

POTTER'S HOUSE SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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Biblical Background

God cares for and values children. This is evident when reading the Bible. The following are just a few of the many examples to be found:

1. Jesus welcomes the children to him – Mark 10 v 13-16.
2. Jesus frees a child from possession - Mark 9 v 14-27.
3. God cares for Ishmael in the desert - Genesis 21.

There are other examples, in the Bible, of good practice in childcare and teaching, some of which are as follows:

1. Ephesians 6 v 4 - Fathers are told not to exasperate their children and to teach and train them in the way they should go.
2. Proverbs 22 v 6 - Adults are encouraged to teach and train their children.
3. Psalm 78 v 1-8 - The people are encouraged to pass on teaching about God to their children and to the future generations.
4. Deuteronomy 6 v 6-8 - God's people are encouraged to pass on the commandments and truths of God to their children.

As a Christian School we want to give our children the best possible care and the document which follows outlines the policy for achieving this.

Principles Adopted

Before considering the detailed policy it is worth noting the principles upon which it is based.

1. **TRUST** - This is vital in any situation but particularly in a school environment. As we trust God, ideally we should trust each other, both teachers and children. However because we are all fallible human beings, wisdom and discernment are needed to know what is right. We are to be as shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. Matt 10 v 16.
2. **RESPONSIBILITY** - As parents and teachers God has given us responsibility for our children. We need to administer that responsibility wisely. Proverbs 29 v 15.
3. **LOVE** - God loves us as children and so we too should love and care for the children we teach. Colossians 3 v 14. Love has many aspects, including cherishing and nurturing but also discipline, without which a parent would not be giving true love. Heb 12 v 10.
4. **FORGIVENESS** - It is vital that we are able to forgive each other as our Father forgives us. We all do wrong so it is essential that we can deal with our wrongdoing and both forgive and be forgiven. Ephesians 4 v 32.
5. **INTEGRITY** - We aim to be a community that is open and honest with each other. If we are, then we will build up good, strong relationships between the children and ourselves. Eph 4 v 15.

With these principles at the centre of our school life we will provide the best possible environment for all of our children to receive their training and education.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURES

The safeguarding procedures have regard to Chapters 3 & 4 of “Safeguarding children & Safer Recruitment in Education”(2007)(SCSRC)

INTRODUCTION

As Christians we are called to respect children as individuals and to further their well being in every way. Jesus taught clearly about the value of children, both as individuals and for their ability to show others true Christian virtues. He also said that those who exploited or abused children deserved profound condemnation. (Matthew 18:6)

As a school we seek to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. It is important, therefore, that everyone who works with children, even in a voluntary capacity, should behave responsibly and understand the need to operate within a carefully worked out framework of good policy and practice.

Before you take on your position as teacher or assistant in any school activity dealing with children under 18, we would ask you to read this document carefully, and ask questions if you do not understand anything.

Everyone who works in the school should be clear about their role and responsibilities before they begin. You should discuss your work with the Head Teacher and read through all the relevant policy documents so that you are well prepared.

SUPPORT

Each teacher is expected to meet with their team regularly during the school year and you should feel able to ask for support and further training in all aspects of the work you are involved in. The Trustees are willing to respond to requests for training with Information Evenings at school and there are several courses organised by the Christian Schools’ Trust each year.

Please make your needs known to the Head Teacher; they are available to help should you have any difficulties. It is always helpful to be able to talk over any problems that you might be having with the children with someone of greater experience.

Sometimes those helping in school can feel rather isolated from the general school family. This could make any sensitive situation unnecessarily difficult. Isolation is not inevitable. Try to attend at least some of the prayer meetings and information evenings. Let the specific needs of your work with the youngsters be made known to the members of the prayer groups.

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking that Christians will never be guilty of abusing children because they are part of God’s community. Sadly this is not so, (as a result of the fall, human nature is corrupted by sin and Christians are only in the process of being sanctified). Nevertheless, the best way of preventing abuse and also of protecting our workers from false allegations of abuse is to plan the work so that opportunities for abusive situations to arise are minimised.

1. Adult /Child Ratios

Outside the formal class setting there must be at least two recognised leaders for a group.

Further information about leading trips outside of school and outdoor activities can be found in other school policy documents.

2. Time alone with children

Other than for individual tuition, time alone with children needs to be kept to a minimum and handled with the utmost care. This is the situation where adults are most vulnerable to false allegations or serious temptations. Whenever you find yourself in the situation of being alone with a child, other people should know of the meeting.

If a school activity extends beyond normal school hours, then two adults should be on the premises until all the children have been collected. It is recommended that younger children should not go home on their own and never without a parent’s consent.

3. Good practice in managing behaviour

All children and young people need to be treated with respect and dignity. Under no circumstances should a child be summarily smacked. The head Teacher will refer to the Discipline Policy and decide what action is appropriate. Verbal sanctions need to be given sensitively. Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, even in fun. It is essential that seriously unruly behaviour is discussed with the parents, and the class and school co-ordinators

Always look out for a child who is being bullied either physically or verbally by another child. Often this is quite subtle and discernment is needed to discover intent. It should always be taken seriously as both the victim and the bully may have problems.

Excessive attention seeking or sexually provocative behaviour is often a sign that something is wrong at home. If you find that you are the object of such attention discuss this with your class co-ordinator or the child care officer as soon as possible.

4. Touch

A good principle is that touch should be related to the child's needs not yours, It should be age appropriate. Obviously young children need a lot more physical contact than older ones. A small child who hurts herself may need a cuddle, likewise an older child who is seriously upset for some reason. In the latter case physical contact is more appropriate from someone of the same sex. Two small boys fighting may need to be separated. Remember that a hug in public is very different from one behind closed doors. What might be considered acceptable "horse-play" in the context of a family relationship is unacceptable between a young person and an adult in charge. Members of staff should take responsibility for monitoring each other in this area.

5. Confidentiality

It is very important never to assure complete confidentiality to a child/young person until you are sure about the nature of their concerns. It is always possible to assure them of your help and support whatever they have to say. If they begin to tell you that they are being abused, or if you suspect that abuse has taken place, you will need to inform the Head Teacher/Child Protection officer. *
This applies in all future references to Head Teacher

6. Health and Safety

You should keep yourself up to date with the relevant policy documents and fire/safety procedures. All leaders should know how to access help via a telephone. Fire Extinguishers are in place and checked regularly. A First-Aid kit is available and regularly checked. Most teachers and helpers should have Basic First Aid Training. Accidents should be recorded in the accident record-book with a note of any action taken. When transporting children, the driver is responsible for ensuring that seat belts/booster seats are worn as appropriate. The Head Teacher must be shown that the driver's insurance policy covers the transport of children on school outings.

If a driver is used regularly for transporting children, they should have an enhanced CRB Disclosure.

CRB DISCLOSURES

To comply with the law enhanced CRB checks must be carried out before you take on any responsibility for work with children. This will include those helping in the classroom or leading an outdoor activity. Forms are available from the school CRB co-ordinator, Mike Mitchell. He is willing to meet with you to make sure you have understood the guidelines. The form, once completed and signed by you, should be returned to him. Disclosures are to be kept securely until the next Ofsted inspection. If you have any problem with signing the form or are unsure what an item means, please do not hesitate to consult any member of the management committee. The Trustees are the group who must ultimately decide whether or not you are able to work with children.

If you work in the school, you will be asked to provide the names of two referees. We suggest that at least one of your referees is someone who has knowledge of your previous work with children. Previous experience of

work with young children **is always helpful** but nobody should be deterred by lack of experience. It is, however, helpful for the school to know what experience you have had.

MAKING A RESPONSE

These guidelines are primarily directed at dealing with situations that may arise in a school setting. However, there may be occasions when you become concerned about possible abuse at home.

The school is committed to taking seriously any report of suspected abuse, while realising that the personal cost to someone of making such a complaint may be high. The tendency must be resisted to become defensive about the person being accused or about the school's reputation. It is particularly important to let the child know that he or she is being listened to.

If you are not sure, or your suspicions have been aroused, speak at once to one of the Head Teacher. If you receive a report of suspected abuse, you should remember that it is important that you do not begin to carry out an investigation yourself into what might be a matter for the Social Services and Police.

CHILD CARE OFFICERS

The Trustees will ask the Head Teacher to appoint Child Care officer. The officers **can** be appointed from amongst the parents, the teaching staff, the Trustees. The Officers should be persons of spiritual wisdom, maturity and sound judgement. A background in a suitable profession – medical, social services, child care, police or pastoral responsibility – may be of assistance but is not essential.

Guidelines for the Officers are included in this policy.

THE ROLE OF THE CHILD CARE OFFICER

It is a common feature of situations where children have been abused that an adult has exploited their power to gain submission or silence. It is hoped that one of the benefits of establishing good practice and a safe environment for children is that they feel safe to talk about any concerns they have to their teachers or helpers. Children will talk to those people with whom they feel safe and if that is you, you may not feel particularly well equipped to deal with the matter. This is one of the reasons why we have Child Care Officers who are more than willing to discuss with you any concerns you have about a particular child. If they are not available, consult the School Co-ordinator. However, some children are unwilling to confide in anyone they know and that is why the Childline number should be known. (0800 1111)

PROCEDURES FOR CHILD CARE OFFICERS IN CASES OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

These procedures are given as guidelines to assist the Child Care Officers, Coordinators and Management Committee of the School in dealing with cases of suspected abuse.

They supplement the school's Child Care Policy

HELP IN RECOGNISING ABUSE

Those working in the statutory agencies of Health, Social Services, Police and Education are specially trained to identify child abuse. However, they often have to rely on people close to children spotting signs that something is wrong,

Professional workers use the following definitions of abuse:

- a) **Neglect:** The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.
- b) **Physical Injury:** Actual or likely physical injury to a child or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.

- c) **Sexual Abuse:** Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature.
- d) **Emotional Abuse:** Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection, All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment.

Where abuse occurs, someone known and trusted by the child usually perpetrates it. The incidence of abuse by someone unknown is extremely low.

You may begin to suspect that a child is being abused for a number of reasons.

The child may tell you outright.

You may notice bruises which cause you concern.

Another child may tell you that their friend is being ill-treated.

An adult may admit to you that they have harmed a child in some way. An allegation may be made on the child's behalf by a parent or carer.

You may notice a sudden change in a child's behaviour.

OFFICERS

The Trustees will appoint a Child Care Officer to cover the School and Nursery, as well as a deputy.

REPORTING ABUSE/SUSPECTED ABUSE

Any suspicions of abuse, injury or neglect received by Class Teachers, however minor in nature, must be reported to the Head Teacher. The ultimate responsibility for deciding whether or not to report a case of abuse/suspected abuse lies with the Head, after discussions with one of the Teacher and/or Trustees, and will depend on the nature of the allegation, the severity of any suspected injury, any concerns previously raised etc.

A: Cases of Serious Physical Injury or Serious Neglect

- 1) When a report is received from a teacher or a child or obvious signs of serious injury/abuse are apparent, the Head Teacher must report matters to the Social Services or (in the case of extreme emergency) to the police.
- 2) Medical assistance should be called if necessary.
- 3) A Trustee must be informed if the allegation concerns the Head Teacher. Other members of the Trustees will be informed on a need-to-know basis only.
- 4) The parents must NOT be informed if they are the ones suspected of causing the abuse .
- 5) A written record must be kept.

B: Cases of Less Serious Suspected Injury or Neglect

- 1) The head Teacher should report concerns to the Trustees.
- 2) The parents should be approached in confidence and it should be suggested that professional help is sought from medical/social services or church leadership who can then make their own decision to take the matter further if necessary .
- 3) A written record must be kept.
- 4) If another incident occurs or the parents refuse to seek further help then the Child Care Officer/Deputy Child Care Officer should consider if the matter needs to be referred to Social Services (the advice of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service [CCPAS] may be helpful at this point tel: 0845 120 45 50).

C: Case of Suspected Sexual Abuse

- 1) The Head Teacher must report the allegations IMMEDIATELY to the police and Social Services.

- 2) The Trustees must be informed immediately.
- 3) The parents MUST NOT be told where the allegations concern a parent or another family member.
- 4) A written record must be kept.
- 5) The CCPAS (0845 120 45 50) are happy to give advice on the telephone (they will subsequently confirm details for record purposes).

Once a matter has been reported to the Police/Social Services, they must be left to investigate and NO FURTHER COMMENT should be made.

It is crucial that the Head Teacher /Trustees should not be seen to be "taking sides and should refuse to get involved in any discussion on the subject until official investigations are completed. Other parents/pupils should do the same. It is vital to avoid an "us v. them" mentality.

All records must be kept securely by the Head Teacher to ensure confidentiality. In the case of a change of personnel the "outgoing" Head must ensure that all records are handed over to the new Head

RECORD KEEPING

Whenever there is an incident that causes you concern about possible abuse be sure to take a brief factual note of the incident or concern, the action taken and the date it occurred. This note may be of vital importance at a later date, even if nothing is resolved at the time.

TRAINING

The Head Teacher/Child protection officer must attend regular training every two years from the Local Safeguarding Team in Bury. Training of other staff must occur regularly every three years, ideally as part of a "rolling programme", which can be school based.

The Trustees will undertake to review this policy annually.

WHY DO WE NEED ALL THIS?

People who work with children are sometimes vulnerable to false allegations. Children as well as adults are sinners and as such are capable of making misleading or even malicious statements. One of the reasons for working within these guidelines is not only to minimise the incidence of abuse, but also to reduce the likelihood of false accusations.

We believe it is right that people should work together as a team, supporting each other, understanding what is expected of them and being keen to learn about how they might make the group even more effective. As a school we pray that the main focus of our concern is to bring young people to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. They will be influenced not only by what we say but who we are and what we do.

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For further reading see 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' (Jan 07) and 'Every Child Matters' (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk) and the Report on the "Baby P" case

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