

Reporting Concerns About a Child - Procedures

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 should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies

All school staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns about a child's safety and to report any disclosures of abuse of a child. Details of how to do this should be outlined in the school's child protection policy and procedures. The process should also form part of child protection induction and refresher training.

Reporting concerns

Any and every concern about a child's welfare or safety should be recorded and given to the school's designated safeguarding lead.

Staff should record the date and time of the observation, the details of the concern, noting anything that the child said or did, or any observation that gave the cause for concern. This should be signed and dated by the member of staff reporting the concern

Reporting disclosures

All staff should be fully aware of their responsibility to report any disclosure as soon as possible to the designated safeguarding lead. The procedures for doing this should be given in the school's child protection policy.

When recording a disclosure, the following should be recorded:

- Child's name, date and time of the disclosure.
- A written account of the disclosure using as much of the child's own language as possible.
- Note the emotional state of the child.
- Record any visible signs but only what can be seen. Use a body map if that is easier than describing any visible sign in words.
- Sign and date the record.

Effective listening skills when responding to concerns and disclosures

Disclosing abuse or talking about something that is worrying them can be difficult for some children. Staff in school are seen by many children as adults they can trust, who will take them seriously and who have their best interests at heart. The decision to talk to an adult about a concern is not usually one that is taken lightly and it will have taken courage for the child to decide to speak out. It could be a spontaneous decision to talk following an incident or something that has been on the child's mind for a while.

Overcoming obstacles to listening

Perhaps the biggest barrier to effective listening is time. It is very unlikely that a child will speak about a problem at a time that is convenient to a busy member of the school staff, but such conversations need to take priority and should not be delayed.

Adults can be anxious about what a child is saying and what the appropriate response would be. Familiarity with the school's child protection policy and procedures will ensure that staff:

- know how to respond to a disclosure
- understand their responsibilities in listening carefully and providing a written record

- are clear that concerns must be passed to the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible
- understand that it is not their role to investigate.

Showing empathy

Empathy is the ability of a person to understand the feelings of another person. Empathic listening helps to promote trust and confidence of the child by demonstrating a genuine desire to understand what is being said. In addition to following the points above it will be helpful to the child to:

- be attentive
- use friendly and approachable body language
- reflect back what the child has said
- give the child time. Do not rush them or be tempted to fill any silences
- keep own feelings about what is being said hidden
- give verbal and non-verbal encouragement (saying "I see" or nodding).

After the disclosure

The child may need reassurance that they have done the right thing in sharing their concern and that they have been taken seriously. The child should be told what will happen next in general terms. Following a concern or a disclosure the adult needs to provide a written record of what has been said using as much of the child's own words as possible. The child's emotional state should also be noted. The record should be signed and dated and given as soon as possible to the designated safeguarding lead. The school may have an agreed format for recording concerns.

Support

The designated safeguarding lead will take responsibility for following up the disclosure and should let the member of staff who passed on the concern know what is happening, bearing in mind any issues about confidentiality.

It is upsetting to receive a disclosure and the school should have some support in place for staff. This could include reassurance from the designated safeguarding lead that the right response has been made and that the disclosure has been handled appropriately. Additional support can be available via professional networks and local and national helplines.

Written by Alice Jones

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