

# The Protection of Children

## Policy Procedure & Guidelines for keeping children and young people SAFE

### MISSION STATEMENT

#### Committed to protect.

#### Child protection policy statement.

- It is the belief of St. John's School and College, that the well being of all children and young people is given paramount consideration.
- All members of staff share in the responsibility for protecting children and keeping them safe from harm whilst they are attending St. John's School and College. Children have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- St. John's is committed to implementing this Child Protection Policy which follows the guidelines of the Brighton and Hove Area Child Protection Committee.

### THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

#### Children's Rights

Children have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

All citizens, as well as professionals, have a responsibility for the protection of children and for reporting concerns about a child's welfare or safety.

#### Putting Children First

The well being of the child is the paramount consideration in all protection work.

In any conflict between the needs of the child and those of the parents/carers, the needs of the child must be put first.

## **Treating children as individuals**

Children must be listened to and taken seriously, whatever their level of development or communication.

Children's wishes and feelings must be taken into account; children will be involved in decisions about their future in ways appropriate to their age and understanding.

Work with children should be sensitive to the child as an individual with particular needs and circumstances.

All children will be treated with respect and accorded full civil and legal rights.

## **Equality**

Each child and family is unique with differing experiences, circumstances and perspectives.

Professionals concerned with child protection investigations must make every effort to identify and ameliorate any disadvantage arising from ethnic origin, culture, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability or age.

Particular attention should be paid to the vulnerability of children with a disability, special needs or communication difficulties.

## **Confidentiality**

All matters to do with our children and their families are subject to clear standards of respect and confidentiality.

Guidance in relation to confidentiality at St. John's School and College is to be found in the St. John's Confidentiality Policy, which forms a part of the staff induction pack.

However we must understand that sharing information with the appropriate agencies and professionals is essential if children are to be protected. Research has shown that it is often the failure to share information that has put children at risk.

There are clear legal frameworks that support and promote the sharing of information in a child protection context.

## PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES

(TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH BRIGHTON & HOVE AREA CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE PROCEDURES.)

St John's provides Senior Staff who will act as Child Protection Co-ordinators. At least one co-ordinator will be available at all times to provide advice, guidance and decision making in respect of any child protection concerns.

A child or young person may share information with you that gives you cause for concern or you may observe something which leads you to believe that a child or young person has suffered harm or may be at risk from harm.

Staff will be aware of the need to make a distinction between, on the one hand, behaviour which amounts to serious physical assault, intimidation and sexual assault which requires external Child Protection intervention and possibly criminal investigation and, on the other hand, normal childhood behaviour or sexual exploration which should be dealt with by the appropriate staff. ( Regulations Vol 4, paragraph 1.184 )

Staff should also be aware of the school policies on:

***Bullying and Intimidation***  
***Control and Holding***  
***Behaviour Management***

All of these are to be found as part of the St. John's School and College Behaviour Policy, which forms part of the Staff Handbook and Induction Pack.

### **What should you do?**

Always stop and listen straight away.

Write brief notes as soon after as possible, or at the time if it is not disruptive to information sharing.

Keep your originals, no matter how scruffy.

Explain that you might not be able to keep a secret, if you are going to be told something very important that needs to be sorted out, then you need to tell the people who can sort it!

### **Don't ask leading questions.**

The child or young person's first words are important to note and try to allow the child to express itself freely rather than ask questions. Questions to clarify the account may be helpful but it is important not to ask leading questions as these might influence and possibly distort the account given by the child.

NEVER attempt to carry out a formal interview of a child yourself, this must be left to other professionals (Police and Social Workers) responsible for child protection investigations.

Immediately consider the need to make the child safe from further harm or from harming others and seek help from colleagues in doing this.

Consider the need for hospital or medical attention if there are urgent health needs but be aware of the possible need to retain evidence of harm or assault.

### **Accumulative concerns**

It may be that the incident you are dealing with, does not in itself appear significant or of a serious nature. It may be one of a series of incidents over time and it is important that senior staff are made aware of such incidents so that the necessary information can be collated.

### **Allegations concerning staff**

Allegations that concern colleagues are extremely challenging to other staff and to the school but in spite of our commitment to colleagues we must also allow ourselves to think the unthinkable and keep an open mind to the possibility that a staff member may be implicated.

Never think that abuse is impossible in your school or college or that an allegation against someone you know well is bound to be wrong.

In such instances the School's own disciplinary procedures will run alongside the child protection investigation and possible Police investigation. (Regulations vol 4, 1.187-1.189)

### **You should report your concerns IMMEDIATELY to one of the Child Protection Co-ordinators.**

Along with this immediate action, it is ESSENTIAL that a written record with clear dates, times and names is begun and kept up to date.

On the Seaford site, you should speak to the

Head of Care - **Chris Thompson**  
Care Office, extension **119**  
Mobile 'phone: **07740 334715**

or to the

Head of Education - **Jane Molyneux**  
Office extension **104**  
Mobile 'phone: **07736 925200**

On the Brighton site, you should speak to the

Head of Care - **Julie Newson**  
Care Office, extension **234**  
Mobile 'phone: **07803 750147**

or to the

Head of Education - **Coral Romain**  
Office extension **203**  
Mobile 'phone: **0468 116751**

### Then what happens?

The Child Protection coordinator will:

Immediately respond to the concerns raised by staff (or students) and decide the appropriate course of action.

Ensure that the identified child/children are protected from harm.

Collate the available information concerning the allegation/incident.

Make a Child Protection referral to

Seaford - Duty Officer  
Child Protection Unit  
10 Pembury Road  
Eastbourne

Tel: 01323 769018

Seaford - Duty Officer  
Lewes South Children & Families Team  
Saxonholme  
Meeching Road  
Newhaven BN9 9QX

Tel: 01273 513574

The Duty and Assessment Team  
Royal York Buildings  
Old Steine  
Brighton. BN1 1NH  
Tel: 01273 296000

(Out of hours Child Protection matters should be referred to the Emergency Duty Service on 0870 238 5358 )

There may be unusual circumstances in which it is best to inform the Police first, for example when there is direct evidence that a serious crime has been committed or the child is in such immediate danger that the protective powers of the Police are needed. In such circumstances the SSD should also be informed immediately as well.

Senior Staff will take responsibility for informing the “home authority” for the child. In normal circumstances the child’s parents should also be informed as soon as possible and indeed their permission may need to be sought for some elements of the investigation, e.g. a medical.

However in some cases where allegations might implicate parents then Senior Staff will need to take advice from the local Child Protection professionals about when to inform the parents of the child, in case that doing so would impede the investigation.

If you have any queries about Child Protection, or this policy document, please speak to one of the members of the Child Protection Development Group.

On the Brighton site, these are

Julie Newson	- Head of Care
Coral Romain	- Head of Education
Sharon Davis	- College Youth Worker
Vanessa Barber	- College Nurse

On the Seaford site,

Chris Thompson	- Head of Care
John West	- Head of Education
Marilyn Ross	- School Nurse
Fiona Kemp	- Senior Care Officer

St John’s accepts responsibility for establishing the above procedures, for responding to allegations of abuse and for providing guidelines for good practice.

St. John's will ensure that staff who are employed, those who volunteer and others who have substantial access to children are checked through the Police service and other appropriate sources. See also "Recruitment Procedures 2001"

St. John's will present obligatory training on the policy and procedures to all staff working with children and young people in the organisation, as part of the Induction Training Programme.

In addition, ALL staff will be expected to attend refresher sessions every two years, with attendance of such being logged onto personnel files.

## ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING SENIOR STAFF

**In some residential and school settings it has been known for Senior Staff to be involved in the harm and abuse of children and young people. In such situations it is difficult for other staff members to know how best to raise their concerns.**

**Consequently in the spirit of openness that Child Protection Procedures demand, St Johns will develop a type of "whistleblower" policy where staff will be able to make direct contact with outside support and guidance.**

**In the meantime should such an extreme situation arise then staff should contact either the Duty and Assessment Team, Tel. 296000, or the Police Child Protection Team via 0845 60 70 999.**

## APPENDIX

### What is child abuse?

#### Definitions

The Children Act 1989 provides the legal framework for defining the situations in which local authorities have a duty to make enquiries about what, if any, action they should take to safeguard or promote the welfare of children.

The Act requires that if the local authority has 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives or is found in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, they must make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary....'

**'Child'** means any child or young person under the age of 18 years old.

#### The Concept of Significant Harm

##### Under Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989:

**'harm'** means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development;

**'development'** means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;

**'health'** means physical or mental health;

**'ill treatment'** includes sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment, which are not physical.

##### Under Section 31 (10) of the Act:

Where the question of whether harm suffered by the child is significant, turns on the child's health and development. His or her health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect and the extent of premeditation, degree of threat and coercion, sadism, and bizarre or unusual elements in child sexual abuse.

Each of these elements has been associated with more severe effects on the child, and/or relatively greater difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the ill treatment.



Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, e.g. a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is an accumulation of significant experiences, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the children's physical and psychological development. Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. In each case, it is necessary to consider any ill treatment alongside the family's strengths and supports.

**To understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider:**

- The family context, education, or living situation
- The child's development within the context of their family and wider social and cultural environment
- Any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication difficulty or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family
- The nature of harm, in terms of ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care
- The impact on the child's health and development
- The adequacy of care.

**It is important always to take account of the child's reactions and his or her perceptions, according to their age and understanding.**

**Categories of child 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 feigns the symptoms of or deliberately causes ill health in a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as 'factitious illness by proxy' or 'Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy'.

**Emotional abuse** - the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse**

- involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or 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 sexually inappropriate ways.

**Neglect**

- 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, including non-organic failure to thrive. It may involve the parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic educational or emotional needs.

**Revised June 2004**  
**Don Kent**  
**Chief Executive**

**Next review**