

# MEARNS ACADEMY



Policies and Procedures

## Child Protection

## Introduction

Mearns Academy strives to educate all its pupils within an environment where the traditions of working together, honesty, fairness, communication and respect for all are promoted. We aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in our care by being proactive:

- Positive whole school ethos
- Personal safety programmes increasing knowledge and developing skills
- Anti-bullying, Equalities policies and practices
- Health and well-being programmes
- Education for personal and social development
- Developing resilience
- Safe use of internet and other technologies
- Working positively with parents and carers

We recognise that every adult has a role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people and in educational establishments, staff are in a strong position to contribute to the safety and well-being of children and young people – acting to challenge, minimise or prevent harm, to provide on-going support, and to educate about risks and how these can be managed. All staff share the responsibility during both pupil hours and out of school activities.

“Child protection” means protecting a child from abuse or neglect. **Abuse or neglect need not have taken place;** it is sufficient for a risk assessment to have identified a **likelihood or risk of significant harm** from abuse or neglect

### How do we recognise abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) or neglect?

#### Physical Abuse:

Definition:

- This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.
- It may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

Possible Indicators may include:

- Unexplained injuries or burns
- Improbable explanation for an injury
- Recurring ‘accidents’
- Untreated injuries
- Reluctance to discuss injuries
- Fear of returning home or chronic running away

#### Emotional Abuse:

Definition:

- It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- It may involve the imposition of age- or developmentally-inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children.

Possible Indicators may include:

- Constantly being put down, ridiculed, scapegoated
- Being treated differently from other children in the family
- Extremes of passivity and aggression or outbursts
- Lack of concentration
- Low self-esteem
- Running away
- Self-harm

## Sexual Abuse:

### Definition:

- Involves any act involving the child or young person in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person

### Possible Indicators may include:

- Behaviour changes eg withdrawn, anxiety, isolation, depression
- Developmental regression
- Anxiety associated with certain places or people
- Lack of trust or over familiarity and attention seeking
- Sexual knowledge and awareness beyond age
- Sexualised acting out with other children or toys
- Risk taking behaviours eg drug or alcohol misuse
- Self-harm

## Neglect:

### Definition:

- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs in an age and stage appropriate manner and is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.
- It may involve the failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- In its extreme form children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation leading to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life-threatening within a relatively short period of time

### Possible Indicators may include:

- Always hungry
- Inappropriate clothing
- Health needs not being met
- Appointments not kept
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor self-esteem
- Social isolation
- Left unattended or with inappropriate adults
- Poorly supervised

Increasingly we are seeing newer forms of child abuse which staff in schools may be well placed to identify:

- Harmful traditional practices, such as honour-based violence, forced marriage and FGM (female genital mutilation)
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children/young people who are missing
- Child trafficking
- Online and mobile phone safety

The school is committed to the continuing professional development of staff around child protection issues. We continue to develop awareness in all staff of the need for child protection and their responsibilities in identifying abuse through annual Child Protection training and ensuring that all staff are aware of referral procedures within the school.

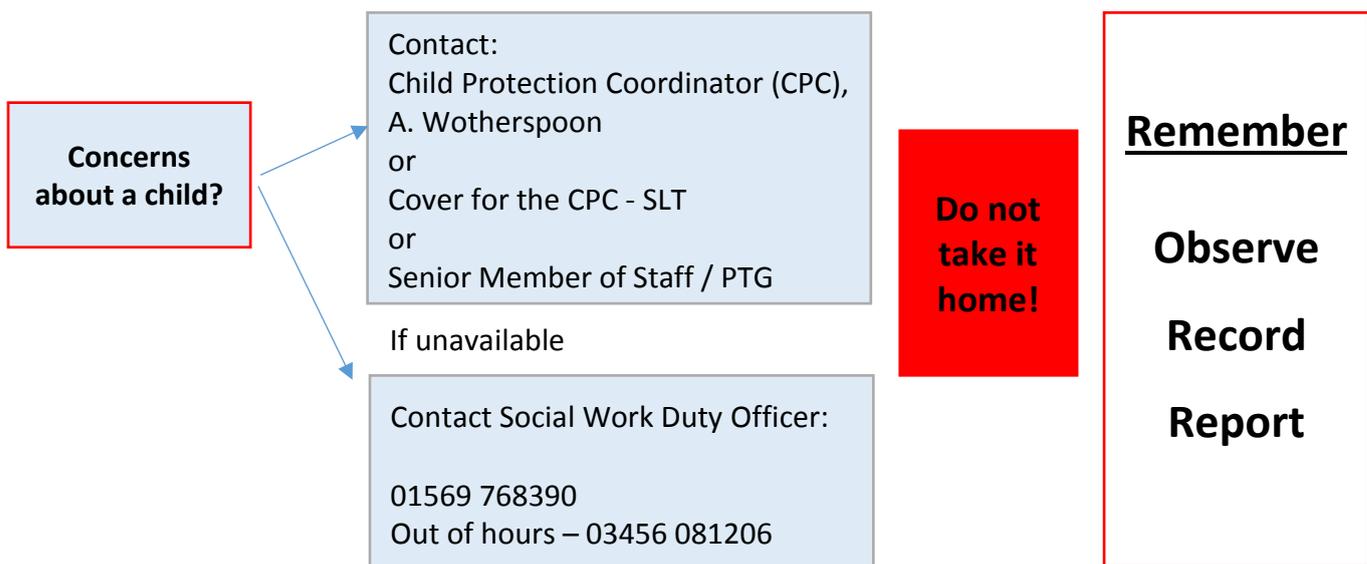
- We monitor children who have been identified as ‘at risk’.
- We ensure that, where appropriate, outside agencies are involved.
- We ensure that key concepts of child protection are integrated within the curriculum, especially with Health & Wellbeing.
- We create an environment where children feel secure, have their viewpoints valued, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.

### What staff should do if they have concerns about a child’s welfare or safety?

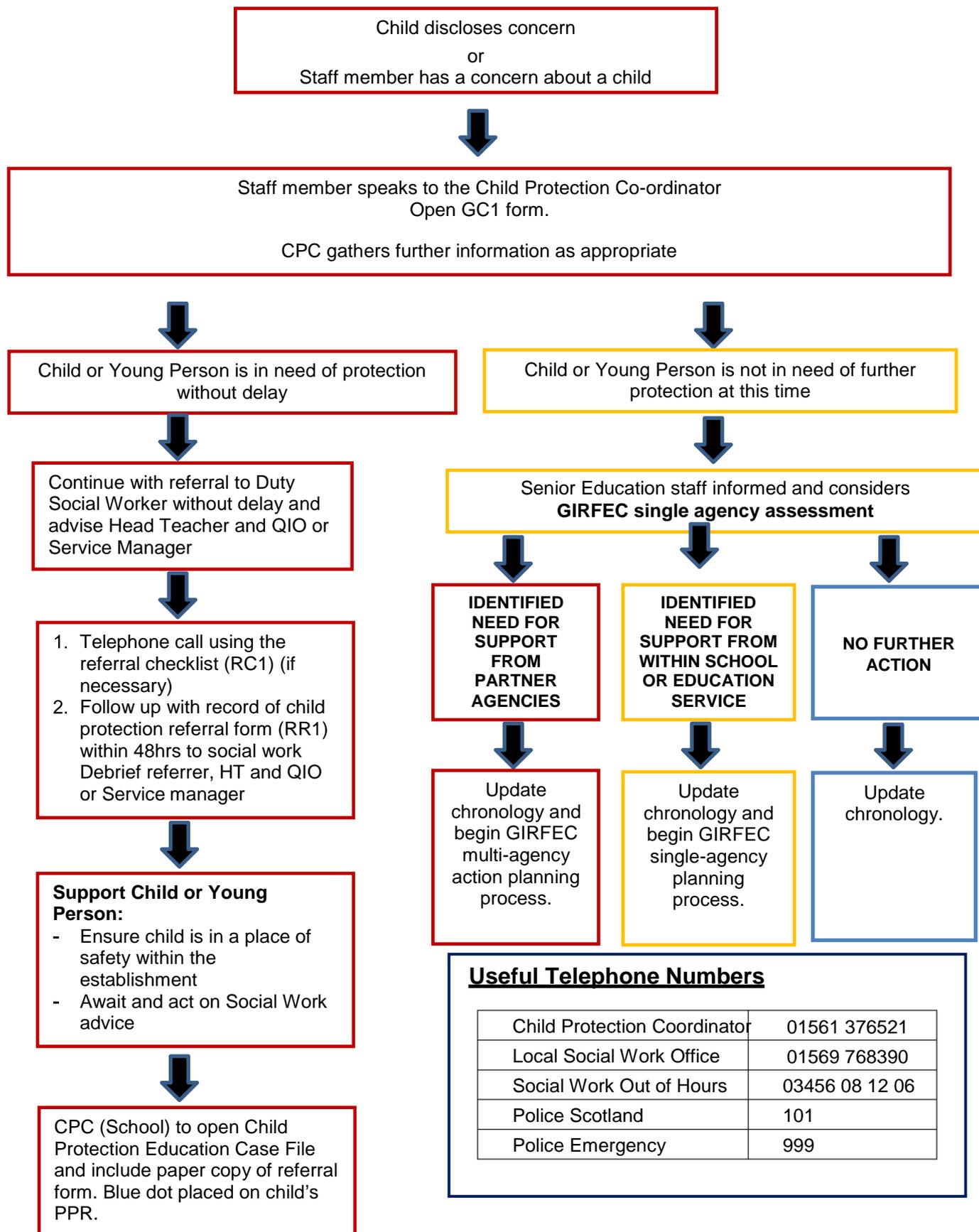
The designated person for child protection is the Child Protection Co-ordinator, **Depute Rector, Mrs Wotherspoon**, and in her absence, any other member of SLT.

### Welfare concerns

Any member of staff with an issue or concern relating to child’s welfare should immediately discuss it with a trained member of staff. The Depute Rector will then decide on an appropriate course of action.



## Child Protection Procedure in Education Flow Chart Recognising actual or potential harm to a child



**Allegations of child abuse must always be given the highest priority and referred immediately to Mrs Wotherspoon or in her absence, another member of the senior leadership team.**

**What should you do if a child discloses a possible child protection issue?**

**Pupils may make a disclosure to a member of staff with whom they have a good relationship. If this happens staff must follow the procedures below**

- Stay calm.
- Do not transmit shock, anger or embarrassment.
- Reassure the child and let them know that you are glad he/she is speaking to you.
- Children very rarely lie about abuse and any disclosure should be treated very seriously.
- Tell the children that you know that it is not their fault.
- Never enter into a pact of secrecy with children. Assure them that you will try to help them, but let them know that you may have to refer the matter further.
- Do not ask 'leading questions' or press for information.
- Check that you have understood correctly what the child is trying to tell you.
- Praise the child for telling you.
- Do not comment on the alleged abuser or his/her morality—it may be someone the child loves.
- Be aware that children may try to retract all they have told you.
- As soon as you can, record the conversation accurately, using the child's own language. Do not add comments or opinions.

**What next?**

You must **not** attempt in any circumstances to deal with this yourself but you **must** report it immediately.

**What should you do if there are indications of abuse?**

You must not enter into any discussion with the pupil but you must report it immediately.

**To whom should you report your concerns?**

The Child Protection Co-ordinator, Mrs Wotherspoon, Depute Rector. In Mrs Wotherspoon's absence, all reports must be made to the Senior Leadership Team.

**The Role of the Designated Person (Child Protection Co-ordinator)**

- To ensure that all staff know that the Depute Rector is responsible (and in his/her absence the Rector) for child protection issues.
- To raise awareness and confidence on child protection procedures and to ensure new staff are aware of these procedures.
- To ensure that all staff know about and have access to guidelines.
- To refer promptly all cases of suspected child abuse to the local Social Services Department or the Police Family Protection Unit. If a parent arrives to collect the child before the social worker has arrived then it must be remembered that we have no right to prevent the removal of the child. However, if there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, the police should be called.
- To co-ordinate action where child abuse is suspected.

- To attend case conferences or nominate an appropriate member of staff to attend on his/her behalf.
- Maintain records of case conferences and other sensitive information in a secure confidential file and to disseminate information about the child only on a 'need to know basis'.
- To maintain and update as necessary the Child Protection Monitoring spreadsheet.
- To keep up-to-date with current practice by participating in training opportunities wherever possible.
- To organise regular training on child protection within the school.
- To facilitate and support the development of a whole-school policy on child protection.
- To pass on records and inform the key worker when a child is on the Child Protection Register leaves the school. The custodian of the register must also be informed.

### **Protection Professional Integrity**

All staff should be aware that allegations of abuse can be made against them. The following advice is offered:

- Do maintain appropriate professional relationships with children and young people. Be aware of professional boundaries
- Do not believe that it cannot happen to you
- Do not rely on your good name to protect you
- Do not arrange to see children on their own when there is no one else around, unless you are required to do so as part of your job
- Do not touch children except for care and safety
- Do not use suggestive or sexual language
- Be mindful of other relevant policies such as intimate care
- If you feel that a young person is becoming attracted to you, or that you are attracted to them, share this with your line manager or the school Child Protection Co-ordinator
- Similarly, if you are uncomfortable with what you are seeing or hearing in relation to a colleague, share this with your line manager or the school Child Protection Co-ordinator

### **Scotland's Children and Young People**

"A Scotland in which every child matters, where every child, regardless of his or her family background, has the best possible start in life."

"It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright" 2002

"Providing and ensuring a safe and secure environment for all learners within a caring and compassionate ethos and with an understanding of wellbeing" (GTCS – Standard for Registration, pg 6)

The following website is extremely useful for finding out additional information about Child Protection policy, procedure, paperwork, guidelines, CPD opportunities:

[www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/childprotection](http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/childprotection)

**Policy Last Updated:** October 2017

**Key Sources Consulted:** National Framework for Child Protection (2012) and National Guidance for Child Protection (2014)

Protecting Children & Young People in Aberdeenshire – identifying and responding to concerns – August 2017

**Member of Senior Leadership Team responsible for this policy:** Mrs Wotherspoon