



The school's Christian vision

Our five core Christian values

Trust, Honesty, Compassion, Respect and Kindness
are centred on

'Do to others as you would like them to do to
you.' (Luke 6:13)



Through these values we inspire children to be the
best they can be. Encouraging high aspirations and
expectations that will allow them to achieve, explore,
succeed and prepare for their own path through life.

St Michael's CE VA Primary School

Lyme Regis

Child Protection Policy

Signature of Headteacher:	N. Kiddle
Signature of Governing body:	B. Wood
Date ratified by the Governing Body:	06.12.2021
Next review date:	September 2022

Useful Contacts

1) Dorset Children's Services Family Support Teams (incorporating Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Services)

When making new referrals ask for the Child Care Duty Officer for the area in which the pupil lives. (Boarding schools can call for advice about any pupils):

01305 228558

2) DEVON MASH TEAM - for children who live in Devon

0345 155 1071

3) Dorset Virtual School for children who are in care/ Looked After

01305 225808

4) Dorset Governor Services (for governor safeguarding training)

01305 224382

Possible Indicators of Abuse

The following information is not designed to turn school staff into experts but it will help them to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse. The examples below are not meant to form an exhaustive list; Designated Safeguarding Leads and other staff will find it helpful to refer to the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board website for more detailed information.

i) Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily lives. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of the body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children, however, will have bruising which is less likely to have been caused accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or there are differing explanations. A delay in seeking medical treatment for a child when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different ethnic groups and specialist advice may need to be taken.

Patterns of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse can include:

- bruising in children who are not independently mobile
- bruises that are seen away from bony prominences
- bruises to the face, back, stomach, arms, buttocks, ears and hands
- multiple bruises in clusters
- multiple bruises of uniform shape
- bruises that carry the imprint of an implement used, hand marks, fingertips or a belt buckle

Although bruising is the commonest injury in physical abuse, fatal non-accidental head injury and non-accidental fractures can occur without bruising. Any child who has unexplained signs of pain or illness must be seen promptly by a doctor.

Other physical signs of abuse can include:

- cigarette burns
- adult bite marks
- broken bones
- scalds

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- flinching when approached or touched
- reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- missing school
- running away from home

ii) Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear otherwise well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. *Children who live in households where there is domestic violence often suffer emotional abuse.* Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix/play with other children.

The physical signs of emotional abuse can include:

- a failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, e.g. in hospital or away from parents' care
- sudden speech disorders
- developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include: ☐

neurotic behaviour, e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking

- being unable to play
- fear of making mistakes
- self harm
- fear of parents being approached

iii) Sexual Abuse

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Children can also be sexually abused by other children (ie those under 18)

Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause concern, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to, taken seriously and appropriate action taken promptly.

The physical signs of sexual abuse can include: ☐

pain or itching in the genital/anal areas

- bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- sexually transmitted disease
- vaginal discharge or infection
- stomach pains
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse can include:

- sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn.
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- having nightmares
- missing school
- running away from home
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- sexual drawings or language
- bedwetting

- eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- alcohol / substance / drug use
- suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults or other children

iv) Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children and young people.

The physical signs of neglect can include:

- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- being constantly dirty or smelly
- loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect can include:

- complaining of being tired all the time
- not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- having few friends
- mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

It is important that adults in school recognise that providing compensatory care might address the immediate and presenting issue but could cover up or inhibit the recognition of neglect in all aspects of a child's life. Compensatory care is defined as 'providing a child or young person, on a regular basis, help or assistance with basic needs with the aim of redressing deficits in parental care'. This might involve, for example, providing each day a substitute set of clothing because those from home are dirty, or showering a child whose personal hygiene or presentation is such that it is affecting his/her interaction with peers. It does not include isolated or irregular support such as giving lunch money or washing a child who has had an 'accident'. If any adult in school finds s/he is regularly attending to one or more aspects of a child's basic needs then this will prompt a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The general rule is: the younger the child, the higher the risk in terms of their immediate health. However, serious neglect of older children and adolescents is often overlooked, on the assumption that they have the ability to care for themselves and have made a 'choice' to neglect themselves. Lack of engagement with services should be seen as a potential indicator of neglect.

School staff should be mindful of the above and discuss any concerns with the DSL who will take the appropriate action in accordance with the inter-agency neglect guidance on the DSCB website.

Record Keeping: Best Practice

71. All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child. (KCSIE 2021)

1. Introduction

1.1 The importance of good, clear child welfare and child protection record keeping has been highlighted repeatedly in national and local Serious Case Reviews.

1.2 It is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)'s responsibility to ensure that child protection files, access, storage and transfer meet the required professional standards as detailed in this document.

1.3 The common law of confidentiality, Data Protection and Human Rights principles must be adhered to when obtaining, processing or sharing personal or sensitive information or records. In summary, the Data Protection Act requires that records should be securely kept, accurate, relevant, up to date and kept for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which they were made.

2. Record to be made by an adult receiving a disclosure of abuse (when a child talks about abuse)

2.1 This record should be made as soon as possible **after** the individual hearing the disclosure has reported it verbally to the DSL. The facts, not opinions (unless of particular relevance), should be accurately recorded in a non judgemental way. It is important to remember that expressing an opinion as to whether the child is telling the truth is not helpful and can prejudice how a case proceeds.

2.2 The record should ideally be on a standard 'concerns' form (LA model available from the Safeguarding and Standards Team) but if this is not used, should include:

- The child's name, gender and date of birth
- Date and time of the conversation
- What was the context and who was present during the disclosure?
- What did the child say? – verbatim if possible
- What questions were asked? – verbatim
- Responses to questions –verbatim
- Any observations concerning child's demeanour and any injuries
- The name of the person to whom the disclosure was reported
- Printed name and job title of the author, followed by signature and date

2.3

The record about a disclosure of abuse should be passed to the DSL and retained in the pupil's child protection file in its original and contemporaneous form (as it could be

used as evidence in court proceedings), even if later typed or if the information is incorporated into a report.

2.4

Schools should never ask pupils, regardless of their involvement in a child protection matter (ie the subject of an allegation, a witness or the alleged 'perpetrator'), to write out their 'statements' of what has happened. In some cases this could have the unintended consequence of jeopardising a child protection investigation. This applies regardless of whether the incident(s) took place within or outside school.

3. Records kept by the Designated Safeguarding Lead

3.1 As stated at 2.2 above it is useful and recommended practice for school staff to have one standard pro forma for recording all 'welfare' and child protection concerns.

3.2 The concern form should be passed to the DSL who will make a judgement about what action needs to be taken, in accordance with local inter-agency safeguarding procedures. The decision about any action, whether or not a referral is made to Social Care, will be recorded clearly by the DSL.

3.3 Concerns which initially seem trivial may turn out to be vital pieces of information later, so it is important to give as much detail as possible. A concern raised may not progress further than a conversation by the DSL with the parent, or, at the other end of the scale, could lead to matters being heard in a court.

3.4 All 'lower level' concerns about a child's welfare, which will generally have been discussed with parents/carers, are kept in the child's main file. Alternatively, some schools have adopted their own systems of collating such welfare concerns, but whichever system is in place, these records should not be labelled 'child protection'.

3.5 It is never good practice to keep pupil welfare records in a diary or day-book system. Often it is only when a number of seemingly minor issues relating to an individual pupil over a period of time are seen as a whole that a pattern can be identified indicating a child protection concern.

4. Starting a school child protection file

4.1 A school child protection file does not necessarily mean that the pupil is or has been the subject of a child protection conference or plan. 'Child protection file' denotes a high level of school concern which has warranted the involvement of, and in most cases assessment by, child care social workers.

4.2 It is the responsibility of the DSL to start a school child protection file when a social worker is or was involved, eg:-

- a) A formal referral is made by the school to Children's Social Care on an inter-agency referral form or
- b) Social Care inform the school they have commenced an assessment in relation to a pupil resulting from information from another source or

- c) A child protection file is forwarded to the school by a previous school or pre-school attended by the pupil or
- d) A child who is in care/looked after transfers into the school
- e) A pupil is privately fostered

- I.3 It is not good practice to make 'family files'; each child should have his/her own record which includes information specific to him/her and which will be sent to the next school at the time of transfer. The names of siblings and/or other children who live in the household who also attend the school should be clearly noted on individual files.
- I.4 If two (or more) pupils at the school are referred to Social Care for the same concern (for example, an allegation of sexually harmful behaviour), then child protection files will be started on both/all pupils.
- I.5 'Document wallet' - type files are not ideal as the papers therein can easily fall out or get 'out of order'.
- I.6 School child protection files are never 'closed' or de-categorised. Once a school has started a child protection file, it is always a school child protection file and the chronology is maintained so that any future concerns can be considered in the context of past events.
- I.7 Note - If there is an allocated social worker because a child is disabled or a young carer and there are no child protection concerns then a child protection file should not be started.

5. Adopted children

5.1 When a pupil is admitted to a school in Reception class and parents provide the information that s/he was adopted prior to commencing education, this should be recorded with their permission on the main school file in order that appropriate support can be provided in future if necessary. In these situations it is not necessary to start a child protection file **unless** the criteria described above (at 4.2a and 4.2b) also apply.

5.2 Some older adopted children will have school child protection files because they were initially in care/looked after and were subsequently adopted. During the period when the child is 'placed for adoption' (prior to an adoption order being made) any file that contains information that identifies both the birth family and the adoptive family must be classed as highly sensitive and this information should only be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

5.3 Once the adoption order has been made the DSL in the school that holds the child protection file must overhaul the file. The principle is that there must be nothing that identifies the child's birth name or the birth family. In sifting the file it is acceptable to destroy documents that will continue to be held by other agencies: for example, child protection conference minutes and LAC review minutes which will be in Social Care records.

5.4 A chronology should be prepared that gives an overview of the information previously held in the file but **without giving the child's birth name or any details which would identify the birth family.**

5.5 The overhauled file should only contain the new chronology and any information that has originated from within school (for example concern forms). This file should now be in the child's new name, contain no information which identifies the birth name or birth family, will be held in the school as long as the child remains or sent onto a new school as described (at 9) below.

5.6 Please note that once a child is adopted, all school records, not just cp files, must be amended so that there is nothing which gives the birth name or identifies the birth family.

6. The format of child protection files

6.1 It is helpful if individual files have a front sheet with key information about the pupil and contact details of parents/carers, social worker and any other relevant professionals.

6.2 If a pupil is or was subject of a child protection plan or in care/looked after, this should be highlighted in some way to make it immediately obvious to anyone accessing the record.

6.3 It is a multi-agency standard that children's child protection files must have at the front an up to date chronology of *significant* incidents or events *and* subsequent actions/outcomes. Maintaining the chronology is an important part of the DSL role; it aids the DSL, Deputy and others to see the central issues 'at a glance' and helps to identify patterns of events and behaviours.

6.4 It should make sense as a 'stand alone' document: anyone else reading the chronology should be able to follow easily what the concerns are/have been, whether the concerns have escalated and why plus the actions taken by the school to support and protect the child. This will be particularly useful for DSLs in receiving schools when pupils transfer, for professionals involved in collating information for Serious Case Reviews and for parents/pupils/ex-pupils if they view the record.

6.5 Once a chronology is started it should be updated as appropriate even if Social Care later cease involvement (see 4.6 above).

6.6 The file should be well organised and include, as appropriate, school 'concern forms', copies of correspondence, school reports to and minutes of child protection conferences, documents relating to children in care/'looked after' etc. The DSL will decide which relevant information which pre-dates the starting of the child protection file, such as CAF or other pastoral care documentation, will also be included.

7. Storage

7.1 All records relating to child protection concerns are sensitive and confidential so will be kept in a secure (ie locked at all times) filing cabinet, separate from other school files, and accessible through the DSL, the Deputy(s) and other senior staff in larger schools.

7.2 The pupil's general school file should be marked in some way (e.g. a yellow star) to indicate that a child protection file exists. All staff who may need to consult a child's school file should be made aware of what the symbol means and to speak to the DSL if necessary if they see this symbol and have concerns. For example, a member of the office staff who is looking in the main file for a parent's contact details because of unexplained absence might decide to report this to the DSL if they see the indicator, in case the absence is significant.

8. Sharing of and access to child protection records

8.1 It is highly unlikely that all members of staff need to know the details of a child's situation, or that there should be widespread access to the records. Access to, and sharing of, information should be on a need-to-know basis, decided case by case. The DSL is the best person to decide this. Consideration must also be given to *what* needs to be shared. Generally speaking, the closer the day-to-day contact with the child, the more likely the need to have some information.

8.2 The child who is the subject of a child protection record has the right to access the file, *unless* to do so would affect his/her health or well-being or that of another person, or would be likely to prejudice a criminal investigation or a Section 47 assessment (which relates to significant harm) under the Children Act 1989.

8.3 Parents (i.e. those with parental responsibility in law) are entitled to see their child's child protection file, with the same exemptions as apply to the child's right to access the record. Note that an older pupil may be entitled to refuse access to the record by his/her parents. As a guide, this applies to pupils who are 12 years of age or above, if they are of normal development or maturity.

8.4 References by name to children other than the pupil who is the subject of the file should be removed when disclosing records, unless consent is obtained from the individual/s concerned (or their parents/carer on their behalf). Care must be taken to ensure all identifying information is removed from the copy of the record to be shared.

8.5 Always seek advice if there are any concerns or doubt about a child or parents reading records. However, it is generally good practice to share all information held unless there is a valid reason to withhold it, e.g. to do so would place the child or any other person at risk of harm. Any requests to see the child's record should be made in writing to give time for confidential information, such as any details of other pupils, to be removed.

8.6 In respect of requests from pupils or parents for information which wholly or partly consists of an educational record, access should be granted within 15 school days. This might be relevant to 'welfare' concerns in a main school file, for example. Viewing-only access to these records is free but it is reasonable to charge for copies on a sliding scale from £1 - £50 (maximum) depending on the number of pages.

8.7 However, should the request only seek access to a child protection file (which is not classed as an educational record), access should be granted within 40 calendar days. A discretionary maximum fee of £10 can be charged for viewing access to or a copy of a child protection record.

8.8 If the record to be disclosed contains information about an adult professional, that information can be disclosed if it relates to the performance by that person of their job or other official duties e.g. a reference to a teacher in their teaching role or a school nurse in their nursing role. However, if the reference refers to that individual's private life, it should be removed (unless this relates to a child protection matter which is relevant to the record to be disclosed).

8.9 Child protection information should not normally be shared with professionals other than those from Social Care, the Police, Health or the Local Authority. OfSTED and other school inspectors can view individual child protection files. Information should not be released to parents' solicitors on request; advice should be sought from the school's legal advisor in such cases.

8.10 Governors, including the Nominated Governor, should not access the records.

8.11 Further advice about disclosure of information held in child protection records can be sought from the DCC Data Protection Officer (01305 225175).

9. Transfer of child protection records

9.1 When a pupil transfers to another school (including to a Learning Centre because of permanent exclusion) the DSL should inform the receiving school as soon as possible in person or by telephone that child protection records exist. The original records must be passed on either by hand or sent by recorded delivery, separate from the child's main school file. Care must be taken to ensure confidentiality is maintained and the transfer process is as safe as possible.

9.2 If the records are to be posted, they should be copied and these copies retained until there has been confirmation in writing that the originals have arrived at the new school. They can then be shredded.

9.3 Whether child protection files are passed on by hand or posted, there should be written evidence of the transfer (such as a form or slip of paper signed and dated by a member of staff at the receiving school.) This receipt should be retained by the originating school for 6 years (in line with guidance from the Records Management Society).

9.4 If the pupil is removed from the roll to be home educated, the school should pass the child protection file to the LA EHE Administrator and a receipt obtained as described above.

9.5 If a pupil with a child protection record leaves the school without a forwarding address and no contact is received from a new school the DSL should follow the school's Child Missing Education (CME) procedures. If there is reason to suspect the pupil is suffering harm then the DSL will refer to Social Care in the usual way.

9.6 If a child arrives in the school in an unplanned way and / or there are concerns about them from the outset, it is worth contacting the previous school for a discussion with the DSL. There might be a cp file which has not been passed on.

10. 'Dual registered' pupils

10.1 Where a pupil is on roll at the school and starts to attend a Learning Centre

(LC), the chronology and other relevant information in the child protection file should be copied and passed to the DSL at the LC at the earliest opportunity. Because of the nature of such 'bespoke' arrangements for individual pupils, the two DSLs should agree on which one of them will keep the chronology updated and how best to communicate to each other significant events and issues in relation to that pupil.

11. Retention of records

11.1 The school should retain the record for as long as the pupil remains in school and then transferred as described above.

11.2 Guidance from the Records Management Society is that when a pupil with a child protection record reaches statutory school leaving age (or where the pupil completed 6th form studies), the last school attended should keep the child protection file until the pupil's 25th birthday. It should then be shredded (and a record kept of this having been done, date, and why).

12. Electronic child protection records

12.1 Electronic records must be password protected with access strictly controlled in the same way as paper records.

12.2 They should be in the same format as paper records (ie with well maintained chronologies etc) so that they are up to date if/when printed, if necessary.

12.3 Electronic files must not be transferred electronically to other schools unless there is a secure system in place (such as cjsm, GCSX or IronPort) but should be printed in their entirety, linked with paper documentation such as conference minutes and transferred as described in section 9 above. When the receipt has been returned to confirm that the file has been received at the new school, the computer record should be deleted.

13. Sharing information with Further Education (FE) Colleges

13.1 A protocol is in place with DSLs at FE colleges: at the start of each academic year they will send to secondary school DSLs a list of newly enrolled students who have previously attended the school, requesting any relevant information. Secondary school DSLs will use their professional judgement but should always disclose if a young person is in care/looked after, is or has been subject of a child protection plan or is assessed as posing a risk to themselves or other students.

13.2 Note this applies only to Dorset schools and FE Colleges with whom the protocol has been agreed.