

# Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College

## Safeguarding Policy and Procedures



**'With God's Grace we Excel and Lead'**

### Introduction

Schools and other educational establishments have a special role to play in child protection. The adults working there see children more regularly than anyone else in the caring services and have the opportunity to observe and communicate with children more than any other professional.

Teachers make a high percentage of child protection referrals. This should be expected as teachers are trained in child development and should be able to identify signs and recognise behaviour which is 'different' from usual.

As children or young people are likely to spend more time at school than anywhere else, other than at home, they will often choose a known adult at school to talk to about the situation at home. It is not unusual for the listener to feel uncomfortable with the subject or feel disbelief, be distressed or immobilised by what they are hearing. It is essential for educational staff to know that they are not alone and that there is a process both at the personal level within the school and within Brent to support them as well as the child.

We updated this policy in light of "Keeping Children Safe In Education" September 2018. This policy also takes into account key legislation (The Children Act 1989; Local Government Act 2000; Education Act 2002; Children Act 2004) and guidance contained in "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2015); "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners" (2015); "Information Sharing" (2015). The policy reflects the school's on-going commitment to safeguarding and it aims to create a culture of vigilance. Safeguarding issues are explored as part of the curriculum.

The policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education [Part 1 and Annex A] 2018
- The Staff Code of Conduct

### Procedures

The Headmistress is ultimately responsible for child protection at the school. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Mr Haran, Deputy Headteacher. His role includes providing support to staff members to carry out their safeguarding duties and liaising closely with key stakeholders.

If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not in school, any matter arising should go directly to the Headmistress or, in her absence, to Dr Bonelli (safeguarding consultant) or Mrs Peppiatt. The named Governor for safeguarding is Mr Finnegan, Chair of the Governing Body.

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If you observe what you consider to be unusual behaviour or suspect abuse whether it be emotional, physical injury, sexual abuse or neglect, your observations should be recorded using CPOMS (all verbal conversation should be promptly recorded in writing). You must also see the Designated Safeguarding Lead **immediately**. A recorded decision will be made whether to continue to observe, record or monitor, or whether to take further action.

*The best interests of the child are always paramount.* If a child or young person makes a disclosure to you, you may **NEVER** keep this as confidential between yourself and the child. Tell the child that you are obliged to let the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Headmistress know. Record the conversation as factually as possible on CPOMS. Then inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a matter of urgency. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is not available, inform the Headmistress or a named deputy immediately. **It is not the responsibility of teachers or other staff to investigate suspected abuse.** In Brent that responsibility lies with Children's Services and/or the Police.

Strict confidentiality is essential.

The Headmistress and Designated Safeguarding Lead will be made aware of students whose names are on the Child Protection Register. They will inform others only on a 'need to know basis' e.g. the Head of Year and the Form Tutor.

We need to be especially mindful and sensitive to the needs of SEN pupils who can be more at risk of being harmed, bullied or isolated by their peers; their behaviour, mood and any injuries may relate to possible abuse and not just their SEN or disability. As a girls school we also need to be mindful of those issues which have a greater effect on girls (including sexual violence and sexual harassment, sexting, so-called initiation ceremonies as well as bullying and physical abuse). Procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and allegations by one pupil against another are detailed in the anti bullying policy, the student planner and the staff handbook. For all reported incidents statements are taken from all involved prior to them being fully investigated and sanctions decided. Reconciliation between victim and perpetrator is a key element of this process. No form of bullying is tolerated at the school. Where necessary, mentoring and counselling services are available – referrals can be made immediately by members of the Inclusion team where concerns are raised.

Our local area presents specific risks, which range from gang activity to deprivation and the strains it places on individuals and families and their various manifestations and consequences. The cultural diversity of the area brings with it customs which are not necessarily in line with current national guidelines.

The duty to follow Child Protection procedures applies to **ALL** staff. All staff must read the school's child protection procedures. All staff are expected to sign confirmation that they have read and understood these on an annual basis.

**Please read and be familiar with the following child protection procedures.**

#### **Formal Investigation Criteria**

A formal investigation is required under the child protection procedures when there are identified continuing concerns that the child or young person:

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- has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm from physical injury including Female Genital Mutilation, the non-medical, partial or total removal of the external female genital organs (FGM –this requires immediate referral to the police). *Risk factors include: lower level of integration in UK society; mother/sister who have undergone FGM; girls being withdrawn from PSHE; visiting female elder from country of origin; being taken on a long holiday to country of origin; talk about a 'special' procedure to become a woman.* Physical abuse involves any action that causes physical harm to a child including fabricating the symptoms of or deliberately inducing illnesses. *Key features include: bruising; bite marks; burns and scalds; fractures in non-mobile children; injuries in unusual areas/with well-defined edges; old injuries or scars; refusal to discuss injuries; inconsistent explanations; talk of seemingly excessive punishment; arms and legs kept covered; reluctance to remove clothing for swimming/PE; parents who are uninterested or undisturbed by accident/injury.*
- has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm from sexual abuse. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities including non-contact activities. *Key features include: aggression; withdrawn; self-harming, including eating disorders; drawings of sexually explicit behaviours; promiscuity/precociousness; inappropriate sexualized conduct; sexually explicit behaviour; reluctance to remove clothing for swimming/PE.*
- has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm from emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. *Key features include: development delay; abnormal attachment to parent/carer; low self-esteem; lack of confidence; inappropriate emotional response.*
- has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm from neglect. Neglect is the failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs. *Key features include: inadequate clothing for the child's size, weather or time of year; underweight for age; frequent school absences; poor health; emotionally needy; persistently dirty with a body odour.*
- has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm from self-abuse.
- is being sexually exploited. *Warning signs include: going missing for periods of time; returning home late; disengagement from education; poor school attendance; appearing with unexplained gifts; associating with others involved in sexual exploitation; frequently in the company of older people, particularly boyfriends/girlfriends; poor sexual health; mood swings/poor anger control/changes in emotional wellbeing; drug and alcohol misuse; inappropriate sexualized behaviour, especially around strangers; association with 'risky' adults; chronic tiredness; secretive behaviour; low-level crime; self-harm; talking about visiting different areas, especially at night.*
- is a victim of (child on child) sexual violence or harassment ('unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline).
- is involved in violent extremism. All staff at the school undertake Prevent awareness training to equip them to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.
- is likely to become a victim of honour-based violence - a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.
- is likely to go missing from education. All schools have a duty to inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority. School procedures include the prompt follow-up of all absences.
- Is being privately fostered. Where schools and colleges have not been involved in making the arrangement but a member of staff or volunteer at a school or college becomes aware that a pupil may be in a private fostering arrangement, where a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by someone to whom they are not related in that person's home, they should raise this in the first instance with the designated senior person for

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child protection. The school or college should notify the local authority of the circumstances, and the local authority will check that the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child.

For your information, the courses of action available to us are:

- We can make a referral to social services at Brent Family Front Door.
- If we need more specific advice we can contact the Brent Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- If we believe it is a matter for the police we will contact our school liaison officers (PC Holly Breakwell or PC Gary Weedon), call 101 or call 999 in an emergency.

### **Safer working practice (whistleblowing procedures)**

If staff members have concerns about another staff member then this should be referred to the Headmistress. Where there are concerns about the Headmistress, this should be referred to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors in this school is:

NAME:	CONTACT NUMBER:
<b>Mr Danny Finnegan</b>	077 0909 5126 (Ms D. Bal – Clerk to the Governors)

In the absence of the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair should be contacted. The Vice Chair in this school is:

NAME:	CONTACT NUMBER:
<b>Ms Marina Picano</b>	077 0909 5126 (Ms D. Bal – Clerk to the Governors)

In the event of allegations of abuse being made against the Headmistress, where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, allegations should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Staff may consider discussing any concerns with the Designated Senior Person and, if appropriate, make any referral via them. The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. S/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification; it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only. Actions to be taken include making an immediate written record of the allegation using the informant's words – including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, brief details of what happened, what was said and who was present. This record should be signed, dated and immediately passed on to the Headmistress. The recipient of an allegation must not unilaterally determine its validity, and failure to report it in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter. The Headmistress/Chair of Governors will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but will assess whether it is necessary to refer the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer through the whistleblowing procedure or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- Children's Services 020 8937 4300 or 020 8863 5250 outside office hours

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- NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook/ school code of conduct / staff behaviour policy.

All members of the SLT successfully completed the approved training for Designated Safeguarding Leads in July 2018. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputies will receive training every two years, with annual updates for the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Several members of the support/pastoral team have successfully completed level 2 training. All staff receive level 1 training on safeguarding procedures as part of the Inset day at the start of the academic year. A specific separate session is offered to the line managers of non-teaching staff. Termly refreshers are offered as well as sessions for NQTs/new members of staff.

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## **Annex A**

### **Statement of procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff**

Although it is an uncomfortable thought, it needs to be acknowledged that there is the potential for staff in school to abuse children. This statement should be used in any case in which it is alleged that a member of staff has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the Diocese of Westminster Safeguarding Policy and Procedure (2018). To reduce the risk of allegations, all staff should be aware of safer working practice and should be familiar with the guidance contained in the staff handbook and staff school code of conduct.

Allegations or concerns about colleagues and visitors must be reported directly to the Headmistress or Safeguarding Leads. The Headmistress or Safeguarding Leads should carry out an urgent initial consideration in order to establish whether there is substance to the allegation and the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will be followed as appropriate.

The school recognises the sensitive and distressing nature of allegations on all parties. In handling such matters, school leaders will exercise their professional judgment on the action to be taken, as follows:

- If the actions of the member of staff, and the consequences of the actions, raise credible child protection concerns the Safeguarding Lead will notify the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Team. The LADO Team will liaise with the school and advise about action to be taken, and may initiate internal referrals within children's social care to address the needs of children likely to have been affected.
- If the actions of the member of staff, and the consequences of the actions, do not raise credible child protection concerns, but do raise other issues in relation to the conduct of the member of staff or the pupil(s), these should be addressed through the school's own internal procedures, such as the Disciplinary Procedure.
- If the Headmistress decides that the allegation is without foundation and no further formal action is necessary, all those involved should be informed of this conclusion at the earliest opportunity, and the reasons for the decision should be recorded.

The vulnerability of staff to allegations must be recognised. Hasty or ill-judged decisions can have a substantial and detrimental effect upon an adult's career and can also be very distressing for any children concerned. Staff facing allegations of abuse need to have confidence that the school will act in a careful, measured way when allegations are brought to their

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attention. Brent LADO can be contacted on [brent.lado@brent.gov.uk](mailto:brent.lado@brent.gov.uk) by staff, parents or students. When conducting investigations where abuse is alleged against staff, the following should be observed:

- If an allegation is made against a teacher or other staff the quick resolution of that allegation should be a clear priority to the benefit of all concerned. At any stage of consideration or investigation, all unnecessary delays should be eradicated.
- In response to an allegation, staff suspension should not be the default option. If suspension is deemed appropriate, the reasons and justification should be recorded by the school and the individual notified.
- The school will assess whether additional steps need to be put in place to safeguard both the member of staff and the student both during and after the investigation. This includes how contact with the child who made the allegation can best be managed if they are a pupil at the school. If additional steps are deemed appropriate, the staff member will be informed of them and the reasons for any action provided.
- Allegations that are found to have been malicious should be removed from personnel records and any that are not substantiated, are unfounded or malicious should not be referred to in employer references.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while the allegation against the member of staff is being investigated or considered.

This statement was reviewed and approved by the Pastoral Committee of the Governors of The Convent of Jesus and Mary Language College on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

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