

MAVISBANK SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Rationale

Mavisbank School is concerned about the welfare and safety of all its pupils. The school ethos ensures that we provide an environment in which children are not only secure but also feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, they are encouraged to communicate and are listened to.

"The common responsibilities of Education, Youth and Communities and other agency employees are to protect children from abuse and exploitation, to respond appropriately when abuse is identified and to ensure wherever possible that all children are able to exercise their right to be raised in a warm, stimulating and safe environment with the support of staff, their families and carers"

(Taken from North Lanarkshire Council Child and Adult Protection Guidelines and Procedures page 3).

Introduction

It is recognised that ALL staff play an important role in identifying potential causes of child abuse. It is also important that all relevant agencies involved in child abuse co-operate together for the benefit of the child. All schools have a designated Child Protection Officer, who liaises with Social Work and staff in school.

At Mavisbank School, our Child Protection Team consists of the Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher and the designated Child Protection Officer is Acting Teacher Eileen McDonnell. All staff have a total commitment to the protection of children and are particularly aware how vulnerable our group of children and young people are. They are therefore extremely vigilant when supporting the children with their daily activities including intimate care.

New staff undertake an 'Understanding Child Protection Self Learning Pack' as part of the induction process and there is an annual update for all staff at the start of each school year.

Mavisbank has a clear policy of partnership working between home and school, but with child abuse or suspicion of child abuse our first responsibility is to the child. This may mean that parents are not informed or consulted in some instances. We may not be able to prevent child abuse, but by following child protection procedures, we are first and foremost trying to offer the best protection for all our children who are the priority for all staff in school.

All staff make sure that all the children and young people within Mavisbank remain safe, are well nourished and given the opportunity to flourish.

Any cause for concern is reported and child protection procedures adhered to both by the school and partner agencies involved in supporting the child or young person.

Purpose of a Child Protection Policy

- To ensure the care, welfare and safety of the pupils of Mavisbank School.
- To inform staff, parents and the local community about the school's responsibilities.
- To enable everyone to have a clear understanding of local and national guidance as well as our responsibilities and how we should adhere to these.

Safeguarding

Due to their complex needs our pupils are extremely vulnerable. Although unable to keep themselves safe staff use every opportunity to help pupils build resilience, promote communication and reduce anxiety.

This is achieved by acknowledging and responding to pupils' attempts to communicate unhappiness / dislike / distress.

Staff use signifiers to help pupils understand the routines of the school day which promotes a sense of security.

We use moving and handling risk assessments and therapy profiles to ensure pupils are safe and receive appropriate support.

We promote independence and the opportunity to make choices wherever possible and do things with the pupils rather than for them.

Guidelines

If staff have a reasonable suspicion about the safety or wellbeing of a child then it is their duty to report this to the child protection co-ordinator within the school. In reporting concerns or suspicion all adults in school must follow national and local guidelines. Teachers and school staff are particularly well placed to:

- Observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour and failure to develop, because they have daily contact with the children.
- Recognise the important role the school has in the early recognition of the signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect and then follow the appropriate procedures set down in guidance.

Safeguarding

North Lanarkshire Child Protection Procedures

This policy is seen in the wider context of 'Getting it right for every child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is to be read in conjunction with North Lanarkshire Council Child and Adult Protection Guidelines and Procedures, Management Circular C5 and the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010.

North Lanarkshire Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance place the following responsibilities on all schools.

- Staff should be alert to signs of abuse and know who they should report any concerns or suspicions to. Staff should be aware that neglect and verbal abuse are forms of child abuse.
- The Head Teacher has responsibility for co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with other agencies.
- Schools should have procedures, 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.

Child Protection Coordinator

The Child Protection Co-ordinator in Mavisbank is the Head Teacher.

Their role is to ensure that they;

- Are familiar with the information contained in the Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance and Management Circular C5
- Raise awareness of these procedures with all staff and ensure that they receive appropriate training and support.
- Bring the contents of the Child Protection Action Guidance leaflet to the attention of all employees annually and that employees have access to the guidance and a copy of the leaflet.
- Co-ordinate Health and Wellbeing education programmes for pupils.
- Co-ordinate support within the establishment for specific children/young people.
- Co-operate on behalf of the establishment/service with inter-agency child protection support plans.
- Alert staff to be particularly vigilant when a child is known to be on the Child Protection Register.
- Assist appropriately in the efforts to help the child and the family involved in terms of advice following on from the case conference or from discussions with the Principal Psychologist
- Liaise with other establishments and external agencies.
- Are responsible for updating the Child Protection Agency Contact List/Network of Support, Contact Log and Chronology of Significant Events (Appendices 5, 6, 7) in the Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance.

Grounds for Concern

Grounds for concern about the safety and wellbeing of a pupil can arise from a wide range of circumstances and will generally be covered by the

following events:

- a child/young person communicates that abuse has taken place or that he/she feels unsafe
- a third party or anonymous allegation is received
- a child's/young person's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or communication arouses suspicion of abuse
- a child/young person reports an incident of abuse which occurred some time ago
- employees witness abuse
- Failure to thrive

Responding to grounds for concern

Staff should:

- Any grounds for concern should be reported immediately to the head teacher
- If there is direct evidence or suspicion of abuse the matter should be reported immediately. The member of staff should not wait to gather evidence.
- Staff should follow guidance from the head teacher in relation to recording concerns.
- It is essential that there are no delays in reporting child protection concerns even if the child protection coordinator or head teacher are not available.

Heads of establishment should treat the notification from staff of grounds for concern as a priority action and:

- consider the immediate needs of all children/young people involved

- take emergency action if required
- gather and ensure clarity of information offered by staff in relation to incident
- ask staff to record, sign and date relevant information
- store all information in a confidential incident file
- notify the duty senior social worker at the locality social work office immediately in all cases where there are grounds for concern about child abuse. (This should be the locality in which the child resides) A medical emergency should be reported immediately to the Medical Services and, if required, first aid should be administered before reporting the incident to the duty senior social worker.

Dealing with a disclosure

If a pupil discloses / communicates that she/he has been abused in some way, the member of staff 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 might not be possible to keep.
- Not promise confidentiality - it might be necessary to refer to Social Services.
- 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.
- Ask open questions rather than leading questions.

- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.

Due to the complex nature of the needs of pupils in Mavisbank any communication is likely to come from body language and vocalisations. Staff therefore need to be especially alert to changes in a child's demeanour or vocalisations around people.

Record keeping

When a pupil has made a disclosure the member of staff should:

- Make brief notes as soon as possible after the conversation and pass these to the head or depute head teacher in order to be securely stored in case they are needed at a future date. They will also log any relevant information in the child or young person's pastoral notes.
- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.
- Use a body map or draw a diagram to indicate the position of any bruising or other injury.
- Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions.

Support

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 should, therefore, consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the Head Teacher.

Confidentiality

Child protection raises issues of confidentiality which must be clearly understood by all staff in the Education Service. The circular advises that all staff in the Education Department, both teaching and non-teaching staff, have a 'responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies (Social Services and the Police). If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it

is important that the member of staff tells the child sensitively that she/he 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 who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts. Child Protection records should be kept securely locked.

Reviewed and amended by: Helen Delaney and Eileen McDonnell

December 2017

May 2019 Eileen McDonnell

To be reviewed: December 2020