

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

ST CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

**To be read in Conjunction with Hertfordshire
Area Child Protection Committee Child
Protection Procedures**

1st January 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of a Child Protection Policy

To inform staff, parents, volunteers and governors about the school's responsibilities for safeguarding children.

To enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

Hertfordshire Child Protection Procedures September 2002

The School follows the procedures established by the Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Committee – a guide to procedure and practice for all professional staff in Hertfordshire who work with children. This guide is available to all staff and is located in the Monte Office.

School Staff and Volunteers

All school staff and volunteers are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour and failure to develop because they have daily contact with children.

They should be aware of the important role the school has in the early recognition of the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect and the appropriate referral process.

Mission Statement

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to when they have a worry or concern.
- Ensure children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the PHSE curriculum for children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

2. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

In order to protect children from harm the school will act in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

The Children Act (1989)

Education Act (2002), section 175

Hertfordshire ACPC Procedures (2002)

DfES guidance 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (2004)

'Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999 DoH)'

'Working Together to Safeguard Children (1999 DoH)' requires all schools to follow the procedures for protecting children from abuse which are established by the Area Child Protection Committee. Schools are also expected to ensure that they have appropriate procedures in place for responding to situations in which they believe that a child has been abused or are at risk of abuse – these procedures should also cover circumstances in which a member of staff is accused of, or suspected of, abuse.

DfES guidance 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (2004) places the following responsibilities on all schools:-

- Schools should be aware of and follow the procedures established by the Area Child Protection Committee
- Staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know to whom they should report any concerns or suspicions
- Schools should have procedures (of which all staff are aware) for handling suspected cases of abuse of pupils, including procedures to be followed if a member of staff is accused of abuse, or suspected of abuse
- A Designated Teacher (Designated Senior Person) should have responsibility for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies.
- Staff with designated responsibility for Child Protection should receive appropriate training.

Safeguarding Children in Education also states that “parents should be made aware of the school’s Child Protection Policy and the fact that this may require cases to be referred to the investigative agencies in the interests of the child”

3. THE DESIGNATED SENIOR PERSON

The Designated Senior person for Child Protection in this school is Pat Themistocli. In the Monte Club Valerie Olton, the Manager, should be made aware of any concerns although all staff should be aware of procedures. The Manager is in regular contact with the Child Protection Officer.

It is the role of the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection to:-

- Ensure that the school operated within the legislative framework and recommend guidance
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the Hertfordshire ACPC procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided to all staff
- Ensure that the head teacher is kept fully informed of any concerns
- Develop effective working relationships with other agencies and services
- Decide whether to take further action about specific concerns (e.g. refer to Children, Schools and Families Social Work Team)
- Liaise with Social Work Teams over suspected cases of child abuse
- Ensure that accurate records relating to individual children are kept separate from the academic file in a secure place and marked 'Strictly Confidential'
- Submit reports to, and ensure the school's attendance at Child Protection Conferences
- Ensure that the school effectively monitors children about whom there are concerns
- Provide guidance to parents, children and staff about obtaining suitable support

4. SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- If any member of staff is concerned about a child he or she must inform the Designated Senior Person
- The member of staff must record information regarding the concerns on the same day. The recording must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations. (Pro-forma is available on the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning and a copy is attached to the back of this policy)
- The Designated Senior Person will decide whether the concerns should be referred to Children, Schools and Families. If it is decided to make a referral to Children, Schools and Families this will be done with prior discussion with the parents, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of harm
- Particular attention will be paid to the attendance and development of any child about whom the school has concern or who has been placed on the Child Protection Register and a written record will be kept
- If a pupil who is/or has been on the Child Protection Register changes school, the Designated Senior Person will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the receiving school, in a secure manner, to a named person, and separate from the child's academic file

5. WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

All staff and volunteers should be concerned about a child if he or she:

- Has any injury which is not typical of the bumps and scrapes normally associated with children's injuries
- Regularly has unexplained injuries
- Frequently has injuries (even when apparently reasonable explanations are given)
- Gives confused or conflicting explanations about how injuries were sustained
- Exhibits significant changes in behaviour, performance or attitude
- Indulges in sexual behaviour which is unusually explicit and/or inappropriate to his or her age
- Discloses an experience in which he or she may have been significantly harmed
- Any other cause to believe that a child may be suffering harm

6. DEALING WITH A DISCLOSURE

If a child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief
- Accept what is being said
- Allow the child to talk freely
- Reassure the child, but not make promises which it might not be possible to keep
- Not promise confidentiality – it might be necessary to refer to Children Schools and Families
- Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell
- Listen, rather than ask direct questions
- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told
- Make a written record (see Record Keeping)
- Pass information to the Designated Senior Person without delay

SUPPPORT

Dealing with a disclosure from a child, and a Child Protection case in general, is likely to be a stressful experience. The member of staff/volunteer should therefore, consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the Designated Senior Person.

7. RECORD KEEPING

When a child has made a disclosure, the member of staff/volunteer should:

- Make brief notes as soon as possible after the conversation
- Not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court
- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child
- Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising or other injury
- Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions
- All records need to be given to the Designated Senior person promptly. No copies should be retained by the member of staff or volunteer (Pro-forma available on the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning and a copy is attached to the back of this policy)

8. ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING SCHOOL STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff/volunteer, the person receiving the allegation must take it seriously and immediately inform the Head.

If any member of staff/volunteer has a reason to suspect that another member of staff/volunteer may have abused a child at the school, or elsewhere, they must immediately inform the Head. They should also make a record of the concerns including a note of anyone else who witnessed the incident/alleged incident.

The Head will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but he/she will assess whether it is necessary to refer to Children, Schools and Families in consultation with the Child Protection School Liaison Officer, or the Social Work Manager.

If the Head decides that the allegation warrants further action through Child Protection Procedures he/she must immediately make a referral to CSF Client Services (tel 01438 737511).

Under these circumstances the member of staff against whom an allegation has been made should not be informed of said allegation until future action is agreed with the Social Work Team Manager. It may be necessary to discuss appropriate steps to ensure other children are not at risk. The allegation will be investigated in accordance with the Hertfordshire ACPC Procedures.

If it is decided that it is not necessary to refer to Children, Schools and Families the Head will consider whether there needs to be an internal investigation.

➤ For further information see:

Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Committee Child Protection Procedures:
Section 11, page 65 and Appendix C

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Child Protection raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all staff/volunteers in schools.

- All staff in schools, both teaching and non-teaching staff, have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigating agencies(Children, Schools and Families and the Police).
- If a child confides in a member of staff/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff/volunteer tell the child sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies for the child's sake. Within that context, the child should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.
- Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share information only within the appropriate professional contexts.

10. OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

The following publications are available to all staff and are kept in The Monte Office;

- Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Committee Child Protection Procedures
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – Children's Services Guidance
- Safeguarding Children in Education: Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Teachers and Other Staff (DfES)

11. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

DfES guidance 'Safeguarding Children in Education' highlights the school's role in protecting children from abuse. This is not a matter of choice. The following statement appears in our literature sent to parents prior to their child starting.

“Safeguarding Children in Education

St Christopher recognises that Schools have a duty to safeguard and to promote the welfare of their students. This responsibility requires a Child Protection Policy and appropriate procedures. They mean that the School may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies if there are concerns about a child's welfare.

A copy of St Christopher School's Child Protection Policy and Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Procedures are available for parents or carers to see. The School's Designated Senior Person for Child Protection is happy to discuss any concerns parents may have about Child Protection Policies and practice.”