

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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 host families and a full programme of activities and excursions.

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

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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

4. 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.

5. Child Protection Officer (CPO)

The designated member of staff for child protection matters is Christopher Hills (Director). 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 01305-858081 or by email at chris@weymouthenglishcentre.com.

6. Training

All adults working at the School will be 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 at least once every two years.

7. 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.

8. 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 the Director of Studies.

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 General Guidance section of this document.

9. Allegations Against Members of Staff

Allegations against a member of staff must be reported immediately to the CPO. 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 the Director of Studies 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.

10. 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.

11. Review

The School 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.