



## **Categories Of Child Abuse**

Abuse is categorised under four headings: physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. There are many signs which may indicate that a child is being abused. For example, overt and inappropriate sexual behaviour may be a specific sign that the child is being exposed to sexual abuse. However, a withdrawn and unhappy looking child could possibly be suffering from any of the four categories of abuse, but it may not be obvious as to what is the cause of the unhappiness. Staff should always be aware of children who show:

- Uncharacteristic aggression or temper tantrums
- An inability to make friends or relate to other children of the same age group.
- Bursts of tearfulness
- Frequent complaints of tummy aches and headaches.
- An air of depression.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is where there is an injury to a child and there is either definite knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that the injury was not accidental. This suspicion may arise when the nature of the injury is not consistent with the explanation given by the child or the parent. Signs of physical abuse could include:

- Obvious major injuries such as fractures, black eyes, cuts, and burns.
- Frequent "minor" injuries such as bruising, swelling, and redness, which may be evident in P.E.
- A child walking stiffly or holding themselves in an awkward way which might indicate an injury hidden beneath their clothing
- An unwillingness to change for P.E.
- Flinching at sudden movements
- An air of watchfulness and fear

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent or severe neglect of a child which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development. It includes allowing the child to be exposed to dangerous situations. Signs of neglect could include:

- Constant hunger
- Thin or weak looking physique
- Untreated medical problems
- Poor personal hygiene and a dirty, unkempt appearance
- Lack of warm clothes in cold weather
- Constant tiredness
- A young child who comes to school and goes home unaccompanied
- A child who is left in the home without adult supervision
- A child who clings to adults and seeks affection

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent and severe emotional rejection or ill treatment of the child. It also includes situations where the child is witnessing domestic violence within the home. It is

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probably the most difficult type of abuse to recognise. The signs are behavioural rather than physical. Emotional abuse may often indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

Signs of emotional abuse could include:

- Withdrawal and an air of detachment
- Depression
- Poor self esteem and lack of confidence
- A loss of appetite

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is the involvement of children in sexual activities which they do not comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent. Signs of sexual abuse could include:

- Child complaining of soreness / itching in the genital area
- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Overt sexual behaviour or playing of a sexual nature
- Sexualised drawings
- Frequent soiling or wetting

### **Raising Child Protection Concerns**

A child protection incident may arise in several ways.

1. A child may approach a member of staff and make a specific allegation e.g. "My mum hit me with a belt last night", or "I am hungry. Dad gets drunk all the time and we never have any food".
2. The child may say something in another context which may arouse suspicion e.g. while talking generally to a lunchtime supervisor, "I hate it when my dad gets drunk and hits my mum".
3. Staff may observe a general pattern being established over a period of time e.g. continued dirtiness and unkempt appearance, or a history of minor injuries, tearfulness and tummy aches.
4. A child may exhibit inappropriate sexualised behaviour.

### **Responsibilities of Staff**

#### **Injuries**

If a child comes to school with an injury the teacher should always ask how it happened. This should be done as a matter of course. Take time as soon as possible to do it in a quite, informal way, on a one to one basis in the normal classroom setting. Staff should always ask open ended questions e.g. "How did that happen?" as opposed to, "Who did that to you?" Avoid carrying out an interrogation, and do not ask a child to remove clothing to look at injuries. If the teacher is satisfied with the child's explanation and there are no grounds for concern, then no further action needs to be taken. However a note must be made and passed on to the Designated Senior Person. If the teacher is concerned about the answer or the child is already subject to a Child Protection Plan then the Designated Senior Person must be informed immediately (see below). If there is no other adult in the class then a teacher should send a note to the Child Protection Coordinator indicating that there is a child protection issue.

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### **Disclosures by Children**

If a child approaches a member of staff to make a disclosure then the person who has been approached should make it a priority.

- Find a quiet area to talk outside the classroom
- Listen to the child but do not pressurise the child for facts which they are unwilling to give
- Ascertain the facts. Ask questions of the What? When? Where? Who? type. Do not ask leading questions or suggest things to the child.
- Tell the child that you will need to tell other people what they said. Do not promise the child that you won't tell anyone else
- Do not ask the child to repeat what they have said to anyone else
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you
- Inform the Designated Senior Person immediately.
- Make a written record of the disclosure.

A child may not approach a member of staff directly but may say something in another context which may arouse concern. In this situation the staff member should try to follow it up at the earliest opportunity by having a quiet word with the child. This should be very informal and care should be taken not to alarm the child. If the member of staff is still concerned then the Designated Senior Person should be informed at the earliest opportunity.

### **The Designated Senior Person**

Every school has a designated Designated Senior Person for child protection. At Manor Primary this is the Headteacher – Kate McGee. The Deputy Designated Officer is the Child Welfare & Inclusion Officer – Christina Burke. One of these members of staff needs to be informed.

Time is very important in child protection procedures. If an issue arises then it may be that social services may need to take the child to hospital for a medical examination, or social services may need to talk to the child or the parent before the child is allowed to go home in the afternoon.

It is the responsibility of all staff to inform the Designated Senior Person immediately there is an issue. Christina will give the issue priority.

She will talk with the member of staff involved and agree a course of action. This will depend on the nature of the issue, any previous history, and what is known about the child and the family. The course of action could be an immediate referral to CYPS, a CAF assessment, it could be a talk with parents, or it could be a decision to monitor the situation. The latter may be appropriate where the member of staff begins to suspect that there are concerns involving neglect.

### **Record Keeping**

All incidents of suspicion of child abuse must be recorded. The first priority is to inform the head teacher or learning mentor who will talk to the member of staff involved. After that the priority is to make a record of the incident. The Learning Mentor will always ask the member of staff to give her a written report. If it involves a discussion with a child then the report should outline how the discussion arose, who instigated it, where the discussion took place, at what time it took place, and exactly what was said. It is important that this report is kept as factual as possible. This report should, as far as possible, be completed on the same day. If necessary this may mean a teacher missing part of an after school meeting, or a member of the support staff being excused from the classroom for some time.

If the teacher suspects that there are issues of neglect then the head teacher or learning mentor will ask the teacher to begin to keep regular observational records.

All records relating to child protection issues will be kept separate from all other records and will be kept in the head teacher's office. Such records are confidential and will be shared with staff on a need to know basis.