

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

Weymouth English Centre (“the school”) provides English language courses for young people aged between 13 and 17. On exceptional occasions, students aged 12 are also admitted. The courses include accommodation with local Homestay Hosts and a full programme of activities and excursions.

The school aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for the children attending its courses.

2. Definitions

“Child”, “pupil” or “student” in the context of this policy refers to anyone under the age of 18.

“Staff” or “member of staff” refers to anyone who is employed by the school, is contracted by the school or provides a service on behalf of the school.

This policy applies to all children regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

3. The School’s Responsibility for Child Protection

All adults working at the school, as well as those who are involved with the provision of the school's courses and any of the related services such as accommodation, the programme of activities and airport transfers should be aware of their responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of every child, both physical and emotional, inside and outside school. This involves ensuring that children are protected from significant physical or emotional harm.

4. Purpose and Aims of This Policy

The school's Child Protection Policy aims to

- provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with Child Protection and Safeguarding issues
- ensure that Child Protection concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the child
- ensure that parents are aware of our policies and procedures
- make clear our commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures

5. Child Protection at Weymouth English Centre

The school aims to provide an environment within which children feel comfortable and know how to discuss any problems within a culture of strong pastoral support. The Centre Manager is responsible for this aspect of child protection.

The Recruitment Officer is responsible for the implementation of safe recruitment procedures for people applying to work at the school.

The school is also bound to take reasonable measures to safeguard the emotional welfare of its pupils from bullying or abuse within the school. Specifically, the school's anti-bullying policy should be consulted.

6. Child Protection Officer (CPO)

The designated member of staff for child protection matters is Christopher Hills (director and designated safeguarding lead). He has the responsibility for dealing with child protection issues and liaising with other agencies where necessary. He will ensure that guidance outlined in "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2007)" is followed, particularly regarding the appointment of staff. The CPO can be contacted by telephone on 01926 811709, mobile 07453 987210 or by e-mail at chris@weymouthenglishcentre.com.

The CPO is supported by a safeguarding team which consist of Andrew Pitman (designated safeguarding lead), tel. 07467 821994, e-mail: Andy@weymouthenglishcentre.com and Kate Cragoe, tel. 01926 811709, mobile 07445 274020, e-mail: Kate@weymouthenglishcentre.com.

7. Training

All adults working at the school are given a briefing on the child protection policy and procedures. All new members of staff will receive a briefing as part of their induction process. All members of staff will receive a refresher briefing once each year.

8. Definition of Abuse

Abuse can be defined as having occurred when a child has suffered significant harm or impairment of health and development by reason of physical violence, sexual interference, emotional pressure or neglect. Additionally, there are some miscellaneous categories of abuse, such as exposure to child pornography, racial or religious harassment or that occurring as a result of parental incapacity, for example due to mental illness or an addiction.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or 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.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing etc.

They may also include non-contact activities such as involving children looking at sexual images or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs likely to result in the impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide food, clothing, shelter; failing to protect a child from physical or emotional harm; failing to provide adequate supervision or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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 inadequate; not giving a child opportunities to express him/herself; making fun of what they say; causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger; seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another; serious bullying, including cyber-bullying. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, but may also occur on its own.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and female genital mutilation (FGM) are further examples of abuse. Both are illegal in the UK and must be reported to the safeguarding team and the police.

Abuse can be from adult to child but it can also be from child to child.

Adults should be aware of and look out for signs of abuse. These can include, but are not limited to:

- unexplained injuries
- injuries inconsistent with normal play or routine
- inconsistent explanations for an injury
- a child who "cannot remember" how an injury occurred
- wariness of adults
- a child who is extremely aggressive or withdrawn
- a child who feels he or she deserves to be punished
- a child who flinches if touched unexpectedly
- a child who is afraid to go home
- unusual fearfulness
- a change in behaviour
- extreme behaviour
- habit disorders, such as thumb-sucking, biting, rocking
- sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate to the age of the children
- self-mutilation
- difficulties urinating or incontinence.
- frequent or chronic vaginal, pelvic or urinary infections.
- menstrual problems.
- kidney damage or possible failure
- a child being secretive about who he or she is talking to and where he or she is going

9. Procedure in the Event of a Report or Suspicion of Abuse

Any adult at the school who is told of any incident or strong suspicion of physical or sexual child abuse occurring at the school, or to a pupil of the school at home, at their host family or outside the school, or who suspects or knows this to be the case themselves must report the information immediately to the CPO. In the event of an allegation against the CPO, the information should be reported directly to another member of the safeguarding team.

The CPO may, if necessary, interview the pupil to clarify the nature of the allegation or suspicion, before deciding on an appropriate course of action. If necessary, an immediate referral will be made to the local social services department rather than carrying out an investigation.

School staff should not investigate reports of physical or sexual abuse themselves. Alleged victims, perpetrators, those reporting abuse and others involved should not be interviewed by school staff beyond the point at which it is clear that there is an allegation of abuse.

Guidance on the correct response to a pupil's disclosure of abuse is given in the document "Child Protection - General Guidance".

10. Allegations Against Members of Staff

Allegations against a member of staff must be reported immediately to the CPO or to another member of the safeguarding team. An allegation of abuse by a member of staff will be taken very seriously. The quick, consistent and fair resolution of the allegation will be made a clear priority for the benefit of all concerned. In a case of serious harm, the police should be informed from the outset. Sensible precautions will be taken to prevent false allegations from being made.

An allegation against the CPO must be notified to another member of the safeguarding team immediately.

Pending a full investigation, the member of staff may be suspended from duty although in no way is this an admission of impropriety.

Staff may also face disciplinary action where, after investigation, serious concerns remain, even though external agencies may have decided that they are not able to proceed any further with the case.

The school will notify the Independent Safeguarding Authority Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) of any person, whether employed, contracted, a volunteer or a student, whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children.

11. Allegations Against Members of the Safeguarding Team

If an allegation is made against a designated safeguarding lead then the other designated safeguarding lead should be notified immediately.

If an allegation is made about a member of the safeguarding team who is not a designated safeguarding lead, a designated safeguarding lead should be notified immediately.

12. Whistle-blowing Policy

No-one should hesitate to take action to report concerns because of fear of possible repercussions. Any adult who, in good faith, makes a report to the CPO, the police or the Social Services of any concern or allegation about the school's practices or the behaviour of colleagues which are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other significant harm, can expect immunity from retribution or disciplinary action.

13. Confidentiality

Complete confidentiality must be maintained both for the victim and the accused.

Any adult who is made aware of or suspects any case of child abuse or becomes aware of any child protection information must only share this information with a designated safeguarding lead. He or she must not discuss any such information with anyone else, including members of his or her own family.

14. The Difference Between a Concern and a Serious Issue

A concern is when an adult feels that something is not quite right but there is no immediate danger to the child concerned. A designated safeguarding lead should be informed but this can normally be done during normal working hours.

A serious issue arises when there is any danger of harm or abuse being caused to the child. All such issues need to be reported to the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible.

15. Vulnerable Students

Children with special educational needs and children with disabilities are vulnerable students and more susceptible to abuse. The school's safeguarding team pay close attention to any such students. If any adult notices any symptoms of abuse or has any concerns about any such students they should contact a designated safeguarding lead: this will enable the safeguarding team to provide early help which will improve the chances of a swift resolution.

16. Keeping Records

All records concerning any allegations or reports of child abuse are kept in a secure place while the courses are running. Only members of the safeguarding team have access to these records. Outside the summer course season all such records are kept by Christopher Hills in a locked safe.

For concerns which are resolved and do not involve any outside agencies, records are destroyed after three months.

For serious issues and any concerns where an outside agency such as the police, the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board or any other agency is involved, records are kept for as long as the agency advises.

17. Review

The WEC safeguarding team will review this Child Protection Policy annually in accordance with any changes in legislation or general guidance. The annual review will also take into account the effectiveness of the school's procedures based on any experiences.

Last reviewed: June 2018

Next review due by: June 2019