Aldenham School

Safeguarding Children Policy

Introduction

In order to fulfil its key aims Aldenham School (The School) is committed to providing a safe environment for all its pupils. The School is fully committed to meeting its responsibilities for safeguarding children from abuse and discharging its 'duty of care'.

The Background

Safeguarding children has become an integral part of any work with young people in the past few years. It has prominence now because of lapses in the duty of care towards children in a number of areas where children should have received care and protection: the home, schools, local authority care and voluntary services for young people. There have been 'high profile' cases of such lapses of care, most prominently in the cases of Victoria Climbie, Lauren Wright, widespread abuse in some local authority children's homes, in the Cleveland child abuse controversy and, most recently, into the Soham Murders and the Baby 'P' case.

Various pieces of legislation and reports including the Utting Report (1997), the Children Act (1989) and Children Act (2004) and various Education Acts but particularly in (2002) sections 157 and 175 and, again recently, the Laming Report (2003) and the Bichard Inquiry (2004) have clarified the rights of young people to be safe from harm and the failures by key agencies to protect children. The latest legislation regarding the Vetting and Barring Scheme run by the Independent Safeguarding Authority also informs our policy and practice. All these in turn have lead to clarifications of the responsibilities and roles of those who have the care of children in both a statutory and voluntary setting.

The School's Safeguarding Children Policy takes into account the statutory guidance, local child protection procedures and best practice. The policy is reviewed annually and presented to the governors.

The policy is written and reviewed by the Designated Person(s) with Responsibility for Child Protection (DSP) in consultation with the Deputy Head and is adopted by the Governing Body of the School.

Duty of Care

Under the agenda set by Every Child Matters (2004) the Government's aim is for every child to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

Under this agenda the Safeguarding Children Policy seeks to support all of these priorities but most particularly the heading: Stay Safe. Every Child Matters also instigated a process leading to an integrated process for children's services.

In the document Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) our role as a School is clearly set out and our statutory duty is made clear:

The Children Act (1989) and Children Act (2004) places a "Duty of Care" upon the School in respect of a risk or perceived risk of significant harm to a child:

- on a Head of an independent school to report to a local social services department any evidence or suspicion of children being or at risk of being abused.
- on all members of staff to report to his/her manager the same evidence or suspicion.

The document Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) also promotes a multi-agency approach to the care of children and sets forth the good practice of separate agencies co-operating and working together for the benefit of the child.

This document outlines further priorities for Schools:

"Schools (including independent schools and non-maintained special schools) and further education (FE) institutions should give effect to their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils (students under 18 years of age in the case of FE institutions) under the Education Act (2002) and, where appropriate, under the Children Act (1989) by:

- creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people
- identifying where there are child welfare concerns and taking action to address them, in partnership with other organisations where appropriate."

"To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children must have:

- clear priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, explicitly stated in strategic policy documents
- a clear commitment by senior management to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare
- a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- recruitment and human resources management procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff and volunteers
- procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff and volunteers"

The guidance states that:

"All agencies and professionals should:

- be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- be alert to the risks that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
- share and help to analyse information so that an assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances
- contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare
- take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the child against specific plans
- work co-operatively with parents, unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the child's safety."

The Aldenham School Safeguarding Children Policy and procedures also takes into account the requirement of the National Minimum Boarding Standards (2002) Section 3.

The School seeks to support and promote the protection from abuse of the children in its care through this policy.

The School Policy

The School is committed to providing a safe environment for all its pupils so that they can develop their talent, personality and skills in a guided and stimulating environment. The School is fully committed to meeting its responsibilities for safeguarding children from abuse and discharging its 'duty of care' and to cooperate fully with other agencies in pursuing this commitment including the sharing of information as appropriate (See Data Protection Policy) in order that its pupils will be able to enjoy their education free and protected from all forms of abuse, including the particular risks posed by emerging and developing technologies.

This policy seeks to demonstrate the commitment of the Head, all staff and volunteers and the governing body to promoting a safe environment for children and to report any allegations of abuse or suspicions of abuse to the relevant local authority agency.

Commitment

The Governing Body shall appoint one member to have responsibility for monitoring on its behalf the safeguarding procedures in the School. This representative will see that at least once a year the Governing Body discuss child protection as part of their agenda The representative will report at that meeting the number and nature of the concerns the School has dealt with and other issues that relate to the enactment of the policy during the preceding year. The Governing Body adopts the Safeguarding Children Policy and any subsequent revisions. The Governing Body representative will liaise with the member(s) of staff designated with responsibility for safeguarding children.

The Head will appoint a designated senior person(s) to act on his behalf in the Senior School and in the Preparatory and Nursery School. [See section on the role of the Designated Senior Person] These persons will be responsible for promoting this policy on the Headmaster's behalf in the School. These persons will undertake training at Level 2 and renew this training, which should include multi-agency working, every two years.

The School has a commitment to the training of all of its staff and regular volunteers in basic safeguarding and child protection awareness and procedures. All staff are expected to have read this policy document and the attached procedures. The Safeguarding Children *confirmation of reading form* should be signed after which it will placed on file to say that they have both read it and understood it. Staff and volunteers should receive Level 1 training during the initial induction process, with retraining to be undertaken every three years.

Accountability

Every member of staff and each volunteer should follow the Safeguarding Children procedures [See appropriate Child Protection Procedures and Guidance for Staff and Volunteers (Senior / Preparatory and Nursery).] and report as a priority any concern about whether a child is being abused or is at risk of abuse to the DSP. The staff handbook will contain the procedures for staff to refer to if they are unsure what to do. Members of staff should refer the matter to the DSP or in his/her absence to the Deputy Head or Head. The document: <u>What to do if you're worried a child is being abused</u> (2006) sets out further government guidance in this matter.

Recruitment

The School has within its recruitment policy a commitment to establishing and following safer recruitment procedures. The policy is in line with the guidance contained within the document Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2007).

The School's procedures include the training in Safer Recruitment for key personnel involved in advertising, interviewing and recruitment. All staff and volunteers are required to submit to an enhanced CRB check and also a check on List 99 (From October 2009 this will be in line with the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme). A copy of the Safeguarding Children Policy and procedures are part of the recruitment pack sent to prospective applicants and new members of staff are given training in Safeguarding and Child Protection awareness as part of the induction process. Policies are also held on the use of supply and agency personnel and the School's trips policy covers the requirements for monitoring and checking non-school staff accompanying educational visits. Clear working practice policies are also in place for staff working in sensitive areas and in the boarding houses.

Allegations of Abuse against a member of staff or volunteer

The School has procedures to deal with allegations of abuse against a member of staff or a volunteer. The School encourages a 'whistle blowing culture' in this respect and offers consideration of immunity from retribution or disciplinary action when done so in good faith. Ref: *Whistle Blowing Policy.*

Local procedures plus the government guidance Safeguarding Children in Education: Dealing with allegations of abuse against teachers and other staff (2005) and Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (Chapter 5: Dealing with Allegations against teachers and other staff) will be followed.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff, it must be reported immediately to the DSP. Where the allegation is against the Head, the DSP should inform the Chairman of Governors who will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (Ref. C P Protocol).

In order to minimise the risk of harm to children and accusations being made against staff as a result of their daily contact with pupils, Governors should ensure, through the Head, that all staff are aware of safe working practice and follow guidelines on the use of control and physical restraint.

In consultation with the Head, a referral may be made to the local Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Putting the Policy into Action

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated by the DSP(s) in accordance with his/her responsibilities and cooperating and working with the Head, Head of Preparatory School Deputy Heads and the Appointed Governor as appropriate.

This policy will form the relevant section of the Staff Policies and Procedures and will be made available to members of staff and volunteers to support their work.

The Role of the DSP

The DSP is responsible to the Head for:

- holding the school's copy of the current Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures, and

being fully conversant with these procedures

- holding and being fully conversant with the school's copies of:

  What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2006)
  Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2007)
  Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board: Child Protection Procedures (May 2007)
  Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)
  Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004)
  Boarding Schools: National Minimum Standards (2002):
    - National Boarding Standard 2 - Countering Bullying
    - National Boarding Standard 3 - Child Protection
    - National Boarding Standard 31 - Supervision of Boarders
    - National Boarding Standard 33 - Night supervision of boarding houses
    - National Boarding Standard 34 - Job descriptions, induction, supervision, training
    - National Boarding Standard 35 - Staff guidance on boarding practice
    - National Boarding Standard 38 - Staff recruitment checks

- briefing school staff (both boarding, non-teaching, teaching staff and volunteers), and as appropriate, prefects and other senior pupils on the relevant contents of the above guidance and procedures, and on the procedures the school should follow below - including the briefing of new staff as part of their induction after arrival at the school.

- ensuring that the procedures below are followed within The School

- communication and liaison over child protection procedures with the local DCSF.

- receiving reports of alleged or suspected child abuse within the school, or reported by a pupil relating to incidents at home or outside the school, contacting the DCSF and taking other action in response, as set out below.

- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's Safeguarding Children Policy.

Responses of the DSP

The DSP receiving a report of an allegation by a pupil of abuse shall:

a) Take any steps needed to protect any pupil involved from risk of immediate harm.

(This may involve allocating an appropriate member of staff, as far as possible, a person chosen by the pupil him/herself to stay with him or her.)

b) Not interview or investigate the allegation further, but refer the matter within 24 hours to the manager of the child protection team in the local DCSF. Once it has been agreed that a formal referral is necessary, this should be confirmed in writing as soon as possible.

c) Consult the local authority Child Protection Manager (CPM) and follow his/her advice about contacting parents, other staff, police, doctor, alleged perpetrator or witnesses direct.

d) Agree with the CPM any necessary next steps in relation to:

- informing a pupil's parents (there are circumstances where it would be inappropriate to inform parents immediately an allegation has been made)

- medical examination or treatment for the pupil (again, there are circumstances where medical evidence will be needed)

- immediate protection that may be needed for a pupil who has been the victim of abuse, a pupil who has given information about abuse, or a pupil against whom an allegation has been made (each of these may now be at risk)

- informing other people at the school (including any other members of staff) of the allegation and its investigation. Experience has shown that knowledge of an allegation or impending investigation can lead to a serious risk to the informant from the alleged perpetrator, to 'covering up' of evidence that may be sought by police (such as collections of child pornographic photographs), or to pressure being applied on others to remain silent

- informing the placing authority, if there is one

(Contact with the DCSF will initiate an independent evaluation and if necessary, investigation. The local CPM will arrange, within pre-set time limits, the involvement of the relevant specialist police personnel and if necessary a meeting of the agencies who may need to be involved, together with the school).

e) Inform the pupil or adult who made the initial allegation of what the next steps are to be, having agreed these with the local child protection manager.

f) Inform the Head (unless he/she is the subject of any of the allegations or suspicions) of the allegation and the action already taken and agree necessary further action.

g) If necessary, after consultation and with due consideration of relevant documentation consider the suspension from duty, pending investigation, of any staff member who is alleged to have abused a pupil or pupils.

h) Take any necessary steps for the longer term protection and support of each pupil who has made allegations of abuse, or is alleged to have suffered from abuse, taking his or her wishes fully into account. (This may involve the pupil receiving continuing support and protection from a staff member chosen by him/herself, or changing boarding accommodation, or returning to his/her parents temporarily.)

i) Take any necessary steps to protect and support a pupil who is alleged to have abused another. (The allegation may not later be substantiated, but even if it is, the school continues to have a statutory welfare responsibility towards this pupil while he/she is at school.)

j) Ensure that any pupil being interviewed by the police has available a parent or supportive member of staff of his/her own choice to accompany him/her if this becomes necessary.

k) Notify the Department for Department for Education (DFE) of any allegation against a member of staff who is being investigated by the local Children, Schools and Families Department and/or police.

l) Ensure co-operation by the school in any subsequent investigation.

DEM
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