussed with a senior manager or appropriate Social Worker/EWO. After initial contact with pupil and/or parent, any further action or discussion should be directed by the appropriate senior manager. (see appendix 2)
7. Ajmal Shah, Director of studies or Muhilan Mohan, Director, should update all staff with the Child Abuse/Child Sexual Abuse process at least once every term.

RESOURCES

Child protection is important. The Principal will endeavour to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to enable the necessary tasks to be carried out properly under inter-agency procedures, including attending meetings, staff training etc.

1. Child Protection CPD forms part of any INSET programme at the beginning of each academic year and is revisited throughout the year
2. The designated personnel for Child Protection meet termly to discuss and update the safeguarding report, ensuring the needs of identified students are being met.

CURRICULUM

Wider Child Safety issues will be addressed through the curriculum as appropriate, especially in Personal, Social and Health Education.

STAFF ISSUES

Parents can feel confident that careful procedures are in place to ensure that all staff appointed are suitable to work with children. More informal procedures also apply to voluntary helpers, non-teaching staff etc.

A CRB check is undertaken for all adults working in the school. This is organised by Mr Ajmal Shah (Director of Studies).

Any use of physical force or restraint against pupils will be carried out and documented in accordance with the relevant guidance and policy. If it is necessary to use physical action to protect a child from injury, to prevent a child from harming others, or if any child is injured accidentally, parents will be informed immediately. Children will not be punished within the school by any form of hitting, slapping, shaking or any other degrading treatment.

Any complaints about staff behaviour may be made to the Director of Studies or to the Principal. All those involved will be entitled to a fair hearing, both children and staff. Complaints that raise child protection issues will be reported under local inter-agency procedures for investigation outside of the school.

The designated person for all child protection matters in the school is: Mr Ajmal Shah (Director of Studies).

Policy updated August 2011

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

Guidance for school staff

Many school staff are concerned about how to speak appropriately to children who may have a need for child protection services. This is understandable and it is very important to get such conversations right. Incorrect action may contaminate the child's evidence or lead to accusations of coaching. It is essential that staff is aware of the distinction between:

- Making 'friendly enquiries' in order to gain sufficient information to make a decision about what to do next AND
- Interviewing the child about the alleged abuse (which is not the school's responsibility).

Children should NEVER be undressed, examined, photographed or have detailed drawings made about their injuries. It IS appropriate to record what is seen in the course of normal activity (including whenever a child is undressing themselves) and to ask questions such as 'that's a nasty bruise. How did you get that?' **If the answer is a clear allegation of abuse, there is no need for ANY further questioning. Contact the designated teacher immediately** who will decide whether consultation/referral to the Social Services is now appropriate.

All such initial enquiries should be recorded in writing, even if the decision is made not to consult or refer at this point. Do not keep concerns to yourself or act alone. Always consult others in confidence.

If the child makes a clear disclosure, DO NOT CONTACT PARENTS until you have taken advice about whether you should do so from Social Services or the police.

Some general principles:

DO NOT PROMISE CONFIDENTIALITY IN ADVANCE.
KEEP AN OPEN MIND – DO NOT JUDGE WHAT THE CHILD SAYS.
LISTEN TO THE CHILD – DO NOT TRY TO DECIDE THE "TRUTH"
MAKE THE CHILD FEEL COMFORTABLE IN YOUR PRESENCE
REASSURE THEM THAT THEY HAVE DONE NOTHING WRONG
ACCEPT THEIR LANGUAGE, EVEN IF IT IS UNCONVENTIONAL
BE PATIENT IF THE CHILD IS HESITANT
SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE.

DO NOT ask 'leading questions' ("Was it your father who hit you?") or put ideas into the child's mind ("Did he use a belt?") – it must be the child's own story. Do not seek any more clarification than is

absolutely necessary at this stage. You are NOT deciding if the child has been abused and, if so, who by. That is the job of the investigating agencies.

Act on the information you receive, but do not act alone. RECORD what you have seen, heard or done according to your school's internal procedures. Use the child's own words wherever possible (including any words used for sexual activity or private parts).

Watch your body language. A child may be checking to see if you are the right person to talk to. Sit at the same height as the child, and not behind a barrier like a desk. Give encouraging signs that you are listening, and affirm you know what to do.

CHILD PROTECTION, CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

New government guidance generally requires professionals to consult as much as possible with parents about their children when referring to another agency. In general, parents should be asked if they wish to be referred, UNLESS THERE IS A REASON TO THINK THAT OBTAINING SUCH CONSENT MAY PUT THE CHILD AT RISK. If your referral is about child abuse (or the risk of it) rather than *children in need*, it is good practice to consult social services BEFORE discussing the issue with parents, unless a parent has asked you to make the referral and is already aware of it.

There are certain key principles, which must be observed:

- In matters of child protection, the welfare of the child is the PARAMOUNT consideration; more important than issues of usual confidentiality or maintaining a good relationship with parents/family
- Adults should never give a child an ABSOLUTE promise of confidentiality before they know what the child wants to say. If the child discloses an allegation the person receiving that information MUST act on it under ACPC procedures.
- Agencies have a STATUTORY DUTY under s.47 of the Children Act 1989 to work together in protecting children from harm
- Information should only be passed to the appropriate agencies, i.e. in the Police and the Social Services Department, (or NSPCC). Any information passed to anyone else should be on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child's welfare (e.g. the class teacher for a child placed on the Child Protection Register)
- Information about third parties should be treated with caution and advice sought. 'Hearsay' is acceptable as part of the information included in a referral but it should be identified as such and distinguished from known and verifiable facts.
- Any known information about possible risk factors (e.g. adults) should be disclosed to the investigating agencies.
- All minutes of meetings and conferences held under child protection procedures should be regarded as strictly confidential and their availability carefully managed. All documents should

be held by agencies in secure locations and, wherever possible, passed to others who may need them in person (e.g. from one designated teacher to another when a child changes school)

AVOIDING FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

This is an essential element of a child protection policy. Many allegations against teachers arise from misunderstandings, lack of policy and guidance or failures to exercise proper management.

- Keep to your school's Professional Code of Conduct regarding contact with pupils.
- Witnesses are always useful. Work in ways which avoid being alone with an individual pupil wherever possible.
- Keep a written account of anything, which might be open to misunderstanding. This can be very useful if the child's version of events is different from how you remember the incident.
- If a child is injured by accident by a teacher, or if physical restraint has to be used against them, parents are much less likely to suspect a conspiracy if they hear about it from the school BEFORE the child tells them a possibly less reliable version. If the Head is satisfied that no one has done anything wrong, seize the initiative and say no.
- Think 'How would this look if I saw someone else doing it?' Is an action which is innocent in your mind open to misinterpretation?
- Physical contact can be embarrassing – watch your body language. The prohibition of the use of corporal punishment includes 'any degree of physical contact which is deliberately intended to punish a pupil, or which is primarily intended to cause pain, injury or humiliation.' This can include being physically threatening or intimidating.
- NEVER lose your temper. Children NEVER deserve abuse.
- Support one another wherever possible; senior staff should not allow hierarchies of status to prevent colleagues from questioning their behaviour.
- Working to procedures is better for everyone rather than leaving people to sort it out for themselves.
- TRAINING, SUPERVISION, MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY are not an assault on a teacher's integrity but evidence of professional good practice.