



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. PHILOSOPHY

- Cranbrook School views the protection of children as of central importance to the healthy life of the school.
- Within the School there exists an ethos of encouraging students to speak out, exemplified by the “Student Listener” scheme.
- In all cases of suspected child abuse, the child’s welfare and interest is paramount, taking precedence over all other considerations. (See Confidentiality Policy)
- We recognise that abuse may take a number of forms: physical abuse; neglect; sexual abuse; emotional abuse.
- We work together closely with other concerned agencies including police, social services and NSPCC. In all cases a first referral will be made to Social Services in Tunbridge Wells or Maidstone, depending on the child’s home address.
- Staff are aware that their dealings with children can be open to misinterpretation. Where possible they should ensure that doors are left open when they are seeing a child. If they feel uncomfortable, then another member of staff, preferably of the opposite sex, is invited to be present.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

A. When allegations are made against people outside school or other students within the school:

- If a child discloses abuse to a member of staff, (s)he recognises this as a sign of a trusting relationship and takes the following action:

LISTEN – repeats the child’s words

STOP – does not ask questions

REASSURE – tells the child that (s)he is not to blame

BELIEVE – tells the child that (s)he is believed

AFFIRM – gives a positive response – “I am glad you’ve told me”; “You’ve been brave”; “It was right to tell”.

CONFIDENTIALITY – does not promise confidentiality but explains that what has been said MUST be passed on to relevant people who can help.

REPORT – immediately tells the School’s Designated Child Protection Coordinator (DCPC) what has been said and writes a verbatim account as soon as possible after the conversation, using the child’s own words. This is signed and dated and a copy given to the DCPC. If the DCPC is not available, the Headteacher should be told, and given the verbatim account.

EXAMINATION – does not attempt to examine the child for injuries. If the child is anxious for these to be seen then a colleague, of the same sex as the child, is asked to be present as a witness, or assistance is requested from a nurse in the school’s medical Centre.

- All concerns are recorded, signed and dated and shared with the DCPC.
- Notes taken are specific: distinguish fact from fiction but record both; state any action taken and who has been contacted; describe any injuries in detail; include any statement by the child.
- Information relating to individual cases is strictly confidential and is kept securely by the DCPC and separate from other records.
- The DCPC refers cases to the relevant branch of Social services, initially by telephone but followed up by letter.
- The DCPC takes the advice of the Duty Social Worker in the contacting of parents/guardians.

B. When allegations are made against staff:

- Staff who hear of an allegation against another member of staff, immediately report this to the DCPC.
- The DCPC obtains details of the allegation in writing, signed and dated by the person who heard the allegation (not the pupil) and countersigns it. Information about times, dates, locations and potential witnesses is recorded. The DCPC will immediately inform the Headteacher of the allegations.
- The Headteacher makes an initial consideration of whether or not there is sufficient substance to warrant an investigation. In making that decision, (s)he consults with the duty officer of Social Services. There will be one of 4 possible outcomes of this deliberation:
 1. An immediate referral under the school's child protection procedure
 2. There is reason to suppose that abuse may have occurred and that referral under the school's child protection procedure or under internal disciplinary procedures may be necessary
 3. The allegation is apparently without foundation
 4. The allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour which needs to be considered under local disciplinary procedures
- If the outcome is 1 above then the Headteacher makes an urgent referral to local child protection agencies. Early action at the school, to establish the nature of the allegation, is undertaken in such a way as not to prejudice any subsequent action.
- If the outcome is 2 above, the Headteacher acts quickly. (s)he is not expected to investigate the allegation itself or interview students, but to consider whether the allegation can be substantiated. If (s)he believes that the allegation warrants investigation (s)he should:
 1. Either make a referral to one or more of the agencies with statutory duties
 2. Or if wholly satisfied that a reportable criminal offence has not been committed, consider the need for disciplinary action. In that case a school investigation becomes necessary. This must be clearly separated from any child protection investigations and will be held in abeyance pending the outcome of any external investigation

- The Headteacher informs all relevant persons of the course of action. These include: the child, children or parent making the allegation; the member of staff against whom the allegation is made; the Chair of Governors. A written record of these factual matters is made.
- Where the outcome is 3 above, and the Headteacher believes the allegation is without foundation then (s)he:
 1. Informs the member of staff that no further action will be taken. The member of staff may be accompanied by a Union Representative or a friend.
 2. Considers whether counselling and/or informal professional advice to the member of staff is appropriate.
 3. Informs the parents of the child/children of the outcome and considers appropriate counselling and support for the child/children.
 4. Prepares a report, setting out the conclusions and giving reasons why the allegation is without foundation.
- The Headteacher will not automatically consider suspension of a member of staff against whom an allegation is made. (s)he will consider recommendations made by Child Protection agencies. Suspension is likely to be used when:
 1. A child or children are at risk
 2. The allegations are so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct is possible
 3. A suspension is necessary to allow the conduct of the investigation to continue unimpeded
- In all cases where suspension is being considered the Headteacher advises the member of staff to seek assistance from their union or teacher organisation. **AT THIS POINT CRANBROOK SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES WILL COME INTO FORCE.**
- All documents are retained with a written record of the outcome. Where disciplinary action is taken the records are maintained on the member of staff's file. If the teacher is dismissed or resigns, the Headteacher must inform the DfES – Teacher Misconduct Section.
- A record of the allegation and report of the outcome is kept on the pupil's file not open to disclosure.
- When the allegation is made against the Headteacher the member of staff who hears the allegation or the DCPC (if that is not the Headteacher) must report the allegation to the Chair of Governors, who follows the same process as that given above.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- All staff have a responsibility for the safety of all the pupils within the school.
- The DCPC liaises with outside agencies as necessary and ensures that correct procedures are followed at all times. Currently the DCPC Mrs Jo Taylor, Head of Pupil Development.
- The Headteacher is responsible for determining if an allegation against staff has foundation and for carrying out any necessary investigation and disciplinary process.
- The Chair of Governors is responsible for any investigation and disciplinary action when an allegation is made against the Headteacher.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- The Governing Body reviews the Child Protection Policy every three years.
- The DCPC regularly attends training sessions to keep his/her knowledge up to date.
- The policy is published in the staff handbook via Portal each year and staff attention is drawn to it.
- From time to time child protection issues form part of whole staff training on Inset days.

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