



SHERBORNE SCHOOL

# Child Protection and Safeguarding Children: Recognising Abuse

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**Deputy Head Pastoral**

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### IMPORTANT

1. The English document is seen as the original, true and correct version
2. Once downloaded or printed, this is an uncontrolled document. Please refer to the school website for the latest version
3. Sherborne School MoQ reserves the right to amend and update this policy at any time.

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## Procedures for 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.

**Some of the categories of abuse are physical abuse, emotional 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 causing 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 beyond the child's developmental capability, 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.

## **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 due to 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 irresponsiveness 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 Headteacher 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 their family background. Sometimes, a smaller or younger child can dominate 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 other 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 regarding 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 schoolwork
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- be involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about illegal substances
- display inappropriate 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.

## 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 much courage for a child to disclose that they are being neglected 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 you do not want to listen; if you leave it till the conversation's end, 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 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.

## Children with 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. The management of children and young people with 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.