

Park School and Outreach Service



Child Protection Safeguarding Children Policy

Written by: Mrs B Davis
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Child Protection Policy

Park School and Outreach Service

INTRODUCTION

This policy is consistent with the guidance and procedures set out by DE.

The central thrust of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 is that *the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration*. This is also reflected in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – *the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration*. It is therefore the essential principle which underpins Child Protection policy and procedures in Park School and this has been ratified by the Board of Governors on

Our aim in Park School is to provide for our pupils a safe, caring environment, where they feel secure and valued as individuals, and they can be encouraged to learn and develop their full potential. We seek to safeguard our pupils by helping them learn about the risks of possible abuse or unacceptable behaviour in others and to acquire the confidence and self esteem they need to help in keeping themselves safe.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that all staff* who work in Park School have clear guidance on the action that is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in Park School, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

* Staff means teaching, non teaching, paid and unpaid adult members of the staff community (including volunteers).

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

(A child is a person under the age of 18 years as defined in the Children Order)

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children maybe more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse – is deliberately physically hurting a child. It may take a variety of forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Possible signs or symptoms of physical abuse include:

- Unexplained bruises or burns particularly if they are recurrent
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained lacerations, fractions or abrasions
- Untreated injuries
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Fear of going home

Emotional Abuse – is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it may have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved or inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Possible signs or symptoms of emotional abuse include:

- Bullying of others
- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- Difficulty in forming relationships with others
- Depression
- Suicide attempts
- Attention seeking
- Running away
- Poor self image

Sexual Abuse – occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical content, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing.

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Possible signs or symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Bruised or sore genitals
- Genital infection
- Maturity at a young age
- Inappropriate sexual language or behaviour
- Withdrawn
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

Neglect – is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Possible signs or symptoms of neglect include:

- Poor hygiene
- Constant hunger/cramming food
- Inappropriate clothing for the time of year (e.g. no socks in winter)
- Constant tiredness
- Exposed to danger / lack of adequate supervision
- Untreated illness
- Lack of peer relationships
- Compulsive stealing / begging

Exploitation – is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation can also be sexual in nature.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland DHSSPS 2016)

Remember, some of the indicators of abuse maybe obvious, such as belt marks on a child's body. However other possible signs of abuse such as constant hunger, should not be used in isolation, they simply provide a useful point of reference if you have concerns or suspicions about a young person you are working with.

Park School recognises the impact of an abusive family setting and will respond to domestic violence issues when made aware of it.

ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED TEACHER (DT) AND DEPUTY DESIGNATED TEACHERS (DDT's)

The DT:

- To provide training to all school staff including support staff
- Being available to discuss the child protection concerns of any member of staff
- Responsibility for recordkeeping of all child protection concerns
- Making referrals to Social services or PSNI Public Protection Units
- Liaising with EA (BELFAST) Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Keeping the school principal informed
- The lead responsibility for the development and updating of the school's child protection policy
- Ensures parents receive a copy of the child protection policy every 2 years which alerts them to the fact that referrals may be made and the role of the school on this
- Promotion of a child protection ethos in the school
- Written reports to the Board of Governors regarding child protection
- Meet monthly, or more often if required, with the DDT to update on relevant issues, referrals and procedure changes.

The DDT's:

To support and undertake the duties of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection as required

GUIDANCE ON DEALING WITH SUSPECTED ABUSE

Where teachers see signs which cause them concern, they should, as a first step, bring them to the attention of the DT. Where a classroom assistant or another member of the school's ancillary or auxiliary staff see such signs, he/she should also bring them to the attention of the DT.

The chief task at this point is to *listen* to the child, and not to interrupt or try to interpret if he/she is freely recalling significant events, and as soon as possible afterwards to make a note of the discussion to the designated teacher. The note should record the time, date place and people who were present, as well as what was said. Signs of any physical injury observed should be described in detail, but under no circumstances should a child's clothes be removed. Physical injury could be represented on a drawing to indicate location and the shape of the injury.

Care must be taken in asking questions of clarification possible indications of abuse. The same considerations apply when a child discloses abuse, or volunteers information which amounts to a disclosure. Staff should be aware that the way in which they talk to a child can have an effect on the evidence which is put forward if there are subsequent criminal proceedings, and the extent of questioning should therefore be kept to a minimum:

- Questions should be open, not closed. The child should never be asked leading questions, as this can later be interpreted as putting ideas in to the child's mind;
- The child should not be asked questions which encourage him/her to change his/her version of events in any way, or which impose the adult's own assumptions. For example, staff should say,
"Can you tell me what happened?"
rather than,
"Did they do x to you?"

DO NOT INVESTIGATE that is the role of the statutory services i.e. social services and/or the police

- Any comment by the child, or subsequently by a parent or carer or other adult, about how an injury occurred should be written down as soon as possible afterwards, where possible quoting words actually used;
- Staff should not give the child undertakings of confidentiality, although they can and should reassure that information will be disclosed only to those professionals who need to know.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED (OR DISCLOSED) CHILD ABUSE

- Where there is a cause for concern about a child, the teacher or other member of staff will notify Mrs Dupree, the DT, as soon as possible on the same day, record the concern (signing and dating it), and pass it on to her.
- The DT will notify the Principal and together they will decide if the information is such that the matter should be referred immediately to Social Services. The DT may consult with the Designated Officers for Child Protection at the EA (BELFAST) as part of the decision making process. If there are concerns that the child maybe at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.
- If a decision is made not to refer the matter to social services, written records will clearly indicate the basis on which the decision was taken, and any alternative supportive actions to be taken within the school
- If the decision to refer is made, the DT will ensure that the following are notified immediately;
 - Social Services or the Police
 - The designated officer for child protection at EA (BELFAST)
 - The parent/carer (except where they are the alleged abuser)

The referral will be followed up in writing within 24 hours using the standard UNOCINI referral form (see Appendix). A copy will be sent to the Child Protection Support Service for Schools (CPSSS) at EA (Belfast), in an envelope marked **CONFIDENTIAL – CHILD PROTECTION**

- If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or Chair BOG if he is not available) must be informed immediately. The Principal will then:
 - Inform the Chairman of the BOG (unless the Principal is the subject of the complaint in which case the DT liaises with the Chair of BOG)
 - Consult with the designated EA (BELFAST) officer for child protection to inform the initial clarification process and decision making about next steps
 - Maintain records of all steps

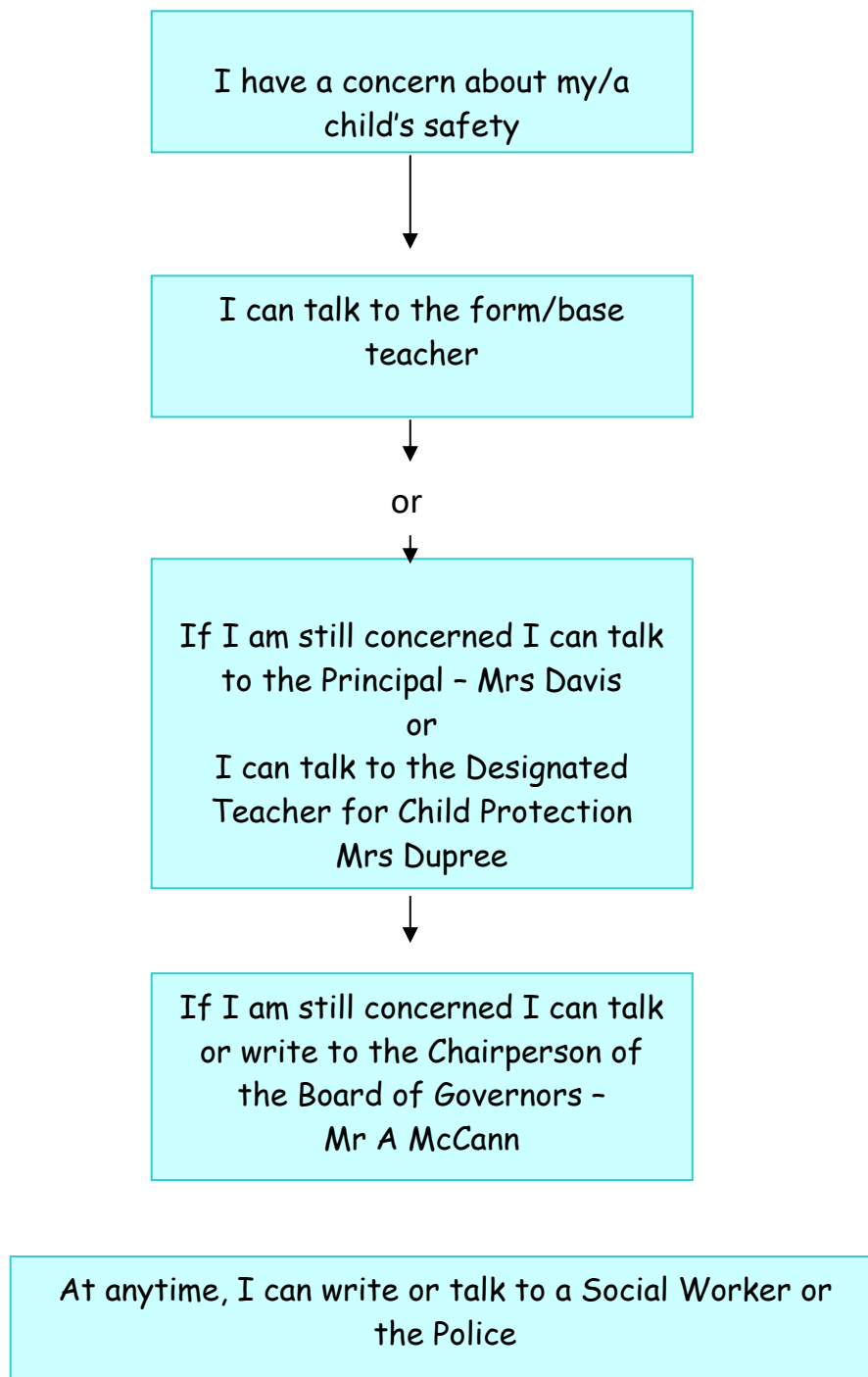
Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be immediately removed from direct contact with children, and maybe suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services. The Principal would take advice from Human Resources at EA (BELFAST) on any decisions around appropriate disciplinary measures. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

- If a complaint is made against the Principal, the DT must be informed immediately. All aspects of the above procedures for complaints against a member of staff will be followed, save that the role set out above for the Principal will be exercised by the Chairman of the Board of Governors. EA (Belfast) will be immediately consulted in any such case
- If a complaint is made against a volunteer working in the school, it will be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is not on the school's staff, and the same procedures followed. If the Principal has any concern that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

HOW A PARENT CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

Members of staff at Park School aim to offer the best possible conditions in order to promote and safeguard the welfare of all pupils.

If parents have a child protection concern they can follow the guide below:



Anti-Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Park School.

Our anti-bullying policy is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

Staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take immediate steps to stop it happening to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both the bully and the victim will be personally contacted when bullying has been identified.

Park School will not tolerate any homophobic bullying and recognise that homophobic comments and behaviour are prejudiced. The whole school is committed to preventing and responding to homophobic bullying.

Any complaints by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the DT for Child Protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or a group of small children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the DT within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation which has been carried out and the action taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case but will include the loss of privileges in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff is satisfied that the problem has stopped. If a pupil's bullying behaviour persists, the second stage will be to instigate the child protection procedures.

CHILDREN WHO DISPLAY HARMFUL SEXUALISED BEHAVIOUR

Park School supports pupils, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the importance of healthy relationships.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours which are defined as 'healthy', 'problematic' or 'harmful'.

Healthy Sexual Behaviour may include the following characteristics:

- Mutual
- Consensual
- Exploratory and age appropriate
- Not intended to cause harm
- Fun/humorous
- Without power differentials

Healthy sexual behaviour has generally no need for intervention however there may be instances when interventions are applied, for example, it is not appropriate when displayed in school or during activities.

Problematic Sexual Behaviour may include the following characteristics:

- Not age appropriate
- One off incident of low key touching over clothes
- Result of peer pressure
- Spontaneous rather than planned
- Lacking in other balancing factors eg. No intent to cause harm, level of understanding, acceptance of responsibility
- Targeting other children, to irritate and make feel uncomfortable. Often the children are not scared and can feel free to tell someone
- Concerning to parents/carers
- Sometimes involving substances which disinhibit behaviours

Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern

Harmful Sexualised behaviour may include some of the following characteristics:

- Lacks the consent of the victim
- When the perpetrator uses threats or violence (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce or intimidate the victim
- Uses age appropriate sexually explicit words or phrases
- Involves inappropriate touching
- Involves sexual behaviour between children – it is considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not
- Involves a younger child abusing an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention.

Checklist for assessing level of concern/intervention:

Assessment factors

- The type of sexual behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The young person's response when challenged about their behaviour
- The reaction/response of others
- The relationship between the children/young people/targeted adult
- The persistence and frequency of the behaviour
- Any other behavioural problems
- Background information known

Recognising and managing harmful sexualised behaviour is handled under existing arrangements for recording and reporting.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons.

The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

(Multi Agency Practice Guidelines: FGM DFP 2014)

FGM is a criminal offence in NI. Where any individual in school has a concern that a pupil may be at **immediate** risk of FGM, report it to the DT or DDT without delay. They will in turn contact the PSNI immediately.

Where any individual in school has a concern that a pupil may be at risk of FGM report it to the DT or DDT without delay. They will in turn contact the Health and Social Care Trust.

PARK SCHOOL VETTING PROCEDURES

The school's vetting processes are compliant with practice advised in DE circulars 2006/07, 2006/08 and 2006/09. 2012/19 and 2013/01.

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have an important and beneficial role in supporting the work of teachers and other paid staff in Park school and in contributing, by their efforts and initiative, to the life of the school.

It is essential however, that appropriate steps are taken, through screening and selection arrangements, to ensure that children are not placed at risk through allowing the unsupervised and unmanaged access of unsuitable adults to the school.

Who is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is an individual who, subject to the satisfactory procedures below, either

- 1) assumes unpaid duties in a school on a regular basis on more than two occasions or
- 2) is engaged by the school to accompany or assist in school visits or trips; residential activities or to undertake coaching in sports activities.

Formal arrangements as to selection and vetting should not be required for volunteers who are involved outside school hours and who do not have unsupervised contact with pupils. These would include fund raisers, people using school premises for meetings etc.

Use of Volunteers

There are three main categories into which the use of volunteers might be grouped and to which guidance will apply:

- During school hours involving direct contact with Pupils
- Outside school hours involving direct contact with pupils
- During school hours but not usually involving direct contact with Pupils

Recruiting and Selecting Volunteers

The school may canvass for volunteers or people may come forward to offer assistance at their own initiative. In many cases potential volunteers may already be known to the school. Others may come forward from the local community. Engagement of volunteers is only undertaken with agreement of the Board of Governors.

Initial Appraisal

As a minimum requirement all potential volunteers are asked to provide the following information:

- personal details
- qualifications and previous work with children
- a declaration that they have never been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound-over Order
- a declaration as to whether they have been investigated by Social Services for child protection
- agree to a criminal record being carried out
- provide the name of two referees who are not family members or members of staff in the school
- attend an interview with the school Principal with proof of identity
- Undergo an annual criminal record check through the EA (BELFAST)

No individual will be admitted to the school as a volunteer until these basic steps have been completed and the results assessed.

Accepting Volunteers

Where the previous procedures have been followed as appropriate and the school is satisfied that:

- the volunteer is a suitable person to have contact with the children and has the character, skills and experience to support the work of the school in a voluntary capacity;

- well defined and worthwhile activities have been identified for the volunteer to undertake and he/she is competent to undertake them;

The school will notify the individual that he/she has been accepted for voluntary duties in the school

The use of Volunteers

Some fundamental principles should be observed when using volunteers:

- the purpose of the volunteer is to assist staff, whether teaching or non-teaching. They are not used as substitutes either to cover activities normally undertaken by paid staff who are absent, or to release such staff to undertake other duties;
- volunteers only work under the supervision and guidance of paid staff and these arrangements should be such as to minimise the opportunities for direct, unsupervised, access to children;
- volunteers are not placed in a position of sole responsibility for the security of children, premises or equipment;
- volunteers should understand the tasks they are to undertake and receive appropriate training to enable them to perform these;
- volunteers are only allocated duties after consultation and agreement with the teacher or other member of staff with whom the volunteer will be closely involved. Teachers are not to be placed under any pressure to accept a volunteer in their classroom;
- volunteers are not afforded access to records or other information relating to staff or pupils. An exception might be made where a child has a medical or other condition of which all those working with the pupil should be made aware, and where agreement of the parent has been sought.

Health and Safety Insurance

Volunteers are owed a duty of care under the requirements of Health and Safety Legislation. Park School therefore ensures that volunteers are treated no less favourably than paid employees in terms of Park schools' obligations under the legislation.

Duration

Park school places a time limit on the period of the volunteer's service. This is done where the work earmarked for the volunteer is likely to be completed within a specific period. Where a volunteer's involvement is likely to be long term, the school advises the volunteer that he/she will be subject to a trial period, during which the Principal monitors the volunteer's effectiveness in contributing to the life and work of the school.

Information and Training

The school ensures that the volunteer receives such information, guidance, preparation and where necessary, training to enable him/her to perform tasks effectively. As a minimum, volunteers are briefed on:

- the policy of the school and the management authority in relation to pastoral care, including its behaviour/discipline policy, including rewards and sanctions, and the extent of the volunteer's authority within it; its child protection procedures
- Park School's Health and Safety Policy

Arrangements are made for the volunteer to have a formal line of communication to Senior Teachers or Vice Principal for reporting issues of concern or the welfare of the children in the school.

School Security

Park School has drawn on the advice from the guidance Document “Security and Personal Safety in Schools” 1997 to establish arrangements for the admission and supervision of volunteers on school premises. Particular attention is drawn to:

- The volunteer registering at the beginning of each visit
- Providing the volunteer with a readily identifiable name badge or pass giving his/her name and status

The school ensures passes are surrendered at the end of each day and when the volunteers’ involvement with the school comes to an end.

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF

(Pastoral Care in Schools CHILD PROTECTION 1999)

This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences pupils at Park gain from positive interaction with staff. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

1. Private Meetings with Pupils

Staff should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there are occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.

Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.

Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

2. Physical Contact with Pupils

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils.

It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however to, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child may need reassurance involving physical comforting. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this in an age appropriate way.

Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. Staff would follow guidelines given in the TEAM-TEACH course given by EA (BELFAST).

Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

Staff who administers first-aid to a pupil should ensure whenever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*

Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or maybe, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the Principal or Vice Principal.

Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.

When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.

If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the Principal before using it.

4. Relationships and Attitudes

Within the Pastoral Care policies of Park School and EA (BELFAST), staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.

THE PREVENTATIVE CURRICULUM

The staff of Park School recognises that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The school may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. When at school their behaviour maybe challenging or they maybe withdrawn.

Park School will endeavour to support the pupil through:

- The content of the curriculum, particularly Personal Development.
- The school ethos which promotes a positive supportive and secure environment and gives pupils a sense of being valued.
- The school behaviour policy which is aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils in the school. The school will ensure that the pupil knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse that has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the pupil such as Social Services, Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology, Helping Hands, PSNI, the school counsellor and the school nurse.

PHYSICAL RESTRAINT

Our policy on physical restraint by staff is set out in a separate policy Use of Reasonable Force and acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. This is keeping in line with the Team –Teach training all staff have received.


HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our Health and Safety Policy, set out in a separate document, reflects the consideration we give to the protection of our children both within the school environment and when away from the school when undertaking school trips and visits.

THE INTERNET AND DIGITAL IMAGES

Our policy on the internet and digital images is set out in a separate document and acknowledges the opportunities for learning as well as the risks attached to the internet and digital technologies. Specifically, it addresses safeguarding issues that may arise in the use of the internet and digital technologies.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs Bernadette Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mrs B. Davis
Acting Principal

REVIEW

September 2022