



Staff should always be alert to the possibility of a pupil being maltreated. Any anxieties in this area, whether relating to home or school, should be discussed immediately with the Principal (who is the official Child Protection Officer), Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School] or Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care]. However the responsibility for enquiring into allegations of child abuse rests with the Director of Social Work. Teachers should not conduct such enquiries but must report suspicions immediately.

Child Abuse Definitions

The purpose of this statement is to emphasise the responsibility of the School in the matter of Child Abuse, to describe the procedures involved and to advise staff in appropriate strategies for dealing with it.

Child abuse is described under one of five categories on the Child Protection Register. These are:

- Physical Injury
- Sexual Abuse
- Non-organic failure to thrive
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Neglect

Physical Injury

Actual or attempted physical injury to a child, under age of 16, is where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. Physical injury may include a serious incident or a series of minor incidents involving bruising, fractures, scratches, burns or scalds; deliberate poisoning; attempted drowning or smothering; Munchausen Syndrome by proxy; serious risk of or actual injuries resulting from parental lifestyle prior to birth, for instance substance abuse; physical chastisement deemed to be unreasonable.

Sexual Abuse

Any child below the age of 16 may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to sexual arousal. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated the behaviour.

Sexual abuse may include activities such as incest, rape, sodomy or intercourse with children; lewd or libidinous practices or behaviour towards children; indecent assault of children; taking indecent photographs of children or encouraging children to become prostitutes or witness intercourse or pornographic materials.

Non-Organic Failure to Thrive

Any child who has significantly failed to reach normal growth and developmental milestones (e.g. physical growth, weight, motor, social and intellectual development), and where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated, may lead to a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive being established. Factors affecting a diagnosis may include inappropriate relationships between the care giver(s) and child, especially at meal times, for instance the persistent withholding of food as



punishment and the sufficiency and/or suitability of the food for the child. In its chronic form, non-organic failure to

thrive can result in greater susceptibility to more serious childhood illnesses, reduction in potential stature, and with young children particularly, the results may be life threatening over a relatively short period.

Emotional Abuse

Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs can have a severe effect on behaviour and development.

This may include situations where, as a result of persistent behaviour by the parent(s) or care giver(s), children are:

- Rejected
- Denigrated
- Inappropriately punished.
- Denied opportunities for exploration, play and socialisation appropriate to their stage of development
- Encouraged to engage in anti-social behaviour.
- Put in a state of terror or extreme anxiety by the use of threats or practices designed to intimidate them.
- Isolated from normal social experiences, preventing the child from forming friendships.

Children who are left on their own for long periods are under-stimulated or suffer sensory deprivation, especially in infancy. Children who do not experience adequate nurturing or who are subject to a large number of caregivers, may also come into this category.

Sustained or repeated abuse of this type is likely, in the longer term, to result in failures or disruptions of development of personality, inability to form secure relationships and may additionally have an effect on intellectual development and educational attainment.

Physical Neglect

This occurs when a child's essential needs are not met and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care results in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances that endanger the child.

Physical neglect may also include a failure to secure appropriate medical treatment for the child, or when an adult carer persistently pursues or allows the child to follow a lifestyle inappropriate to the child's developmental needs or which jeopardises the child's health.

Some causes for suspicion

While child abuse coupled with violence can usually be fairly easily identified, where sexual abuse may be occurring the signs are not so obvious. Children can be identified and proceed through the system as truants, but the suspected root of the problem may be sexual abuse. Children can show by their behaviour or by an attempt at telling a trusted person that sexual abuse is occurring and Staff should be alert to any such attempts to pass on this information. They should be aware of children's own



language for sexual acts and parts of the body. Evidence indicates that any suggestion that a child is being sexually abused should be taken seriously and warrants careful investigation.

Behavioural clues could include running away from home, hysterical behaviour, sudden onset of learning difficulties, psychosomatic complaints such as persistent abdominal pains, headaches, sleeplessness or physical symptoms such as cystitis, infections and pregnancy. Other clues could include a child's drawings, promiscuous actions, depression, anorexia nervosa and bulimia (compulsive eating); imitation acts by young children of sexual activity etc. Many of the behavioural cues could be caused by other problems but when the above signs are present the questions as to whether sexual abuse has occurred should be considered as one of a number of possibilities.

Although most injuries to children are accidental, it is vital that all concerned with children should be alert for possible signs of non-accidental injury. There are a number of signs that singly, or in combination, may indicate that a child has been abused.

Among these could be:

- Doubtful or inconsistent explanations of fractures, cuts, bruises, scalds, burns, lacerations and swellings or small bite marks. Damage around the mouth and ears.
- Bruising in areas that a child would not normally injure in everyday play, e.g. centre of back, abdomen, between thighs and around genitalia.
- Bruising which would indicate that a child has been gripped too tightly and possibly shaken: fingertip bruising, e.g. on an upper arm and face, across the shoulders.
- Failure to thrive emotionally or physically, or loss of weight, lethargy, tiredness.
- Anxious and disturbed behaviour by children. Children may exhibit undue fear of adults or display apprehensive or withdrawn behaviour, or conversely very aggressive behaviour. Children may also demonstrate sexual knowledge beyond their years either in what they say, play or draw.
- Signs that a child may have been sexually abused (e.g. recurrent urinary tract, genital and vaginal infections or pregnancy). Similarly signs that may indicate the child is upset and disturbed (e.g. anorexia nervosa and insomnia, as well as depression or running away from home).
- Unusual or suspicious parental behaviour including delay in seeking medical advice, over-attendance at clinics or surgeries, or attendance at various different medical establishments.
- Conflicting explanations of an injury.
- Poisoning or ingestion of damaging substances including alcohol or drugs.
- The child's explanation/claim to have been abused.
- If the injury is consistent with the explanation, this of course does not mean that abuse can be ruled out.

Child abuse does not have exact boundaries and although this list should provide guidance it should not be regarded as a strict definition.

When a child tells any adult about possible abuse, his or her statements should not be dismissed or ignored. Sometimes children may say things that may seem fantastic. Adults should consider what may have prompted this and assess their meaning and significance. Adult abusers sometimes use stories or fantasy to make a child's claims of abuse less credible.



Where information is offered, those receiving the information should be attentive and responsive, taking into account the child's age and stage of development, and allow the child to say what he or she wants to, without being drawn into detailed questioning. Care must be taken to avoid undermining future inquiries or police investigation, for example by asking leading or multiple questions. The listener should record as accurately as possible anything a child has said,

noting exact words, time, place and context, as far as possible, and should avoid summarising the child's account using the listener's words.

Whilst it is the responsibility of the Director of Social Work to enquire into allegations of child abuse, teachers and staff in all educational establishments do have a major responsibility to assist the Social Work Department in identifying cases of child abuse. Attendance at Case Conferences to establish whether or not there has been child abuse and assisting with the monitoring of children who are on the Child Protection Register are further responsibilities of Staff. The Police will be involved where it appears that a crime may have been committed, and Staff will be expected to assist the Police in making their enquiries. The Reporter to the Children's Panel, with whom Staff should co-operate fully, will assess evidence obtained by Social Workers or Police. Similarly assistance should be offered to Medical Authorities as required.

Action Strategy

Wherever there is evidence that a child has been abused or there is suspicion of abuse, this must be reported immediately to Principal (who is the official Child Protection Officer), Senior Vice-Principal, Head of Junior School or Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care]. After consulting with the Principal and judging that there may be grounds for suspicion, the School will then immediately advise the Duty Senior Social Worker at the local Social Work Department Area Office of the circumstances.

Although the Senior Social Worker must always be informed by the School, the Principal must consider if an emergency exists where urgent circumstances require the earliest call to be made to the Police. Urgent circumstances could include, for example, the immediate avoidance of further abuse, the immediate pursuit of an alleged abuser, the avoidance of the destruction of evidence or the need for an immediate place of safety for a child.

Should the Child Protection Officer decide that the child's condition is a medical emergency then First Aid and urgent removal to hospital become the first priority, immediately followed by notifying the Social Work Department and the Police. In such cases, an appropriate member of Staff should accompany the child to hospital. On the same day a report of the incident must be made to the Area Reporter of the Children's Panel with copies of the report to:

- The Principal
- The Chair of the Board of Governors
- The Social Work Department Area Manager at the local Social Work Area Office.

A member of senior management should record the circumstances in a confidential file set aside for this purpose.



When there is evidence concerning the abuse of a child, the Area Manager will normally convene a Case Conference. Arrangements for the continuity of the child's education should be on the Agenda of this Case Conference. Appropriate staff will be alerted about their monitoring and support role for the pupil and the Principal will decide with staff that will represent the child's best interests at subsequent child protection case conferences etc.

Where the removal of a child to a place of safety makes it impracticable to continue attendance at the child's School the Principal should discuss the child's needs with the receiving Principal as early as possible. The School should also advise the Social Work Area Manager of the steps taken.

Once a Case Conference has decided that there are grounds for concern about a child, the child's name may be placed on the Child Protection Register. The Principal will have been advised by the Area Social Workers of the name or names of those pupils attending the School who are on the Register. Additional injuries to children on the Child Protection Register and suspicious or unexplained absences of these children should always be reported to the Area Office of the Social Work Department immediately.

Children placed on the Child Protection Register will also be referred to the Reporter to the Children's Panel and the Reporter may request a report from the School.

The system of communication to the School advising of children on the Child Protection Register can, of course, break down when for instance, a child changes address or perhaps adopts a new name. Where there is the slightest suspicion of child abuse in the case of a child who has just enrolled in the School and whose background is not particularly well known, the School should consult with the Duty Senior Social Worker to find out whether or not the child is on the Child Protection Register under another name or in another Region.

Child abuse inflicted by a pupil or pupils

Where this is physical abuse - an attack or series of attacks, bullying, threatening, extortion etc. the normal disciplinary procedures of the School should apply. The parents of the victim may be involved in decisions about possible Police Charges. The parents of accused pupils would normally be present if the Police were questioning their children. The Police could interview accused children immediately, within the School in the presence of the Principal or a deputising teacher, although the parents should be advised of this by the Police as soon as possible thereafter.)

In serious cases, the Police would report to the Procurator Fiscal even if parents did not support charges.

The Principal's professional judgement will also determine when other agencies should be involved and whether emergency action is necessary to safeguard a child.

Sexual abuse involving another pupil or pupils

The circumstances of individual cases can vary widely from the possibility of rape to willing participation in intercourse and to exploratory childish activity. The law requires that suspected sexual abuse must be reported. It is not a discretionary matter.



Intercourse with a person under 16 years of age (below the age of consent) involves a criminal offence even when both parties appear willing.

It must also be remembered that promiscuous behaviour by younger children is one possible sign of their own sexual abuse by an adult and this itself can justify investigation.

Child abuse involving a member of staff

The care and safety of every young person in the school is our foremost priority. Loyalty to a colleague cannot override that priority and each member of staff must understand that the school must take very seriously allegations of mistreatment by staff. Any suspicion or complaint that a member of Staff has been involved in child abuse must be reported to the Principal without delay (or if the Principal is the subject of the suspicion or complaint the report should go to the Chairman of the Board).

Each employee of Belmont House must be treated within the principle of natural justice and therefore this policy seeks to strike a balance between the need to establish facts and the need to protect the integrity of an employee, should allegations prove to be unfounded or exaggerated.

The procedure in the event of allegations will be as follows:

- Establishment of the facts
- Evaluation of the seriousness of any allegations

The Principal will consider the nature of the allegations and will decide on one of the following courses of action:

- the allegations are unfounded and will not be followed up
- if the pupil's account is demonstrably incorrect, the incident(s) will not be investigated further and no record of the allegation will be retained on any staff file. If it is established that a pupil has deliberately or maliciously concocted an accusation against a member of staff, that pupil will be subject to the full extent of the disciplinary sanctions at the School's disposal.
- the allegations cause concern that there has been inappropriate behaviour. In this event, they must be tackled within the school's disciplinary framework. The Principal, Senior Vice-Principal or Head of the Junior School will interview the member of staff concerned to establish as far as possible a full picture of the facts. Disciplinary action may be taken and, depending on the severity of the misconduct, this could range from a verbal warning to a precautionary suspension on full pay, pending a final decision. At all times, the member of staff will have the right to ask for the support and presence of a legal advisor, a Union representative or colleague. A record of the action taken will be held on the member of staff's confidential file.
- the allegations are sufficiently serious for the Principal to believe that the law may have been infringed. In this event, the Principal will contact the Police and if the Police judge that, on the evidence to hand, a charge may be brought; the member of staff concerned will be suspended without delay on full pay, pending a thorough investigation. As far as is possible, an independent party will carry out investigations, not the school's management team.



At all times, the member of staff will have the right to ask for the support of a legal advisor, a Union representative or colleague. The school reserves the right to apply its own disciplinary decision independent of the outcome of the Police investigations or legal proceedings.

The need for the preservation of confidentiality is vital in such cases and a breach of confidentiality would itself be a serious issue.

Serious consideration will have to be given to if/how/when parents should be informed. Once rumours etc start to circulate a lack of openness can lead to a loss of trust between parents and school.

All staff must refer all enquiries from the press to the Principal who will prepare a statement for the press and it is advisable that the school's solicitor, before release, checks this statement.

Child abuse inflicted by a person outwith the family and the School

Any information or suspicion should be reported to the Head immediately. After any necessary initial enquiry the Principal should report any serious physical assault or every possible sexual assault to the Police without delay. The next steps are:

- any emergency medical action should be taken
- the Principal should inform the pupil's parents as soon as possible
- the Principal's professional judgement will determine if other agencies should be involved in further support to the child.

Staff Strategies:

Listening to the child

The policy of the school is to work in dynamic partnership with parents in order to promote the welfare of children. The school also aims to build up relationships of trust with children. Children and parents should feel able to discuss with the school any concerns about safety and welfare, in the knowledge that these will be dealt with sensitively.

Due to the sensitivity of these issues, the school will operate on the presumption that anything imparted in confidence will be treated in confidence BUT this is subject to three important qualifications:

Anything imparted in confidence to one member of staff or person approached as an associate of the school, may be shared with a restricted number of colleagues if that person feels in need of support and guidance from them.

If serious concerns are raised about the safety or welfare of a child, the person approached may be obliged, in terms of the school's child protection procedures, to pass that information on to the Child Protection Officer, for consideration as to whether it should be shared with the appropriate authorities.

In these circumstances, the person approached would not, except in an emergency, breach the confidence without letting the person seeking assistance know that he/she intended doing so. The



school must, of course, pass on information when legally obliged to do so, for example, by a court of law.

Children must feel able to share concerns with staff. The listener should reassure the child that he or she is right to talk to an adult about being hurt or harmed, and that the adult must take what the child says very seriously. Problems may arise when a child consults a member of staff about a problem and does not want that information to be shared with parents or other staff. Whilst staff will try to encourage children to share the information with parents where that is appropriate, there may be circumstances in which any pressure to pass the information on could result in the child keeping the problem to him or herself or not sharing concerns in the future. The listener must make it clear that other people may have to be informed to make sure that the child can be properly protected. They should not make promises to children about confidentiality. In most cases the listener should be able to explain to the child who else will need to be told and why, giving a commitment to keep to a minimum the numbers of people who need

to be informed. The teacher should, as far as he or she is able, tell the child what is likely to happen, and should find out the child's views and wishes to inform the next steps.

Cases with no clear evidence

If staff have feelings of unease about a pupil's safety or welfare, then the following advice should be followed:

It is essential to recognise that young people only disclose that they are being abused when they are in a safe environment, to a person they trust, and in their own time. It may be that they only communicate their distress through their behaviour. The member of staff who has concern should arrange to meet with the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, Head of Junior School or Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care] to discuss what steps, if any, should be taken. Other agencies may be contacted to seek advice and expertise.

The decision may be to take no action immediately but to instigate or to continue monitoring. It should be noted that leading an investigation into suspected abuse of young people is not the school's role. All staff are asked to listen, observe, record, consult and report. Staff should be aware that leading questions could contaminate evidence where a crime may have been committed. However, clarification may be sought from a child or young person and observations immediately should be translated into a record stating the time and date of the observation of behaviour and noting any comment that might have been made in the young person's own words.

Recording

It is important to have an accurate record of what has been said to staff or what staff have noticed as they may be asked to speak about this later. Staff should understand that the keeping of records regarding suspected abuse is both acceptable and expected. Details will be needed of dates, times, witnesses, words spoken, injuries noticed or shown. It is important that staff distinguish between gossip, hearsay and actual information or observation. Child abuse is a highly emotive issue and the question of confidentiality is important. The member of staff with concerns should initially discuss the situation only with the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, Head of Junior School or Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care]. This group of staff would then decide whether or not other staff should be informed. Incident forms



covering issues of suspected child abuse must be given to the Principal who will be responsible for filing them.

Keeping the pupil informed

The Principal will be responsible for allocating a member of staff to liaise with a pupil who has been abused. The key points for this member of staff will be:

- keeping the pupil involved and if possible having some sense of retaining some controls in the proceedings as these evolve
- encouraging explanations to the pupil as staff go through any formal processes
- asking ideally what the pupil wants, assessing this and feeding back to the pupil whether or not this is possible - if not, why not?
- in considering the timing of any action, there may sometimes be value in not acting too quickly. How much flexibility is possible/desirable (this will vary depending upon unique circumstances of each case and should be a decision reached with others in management and may involve the pupil also)
- being honest with the pupil about what you are/are not going to do and why
- communicating to the pupil who else will be told and what they will be told
- offering ongoing support to the pupil throughout the initial period of disclosure and the case investigations
- continuing to support the pupil in the long-term in such a way as to minimise the initial and ongoing traumatic effects of the abuse.

Procedure checklist for all staff

If:

- A child discloses abuse
- A member of staff suspects a child may have been abused, or
- A third party expresses concern
- A staff member witnesses an abusive situation involving another staff member

The member of staff must: - **RECORD and REPORT**

- R** respond without showing any signs of disquiet, anxiety or shock
- E** enquire casually about how an injury was sustained or why a child appears upset
- C** confidentiality must not be promised to children or adults in this situation
- O** observe carefully the demeanour or behaviour of the child
- R** record **verbatim** in detail what has been seen and heard i.e. do not summarise the account given and use the exact words used by the child
- D** do not interrogate or enter into detailed investigations: rather encourage the child to say what he/she wants until enough information is gained to decide whether or not a referral is appropriate.



Then REPORT to **Child Protection Officer** for the School [**the Principal**], **Senior Vice-Principal**, the **Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School]** or **Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care]** without delay.

Members of staff **must not**:

- investigate suspected/alleged abuse themselves
- evaluate the grounds for concern
- seek or wait for proof
- discuss the matter with anyone other than the **Child Protection Officer** for the School [**the Principal**], **Senior Vice-Principal**, the **Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School]** or **Vice-Principal [Pastoral Care]**

Useful telephone numbers

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| • Clarkston Social Work Office | 0141 577 4000 |
| • Barrhead Social Work Office | 0141 577 8300 |
| • Strathclyde Police - Family Protection Unit | 0141 532 4900 |
| • Out of Hours Standby Social Work Service | 0800 811 505 |