



## **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE TO STAFF**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS**

Staff placed in schools by New Directions Education Limited share the same responsibilities as staff employed on a full time basis.

Children trust and depend upon adults to protect and safeguard them from harm. It is therefore our responsibility as adults who come into contact with children on a daily basis to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse which may have occurred or is occurring to a young person.

### **OUR ROLE**

- To keep our eyes and ears open
- To report
- To be excellent role models

**NB.** Identifying and investigating actual child abuse is the responsibility of Child Protection Agencies.

### **DEFINITION**

The term ‘child abuse’ is used to describe a range of ways in which people (usually adults) harm children. A basic definition would be “child abuse is the use of power by one person who is older/stronger than the other. It results in distress, harm or neglect to the victim.” This harm can be in the form of physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect (failing to protect a child).

- Children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse.
- Abuse can take place at home, at school or anywhere where children spend time.
- It can happen to children and young people of any age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability.
- In almost all cases, the abuser is someone known, and often trusted, by the child such as a family member or close family friend.

### **HOW TO RESPOND IF A CHILD CONFIDES IN YOU**

It can take a great deal of courage for a child to talk to an adult about their abuse because the child is “telling on” someone more powerful than they are. Therefore this should be kept in mind: The child may have to betray a person who is not only close to them but also loved by them, and they are risking a great deal in the hope that you will believe what they say.

#### **Helpful Responses**

- Remain calm, approachable and receptive. Do not prejudge.
- Listen carefully without interrupting.
- Make it clear that you are taking them seriously.
- Acknowledge their courage and good sense and reassure them that they are right to tell you.
- Reassure them that they should not feel guilty and you are sorry that this is happening to them.
- ***Wherever possible the pupil’s consent to sharing the information should be obtained. However never promise to keep what they tell you secret: let them know that you are going to do everything that you can to help them and what may happen as a result of their disclosure.***

#### **What to do next**

- You must make an immediate careful record of what has been said using the child’s actual words wherever possible (not your interpretation of them). If you record opinions, ensure that these cannot be confused with facts.
- ***Immediately inform the Child Protection Coordinator*** who will make a decision based on your report judging whether the issue should be referred to outside agencies or not. In the absence of the Child Protection Coordinator, ***the Headteacher*** should be informed. ***Never leave the school without speaking to someone in authority.***

- Record in writing the fact that you have reported the situation to the Child Protection Coordinator: This is for your own protection. **Your dialogue with the school will of course be confidential but New Directions must be made aware of the referral. Telephone and ask to speak to a Head of Department.**
- Remain caring and supportive to the child.

## What to Avoid

### **If a disclosure is made to you:**

- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Do not probe for more information than is offered. You must not question the child or attempt to counsel the child.
- Do not speculate or make assumptions.
- Do not make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Do not make any promises that you cannot keep such as promising that “everything will be alright”.
- Do not agree to keep the information a secret.
- ***Make sure that the child knows that the information will be passed on to the Child Protection Coordinator.***

### **Your role is to:**

- Be vigilant and responsible.
- Report accurately and carefully to the Child Protection Coordinator.
- Support the child by being caring.
- ***There is no more to your role.***
- ***Always refer, never investigate.***

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once you have reported a concern to the Child Protection Coordinator, and they have decided on the status of the concern (whether it is a child protection issue or not) a referral may be made to Children's Services. All further responsibility for gathering information and deciding what happens next will rest primarily with Children's Services.

In some cases, a brief assessment might reveal the child to have needs which can be met by providing specific support. In more serious cases, the information provided to agencies by the Child Protection Coordinator will trigger a full child protection investigation.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### **Personal Code of Conduct**

- Place the safety and well-being of children first, and before loyalty to friends or colleagues.
- Form appropriate relationships with children
- Be committed to actively preventing the abuse of children

### **As a general rule:**

- Do not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children
- Do not take children alone on car journeys
- Do not take children, or allow children, into your home where they can be alone with you

### **It is never advisable to:**

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games or horseplay
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching. Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves

New Directions offers a full days training on Child Protection issues in its programme of courses for supply teachers. These are normally held during half term/beginning of the Summer Holiday. An outline of the day is attached. Colleagues are encouraged to apply for funding from the GTCW for these courses. A full list of courses is available from New Directions.