



**SHERBORNE QATAR**  
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

## CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

**Purpose:** Our core safeguarding principles are:

- It is the school's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Children who are safe and feel safe make more successful learners.
- Representatives of all stakeholders will be involved in policy development and review.
- Policies will be reviewed annually, unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an earlier date of review.

We have a moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We must endeavor to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We should remain alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

**When:** At all times throughout the academic year.

**How:**

- The school will ensure that the welfare of children is given paramount consideration when developing and delivering all school activities.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm in accordance with this guidance.
- All pupils and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support from the senior management of the school who will follow this policy guidance.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children refers to the process of protecting children from abuse or neglect, preventing the impairment of their health or development, ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective and nurturing care and undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

**Child protection** refers to the processes undertaken to meet statutory obligations laid out in the [Children Act 1989](#) and associated guidance the most recent legislation [here](#) in respect of those children who have been identified as suffering, or being at risk of suffering harm.

All those working for or on behalf of the school, full-time or part-time, in either a paid or voluntary capacity have an obligation to keep children safe.

Research suggests that more than 10% of children will suffer some form of abuse. Due to their day-to-day contact with children, school staff are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and to recognise the outward signs of abuse. Children may also turn to a trusted adult in the school when they are in distress or at risk. It is vital that school staff are alert to the signs of neglect and abuse and understand the local procedures for reporting and acting upon their concerns.

The **Designated Senior Persons (DSPs)** for child protection in this school are:

**Sofia Darr – Headmistress**

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Room – GF 116

**Joanne Harward – School Counsellor**

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**Munazza Mukhtar – Deputy Head Pastoral (Years 9 - 12)**

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**Nicola Ramsden - Deputy Head / Head of Pre-Prep**

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## The DSPs must:

- Keep records of all concerns when reported by staff or when disclosed by a child, ensuring that such records are stored securely on CPOMS and reported onward.
- Refer cases of suspected neglect and/or abuse to children's social care or the police.
- Ensure that when a child leaves the school, their information is passed via CPOMS transfer to their new school and the child's counsellor (if they have one) is informed. This must be completed within the first 5 days of the start of a new term.
- Develop effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies.
- Ensure that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood this policy.
- Ensure that all staff sign to indicate they have read at least part one of [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1181955/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181955/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023.pdf)
- Ensure that the child protection policy is updated annually.
- Inform parents that the school has a child protection policy.
- Ensure that there are procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against members of staff.
- Ensure that the safe recruitment procedures issued by HR are being followed.
- Potential new staff to be subject to a digital screening process prior to interview.
- Ensure that there is a training strategy for all staff, including governors, regarding child protection.
- Ensure that arrangements are made to ensure that all temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the school's arrangements for child protection.
- Ensure that the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff.
- Ensure that all staff feel able to raise concerns, including low level concerns, about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the school's whistleblowing procedures.
- Ensure that a child's safety and welfare is addressed through the curriculum.

## Good practice guidelines

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards children, the school community agrees to the following standards of good practice:

- treating all children with respect.
- setting a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately.
- involving children in decision-making which affects them.
- encouraging positive and safe behaviour among children.
- being a good listener.
- being alert to changes in a child's behaviour.
- recognising that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse.
- reading and understanding all of the school's safeguarding and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example bullying, physical contact

and information-sharing.

- asking the child's permission before doing anything for them which is of a physical nature, such as assisting with dressing, physical support during PE or administering first aid.
- maintaining appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between children and avoiding the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- being aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some children lead to an increased risk of neglect and or abuse.

## **Abuse of trust**

All school staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards children is unacceptable and that their conduct towards all children must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#), it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual.

This means that any sexual activity between a member of the school staff and a child under 18 may be a criminal offence, even if that child is over the age of consent.

## **Code of ethical practice for school staff**

All school staff are valued members of the school community. Everyone is expected to set and maintain the highest standards for their own performance, to work as part of a team and to be an excellent role model for our children.

All school staff should:

- Place the safety and welfare of children above all other considerations.
- Treat all members of the school community, including children, parents, colleagues and governors with consideration and respect.
- Adhere to the principles and procedures contained in the policies in our safeguarding portfolio and in teaching and learning policies.
- Treat each child as an individual and make adjustments to meet individual needs.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of and commitment to non-discriminatory practice.
- Recognise power imbalances between children and staff, and different levels of seniority of staff and ensure that power and authority are never misused.
- Understand that school staff are in a position of trust and that sexual relationships with a child, even over the age of 16, may be an offence.
- Be alert to, and report appropriately, any behaviour that may indicate that a child is at risk of harm.
- Encourage all children to reach their full potential.
- Never condone inappropriate behaviour by children or staff.
- Take responsibility for their own continuing professional development.
- Refrain from any action that would bring the school into disrepute.
- Value themselves and seek appropriate support for any issue that may have an

adverse effect on their professional practice.

### **Children who may be particularly vulnerable**

Some children may be at increased risk of neglect and or abuse. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse happens, or who have a high level of tolerance in respect of neglect.

To ensure that all of our children receive equal protection, we will give special consideration and attention to children who are:

- disabled or have special educational needs
- living in a known domestic abuse situation
- affected by known parental substance misuse
- living away from home
- vulnerable to being bullied, or engaging in bullying
- living in temporary accommodation
- living transient lifestyles
- living in chaotic, neglectful and unsupportive home situations
- vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality
- involved directly or indirectly in prostitution or child trafficking.

### **Support for those involved in a child protection issue**

Child neglect and abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved. We will support the children and their families and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously.
- nominating link persons who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact. Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a child, a separate link person will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest.
- responding sympathetically to any request from a child or member of staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety.
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies.
- storing records securely on CPOMS.
- offering details of help lines, counselling or other avenues of external support
- following the procedures laid down in our whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures.
- co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

## **Complaints procedure in respect of poor practice behaviour**

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a child or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a child that initially does not reach the threshold for child protection action. Poor practice examples include unfairly singling out a child, using sarcasm or humiliation as a form of control, bullying or belittling a child or discriminating against them in some way. Complaints are managed by senior staff and the Headmistress.

Complaints from staff are dealt with under the school's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

## **If you have concerns about a colleague**

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. The school's whistleblowing code (see below) enables staff to raise concerns, including low level concerns, or allegations in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place. All concerns of poor practice or concerns about a child's welfare brought about by the behaviour of colleagues should be reported to the Headmistress. Complaints about the Headmistress should be reported to the school's CEO.

## **Whistleblowing code for issues relating to children and young people**

The school's whistleblowing policy and procedures enable staff to raise concerns relating to:

- crime
- a miscarriage of justice
- illegality
- health and safety
- environmental or property damage
- unauthorised use of public funds
- concealing or attempting to cover up any of the above.

This code provides additional information to help staff to understand the role of whistleblowing in the context of poor practice and unacceptable conduct and attitudes towards children.

The whistleblowing procedures and this code may be used by anyone employed by the school in a paid or voluntary capacity who believes they have reason to suspect that the conduct of an employee towards a child is inappropriate. Inappropriate conduct includes, but is not confined to:

- bullying or humiliation
- contravening health and safety guidelines
- serious breaches of the school's code of ethical practice
- professional practice that falls short of normally accepted standards
- compromising pupils' welfare but in a way that does not meet the threshold for child protection intervention.

Staff will naturally be reticent to report a concern about the conduct of a colleague. However, everyone must take responsibility for ensuring that children are fairly treated. If poor practice is allowed to continue unchecked, it could escalate with serious consequences.

Whistleblowing can also support the member of staff who is the subject of the concern. Their conduct may result from inexperience or lack of training that can be addressed by the school, or they may be under stress and be relieved when their conduct is questioned.

Staff who deliberately fail children and show no remorse or desire to improve are unlikely to welcome being exposed, but their conduct has to be confronted for the sake of the child and the reputation of the whole school.

All concerns are treated in confidence and, as far as possible, your identity will not be revealed if that is your wish. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if, as a result of an investigation, you are required to provide a witness statement.

You can, if you prefer, raise your concern anonymously. The school would need to decidewhether the levity and credibility of the concern warrants investigation if the source of the concern, and the key evidence, is not readily available.

The school will fully support you and do all it can to protect you from any harassment or adverse repercussions that may arise from whistleblowing. Allegations that prove to be deliberately fabricated and malicious will be dealt with through staff disciplinary procedures. However, no action will be taken against any member of staff who raises a genuine concern that proves to be unfounded.

## **Reporting procedure**

It may help if you write down, for your own benefit, what you have observed or heard that is causing alarm. One useful way to decide whether your concern should be reported is to consider whether you would want the conduct of this member of staff to continue unchecked if your own child or another young family member was involved.

- You may raise your concern verbally or in writing. You should report your concern directly to the Headmistress.
- If the Headmistress is the subject of your concern, speak to the school's CEO.

- A friend or colleague may accompany you to the meeting if you wish.
- Ensure the Headmistress or CEO informs you of their proposed action and sets a date for a second meeting.
- Timescales will depend on the complexity of the initial enquiry, but the case should not be allowed to stall, and you should receive initial feedback promptly. The timescale for subsequent feedback should then be agreed.
- Ask for clarification about confidentiality and ensure you have your wishes regarding the protection of your identity recorded.

### **Process and outcome**

The Headmistress will make enquiries to establish the facts of the matter and whether poor practice or inappropriate conduct has occurred.

Members of the school community may be asked to provide information or advice.

- External advice, for example, from legal or human resources or children's services may be sought.
- A written record of the conduct, established facts and outcome of the enquiry will be kept.
- The whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress of the enquiry.

The outcome of the enquiry will be one of the following:

1. No poor practice or wrongdoing is established, and the case is closed.
2. The concern has some substance, and the subject of the concern will receive advice and support from the head teacher to improve practice.
3. Poor practice or wrongdoing is established, and disciplinary proceedings are initiated.
4. The concern is more serious, and an investigation is initiated.

If, at any stage in the process, there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of significant harm, the police will be immediately involved.

### **Further action**

If you raise a concern and you are dissatisfied with the way it is managed, or the outcome, you may contact the owner for advice.

### **Staff who are the subject of an allegation**

When an allegation is made against a member of staff, set procedures must be followed. It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events can and do happen. A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we must accept that some adults do pose a serious risk to children's welfare and safety, and we must act on every allegation made. Staff who



are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress. Suspension is not mandatory, nor is it automatic but, in some cases, staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that children are protected.

Allegations against staff should be reported to the Headmistress. Allegations against the Headmistress should be reported to the school's CEO.

### **Safer recruitment**

Our school endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ safe staff.

Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- complete a letter of application and submit an up-to-date CV listing all previous employment
- provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children
- provide evidence of identity and qualifications (these must be verified through an appropriate body in the UK and accepted by the Qatari Embassy)
- be checked through an appropriate Police Check or DBS
- be interviewed by more than one person on SLT.

All new members of staff will undergo an induction that includes familiarisation with the school's safeguarding and child protection policy. All staff sign to confirm they have received a copy of the child protection policy and have read the school's policies.

### **Extended school and off-site arrangements**

Where extended school activities are provided by and managed by the school, our own safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures apply. If other organisations provide services or activities on our site, we will check that they have appropriate procedures in place, including safer recruitment procedures.

When our children attend off-site activities, we will check that effective child protection arrangements are in place. A risk assessment form must be completed for all trips and school visits.

### **Photography and images**

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or using images, so we must ensure that we have some safeguards in place.

To protect children, we will:

- seek parents' consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example,

on our school website, social media, or in newspapers or publications)

- ensure that children are appropriately dressed
- encourage children to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them
- Staff must not take photos or store photos of our pupils on their phones. The school will supply every teacher with access to a school camera.

## **E-Safety**

Most of our children use mobile phones and computers. We are a bring your own device school so we must be extra vigilant. Digital devices are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. The school's e-safety and acceptable use policy explains how we try to keep children safe in school. Cyber-bullying by children, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures.

Chat rooms and social networking sites are the more obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful behaviour and children are not allowed to access these sites whilst in school. These sites are blocked from our network. Some children will undoubtedly be 'chatting' on mobiles or social networking sites at home and we have produced a short factsheet to help parents and children understand the possible risks.

### **Governing bodies and proprietors should regularly:**

Review the effectiveness of school filters and monitoring systems.

Ensure that the leadership team and relevant staff are:

- aware of and understand the systems in place
- manage them effectively
- know how to escalate concerns when identified.

Schools and colleges should use communications with parents and carers to reinforce the importance of children being safe online.

Schools should share information with parents/carers about:

- what systems they have in place to filter and monitor online use
- what they are asking children to do online, including the sites they will be asked to access
- who from the school or college (if anyone) their child is going to be interacting with online.

## Lanyards

SQSFG has a colour coded lanyard system for staff, visitors and pupils in year 7 – year 12.

|           |                         |  |
|-----------|-------------------------|--|
| BLACK     | STAFF                   |  |
| WHITE     | PARENTS AND CARERS      |  |
| GOLD      | YEAR 7 – YEAR 12 PUPILS |  |
| DARK BLUE | VISITORS                |  |
| GREEN     | CANTEEN STAFF           |  |

## SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

### Procedures recognising abuse

To ensure that our children are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, for example by hitting them, or by failing to act to prevent harm, for example by leaving a small child home alone, or leaving knives or matches within reach of an unattended toddler. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse.

The main categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, domestic abuse and neglect.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause

severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. It may feature age – or developmentally-inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Affluent neglect**

Affluent neglect refers to the neglect experienced by children in wealthy families. This can be more difficult to spot, as the kind of neglect experienced by children and young people in these circumstances is often emotional.

### **Bullying/Child on Child Abuse - including online bullying**

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying is thought to result in up to 12 child suicides each year.

All incidences of bullying should be reported and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures. All pupils and parents should receive a copy of the anti-bullying procedures shortly after joining the school and the subject of bullying is addressed at

regular intervals in assemblies and personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. The school will hold an anti-bullying week each year. If the bullying is particularly serious, or the anti-bullying procedures are deemed to be ineffective, the Headmistress and the DSP will consider implementing child protection procedures.

Abuse can happen in any relationship where there is a power imbalance. Adults have power over children because they are bigger and stronger, but these power imbalances can also occur in a child's relationship with their peers.

Some children may develop faster than others, creating a power imbalance due to physical size. Other children may have power over a peer due to a family background. Sometimes, a smaller or younger child can dominant an older child.

## **Domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse:

- can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional
- can impact on children through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse and/or experiencing it through their own intimate relationships

## **Indicators of abuse and what you might see**

Physical signs define some types of abuse, for example, bruising, bleeding or broken bones resulting from physical or sexual abuse, or injuries sustained while a child has been inadequately supervised. The identification of physical signs is complicated, as children may go to great lengths to hide injuries, often because they are ashamed or embarrassed, or their abuser has threatened further violence or trauma if they 'tell'. It is also quite difficult for anyone without medical training to categorise injuries into accidental or deliberate with any degree of certainty. For these reasons it is vital that staff are also aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated person.

Remember, it is your responsibility to report your concerns. It is not your responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused and/or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- keep arms and legs covered, even in warm weather
- be concerned about changing for PE or swimming
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently miss school or arrive late

- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- challenge authority
- become disinterested in their school work
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They should be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the DSP to decide how to proceed. It is very important that you report your concerns – you do not need ‘absolute proof’ that the child is at risk.

### **The impact of abuse**

The impact of child abuse should not be underestimated. Many children do recover well and go on to lead healthy, happy and productive lives, although most adult survivors agree that the emotional scars remain, however well buried. For some children, full recovery is beyond their reach, and the rest of their childhood and their adulthood may be characterised by anxiety or depression, self-harm, eating disorders, alcohol and substance misuse, unequal and destructive relationships and long-term medical or psychiatric difficulties.

### **Taking action**

Key points to remember for taking action are:

- Report your concern to a DSP by the end of the day. Your concerns should be reported on CPOMS.
- If a DSP is not around, ensure the information is shared with the most senior person in the school that day and ensure action is taken to report the concern.

### **Do not start your own investigation**

- Share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family.
- Seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

### **If you suspect a child is at risk of harm**

There will be occasions when you suspect that a child may be at serious risk, but you have no ‘real’ evidence. The child’s behaviour may have changed, their artwork could be bizarre, or you may have noticed other physical but inconclusive signs. In these circumstances, you should try to give the child the opportunity to talk. The signs you

have noticed may be due to a variety of factors and it is fine to ask the child if they are alright or if you can help in any way.

If, following your conversation, you remain concerned, you should discuss your concerns with the designated person.

### **If a child discloses information to you**

#### **Children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone they are being abused.**

It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose that they are being neglected and or abused. They may feel ashamed, particularly if the abuse is sexual, their abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell, they may have lost all trust in adults, or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a child talks to you about any risks to their safety or wellbeing you will need to let them know that **you must** pass the information on – you are not allowed to keep secrets. The point at which you do this is a matter of professional judgement. If you jump in immediately the child may think that you do not want to listen, if you leave it till the very end of the conversation, the child may feel that you have misled them into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

#### **During your conversation with the child:**

- Allow them to speak freely.
- Remain calm and do not overreact – the child may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting you.
- Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – ‘I’m so sorry this has happened’, ‘I want to help’, ‘This isn’t your fault’, ‘You are doing the right thing in talking to me’.
- Do not be afraid of silences – remember how hard this must be for the child.
- Under no circumstances should you ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what does the child’s mother think about all this.
- At an appropriate time tell the child that in order to help them you must pass the information on.
- Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort. It may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.
- Avoid admonishing the child for not disclosing earlier. Saying ‘I do wish you had told me about this when it started’ or ‘I can’t believe what I’m hearing’ may be your way of being supportive but the child may interpret it as that they have done something wrong.
- Tell the child what will happen next. The child may agree to go with you to see the designated person. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see them before the end of the day.
- Report verbally to the designated person.

- Record your conversation as soon as possible on CPOMS.
- Seek support if you feel distressed.

### **Notifying parents**

The school will normally seek to discuss any concerns about a child with their parents. This must be handled sensitively, and the DSP will make contact with the parent in the event of a concern, suspicion or disclosure.

However, if the school believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, then advice will first be sought from children's social care or the equivalent in Qatar.

### **Referral to children's social care**

The DSP will make a referral to children's social care if it is believed that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm. The child (subject to their age and understanding) and the parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless doing so would increase the risk to the child.

### **Children with sexually harmful behaviour**

Children may be harmed by other children or young people. Staff will be aware of the harm caused by bullying and will use the school's anti-bullying procedures where necessary. However, there will be occasions when a child's behaviour warrants a response under child protection rather than anti-bullying procedures. In particular, research suggests that up to 30 per cent of child sexual abuse is committed by someone under the age of 18.

The management of children and young people with sexually harmful behaviour is complex and the school will work with other relevant agencies to maintain the safety of the whole school community. Young people who display such behaviour may be victims of abuse themselves and the child protection procedures will be followed for both victim and perpetrator.

### **Confidentiality and sharing information**

All staff will understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence.

Staff should only discuss concerns with a designated person, Headmistress or the CEO (depending on who is the subject of the concern). That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

All concerns and other information will be stored on CPOMS and only made available to relevant individuals.

Record of concern forms and other written information will be stored in a locked facility



and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Every effort should be made to prevent unauthorised access and sensitive information should not be stored on laptop computers, which, by the nature of their portability, could be lost or stolen. If it is necessary to store child protection information on portable media, such as a CD or flash drive, these items should also be kept in locked storage. Child protection information will be stored separately from the child's school file and the school file will be 'tagged' to indicate that separate information is held.

Child protection records are normally exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act, which means that children and parents do not have an automatic right to see them. If any member of staff receives a request from a child or parent to see child protection records, they should refer the request to the Headmistress.