



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



Child Protection Procedures

Recognising Child Abuse

- 1. Signs and Symptoms**
- 2. Neglect**
- 3. Physical Abuse**
- 4. Sexual Abuse**
- 5. Psychological Abuse**

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Signs And Symptoms

Child abuse is defined as any neglect, physical injury, sexual abuse and psychological abuse whether mild, serious or fatal, inflicted or knowingly not prevented, by any person having care of that child. These include parents, siblings, other relatives or step-relatives, baby-sitters and domestic helpers. Abuse may also be perpetrated by someone who is not known to the child.

“School staff are particularly well-placed to observe the outward signs of abuse and the unexplained changes in behaviour or performance which may indicate abuse.” (DES Circular No. 4/88).

These are four main areas of Child Abuse. It should be recognised that all these signs may also be a symptom of another problem.

Neglect

Neglect is where parents/guardians fail to meet the basic and essential needs of their children, such as food, clothing, and medical care. Leaving small children alone and unsupervised is another example of neglect. Parents refusing or failing to give love and affection to their child(ren) is a case of emotional neglect.

Signs or symptoms which may possibly indicate neglect:

- Hunger
- Tiredness or listlessness
- Child dirty or unkempt
- Consistently poorly or inappropriately clad for the weather
- Poor school attendance or often late for school
- Poor concentration
- Affection - demanding or attention-seeking behaviour
- Untreated illnesses/injuries
- Stealing or scavenging compulsively
- Failure to achieve developmental milestones, eg growth, weight
- Failure to develop intellectually or socially

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is ... any non-accidental injury (NAI) where adults physically hurt, injure or kill a child. This can involve hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning and biting. It also includes giving a child poisonous substances, inappropriate drugs or alcohol and attempting suffocation or drowning.

Signs or symptoms which may indicate physical abuse:

- Patterns of bruising, Inconsistent account of how bruising or injuries occurred Finger, hand or nail marks, black eyes
- Bite marks
- Round burn marks, burns and scalds
- Lacerations, weals
- Fractures
- Bald patches
- Symptoms of drug or alcohol intoxication or poisoning
- Unaccountable covering of limbs, even in hot weather
- Fear of going home or parents being contacted
- Fear of medical help
- Fear of changing for PE
- Inexplicable fear of adults or over-compliance



- Violence or aggression towards others including bullying

Sexual Abuse

SEXUAL ABUSE is the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or which violate the social taboos of family roles. This covers the complete range of actions which result in children being used for the sexual gratification of others including contact and non-contact behaviours, eg touching genitalia, intercourse, involvement with pornography, indecent exposure, etc.

Signs or symptoms which may indicate sexual abuse:

- Sexually explicit play or behaviour or age inappropriate behaviour
- Anal or vaginal discharge, soreness or scratching
- Truancy, lateness, reluctance to go home
- Inability to concentrate, tiredness
- Refusal to communicate, elective mute
- Thrush or other infections
- Persistent complaints of stomach disorders or pains
- Eating disorders, eg anorexia nervosa and bulimia
- Attention-seeking behaviour including sexual harassment or molestation
- Unusually compliant
- Regressive behaviour
- Enuresis, soiling
- Frequent or open masturbation, touching others inappropriately
- Depression, withdrawal, isolation from peer group
- Reluctance to undress for PE or swimming
- Bruises, scratches, etc in genital area
- Lack of trust in a familiar or particular adult

Psychological Abuse

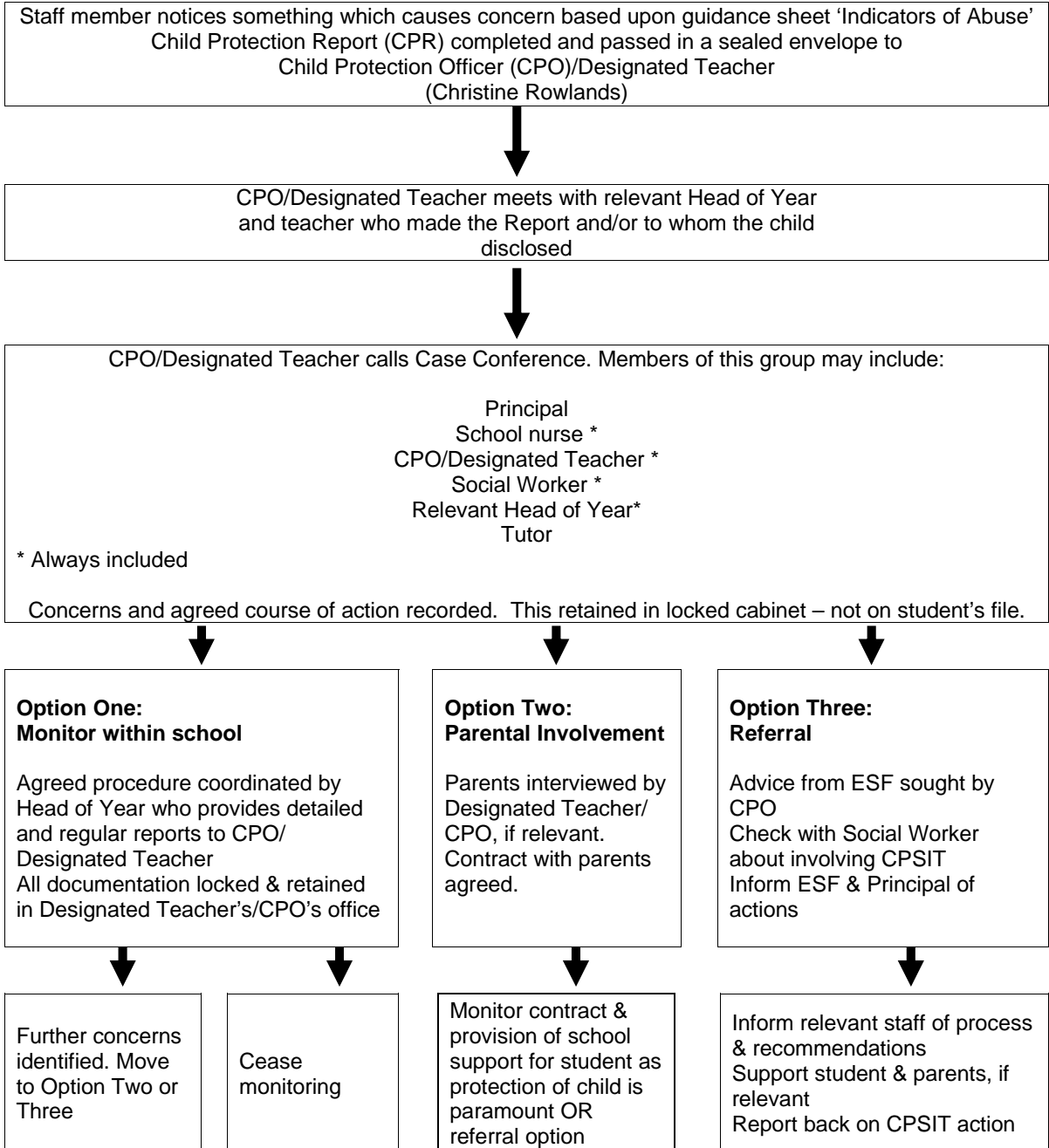
The emotional ill-treatment or rejection of a child where constant lack of love and affection, threats, verbal attacks, taunting, shouting, scapegoating, can lead to a child's loss of confidence and self-esteem. It can also include harassment or indifference on the basis of race, culture, gender or disability.

Signs and symptoms which may indicate emotional abuse:

- Over-reaction to mistakes, continual self-deprecation
- Delayed physical/mental/emotional development
- Sudden speech disorders, elective mutism/deafness
- Inappropriate emotional responses, fantasies
- Rocking, banging head, regression
- Self-mutilation, drug or solvent abuse
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Running away, compulsive stealing
- Masturbation
- Appetite disorders - anorexia nervosa, bulimia
- Soiling, smearing faeces, enuresis



Sha Tin College Child Protection Procedures



A Teacher's Guide to dealing with reports of abuse

When a child is telling you about a case of abuse, it is important that you should remember to:

- Stay calm.
- Reassure the child - tell them they are doing the right thing and that you are pleased they are confiding in an adult. Praise them for having the courage to come forward.
- Tell the child that the information you are giving them will be taken seriously and looked into by school and outside agencies if necessary.
- Explain to the child that it is necessary, in order to help them, that you will have to tell certain other parties but assure them that this will not be general knowledge within the school community.
- Tell the child whom you will be confiding in next and why. Assure them that (in the case of the abuse by a parent) their parents will not be informed until there has been discussion.
- Show that you believe the child and ensure that you tell them this.
- Tell them that it is not their fault.
- Encourage the child to talk - listen to them rather than ask leading questions.
- Check that you have a full understanding of what the child has told you before the end of the discussion.
- Be aware that the child may retract all that they have told you either in the initial interview or later - it is important that you still report it.
- Find out if the child has told anyone else, either in or outside of school, this information.
- Make a detailed report on the relevant sheet of all the information, use the child's language, and pass to the designated teacher immediately. Include questions asked but do not include own opinion or comments. It is important that this is recorded in as much detail as possible so that the child does not have to repeat the details of abuse unnecessarily.

When a child is telling you about a case of abuse, it is important that you refrain from:

- Transmitting anger, shock or embarrassment.
- Promising confidentiality. Assure the child that you will make every attempt to help them but let them know that you may have to tell other people about the incidents in order to help.
- Asking leading questions or pressing for information.
- Telling the child that what has happened to them is "dirty, naughty or bad" in any way, though reference might be made to the teacher's role in helping it to be stopped
- Commenting on the offender and their morality - it may be someone the child loves.
- Talking to anyone but the designated teacher about what the child has told you.
- Acting without the knowledge and agreement of the designated teacher



Sha Tin College Child Protection Report

This report should be completed immediately following any incident which raises concerns about possible child abuse. Any member of staff with reason to be suspicious or concerned with the welfare of a child may complete it. Information must be recorded confidentially and accurately. This report must be passed in a sealed envelope on the same day to Christine Rowlands, the Child Protection Officer at Sha Tin College.

Name of person completing report.....

Position in relation to the student (i.e. teacher, Tutor, Social Worker).....

Name and Tutor group of student involved.....

Date and time.....

Other people present (adults and students).....

Details of your concern

Record here exactly what you saw or heard. Do not embellish. Include the actual site of any injury or an exact record of anything said to you by the child. Record relevant comments you made. Avoid asking any unnecessary questions, except for clarification.

Signature.....

Attach an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.

