

# Families Facing Adversity –Policy

June 2019



## Oxenhope Church of England Primary School

**If you are concerned about the safety of a child, act!**

Our Named Persons for Child Protection are (Head of School), Alice Jones and Gillian Dyson (Pastoral Manager), Caroline Auty (Class Teacher) and Hannah Inman (Explorers Club Leader)

Useful phone numbers:

School – 01535 642271

Social Services Initial Contact Point 01274 437500

NSPCC – 0808 800 5000

West Yorkshire Police – 101 or 999

**This policy must be read alongside the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.**

**It is advised that this policy is read alongside the school's early help offer**

**The role of schools, academies and colleges in England in responding to concerns relating to families with multiple needs (domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, mental health)**

Children who live in families with multiple needs are at an increased risk of negative outcomes.

Difficulties within families may be commonly known by the school or by the local community, but it can be difficult to know when problems within families have reached the threshold for taking action. Schools have daily contact with children and young people, and are in a good position to be able to identify when these problems are impacting upon a child's safety and welfare.

### **A brief outline of the subject**

The term 'families with multiple needs' covers a wide range of experiences and circumstances each of which may be experienced by families from time to time and pose difficulties for them, but may not represent long-term damaging effects for their children.

For children, the most high-risk of these problems are:

- living with domestic violence
- parental drug or alcohol misuse
- parental mental health problems.

Living with domestic violence is included in the definition of “significant harm” and so any concerns about domestic violence must follow child protection procedures. Parents with substance misuse problems or mental health problems may struggle at times to provide their children with the care and protection they need. Concerns about these issues should also follow child protection procedures, to ensure that the family gets the support they need to keep the children safe from harm.

### **School ethos, policy and training**

At Oxenhope C of E Primary we have an ethos that encourages all staff to feel confident in expressing concerns about a child who they believe may be living in circumstances where these parental risk factors apply, no matter how difficult this may be, or where there may be perceived to be a strong relationship between the school and the family. The well-being of the child must come first.

It is made clear to staff that concerns of this nature are regarded as potential child abuse and the school child protection procedures should be followed. Information should be included (or signposted) in school child protection policies, procedures and relevant training.

School also displays posters for Child Line and other sources of support for children who are worried about what is happening at home.

### **Recognition of possible signs and indicators**

- Poor attendance at school
- Not reaching developmental milestones
- Poor educational attainment
- Poor attachment to parents due to emotional unavailability
- Behavioural problems such as anxiety, stress and anger

Other indications that a family is experiencing a multiplicity of problems is when they are known to be regular users of a wide range of services such as welfare and benefit services, social housing, health, social care, youth offending or probation as well as community services for identified problem areas. Response and action to be taken.

If you are concerned that a child may be experiencing problems at home, then report your concerns to your designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible, in line with your

child protection policy and procedures. It is important to record your concerns especially if they occur incrementally over time. Sometimes the evidence builds up with each incident appearing mild but the frequency and impact on the child being highly significant.

### **Working with parents**

The principle of working with parents must of course be upheld, but suspicions relating to a perception of their multiple needs and the impact on their child/ren must be handled very carefully. Neither schools nor members of staff should carry out their own enquiries and any decision about informing parents should be made by Children's Social Care. There should be a presumption of openness, joint decision making, and a willingness to listen to families and capitalise on their strengths and resilience, but the guiding principle should always be what is in the best interests of the child.

Where it is suspected that the level of parental impact on a child, of their behaviour or circumstances, is at an unacceptable level, all decisions about what and when (and by whom), to tell parents and children should be taken by senior staff within the multiagency team. While professionals should seek, in general, to discuss any concerns with the family and, where possible, seek their agreement to action, this should only be done where such discussion and agreement-seeking will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm.

Written by Alice Jones – REVIEW DATE June 2020