



Ashfield Girls' High School

Child Protection Policy





Child Protection Policy

Ashfield Girls' High School has a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our Pastoral Care Policy.

Aims of the Pastoral Care Policy:

- To provide a caring, supportive and safe environment supporting the ethos of our school, "Each Different, Each Talented, All Valued"
- To ensure that each pupil can reach her full potential in terms of her spiritual, moral, cultural, intellectual and physical development, and that she is prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- To give each pupil support throughout her school career.
- To encourage parents to participate actively in the education of their daughters.

Objectives of the Pastoral Care Policy:

- To set up organisational structures, which give each pupil support, identify problems when they arise and facilitate their resolution.
- To provide links with outside agencies, when appropriate, in accordance with our legal responsibilities under the Children's Order 1996.
- To develop each pupil's emotional literacy enabling them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

'All board and school staff must recognise that, in order to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation, a proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families.'

(Education Authority Pastoral Care Policy)

IN ALL CASES

- **The child's welfare must be paramount,**
- **The child's interests must always come first,**
- **All agencies concerned with the protection of children must work together in the best interests of the children,**
- **Confidentiality must be subordinate to the need to protect the interest of the child.**

Procedures in School

The purpose of the procedures is to ensure that everyone who works in our School: teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers, have clear guidance on the actions they should take where abuse or neglect is suspected.

The overriding concern of all the adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the pupils and the welfare of the individual is of 'paramount' importance.

The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in school, even in the knowledge that certain aspects of abuse are a criminal offence.

It is a legal requirement that all members of Ashfield Girls' School Community who work with children must be vetted by P.S.N.I. Teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the Education Authority will be vetted before appointment. Thereafter it is the responsibility of ALL STAFF to ensure that volunteers working with children are vetted.

The forms for the vetting of volunteers are available from Miss J Friar (Designated teacher), Mrs B Cripps, Mrs N Christie (Deputy Designated teachers) and Mrs A Mungavin (Principal)

Ashfield Girls' High School promotes a Code of Practice for all members of the school community working with children (Refer to Appendix 1).

What is Child Abuse?

Neglect: It is the persistent and significant failure to protect a child from

- Impairment of health through lack of cleanliness or medical care.
- Under achievement through absence or lack of supervision at home.
- Exposure to danger through cold, starvation or lack of moral direction.

Physical Abuse: It is injury eg slaps, bruises, burn marks etc. deliberately inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Sexual Abuse: This is the exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or other young person's sexual gratification, including:

- exposure to pornography.
- activities to which they are unable to give informed consent.
- activities that violate normal family roles.

Emotional Abuse: This is persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in:

- severe adverse effects on physical growth eg size according to age.
- emotional problems eg fearful, unhappy or loss of self esteem.
- behaviour problems eg hyperactivity, attention seeking or over passivity.

Bullying: This is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse. It will not be tolerated in our School. All staff need to be vigilant at all times:

- to the possibility of bullying occurring,
- to take immediate steps to stop it happening,
- to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully.

A separate Policy has been drawn up to cover all aspects of this problem in School.
(Anti-Bullying Policy)

Below are some examples of common signs and symptoms, which might indicate abuse or neglect. Please note that this is **not a checklist**. Some of these may have other explanations.

Physical Abuse

- hand slap or belt mark
- two black eyes or black ear
- gripping bruises
- burn or bite marks
- unwillingness to change for PE
- failure to reach their potential

Sexual Abuse

- sexually explicit behaviour
- loss of self esteem
- running away from home
- raising unusual sexual themes
- self mutilation

Neglect

- low weight for height
- listlessness
- chronically dirty, cold or hungry
- under achievement
- lack of supervision at home

Emotional Abuse

- stunted growth
- over passive or hyperactive
- loss of self esteem
- cold, dirty or hungry
- fearful or unhappy

Procedures for Reporting Suspected (or disclosed) Child Abuse

The designated teacher for Child Protection is Miss J Friar, Head of Pastoral Care. In her absence Mrs Beverley Cripps Head of Junior School, Mrs Christie Year Head Head of Progress, or Mrs A Mungavin (Principal) will assume responsibility for child protection matters:

- if a pupil makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of the staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse or
- if a member of staff has concerns about a pupil

ACT PROMPTLY

DO NOT INVESTIGATE YOURSELF

CONTACT THE DESIGNATED TEACHER

REPORT YOUR CONCERNS AND MAKE FULL NOTES

NB The person to whom the initial disclosure is made will be the one who writes up the evidence for the Social Services and the Police. The designated teacher will give guidance and assist but it is a personal report

Next Steps

- The Designated teacher will discuss the matter with Mrs A Mungavin (School Principal)
- The Principal may seek clarification or advice from the Education Authority Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made.
- Parents will be informed immediately unless they are possible abusers.
- Where there are concerns about possible abuse a referral will be made in writing to the Social Services. (This will be done in an envelope marked "Confidential – Child Protection).
- The Senior Education Welfare Officer (Education Authority) will be informed. (This will be done in an envelope marked "Confidential – Child Protection).

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or Designated Teacher in her absence), must be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made about the Principal, the Designated teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher must be informed immediately. She will inform Mr Maurice Frew (Chairperson of the Board of Governors). Together they ensure the necessary actions are taken.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of Staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the Social Services. The Chair Person of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a member of Staff feels unsure about what to do, if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

Confidentiality

Information given to staff will be shared with other professionals ie Social Services, possibly Educational Psychologist, Education Welfare Officer or School Health. Other members of Staff in School will be informed only on 'a need to know' basis.

It is essential that reference to the young person or the disclosure is kept to a minimum so that they can continue with their studies as normally as possible.

REMEMBER

The welfare of the young person is 'paramount.'

If a disclosure happens after School, try to find a member of staff or office staff who will contact the designated teachers or the Principal.

If this is not possible, and the situation is extreme then Social Services can be contacted at 90/204550 or Out of Hours Coordinator 90/56544.

Any teacher or other member of staff who complies with the Education Authority procedures in making a report of a suspected child abuse case is acting within the course of his/her employment. It therefore follows that in such circumstances where he/she has acted in good faith he/she will receive the full support of the Education Authority and will not be legally or financially liable.

Overall responsibility lies with the Education Authority's 'Designated Officer' for Child Abuse

Appendix 1

Ashfield Girls' High School Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers Whose Work Brings Them Into Contact With Children.

Staff and volunteers working in Ashfield Girls' must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the young people in their charge must be above reproach.

Aim Of The Code of Conduct;

- To enable the pupils to enjoy a rich, balanced, enjoyable education in a safe supportive environment.
- To assist staff and volunteers in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

The code of conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences young people gain from positive interaction within our school community.

1. Private Meetings With Pupils

It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. Staff should conduct such meetings in rooms with visual access or with the door open. (Where this is proving impossible please ask Senior Management for help and support.)

Staff should always explain at the outset, the purpose of any interview situation.

Non-teaching staff or community volunteers should never conduct confidential interviews without a member of teaching staff present. (Where this is proving impossible please ask Senior Management for help and support.)

It is always good practice to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.

It is always good practice to ensure that another adult is present or nearby during the interview. (Where this is proving impossible please ask Senior Management for help and support.)

2. Physical Contact with Pupils

- As a general principle, staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with pupils.
- It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular a distressed child may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent might provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- Staff who have to administer First Aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. Designated First-aiders in addition to the School Nurse are listed in the school office.
- No member of staff should hesitate to provide First Aid in an emergency situation simply because another person is not present.
- Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the designated teacher.
- Staff should be careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of hours activities where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment. It is important that parents/guardians are informed about such activities taking place and have given consent.

3. Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be interpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- When using materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by the pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised.
- Where a teacher proposes to use materials of a sensitive nature e.g. AIDS education or sex education programmes they must consult with Parents and Governors through the school Principal. Teachers must never discuss their own sexual preferences with any pupil.
- If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching resource, the teacher should consult with the Principal.

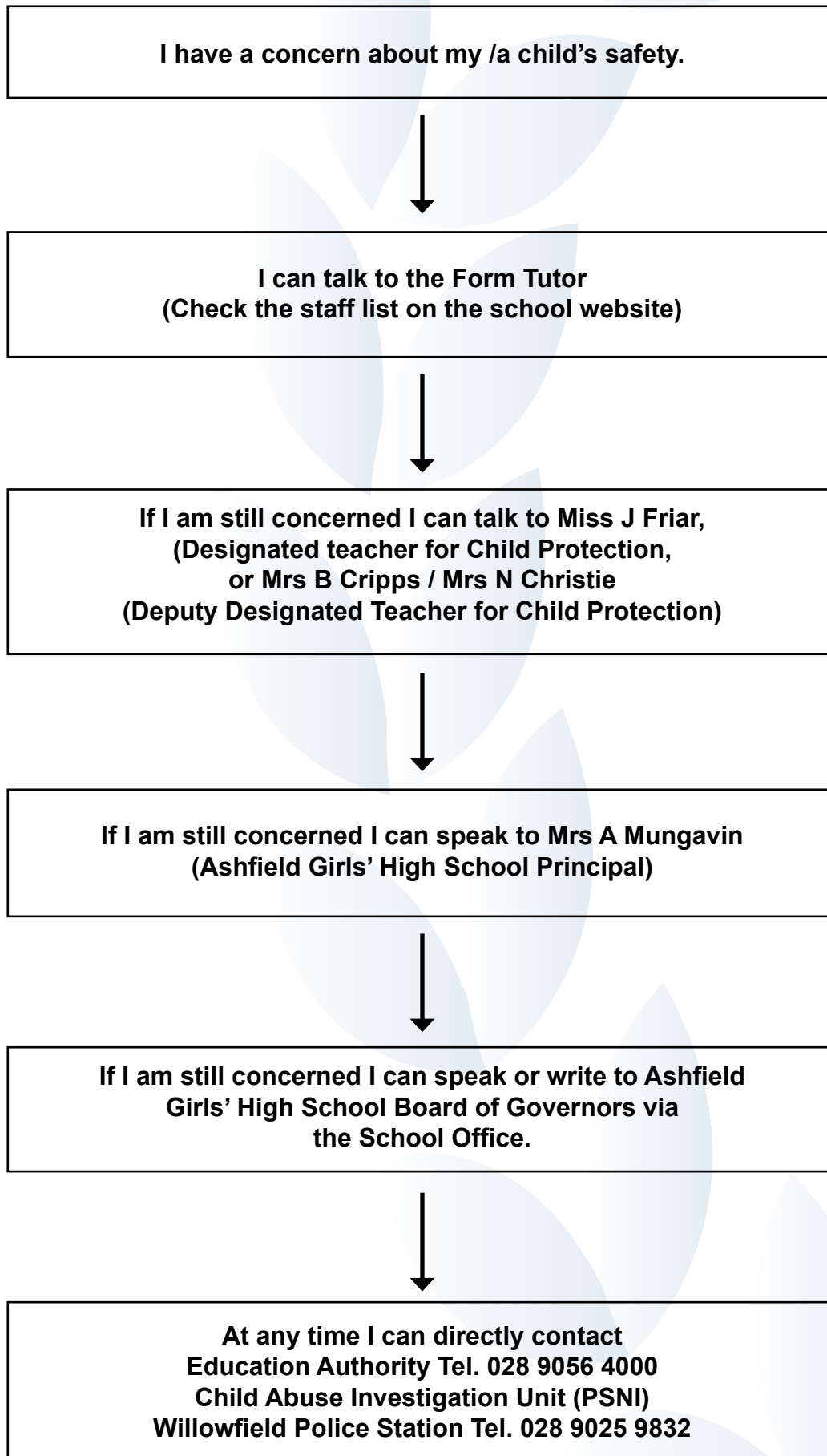
4. Relationships and Attitudes

- Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the Education Authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys (Ashfield Boys' High School) and girls.

Conclusions

- **It is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all circumstances in which staff interrelate with pupils in Ashfield Girls' High school.**
- **If staff have any doubts about the points raised above or how they should act in particular circumstances, they must contact their line manager, Principal or a representative of their professional association.**
- **Further reading and guidance on this subject can be accessed on the D.E.N.I website: <http://www.deni.gov.uk> – “Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection”**

How a parent can make a complaint





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