

Harbinger School Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Harbinger School is concerned that all pupils remain safe and free from harm and is committed to playing a full and active part in the multi-agency response to child protection concerns. This document sets out School's position in relation to all aspects of the child protection process.

Informing principles

- All children have an absolute right to a childhood free from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- All children in whatever setting have an equal right to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- All staff involved with children (teaching and non-teaching) have a responsibility to be mindful of issues related to children's safety and welfare and a duty to report and refer any concerns.
- Parents have a right to be informed about any concerns about a child's welfare or any action taken to safeguard and promote a child's welfare, providing this does not compromise the child's safety.
- Children are best protected when professionals work effectively together and share responsibility for protective action.
- There is not necessarily a conflict between a School's need to discharge its child protection responsibilities and its wish to work in partnership with parents.
- Where there are possible concerns about a child's safety, unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and should not be offered. When a child is on the Child Protection Register information about the child and his/her circumstances should only be shared on a "need to know" basis.
- School should be proactive and take positive steps to inform children of their rights to safety and protection and the options available to express their fears or concerns.
- We recognised that children are sometimes abused and exploited by school staff. School should have in place systems that deter possible abusers and manage effectively any allegations or concerns about abuse when they arise.
- When children make allegations about abuse or neglect they should always be listened to, have their comments taken seriously and, where appropriate, thoroughly investigated.

Partnership

Harbinger School believes that the best outcomes for children generally are achieved when professionals can work effectively in partnership with parents/carers. This belief holds equally in relation to child protection concerns. School believes in open and honest communication and will always share with parents/carers any information or concerns that they have about their children at the earliest opportunity. The only exception to this would be where it was felt that such communication might compromise the child's safety.

If a child is felt to be in need of protection and becomes the subject of a child protection plan, parents/carers should regard the school as a source of help and support.

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Prevention

School takes seriously its duty of pastoral care and will be proactive in seeking to prevent children becoming the victims of abuse or neglect. It will do this in a number of ways:

Through an open culture which respects all individuals' rights and discourages bullying and discrimination of all kinds.

By identifying a member of staff (Mandy Boutwood and Nicky Stephenson) who have overall responsibility for child protection matters. They have received specialist training in this field and act as a source of advice and support to other School staff.

By informing children of their rights to be free from harm and encouraging them to talk to School staff if they have any concerns.

Through teaching PSHE and an ongoing programme of support, at an age appropriate level; this promotes self-esteem and social inclusion and address the issue of child protection in the wider context of child safety in general.

Responding to concerns

If Harbinger School receives information about a child which suggests that he/she has been actually abused or neglected or that this is likely, it has a duty to refer these concerns to the Social Services Department or Police. The school has no discretion in this matter. In these circumstances the Social Services Department's child abuse investigation procedures apply.

In the course of an investigation the Social Services Department or Police might wish to speak to a child, without parental knowledge or consent. The Head Teacher, acting 'in loco parentis' has discretion to agree this to allow the authorities to explore concerns and determine whether there are grounds for further action. In these cases the Head Teacher will ensure that the child's welfare is secured and he/she has access to a trusted adult.

The Head Teacher will not allow a child to be removed from School premises without either:

Parental consent

An order of the Court or a Police Protection Order

The child's own consent (providing the child is of an age and understanding to give informed consent - Gillick competent)

If School receives information which suggests a child may have been abused or neglected or abuse or neglect may be likely, then it will consult with the Social Services Department.

In these circumstances the Social Services Department may decide to begin a child protection investigation in which case its procedures will apply.

In either case parents will be informed of what has happened at the earliest opportunity consistent with the child's best interests.

NB

It is important to remember that a referral or consultation with the Social Services Department is an expression of concern about a child's welfare. It is not an accusation or a presumption of responsibility about a parent/carer.

To avoid any misunderstandings parents of children who sustain accidental injuries which result in cuts/bruises/fractures should inform School on the next working day.

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If School has general concerns about a child's welfare these will be raised with parents/carers at an early stage in an attempt to work together to remedy the situation. If concerns persist over a period of time, School may consult with the Social Services Department to discuss a way forward. In all of the above circumstances School will keep a confidential record of its concerns and actions.

Child/child abuse

In the event of physical or emotional abuse of one child by another, this will be taken seriously and dealt with through the school's anti-bullying policy.

If it emerges that a child is being bullied by a sibling who may not be a pupil then the school in the first instance will inform the children's parents of its concerns. If the problem persists and the pupil continues to be the victim of abuse then School will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

In all matters of suspected sexual abuse, victimisation or perpetration, the school will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

Child protection conferences

If pupils become the subject of child protection conferences then Harbinger School will be represented and will provide information about the child and his/her family. Usually this will be in the form of a written report, the contents of which may be shared with parents/carers prior to the meeting. Where School provides a verbal report, again parents/carers will be informed what is to be said prior to the conference.

Occasionally School may have information which is confidential and which will be shared in a closed section of the conference.* If this is necessary the Chair of the conference will discuss the matter with parents/carers.

When any child becomes the subject of a conference, local procedures require all the other children of the family are considered. It may well be therefore that School will be required to provide information on children about whom there appear to be no direct concerns. In these situations the same procedure on prior disclosure of information will apply.

Harbinger School will contribute to the process of risk assessment and the decision about registration of children.

Child protection registration

When a pupil's name is added to the Child Protection Register the school will be represented on the core group and will play an active part in the creation and implementation of the child protection plan.

For as long as a child's name appears on the Register he/she will be supported by the school and his/her progress will be monitored. The school will keep a confidential record of the child's progress and any further concerns (should they arise) and share this information with other members of the core group in order to evaluate the progress of the child protection plan.

If Harbinger School receives information that a child whose name appears on the Register already has suffered further abuse or neglect, this will be referred immediately to the child's key worker.

Confidentiality

If School receives information from any source that a child has suffered abuse or neglect or may suffer in this way, whether the child is a pupil or otherwise, it has a duty to pass this information to the Social Services Department.

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If parents/carers wish to share such information with Harbinger School they must be aware that it will not be possible to guarantee confidentiality. The school can reassure parents/carers however that if they wish, the source of the information can remain anonymous.

When a pupil's name is added to the Child Protection Register this information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis with the minimum number of staff necessary to ensure the child's safety and welfare. These people will receive the minimum amount of information they need to enable them to implement the child protection plan. They will not have access to all the information shared at the initial child protection conference.

Harbinger School will ensure that the confidentiality of information is maintained by keeping records in a safe and secure place with access strictly limited. All records of a child's progress while the subject of registration will be kept similarly secure.

Transfer of records

If a child whose name appears on the Child Protection Register transfers to another school then the key worker will be notified of this change and School will arrange for the transfer of the child's records including information about registration. The key worker will then notify the new school of the next core group meeting so that the responsibility for monitoring the child's progress can be officially transferred.

If a child whose name has appeared on the Register in the past, but is no longer the subject of registration, transfers to another school then information about past registration will not be transferred.

De-registration

A child's name can only be removed from the Child Protection Register by a child protection review conference. School will be represented at these meetings and will play an active part in the process of risk re-evaluation and the decision regarding de-registration.

In line with the policy above, School will share with parents prior to any review the information they intend to present.

Allegations against staff

All allegations against any member of staff which have implications for the safety and welfare of children will be taken seriously and investigated in line with agreed Child Protection and Disciplinary Proceedings Policy.

When concerns come to the attention of Harbinger School staff they should refer them immediately to the designated persons for child protection.

Members of the public who have concerns should speak to the Head Teacher or the LEA Designated Officer if it is the Head Teacher who is the cause for concern.