

Child Protection (policy and procedure)

The school believes that all pupils have the right to feel safe in their everyday environment and with the people with whom they interact.

Staff at the John Lyon School will therefore:

- (a) Support the development of pupils in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence.
- (b) Uphold the rights of pupils as laid down in the Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- (c) Support staff in safeguarding the welfare of all pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm and from neglect or bullying.

1. Definition of Abuse

A child is considered to be abused or at risk of abuse when the basic needs of the child are not being met through avoidable acts of either commission or omission. The harm must be significant and includes neglect, ill-treatment, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, impairment of physical or mental health or impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional or social development. All members of staff should familiarise themselves with the typical signs and symptoms as set out below.

Child Abuse can be best categorised in four types:

- neglect
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse

It should always be borne in mind that a child may be suffering from any combination of these.

2. General Indicators of Child Neglect and Abuse

There are a number of indicators that have been put forward by professionals in the field of child protection in order to raise awareness in those who are working on a daily basis with children and their families. The following lists have indicators which apply to children and their parents.

Parents who may neglect or abuse their children may exhibit the following:

- Rejection of the child;
- Rough handling of the child;
- Failure to keep appointments with child care staff;
- Frequent visits to the medical services with trivial complaints about the child or themselves.

Children who may be suffering from neglect or abuse may exhibit the following:

- Unexplained failure to thrive;
- Injuries that are inconsistent with an accident as described by the parents;
- Frequent bruising, cuts, burns, etc;
- Frozen awareness, when the child carefully watches adults' expressions and movements;

- Reluctance to be alone with their carer/s;
- Sudden unexplained changes in their reactions towards their carer/s.

Not all children who have been neglected or abused will show all of these indicators, and one indicator alone may not denote that a child is being abused. A number of children may exhibit “failure to thrive” and doctors may not be able to find any reasonable explanation for this but this does not necessarily indicate that they have been a victim of abuse. A child with a combination of indicators who has a parent who is also exhibiting one of more of the adult indicators could lead a carer to suspect that they may be dealing with a case of abuse or neglect.

In the area of child sexual abuse there is a different set of indicators; most of these are related to the behaviour of the child:

- Sudden changes in personality, such as wanting constant attention and reassurance;
- Lack of trust of a familiar adult;
- Aggressive or compliant behaviour;
- Withdrawal, listlessness, sadness;
- Fear of being alone;
- Showing affection in a sexual way inappropriate to their age;
- Eating problems, loss of appetite, problems swallowing, excessive eating.

3. Procedures

a) Guiding Principles

All matters concerning possible or alleged child abuse should be referred **ONLY** to the Child Protection Officer (the Head of Oldfield and Lower School). Under no circumstances will any information or speculation be intimated to anyone else, within or outside the school. The Child Protection Officer will make all decisions on further action, in consultation with the Head and professional bodies (Social Services, Police) as necessary.

b) Initial Concern

Where staff see in children signs which cause them concern they should seek information from the child with tact and sympathy. It is not their role to carry out an investigation. If such concerns are not reinforced the member of staff should make a written note of the concern, recording the date, concern and action taken and pass it to the Child Protection Officer for filing. All child protection records will be filed securely and separately from the main pupil files.

c) Disclosure/Allegation from a Child/Young Person

If a child volunteers information about abuse to a member of staff, it may sometimes be done obliquely rather than directly. An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and the staff member may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. When information is offered in confidence, the member of staff will need to explain with sensitivity, whilst retaining the child’s trust, that action may be required, that other adults will need to be informed and that complete confidentiality cannot be honoured. Staff need to be aware that the most important aspect of their response to a child is willingness to listen and to take seriously what the child is saying, without asking questions or making any assumptions (e.g. about who has abused the child) which could later be interpreted as leading the child if criminal proceedings were to follow. The child should tell the full story

of what has happened only once. The member of staff should as soon as possible (certainly within 24 hours) make a written note of the discussion, recording date, place and names of any else present, and using the words of the child where they are remembered. In any criminal proceedings these notes would be potentially disclosable to both the prosecution and defence lawyers.

d) Medical Examinations

In cases of suspected physical abuse or physical neglect, parental and pupil permission for the School Doctor or Nurse to undress the child in the presence of two professional adults should be sought. Where the School is unable to contact the parents, it reserves the right, acting in loco parentis, to request that the child undress. Should either parent or pupil refuse, the School would then be left with no option but to contact Social Services for further advice.

e) Information About or Allegation of Abuse by a Staff Member

If a child or his/her parent volunteers to a member of staff information about abuse by another member of staff, the person receiving the information should immediately pass it to the School's Child Protection Officer. Teachers are particularly vulnerable to accusations of abuse but even though such allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, reporting must be instantaneous and the informant assured of that. Such information will be extremely sensitive for abuse in these circumstances is particularly serious but unfounded allegations can be traumatic for the teacher concerned and can inflict long term damage on a person's health and career.

The Child Protection Officer will refer the matter to the Head ONLY who will consider initially whether or not there is sufficient substance in an allegation to warrant investigation. The rights of individual staff to be informed and protected will be safeguarded.

4. Child Protection Officer - Role

The Child Protection Officer will:

1. Draw up the school's policy and procedures for responding to and dealing with cases involving child protection and amend and update these in line with revised guidelines from the police, social services or the Department for Children, Schools and Families.
2. Ensure that all members of staff are aware of school policy and procedures.
3. Be the first point of contact for staff suspecting child abuse.
4. Act as Liaison Officer between the school and other concerned parties, including police, social services and medical authorities.
5. Inform the Head immediately of any suspected case of child abuse or allegation of abuse made against a member of staff.
6. Maintain records of all cases reported, separate from pupils' general files.
7. Attend Child Protection Conferences on behalf of the Head if requested.

8. Support staff who have received disclosures of child abuse.
9. Attend relevant courses and maintain a file of relevant publications on Child Protection.

Mrs Lynne Plummer is the John Lyon School's Child Protection Officer

Please contact the Child Protection Officer at the school if you wish to obtain a full copy of the John Lyon School Child Protection Policy.