

# Lantern of Knowledge Secondary School Child Protection Policy

## **Introduction**

Lantern of Knowledge is concerned that all pupils remain safe and free from harm and is committed to playing a full and active part in the multi-agency response to child protection concerns. This document sets out Lantern of Knowledge's position in relation to all aspects of the child protection process.

## **Informing principles**

All children have an **absolute right** to a childhood free from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

All children in whatever setting have an **equal right** to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

All staff involved with children (teaching and non-teaching) have a **responsibility** to be mindful of issues related to children's safety and welfare and a **duty** to report and refer any concerns.

Parents have a **right** to be informed about any concerns about a child's welfare or any action taken to safeguard and promote a child's welfare, providing this does not compromise the child's safety.

Children are best protected when professionals work effectively together and share responsibility for protective action.

There is not necessarily a conflict between a School's need to discharge its child protection responsibilities and its wish to work in partnership with parents.

Where there are possible concerns about a child's safety, unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and should not be offered. When a child is on the Child Protection Register information about the child and his/her circumstances should only be shared on a "need to know" basis.

Lantern of Knowledge should be proactive and take positive steps to inform children of their **rights** to safety and protection and the options available to express their fears or concerns.

Children (regrettably) are sometimes abused and exploited by school staff. Lantern of Knowledge should have in place systems that deter possible abusers and manage effectively any allegations or concerns about abuse when they arise.

When children make allegations about abuse or neglect they should always be listened to, have their comments taken seriously and, where appropriate, thoroughly investigated.

### **Partnership**

Lantern of Knowledge believes that the best outcomes for children generally are achieved when professionals can work effectively in partnership with parents/carers. This belief holds equally in relation to child protection concerns. Lantern of Knowledge believes in open and honest communication and will always share with parents/carers any information or concerns that they have about their children at the earliest opportunity. The only exception to this would be where it was felt that such communication might compromise the child's safety.

If a child is felt to be in need of protection and becomes the subject of a child protection plan, parents/carers should regard Lantern of Knowledge as a source of help and support.

### **Prevention**

Lantern of Knowledge takes seriously its duty of pastoral care and will be proactive in seeking to prevent children becoming the victims of abuse or neglect. It will do this in a number of ways:

Through the creation of an open culture which respects all individuals' rights and discourages bullying and discrimination of all kinds.

All staff, including voluntary staff, are required to undergo appropriate background (including CRB List 99) checks.

By identifying a member of staff who has overall responsibility for child protection matters. He/she has received specialist training in this field and acts as a source of advice and support to other staff.

All staff will be given appropriate training on child abuse.

By informing children of their rights to be free from harm and encouraging them to talk to staff if they have any concerns.

Through PSHE and an ongoing programme of support, at an age appropriate level, which promotes self-esteem and social inclusion and address the issue of child protection in the wider context of child safety in general.

### **Responding to concerns**

If Lantern of Knowledge receives information about a child which suggests that he/she **has** been actually abused or neglected or that this is likely, it has a **duty to refer** these concerns to the Social Services Department or Police. The school has no discretion in this

matter. In these circumstances the Social Services Department's child abuse investigation procedures apply.

In the course of an investigation the Social Services Department or Police might wish to speak to a child, without parental knowledge or consent. The Head Teacher, acting 'in loco parentis' has discretion to agree this to allow the authorities to explore concerns and determine whether there are grounds for further action. In these cases the Head Teacher will ensure that the child's welfare is secured and he/she has access to a trusted adult.

If Lantern of Knowledge receives information which suggests a child **may** have been abused or neglected or abuse or neglect **may** be likely, then it will **consult** with the Social Services Department.

In these circumstances the Social Services Department may decide to begin a child protection investigation in which case its procedures will apply.

In either case parents will be informed of what has happened at the earliest opportunity consistent with the child's best interests.

#### **NB**

It is important to remember that a referral or consultation with the Social Services Department is an **expression of concern** about a child's welfare. It is not an accusation or a presumption of responsibility about a parent/carer.

To avoid any misunderstandings parents of children who sustain accidental injuries which result in cuts/bruises/fractures should inform Lantern of Knowledge on the next working day.

If the school has general concerns about a child's welfare these will be raised with parents/carers at an early stage in an attempt to work together to remedy the situation. If concerns persist over a period of time, the school may consult with the Social Services Department to discuss a way forward.

In all of the above circumstances the school will keep a confidential record of its concerns and actions.

#### **Child/child abuse**

In the event of physical or emotional abuse of one child by another this will be taken seriously and dealt with through the school's anti-bullying policy.

If it emerges that a child is being bullied by a sibling who may not be a pupil then Lantern of Knowledge in the first instance will inform the children's parents of its concerns. If the problem persists and the pupil continues to be the victim of abuse then the school will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

In all matters of suspected sexual abuse, either victimisation or perpetration, Lantern of Knowledge will refer its concerns to the Social Services Department.

### **Confidentiality**

If Lantern of Knowledge receives information from any source that a child has suffered abuse or neglect or may suffer in this way, whether the child is a pupil or otherwise, it has a duty to pass this information to the Social Services Department.

If parents/carers wish to share such information with Lantern of Knowledge they must be aware that it will not be possible to guarantee confidentiality. Lantern of Knowledge can reassure parents/carers however that if they wish, the source of the information can remain anonymous.

### **Allegations against staff**

All allegations against any member of staff which have implications for the safety and welfare of children will be taken seriously and investigated in line with the agreed procedure regarding allegations of abuse against staff.

When concerns come to the attention of Lantern of Knowledge staff they should refer to the procedures on how to progress these.

Members of the public who have concerns should speak to the Head Teacher or the Chairman of governors if it is the Head Teacher who is the cause for concern.

# Lantern of Knowledge Educational Trust

## Child Protection Policy - In Brief

### Introduction

Lantern of Knowledge has to have a child protection policy to meet Department of Health and Department for Education and Employment requirements.

### Principles

Children have a right to be safe.

Parents have a right to be informed.

Children are best protected when parents and school can work together.

### Partnership

Lantern of Knowledge will inform parents of any concerns about their children (providing it does not compromise their safety) and will help and support them as necessary.

### Prevention

Lantern of Knowledge will actively seek to prevent children suffering abuse and neglect through the development of an open culture which informs children of their rights and encourages them to speak about any concerns. The school will also address the issue of children's safety through the curriculum.

### Responding to Concerns

Lantern of Knowledge will **refer** all allegations or concerns that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected to the Social Services Department.

Lantern of Knowledge will **consult** when it has concerns that a child may have been abused or neglected.

Lantern of Knowledge will **discuss** with parents any concerns they have about children. Parents will be kept informed of what has happened.

### Child/child abuse

Physical and emotional abuse of children by other children will be dealt with through the school's anti-bullying policy. Parents will be kept informed. All concerns about possible sexual abuse will be referred to the Social Services Department.

### Confidentiality

Information from parents about possible child abuse cannot be kept confidential.

### **Allegations Against Staff**

These will be taken seriously and investigated in line with the procedure regarding allegations of abuse against staff. If parents have concerns, contact the Head Teacher/Chairman of governors.

## **Procedure Regarding Allegations of Abuse against Staff**

### **Key Considerations:**

Listen to allegations, assess the extent and nature of the claims with an open and inquiring mind, report the matter to the Head Teacher or to the appropriate agencies after considerations are made. There will be one of four possible outcomes:

1. An immediate referral under the child protection procedure
2. There is reason to suppose that abuse could have occurred and that referral may be necessary.
3. That the allegation is without foundation.
4. That the allegation was prompted by inappropriate behaviour, which needs to be considered under the school's disciplinary procedures.

If there is good reason for suspending the member of staff against whom the allegations have been made e.g. gross misconduct:

An interview should be held with the member of staff to consider whether there should be a suspension.

After a decision to suspend, both the member of staff and child should be given support until an investigation has been held.

The child's parents/guardian and the member of staff should be informed in writing of the circumstances surrounding the allegations and the decision to investigate.

If the member of staff is dismissed or resigns before a disciplinary process is completed, he/she should be informed of the school's statutory duty to investigate.

All documentation pertaining to the outcome of the investigation must be stored in the school's records for future reference; whether the investigation proved that the allegations were true or not.

The Head Teacher should make appropriate use of listed agencies for liaising with Social services or other relevant bodies.

Allegations referred to agencies etc. will subsequently be dealt with in accordance with the local child protection procedures.

## **Conduct**

Staff should avoid actions or behavior that can be classified as poor practice or potentially abusive behavior. Related documents/guidelines should be adhered to by all members of staff: Safeguarding children in Education.

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if required.