The Gordon Schools

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Policy and Guidance

Introduction

The **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)** outlines the collective responsibility of all services, professional bodies and agencies that provide child and or adult services' to identify and actively consider potential risks to all children and young people. Every adult in Scotland has a role in ensuring all our children live safely and can reach their full potential.

"All children and young people in Scotland have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights and needs are respected. The welfare of children is paramount."

The **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** places a specific duty on services to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. It builds upon the principles set out in the **Children (Scotland) Act 1995** which places a specific duty on Local Authorities to investigate if it believes that a child is or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a much wider concept than child protection and refers to promoting the welfare of children. It encompasses: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcome.
(How good is our school? 4th edition)

Child Protection

Child protection is the protection of a child or young person from abuse or neglect and is part of this Safeguarding definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

The Gordon Schools strives to educate all its pupils within an environment where our Vision and values through Together, Growing, Succeeding are promoted. We aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care by being proactive through:

- A positive whole school ethos
- Personal safety programmes increasing knowledge and developing skills
- Safe Guarding & Child Protection, Anti-bullying and Equalities policies and guidance
- Health and wellbeing programmes
- Education for personal and social development
- Developing resilience
- Safe use of the internet and other technologies
- Working positively with parents/carers and our young people

We recognise that every adult has a role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and in educational establishments, staff are in a strong position to contribute to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people – acting to challenge, minimise or prevent harm, to provide on-going support, and to educate about risks and how these can be managed. All staff share the responsibility during both pupil hours and out of school activities.

The aims of this policy

The ultimate aim of this policy is to ensure that all of our children and young people are safe, reducing and preventing risk where possible, with a strong focus on early intervention and primary prevention.

To realise this ultimate aim there is a need to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers within our school can:

- Carry out their responsibilities to protect our children and young people from all forms of neglect, abuse and discrimination.
- Recognise a situation that presents a risk to children and young people and identify signs which may suggest a child or young person is:
  - *being physically, sexually or emotionally harmed, or put at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation;*
  - *having their basic needs neglected or being cared for in ways that are not appropriate to their age and stage of development;*
  - *being denied the sustained support and care necessary for them to thrive and develop normally;*
  - *being denied access to appropriate medical care and treatment; and*
  - *Being exposed to demands and expectations which are inappropriate to their age and stage of development.*
- Understand and implement procedures related to the reporting and recording of concerns as detailed in this Child Protection Policy
- Ensure that all record keeping, including Child Protection Concern referrals and chronologies, are kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).
- Ensure that Child Protection incidents are carefully considered and contribute to the Child's Assessment and Child's Plan which will regularly be reviewed in order to ensure that it meets the child/young person's needs.

This Child Protection Policy in conjunction with the wider Safeguarding practices also aims to ensure that children and young people:

- Are aware of their right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated, **Article 19, UNCRC** and aware of this Child Protection Policy
- Are supported in developing an understanding of the 8 Wellbeing Indicators, outlined in the GIRFEC National Practice Model, appropriate to their age and stage of development, allowing them to set a positive benchmark of wellbeing and recognise deviations from this.
- Are aware that the information may be shared to keep them safe.

- Have experience of appropriate life and social skills to support them in seeking the support of adults/services who can help them and learn to identify potential risks to their safety and wellbeing through our delivery of the health and wellbeing curriculum.

We will achieve these aims by:

- Reviewing this policy annually to ensure it remains in line with most recent advice and guidance

- Issuing all members of staff with this policy and supporting documents to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and of how to take action

- Ensuring that all members of staff make effective use of the GIRFEC, National Practice Model as an effective means to identify vulnerabilities and risk factors at the earliest possible time.

- Monitoring the impact of this policy to inform working practices

- All staff through their daily interactions with children and young people will adhere to this policy operationally and apply it where required.

Roles and Responsibilities

"Everyone working with children and their families, including Social Workers, Health Professionals, Police, Educational Staff, Voluntary Organisations and the Third Sector, as well as members of the community, need to appreciate the important role they can play in remaining vigilant and providing robust support for child protection."
National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland, 2014

All The Gordon Schools staff are well placed to observe physical and psychological changes in a child which might indicate abuse or suggest they are at risk of being harmed. Whilst the statutory responsibility for investigating cases of child abuse rests with Social Work and the Police, Teachers, the Named Person and other school staff are well placed to identify, monitor and report possible cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

It is imperative that all staff, students and volunteers have a good understanding of the categories of concern which may indicate that a child is at risk (see Appendix 1).

All staff and students will ensure they adhere fully to the codes of conduct with their professional regulatory body, the **GTCS** (General Teaching Council for Scotland).

What do staff need to know about Child Protection to be able to see the signs?

Staff need to be able to recognise a situation that presents a risk to children and young people and feel confident to respond in a way that will help protect the child. Children and young people are rarely able to disclose abuse and therefore it is important for schools to create positive relationships and climate in which children feel safe and are able express concerns. There is a need to look out for signs which might suggest that a child is:

- Being physically, sexually or emotionally harmed, or put at risk of harm, abuse of exploitation.
- Having their basic needs neglected or being cared for in ways that are not appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Being denied the sustained support and care necessary for them to thrive and develop normally.
- Being denied access to appropriate medical care and treatment.
- Being exposed to demands and expectations which are inappropriate to their age and stage.

There may be one single reason why staff has concern. More often it will be several things which on their own seem to be relatively unimportant but when looked at alongside other circumstances in the child's life they cause concern. For example, a child or young person may require our intervention if they:

- Have unexplained bruising or injuries in an unusual place
- Appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn or scared to go home
- Appear hungry, tired, unkempt or have poor hygiene
- Are left unattended or unsupervised or are out too late
- Seem to have too much responsibility for their age
- Are speaking or acting in a sexually inappropriate way
- Are misusing drugs or alcohol

In addition, staff are required to raise concerns about a child or young person because of the behaviour of an adult who has responsibility to care for the child or young person, or is involved in their life. This may include staff within your own or other services. Regardless of the perpetrator's position of authority, concerns for a child or young person's safety need to be reported. The adults may:

- Act in a violent way to other adults, within or out with the household
- Act violently or sexually toward the child or young person, or appear to be grooming them for sex
- Misuse drugs or alcohol chaotically
- Be physically or verbally abusive towards the child or young person
- Appear to be neglecting the child's basic needs or not taking them for medical treatment
- Be exposing the child to inappropriate images, particularly on-line
- Struggle to manage mental health problems.

Who takes action to safeguard children and young people?

Each school has an allocated Child Protection Co-ordinator. At The Gordon Schools this is Mr Alan Johnston, Depute Head Teacher. His role is to oversee the timely delivery of Child Protection training and ensure accurate records are kept of this professional learning. In most cases the Child Protection Co-ordinator, Mr Johnston, will receive concerns from staff, students and volunteers and take action to safeguard children although this responsibility could sit with all members of staff or volunteers.

If Mr Johnston is not available then any concern should be passed to Mr P. Gaiter, Head Teacher (Depute Child Protection Coordinator). If neither Mr Johnston nor Mr Gaiter are available any concern should be passed to any member of the Senior Leadership Team: Mr Dixon (Depute Head Teacher) or Miss Raeside (Depute Head Teacher). When no member of the Senior Management Team is available the responsibility for taking action lies with the individual member of staff or volunteer.

The name of the Child Protection Coordinator (Mr Johnston) and Depute CP Coordinator (Mr Gaiter) are displayed in all classrooms and offices throughout the school. Social Work contact details can be accessed via the school office or within the Child Protection Flowchart (Appendix 2).

Confidentiality

It is essential to maintain strict confidentiality in all child protection matters. All staff have a duty to pass on their concerns to the Child Protection Coordinator but should not discuss the concerns with anyone who is not relevant to the enquiry. Breach of confidentiality is a serious disciplinary matter and will be handled following the Council's Disciplinary Procedures. All staff should be aware of their role in any child protection matter and also of the principles set out in the Data Protection Act (1998).

How to take action if you have a concern about a child or young person as a result of:

- A disclosure of abuse
- Suspected abuse
- Expression of a concern made by a third party
- A staff member witnesses an abusive situation involving another person or staff member.

Look and listen to the child or young person

Do not interrogate the child/young person or enter into detailed investigations. Be particularly mindful of not asking leading questions. Observe carefully the behaviour of the child or young person.

You should respond to the child or young person without showing signs of anxiety, alarm or shock. You should enquire casually about how the injury was sustained or why the child/young person appears distressed. Do not promise confidentiality, this is misleading, instead be open and transparent about the need to share information. Do not ask the child or young person leading questions which could compromise any potential investigation. (See Appendix 3 & 4)

Record it

Make a note of concerns by recording:

- What you have seen
- What the child/young person has disclosed (in the child/young person's words)
- What concerns this has raised

Record the context, time, date and actions taken. Use non emotive, clear, plain English which is understandable to all. Provide as much information about your concerns and use the Child Protection Referral Form (Appendix 5) wherever possible or attach your notes to this completed form.

Staff must not:

- Carry out any sort of investigation into the allegations
- Make promises to the child/young person about what may or may not happen

Report it

If you have a child protection concern about a child or young person, speak to the Child Protection Coordinator, Mr Johnston, immediately. You should never assume that someone else has already reported a concern.

Mr Johnston will listen carefully to your concern and use the Child Protection Concern Form to determine next steps. If Mr Johnston or another member of the Senior Leadership Team is not available, the responsibility for taking the following steps rests with the individual with the concern. In this unlikely event the individual should contact the appropriate Social Work Team Duty Social Worker (numbers available in school office or on the Child Protection Flowchart) for advice and support.

In the likely event the Child Protection Coordinator is present they will take appropriate action. Discussion with the Child Protection Coordinator may lead to a series of actions to be taken. Consideration will be given to how parents are to be engaged if appropriate, how the outcome of any investigation will be relayed to you (the member of staff, student, volunteer) raising the concern/passing on the information) and how the Named Person will be informed. At this point further actions may include contacting the appropriate Social Work Team and/or the Police.

The Child Protection Coordinator should adhere to the principles of information sharing set out in the **Data Protection Act 1998** and only share information which is relevant, necessary and proportionate to the Child Protection concern raised but they should not seek consent to share if they consider the child to be at risk.

All discussions and actions should be noted on the Child Protection Concern Form with times and dates noted. This should be securely retained with a summary of relevant and proportionate information transferred into the child's SEEMIS Pastoral Notes (chronology).

Deciding not to take action

Following collaboration with the appropriate Children's Social Work and/or Police any decision not to take further action and the reasons for this should be recorded in the child's SEEMIS Pastoral Notes (chronology). It is important that this entry is completed with times and dates noted.

The Child Protection Register

Children and young people are registered on the Child Protection Register in order to alert workers to the fact that there is sufficient professional concern about a child or young to warrant a Multi-Agency Child Protection Plan.

The Child Protection Coordinator can phone to check if a child's name has been recorded on the Child Protection Register. The Child Protection Register is held jointly on behalf of Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray Local Authorities.

What Happens Next

Reported information will be considered by the Police and Children's Social Work. This may result in a joint investigation. Colleagues in Children's Social Work and Police Scotland will advise of any support they require from the Child Protection Coordinator.

Monitoring

This Policy and Guidance will be reviewed annually by the Head Teacher and Child Protection Coordinator and they have responsibility to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers understand what they have to do if they have a concern about a child or young person.

Further information can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council GIRFEC Website **https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/child-protection/** and links to Legislative Framework can be found in Appendix 6.

Reviewed August 2020



A Johnston DHT Pupil Support (CP Coordinator)