



Queen Margaret Academy

Child Protection, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Policy

Key persons:

Mr Kevin Mallon – Depute Headteacher & Child Protection Coordinator (CPC)

Mrs Oonagh Browne – Headteacher

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i. Introduction

All children and young people have the right to be cared for; protected from harm and abuse; and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights are respected and their needs met. Children and young people should get the help they need, when they need it, and their safety is always paramount.

At Queen Margaret Academy, we are committed to promoting the welfare and wellbeing of all our young people, by working in partnership with families and the wider school community. Our school values of *community, ambition, respect, equity, faith and responsibility*, underpin all that we do, and help us to create an inclusive ethos that honours the life, dignity and voice of each young person, made in the image of God.

Keeping young people safe is our principle priority, and this policy provides the framework within which all staff, individually and collectively, can understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, child protection and promoting the welfare of children.

NB For the purpose of this policy, the terms 'child' and 'young person' may be used interchangeably.

ii. Aims and principles

Our aims:

- Provide a of a safe and loving environment in which all our young people can thrive;
- Develop a confident and highly skilled workforce who, through a commitment to continued lifelong professional learning, can support our most vulnerable young people;
- Work closely with parents and carers as first educators, and with partner agencies to embed our 'team with the family' model;
- Ensure that robust processes and procedures exist to carefully manage all issues pertaining to child protection, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Our guiding principles:

- The safety and welfare of our young people is always our primary concern;
- Protecting young people is everyone's responsibility;
- The rights of all young people should be upheld without compromise;
- All concerns, disclosures and allegations pertaining to child protection and safeguarding should be taken seriously and responded to in an appropriate and timely manner;
- Effective processes and procedures are fundamental to ensuring the safety and welfare of our young people.

iii. Policy and legislative context

The Scottish Government wants Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up so that they become *successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens*.

[The Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) places a duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. To achieve this, child protection and safeguarding guidance sits within the wider legislative and policy context of:

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 \(updated 2023\)](#)

[The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#)

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[The Promise](#)

NB This list is not exhaustive.

iv. What do we mean by Child Protection and Safeguarding?

Child Protection means protecting a child from abuse or neglect. Abuse or neglect need not have taken place; it is sufficient for a risk assessment to have identified a likelihood or risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child **by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent**, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or peer network, online or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

There are no absolute criteria for judging what constitutes **significant harm**, therefore talking to partner agencies and sharing/gathering information will be a priority.

Safeguarding is a much wider concept than child protection and refers to promoting the welfare of children. It encompasses protecting children and young people from maltreatment; preventing impairment of their health or development; ensuring that they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to ensure they have the best possible outcomes.

v. Types of abuse

In most instances, abuse is categorised as being **Physical, Emotional (or verbal); Sexual; or Neglect**:

Physical Abuse
Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.
Emotional Abuse
Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may also involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. It may feature age – or developmentally – inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. A degree of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, however it may also occur in isolation.
Sexual abuse
Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic

material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate way. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.

Neglect

Neglect is the **persistent** failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failing to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

vi. Additional risks

As society changes, so do the risks to our young people. Whilst the list below is not exhaustive, it highlights further risks that exist within the context of child protection and safeguarding. By working closely with the local authority and partner agencies, and through our commitment to continued lifelong professional learning, we remain vigilant with regards to new or emerging risks facing our young people.

Bullying

We recognise that bullying behaviour can have a lasting and detrimental effect on the social, emotional, physical and educational development of a young person. Queen Margaret Academy has clear guidelines for challenging bullying behaviour as outlined in our school's anti-bullying policy.

All allegations of bullying behaviour should be taken seriously and investigated fully; and appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the school's policy. Actions taken should be proportionate, consistent, and where possible have a focus on restorative practice. Whilst it may not always seem an immediate priority, it is also important to consider the wellbeing of the person displaying bullying behaviour.

Online safety

When used responsibly, the internet is an excellent resource that can help to support a child's learning and development. We must however be mindful that it can also pose significant risks:

Cyberbullying: Children may experience bullying or harassment through digital platforms.

Sexual Exploitation: Online platforms can expose children to sexual content or predators.

Sexting: Sending, receiving or possessing explicit messages or images is a crime.

Grooming: Predators may use online platforms to groom children for exploitation.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways. It involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue and hence interferes with the natural function of girls' and women's bodies. FGM causes severe pain and has several immediate and long-term health consequences, including difficulty in childbirth also causing dangers to the child.

Preventing Radicalisation

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on specified authorities, including local authorities and childcare, education and other children's services providers, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Young people can be exposed to extremist influences or prejudiced views, in particular those via the internet and other social media. Schools can help to protect children from extremist and violent views in the same ways that they help to safeguard children from drugs, gang violence or alcohol. At Queen Margaret Academy we encourage children and young people to use the internet safely, we participate in Internet Safety Week and cover online safety in PSE and curricular areas.

vii. Observe, record and report

The role of our local authority staff is TO OBSERVE, RECORD AND REPORT:

- ✓ Observe carefully the child or young person's behaviour and demeanour;
- ✓ Record in detail what the staff member has seen and heard and when;
- ✓ Any signs of physical injury should be described in detail or sketched;
- ✓ Exact words used by the child or young person should be quoted;
- ✓ A guarantee of secrecy or confidentiality must not be given to the child;
- ✓ Use open-ended questions;
- ✓ The child or young person must be told that the Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) will have to be informed;
- ✓ Report suspicions or disclosure immediately to the Child Protection Co-ordinator;
- ✓ Take notes, date and sign them, as soon as possible and recording should not delay reporting;
- ✓ Even when no formal referral has been made to the Health and Social Care Partnership, Education notes should be kept in a confidential record in Pastoral Notes on SEEMiS and if relevant an Ayrshare record created;
- ✓ Be supportive and assure them you will only share this information with those people who need to know in order to prevent any further harm; and
- ✓ Take time to listen, without asking too many questions.

Responding to a disclosure or allegation:

- ✓ listen carefully, let the child speak
 - ✓ do not show disbelief or panic
 - ✓ take the allegation seriously, reassure the child and ask how they feel
 - ✓ avoid expressing views on the matter
 - ✓ do not guarantee confidentiality, whilst explaining the reasons for this
 - ✓ explain that she/he will have to share this information with the Child Protection Co-ordinator and keep the child or young person informed
 - ✓ pass details of the CP concern to CPO or Headteacher **without delay**
- X Do not question the child – this is the responsibility of agencies trained to carry out investigative interviews of children.**
- X Never carry out an investigation or gather any photographic evidence into the allegation.**

Wellbeing concerns:

It is important to recognise that not all instances of child protection come to light through a single disclosure or allegation. In many cases, we become aware through more subtle signs, for example changing patterns in a child's behaviour or presentation. For this we rely on staff that know our young people well, and the positive relationships that exist within our wider school community.

Where teaching staff have concerns of a non-urgent nature pertaining to a child's wellbeing, they should pass this information to the child's guidance teacher and/or year head at the earliest opportunity. Details of their concerns should also be clearly outlined and submitted to the guidance teacher using a **wellbeing form**.

Non-teaching staff who are concerned about a child's wellbeing should also share their concerns with the respective guidance teacher or year head either in person, or by email.

It is vital that any concerns are logged by guidance and SLT on **pastoral notes** to ensure a wider body of evidence around a young person's wellbeing is available. One seemingly minor concern may exist in isolation, however any number of similar concerns about a young person may suggest a wider or more significant issue.

viii. Additional safeguarding measures

School Buildings Security

Restricting access to the school building is an important step in keeping children/young people safe whilst in school. This is achieved through a policy on access for visitors, parents, carers, work persons etc.

- Secure entrance; visitors are required to sign in and out and wear visitor badges.
- CCTV that monitors and records entry/exit points to the school building.
- School Janitors have responsibility for ensuring that the building and school grounds are kept secure.
- Social areas (e.g. canteen and Devlin's Café) are monitored by SLT at break time and lunch times to keep children safe.

Staff Training

- Whole-school in-service training on Child Protection is organised in August by the K Mallon (CPC). All staff should sign to indicate they have attended the training and read these guidelines. These guidelines will also be issued to all supply staff and student teachers working with young people in our school.
- Where appropriate, an online module for Child Protection should also be completed on COAST.
- The Child Protection Coordinator will attend regular meetings run by the South Ayrshire and disseminate information accordingly.
- Staff should alert the Headteacher if they feel their training needs are not being fully met.

Cameras, photography and images

Written consent must be given by a parent/carer to use images of a young person to celebrate success e.g local press or via the social media accounts.

Intimate/Personal Care

Where a child/young person requires support with intimate/personal care they will receive this support from a limited number of staff to preserve dignity and ensure a level of privacy.

Volunteers

- Any parent or other person/organisation engaged by the school to work in a voluntary capacity with pupils will be subjected to all reasonable vetting procedures and a disclosure undertaken.
- Volunteers supporting on school trips need not be disclosed. However, they should not be left unsupervised with children at any time.
- Volunteers will be subject to the same code of conduct as paid employees of the school

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Record keeping

- Well-kept records are essential to good Safeguarding Practice. Our setting is clear about the need to record any concerns held about a young person; the status of such records; and when those records should be shared with partner agencies.
- Any records regarding safeguarding and child protection are kept securely in a locked cabinet in a locked room. Pastoral notes are also recorded via click and go.
- When a child has additional support need(s) it is essential that all relevant staff read and are aware of the child's staged intervention information. It is the member of staff's responsibility to do this.
- Information on children's medical needs is recorded on Seemis, and where necessary in their staged intervention information.

Confidentiality

All staff understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved, but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence. Staff should only discuss concerns with the child protection coordinator (CPC) or headteacher in the first instance. The CPC or headteacher will then decide who else needs to have the information and this will be shared on a "need-to-know" basis.

Keeping everyone safe

Wellbeing should permeate all aspects of the curriculum, however young people are also educated on how to keep themselves safe through the PSE programmes, wellbeing lessons, assemblies, input from Campus Officers etc.

Only staff who have received MAPA training should attempt to restrain a child, both for their own and the child's safety. Children should always be warned that they are likely to be restrained and the restraint should be witnessed by another adult.

As a school we recognise that there is sometimes the need to work in a one-to-one situation with a child. Staff should leave the door open and make sure another adult knows where they are and what they are doing.

Contacts

Name and designation	Contact details
Kevin Mallon, Depute Headteacher, Child Protection Coordinator and Designated Manager	Kevin.Mallon@south-ayrshire.gov.uk 01292 612020
Oonagh Browne, Headteacher and Depute Child Coordinator Officer	Oonagh.Browne@south-ayrshire.gov.uk 01292 612020
South Ayrshire Council's Social Work Initial Response Team	01292 267675 0800 328 7758 (out of hours)