

# **Bredon School Child Protection Policy.**

Bredon School is committed to combating child abuse in all the various forms in which it may arise. Whilst the School is independent, it is nonetheless bound in its duty of care by the Children Act 1989 (section 87) and by subsequent statutory guidance relating to the welfare of children looked after away from home.

In seeking to achieve the highest standards of pupil education and care, the School fully acknowledges its duty of care to all pupils whether full boarders, weekly boarders or day pupils and its constant responsibility to promote healthy relationships between pupils, and between staff and pupils. We strive to work in partnership with parents if at all possible and send a copy of our child protection policy when new pupils join the school.

The complexities of child protection responsibility require that Bredon School does not operate in isolation, but shares concerns with statutory agencies whose task it is to investigate and advise on such matters. Any matter deduced by the Child Protection Liaison Officers, CPLO (Mrs Jane Goodyear and Mr Nick Allison) at Bredon School to constitute a significant child protection concern, complaint, allegation or disclosure must, without delay, be shared with the relevant Social Services Department and Ofsted inspectors rather than being investigated internally. If any member of staff has concerns that involve Bredon school staff and feel unsure about talking to the two CPLO or senior managers they should liaise directly with Social Services or Ofsted directly.

Typically, the Social Services Department, within whose geographical boundaries an incident is alleged to have occurred, deals with child protection matters. Accordingly, Bredon School has professional links with key child protection personnel within Worcestershire Social Services Department. The School also has access to an independent consultant to whom reference is made on matters of guidance and protocol. Should the need for formal investigation arise involving pupils who normally reside outside Worcestershire, notification would normally also go to their local Social Services Department, and if 'statemented' to their Local Authority as well.

In managing child protection concerns as they arise, and in seeking to resolve them appropriately, the emphasis must essentially be on working together with pupils, parents, Social Services, with LA's and others whose combined task it is to safeguard children. The School acknowledges that it is through working openly and collectively, in 'partnership', that abuse will be prevented, and children and young people be made to feel secure and confident in the standard of their education and care whilst away from home. It should be borne in mind that key themes within effective child protection practice are 'awareness and sensitivity' with which to detect and manage allegations as they arise, and 'good communication' so as to share the right information with the right people at the right time.

## **Principles and Safeguards**

In order to protect pupils and promote their welfare, the School fully adopts the following principles and safeguards:

The School accepts that abuse, in whatever form, always constitutes potential serious harm to a child.

The School accepts that, suspicion, belief or evidence of abuse to a child, currently or in the past must always be communicated to the CPLO (Child Protection Liaison Officers) with authority to evaluate and effectively manage the matter with appropriate action.

In conjunction with relevant agencies the School has developed clearly prescribed and available procedures for dealing with any instance of abuse that may arise which is in accordance with national and WSCB (Worcestershire Local Safeguarding Children Board) guidance.

All those involved with the provision of education and care at the School have a duty to be alert to the possibility of abuse by other children, visitors, members of staff, parents, guardians and other carers.

All employees of the School, whether permanently or occasionally contracted, will act in accordance with the aims of this document and will honour their obligation and duty to the School to raise legitimate concerns about the conduct of colleagues and others. The School is particularly mindful of the need to support and protect 'whistle-blowers' and to ensure that their position within the School is not jeopardised or prejudiced by their actions.

Every endeavour will be made to ensure that all pupils and particularly those from minority ethnic backgrounds feel valued and respected. Similarly the rights of pupils with disabilities will be acknowledged and respected. There will be particular endeavours to enhance the self-esteem of those pupils who have a specific learning disability.

Whilst seeking to uphold a sense of security and privacy for members of the School, this needs to be balanced with a need for appropriate openness to the outside world on behalf of staff. This is to ensure that the school is abreast of child welfare concerns and developments and in tune with contemporary child care theory and guidance.

The current aim is for all staff with substantial and unsupervised access to children to receive child protection training so as to be alert to the needs of the vulnerable child and to potential risks of harm. There is a main CP training session with treble updates. The School's staff recruitment, selection and vetting procedures are uncompromisingly inline with guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills as laid out in 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education'.

Should any child find themselves in difficulties, s/he will have ready access to family or friends, the CPLO, the Principal, or a trusted staff member. There are independent parties to whom a child may turn for help if necessary and ultimately, of course, telephone access to Social Services, Child-Line, NSPCC etc. These numbers are prominently displayed be all phones and children made aware of their rights.

### School Procedure for Responding to Suspected Abuse or a Disclosure

Children may begin to disclose abusive experience to trusted adults in any setting or situation that serves to trigger memories – staff members may be completely unprepared or pre-occupied with other matters when they do. All staff are advised however that it is vital that the child is listened to with sensitivity, and that the adult is able to project empathy and understanding whatever the child's emotional state.

In all matters of suspected abuse, questioning of the child will be strictly limited. The child will need to be told that absolute confidentiality may not be possible, as the disclosure may involve other victims. Disclosures should be recorded with as much accuracy as possible, after the event, on

requisite forms if possible, and forwarded to the two CPLO's in confidence. The School will report serious incidents to Social Services, and will contribute to the inter-agency child protection strategy meeting that will determine what action must be taken. The School must not make its own investigations in order that proper means are used to gather evidence and protect the victim etc.

Detailed confidential notes, with reference to the reasons for decisions, actions etc should always be made, and be securely filed. Confidential information should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only. A promise of secrecy should not be made to a disclosing child, although this may often be requested in exchange for further detail. It is important that the child is not encouraged to feel guilty, shameful or disloyal in telling you their story and the information should generally be accepted as true until investigated.

The Principal or CPLO, must report serious matters to Social Services at the earliest opportunity and will act on advice in making appropriate arrangements for the support/protection of the child. Following an investigation, specialist counselling or therapy may be provided for a distressed child subject to parental and professional opinion.

The protection of the child is paramount in matters of abuse, and must be of immediate and primary concern. Any adult staff member suspected or accused of involvement must expect to be suspended without prejudice until the matter is fully investigated and resolved. Should any member of staff be found to have behaved inappropriately, the School's internal disciplinary procedures will be invoked, irrespective of action taken by outside agencies.

### **The Reporting of Abuse or Suspected Abuse**

There are two Child Protection Liaison Officers responsible for the management of any matters relating to child abuse. They are also responsible for training all other staff members within the school from Principal, through permanent to part time and volunteer staff.

Child Protection Liaison Officers  
Mrs Jane Goodyear and Mr Nick Allison

Mrs Jane Goodyear is a qualified, experienced teacher at the school. Mr Allison is a qualified social worker and Head of Boarding. Both attend training in child protection and interagency working and other relevant training as available privately and through the Worcestershire Social Services and Safeguarding Children Board in line with legislation and good practice.

If any member of staff or student is aware or suspects that a child has been subject to abuse at home or at School, it is his/her duty to report these suspicions immediately. Where it is believed that the child has suffered, or is in danger of suffering, significant harm, the Head or the CPLO listed above must formally report the matter as soon as possible, and within 24 hours to:

- a) Worcestershire Social Services Department – Children Services, Social Care.

and subsequently to :

- b) The parents or guardian of the child concerned (unless implicated). Names of alleged perpetrator and/or other victims etc will not be divulged unless agreed in consultation with Social services.
- c) The Managing Director of Colegios Laude.

- d) Where applicable, the Local Authority responsible for the student's placement at Bredon School.

Ultimately, Children's Services, Social Care have responsibility for deciding what action to take in response to information provided by the School, and also to advise on what actions, if any, to take in regard to the victim and perpetrator. The School will, as a matter of course, co-operate fully with the Social Services Directorate in accordance with the 'Inter-Agency Guidelines for Management of Child Abuse' and other relevant external agencies who may become involved.

If a member of staff is accused then the senior management at the school may take the decision to suspend the staff member during the investigation. This is to protect both the child and the staff member. The school will make every effort to ensure that the staff member is supported and communicated with throughout. A member of the senior management team will take on this responsibility. The school is aware that on rare occasions, accusations can be vexatious or mistakes made and will be sensitive to the implications that an accusation can have on a member of the school.

If it should be suspected that the Principal or a senior manager has committed abuse, then matters must be reported to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board and Social Services.

If a member of staff having reported specific concerns does not feel that the correct action has been taken, he or she may report their additional concerns directly to Social Services, the police and Ofsted.

In addition to co-operating fully with outside agencies, the School will work with the investigating body to ensure that the ISA is fully informed of any issues surrounding the suitability of staff to work with children.

### Summary

Child Protection is a difficult and sensitive area of law and practice. The focus of the law is on safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare, but there can often be genuine differences of view as to how the child's interests will best be served. In essence, child protection is about :

Keeping children safe from abuse when at school

Being alert to signs of abuse both in school and from outside

Dealing appropriately with every complaint

Designing and operating procedures which promote these aims and which, so far as possible, ensure that teachers and others who are innocent are not subjected to, or prejudiced by, false allegations.

The Principal and designated CPLO staff should, long before any problem or concern arises, be aware of :

The Children Act 1989, ss.47;87;105

CA'89 Guidance Vol 5, 'Independent Schools'

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 1999, DoH.

‘Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment’, Department of Education and Skills.

Referral routes to Social Services must be clear and well established, with agreed parameters for cooperation. It is hoped, at the very least in difficult circumstances, that trust and confidence between the School and local Social Services will always be such that a case can be discussed informally. It is s87 of the Act which imposes a shared responsibility on both the School, to safeguard and promote pupils’ welfare, and a corresponding welfare monitoring duty on to the local social services authority. Intentional obstruction of an authorised social services officer is a criminal offence.

The detail of current child protection guidance places a duty on the School to report an allegation or suspicion to the SSD without delay; not to carry out an internal investigation; to agree with the SSD the appropriate next steps; and to have regard to the safety and welfare not only of the pupil concerned, but of all the pupils accommodated at the School.

In regard to Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998, which guarantees everyone the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and correspondence, the School will consider obtaining its own specialist legal advice at the outset of any developing child protection investigation. The potential for conflict of interest, given the current range of pertinent legislation, is considerable.

It is essential, that the School identify designated persons with specific responsibility for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse. The CPLO’s will have clear knowledge of how to identify signs of abuse, and when to make a referral. They will know Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board procedure and guidance, and the requirements of record keeping. The School will aim to broaden the range of child protection training available to all its staff and will ensure that adequate training is provided to those with particular child protection responsibility, in this case the CPLO’s.

Formal recruitment checks will be carried out on all prospective new staff and any other adults who may be given unsupervised access either to pupils or to boarding accommodation. It is an offence to employ a person who has been barred or restricted from working in a school. Qualifications and references will be verified. Facts relating to dismissal of any staff member on the grounds of unsatisfactory conduct, whether subject to Police involvement or not, will be referred to the ISA in writing within one month of dismissal.

A member of staff, who has reason to believe that a pupil is being abused outside the School, should initially seek information from the child with tact and sympathy using ‘open questions’ and not leading the child. A record will be kept. The designated CPLO staff member will be consulted at an early stage, and the Principal must also be informed if there is a suspicion of significant harm.

The School will work openly with others to combat child abuse in all its many forms, and will strive to maintain the very highest of professional standards with the aim of promoting the welfare and optimal development of all its pupils.

Note that Child Protection training runs each year for new staff and there are compulsory termly updates for all staff on admin days.

*If you are worried about a Child, what should you do?*

***Worries.***

If you have a worry about a child, do not keep it to yourself, share it with the school with Mr Allison or Mrs Goodyear (CPLO), the pupil’s Houseparent or Personal Tutor. It is important to do

so as others may have similar worries or a different understanding of the same problem. Confidentiality is important, but it can also be better to share information if it means protecting a child.

In the event of an obvious emergency (e.g. actually witnessing an abduction or an attack) **CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY BY DIALLING 999**. Child protection is a whole community responsibility – no matter what position you hold it is vital that you report any suspicions or disclosures.

### **School Structure**

Mrs Goodyear and Nick Allison are the Child Protection Liaison Officers who liaise with Social Services and the Police. In addition you are able to reach the Worcestershire Social Services on 01905 765575.

### Some information on how the school approaches staff and physical contact

At Bredon School we believe in normal relationships with the pupils in our care. We have to balance this whilst being aware that there can be a culture which strongly suggests that all physical contact should be avoided for fear of allegations. There will be occasions when physical contact with pupils is proper or necessary.

### Early Years and Children in Transition

It is appropriate to use physical contact with a pupil in Early Years if she/he

- Is distressed
- Is finding separation from mother difficult to cope with
- Has lost his/her temper and is angry
- Is in danger of hurting themselves
- Is tired at the end of the day
- Is feeling unwell
- Has wet themselves

### Junior School Children

Touching is appropriate if a child is

- Distressed
- Angry
- For their own safety
- Involved in any sort of accident

By Year 6 a comforting arm around them would be appropriate if a child is

- In emotional distress
- Over-excited

### Senior School

As a general rule it is not appropriate for staff to touch children. However, there are occasions when it is acceptable. These include

- Sports coaching
- During the giving of First Aid
- When a pupil is in distress and needs comforting.

There may be some children for who touching is particularly unwelcome perhaps because of their cultural background or because they have suffered some form of abuse. Physical contact with pupils becomes increasingly open to question as pupils reach adolescence and staff are aware that even innocent and well-intentioned physical contact could sometimes be misconstrued.