

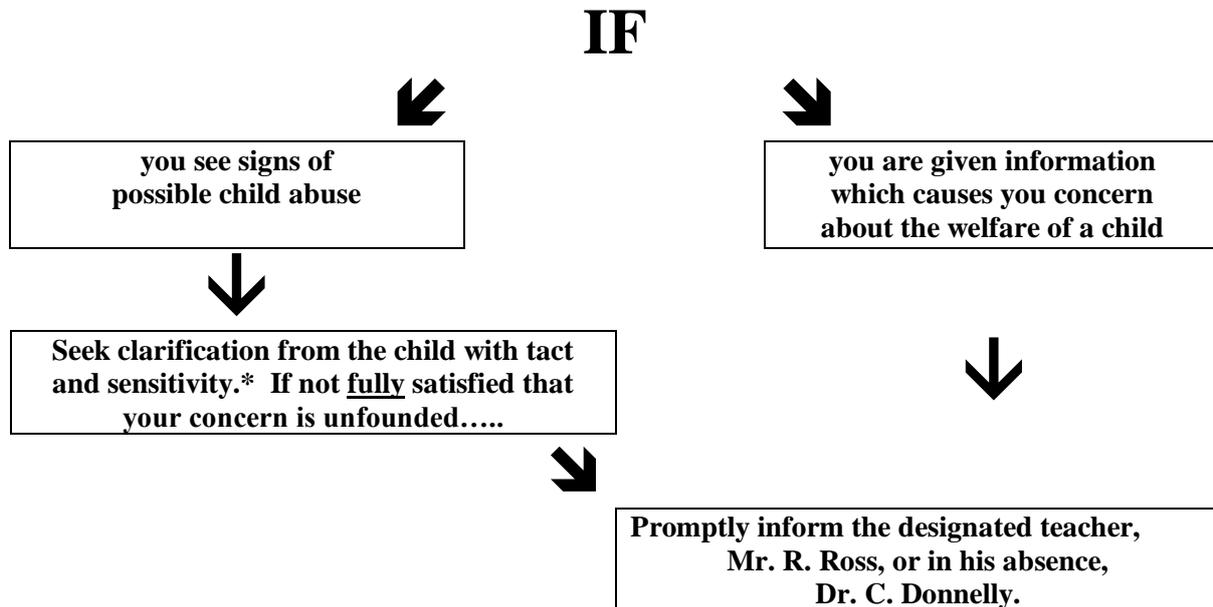
CHILD PROTECTION

Introduction

The school has a statutory pastoral responsibility, in addition to its caring ethos, and seeks to promote the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

This begins with staff awareness that abuse can and does happen to children, regardless of class or gender. Staff must know how to identify possible abuse and the correct procedures which must follow.

Summary of Guidelines - Teaching Staff



The designated teacher will then inform the Principal.

In all cases where abuse is suspected, or where an allegation has been made by a pupil or a third party that abuse has taken place, or where serious concerns exist about a child's welfare a referral to the Social Services and/or the Police is required.

* While discreet preliminary clarification may be sought in order to confirm or allay concerns **it is not the responsibility of teachers or the school to carry out investigations into cases of suspected abuse or to make extensive enquiries of members of the child's family or other carers.**

* In seeking clarification please use the following guidelines:-

- Note down any comment(s) made by child or informant.
- Avoid asking the child leading questions.
- Avoid asking questions which encourage the child to change his/her version of events.
- Do not guarantee confidentiality.
- Reassure child that only those who need to know will be informed.

The safety of the child is the first priority.

This document is intended only as a brief summary of what action you should take. Further details are contained in the Ballymena Academy Child Protection Policy issued to all staff. A copy is also available for consultation in the staffroom and main school office.

PROTECTING CHILDREN – *a duty to care*

What to do when you have cause for concern:

- **RECEIVE** – listen to what a child says but do not ask leading questions except when to show you have understood
- **REASSURE** – ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and their interests come first
- **REACT** – only to ensure that the child is safe and secure
- **RECORD** – make note of what you have seen or heard and the date and time
- **REPORT** – report to the designated teacher as soon as you have any concern for a child

Categories of Abuse

The child protection procedures apply to all children and young people under 18 years of age.

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in a residential, hospital or institutional setting or in a community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

There are four main categories of abuse.

- Neglect
- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional

Bullying is not categorised as abuse, for Child Protection purposes. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is in place and staff are expected to seek to eliminate bullying as well as dealing quickly and effectively with any incidents which may arise.

Signs of Abuse

Staff in school are well placed to observe children and to pick up on any signs of abuse. Where such signs are noticed, staff should be careful not to make any allegation of abuse but neither should they dismiss such signs. The correct response is to report the concerns to the Designated Teacher (Appendix 2 : Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines).

A list of symptoms or signs cannot be exhaustive and since every child will react slightly differently to abusive circumstances, it is not even possible to predict with certainty which signs are likely indicators of each category of abuse.

There are some general signs which can give cause for concern.

- These would include
 - a reluctance to go home
 - an unusual attendance/absence pattern
 - poor or rapidly falling attainment

The following signs should, however, be drawn to the attention of the Designated Teacher.

Physical Abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour. (ACPC, 2005)

Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises or burns, particularly if they are recurrent (in places difficult to mark)
- Human bite marks, welts or bald spots
- Unexplained lacerations, fractures or abrasions
- Untreated injuries

Behavioural Indicators

- Self-destructive tendencies
- Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
- Aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of returning home
- Chronic runaway
- Reluctant to have physical contact
- Clothing inappropriate to weather – worn to hide part of the body

Emotional Abuse is 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 a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of another person. It may involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse. (ACPC, 2005)

Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Sudden speech disorder
- Signs of mutilation
- Signs of solvent abuse (e.g. mouth sores, smell of glue, drowsiness)
- Wetting and/or soiling
- Depression

Behavioural Indicators

- Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)
- Reluctance for parent liaison
- Fear of new situations
- Chronic runaway
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations
- Bullying of others
- Change in personality from outgoing to withdrawn
- Poor peer relationships
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Low self-esteem

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative 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. (ACPC, 2005)

Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Soreness or bleeding in the genital or anal areas or in the throat
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothes
- Chronic ailments such as stomach pains or headaches
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Frequent urinary / genital or yeast infections
- STIs
- Unexplained pregnancies

Behavioural Indicators

- Be chronically depressed/ suicidal
- Inappropriately seductive or precocious
- Sexually explicit language
- Low self-esteem, self-devaluation, lack of confidence
- Recurring nightmares/fear of the dark
- Outbursts of anger/hysteria
- Overly protective to siblings
- Substance abuse
- Personality changes
- Fear of going home

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth). (ACPC, 2005)

Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Constant hunger /cramming food
- Poor state of clothing and/or personal hygiene
- Untreated medical problems
- Emaciation/distended stomach
- Constant tiredness

Behavioural Indicators

- Tiredness, listlessness
- Lack of social relationships
- Compulsive stealing, begging or scavenging
- Frequently absent or late
- Low self-esteem
- Exposed to danger / lack of adequate supervision

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Young Person whose Behaviour places them at Risk of Significant Harm – a child whose own behaviours, such as alcohol consumption or consumption of illegal drugs, whilst placing the child at risk of significant harm, may not necessarily constitute abuse as defined for the purposes of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures. If the child has achieved sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind, then the decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement and each case should be considered individually. Professionals should though be alert to the possibility that a young person may be engaged in certain risky behaviours as a result of other adverse experiences in their lives, which may be indicative of abuse.

Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in Ballymena Academy. Our anti-bullying policy is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under Child Protection procedures.