



Every Child Matters Policy

The rationale of this policy is in line with the agenda for reform as set in Every Child Matters. Our primary aim is to scaffold the five outcomes of Every Child Matters so that every child in The St Lawrence Academy has the chance to fulfil their potential whilst:

- Being protected from harm, kept safe
- Being encouraged to stay healthy
- Being encouraged to enjoy and achieve.
- Being encouraged to overcome all barriers to achievement, economic awareness.
- Being encouraged to make a positive contribution to our community and to society.

Introduction

Within the academy we strive to create a learning environment, curriculum, experiences and relationships in which all individuals can find expression, be nourished and developed.

The academy commits itself to creating an environment for everyone that is characterised by our core values of Truth, Justice, Forgiveness, Generosity and Respect. These values have been used to determine this policy.

At The St Lawrence Academy, we believe we play a vital role in ensuring that our students grow and develop in an environment which promotes the emotional, social, moral and spiritual well being of each of our students.

We recognise that all adults have a full and active part to play in promoting the five outcomes of Every Child Matters and so we continuously attempt to ensure that:

- All students feel secure, valued, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- There is an ethos of mutual respect which underpins all relationships.
- All adults are made aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding children and take these responsibilities seriously.
- All adults provide suitable welfare and guidance to students or are able to locate and direct students to named staff who are able to offer guidance in line with their responsibilities.

Aims

Our aims serve to develop these principles:

- To raise awareness of all staff of the need for procedures which support vulnerable or at-risk students and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of concern or abuse.
- To have a structured internal procedure that is followed by all staff which can be used with all cases of concern or suspected abuse or in response to a disclosure or allegation.
- To develop and promote effective inter-agency partnerships in particular with Health Services, Social Services and the Police.
- To promote a systematic means of monitoring children who are vulnerable or are known or thought to be at risk of significant harm.
- To address issues of vulnerability and Child Protection within the curriculum so that children are more aware and are able to protect themselves.
- To support our students by developing their self esteem and assertiveness skills without condoning aggression or bullying.

Our Procedures

We aim to have clear procedures in place which can be used to respond to concerns about vulnerable students or disclosures of abuse but which also develop the culture of protection in the Academy. These procedures follow legislation as set by Every Child Matters and Safeguarding Children in Education and are also in line with Local Authority guidelines and National Child Protection procedures:

- A designated senior member of staff, Helen West is responsible for Child Protection and Looked After Children and who undertakes regular training.
- A member of staff (The Principal) acts in the designated teacher's absence.
- Members of staff know how to respond to a student who discloses abuse through a clear system of referral.
- Parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members with regard to child protection procedures.
- New members of staff are given a copy of our child protection procedures as part of their induction into the Academy.
- Confidentiality is maintained and the decision to breach confidentiality is in line with the guidelines below
- Child Protection practice and lines of communication are regularly reviewed and monitored.
- Members of staff are aware of the different social and cultural patterns and practices of the Academy community, and are supported to consider their concerns in context.

- Information is promptly passed on to relevant professionals.
- Students identified as being at risk are continuously monitored.
- New staff, newly qualified staff and temporary staff are given an induction to the Academy's whole Academy procedures.
- Liaison with other agencies is actively sought, encouraged and supported.

Supporting students and personalised learning

We recognise that a child may have low levels of self esteem and self confidence and may find it difficult to express their concerns. We aim to use our pastoral system and curriculum to promote opportunities for reflection and open communication in the context of a culture of support and mutual respect. Promoting the student voice and personalised learning are also key to developing a culture of open communication and trust. We will individualise support and timetables according to strength and need and monitor progress formally and informally in order to address concerns proactively rather than reactively. We will seek to extend our curriculum through our Out of Hours Learning programme to further support individualised learning and opportunity.

Supporting staff

We recognise that staff working in the Academy and who work closely with a child in difficult circumstances may find this difficult and upsetting. We serve to support staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the designated teacher or named member of staff. We will also seek further and more specialised forms of support where this is needed.

Confidentiality

Within a culture of open communication, we recognise that sensitive and delicate issues are often discussed between students and staff. We have provided guidelines on confidentiality to promote a culture of trust, to protect both students and members of staff. The guidelines also serve to support professional judgement and inform practice given the reference made to statutory and non-statutory guidance.

As such, we believe that all adults in contact with our students should:

- Be aware that they are not bound by law to either maintain or break the confidence of a student, unless information relates to issues of child protection.
- Inform the student before a disclosure that information may need to be shared with another responsible adult. It is considered good practice not to break a student's confidence without informing them first.
- Never promise a student absolute confidentiality.
- Respect the student's right to privacy. If there is suspicion of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect members of staff must pass this information directly to the designated teacher for child protection.
- Promote a safe and secure environment where students feel able to discuss issues of concern. Students should not be asked to repeat a distressing disclosure to other adults unnecessarily.

- Be aware that any discussions of a personal nature should take place in private.
- Be aware of their responsibilities in supporting students to access appropriate advice and guidance. Members of staff may give general advice relating to sexual health and drug use including the location of sexual health and drug agency services that are available.
- Expect the cooperation and trust of parents and carers.
- Be flexible and trusting in their relationship with the parent/carer and the student.
- Be aware of appropriate support available to students within the Academy.
- Be aware that if a student has embarked upon, or is contemplating a course of conduct which is likely to place them at moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, another responsible adult should be informed.
- Comply with Academy policy and the Principal's instructions at all times.

To ensure the implementation of these guidelines we have a commitment to training and to giving on-going support through middle and senior management and the designated teacher for child protection.

Inter-agency collaboration

Every Child Matters states that good practice requires regular and effective inter-agency cooperation and collaboration. We fully accept and acknowledge our responsibility to assist all agencies by referring our concerns to Social Services, the Police or other agencies as appropriate so that investigations can establish the degree of concern or risk of significant harm. We will attend all Core, Initial, Review and Personal Education Plan meetings and other forums as requested.

We acknowledge the need for collaboration to be continuous and as such we will liaise with all agencies as requested. We also recognise the need to embed collaboration and partnership, particularly with parents, through our curriculum, extended Academy and specialised Academy status

Child Protection and Looked After Children information

A file is kept on every student known to be on the Child Protection and Looked After Child registers. This information does not form part of the child's open file due to the sensitive nature of the information held. All supporting information including a log of communication and contact is kept in the student's file. **Mrs West is our Child Protection Officer.**

Location of files

The files are kept in a locked filing cabinet in Helen West's office (Inclusion), the current designated teacher for child protection and Looked After Children.

Access to the files

Due to the sensitive nature of the material in the files, members of staff who require access are asked to read the information in Mrs West's office. Members of staff can be given access to files on a 'need to know' basis. These files should not be taken outside the office.

Record Keeping

We recognise the need to monitor the progress of students who may be vulnerable or going through difficult personal circumstances. We will monitor rates of progress across subject areas in relation to prior attainment, teacher assessment and potential in order to target support on a 'needs led' basis. The impact of this support will be monitored, evaluated and adjusted accordingly on an ongoing basis.

Transferring information on a student who moves to another school

All information about a student who is on the Child Protection and Looked After Children register will be forwarded to the relevant school once it has been confirmed that the student is attending there.

Child Protection allegations against Academy staff/ Trustees and visitors

Allegations against Academy staff will be dealt with by the Principal. Both Child Protection and Academy disciplinary procedures will be followed. Any allegations against the Principal will be made to the Chair of the Trustees.

Working with parents/carers

We understand the need for working closely and continuously with parents and carers. We will actively seek to work closely with parents and carers to discuss concerns whether they can be academic, emotional, social or behavioural in nature in line with our confidentiality guidelines. We will seek to develop an ethos of parental partnership and collaboration through development of our extended Academy programme to emphasise family learning and community involvement.

Training and Continuous Professional Development

We will provide regular, high quality training to staff at a targeted and whole group level. This is to ensure that the Academy community remains fully aware of all legislation and changes in guidance and policy. We will also provide training on an individual basis. We will seek to empower the student leadership using the student council to update students on all changes and developments.

Child Abuse

Achieving good outcomes for children requires all those with responsibility for assessment and the provision of services to work together according to an agreed plan of action. Effective collaborative working requires professionals and agencies to be clear about:

- their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- the purpose of their activity, what decisions are required at each stage of the process and what are the intended outcomes for the child and their family members;
- the legislative basis for the work;
- the protocols and procedures to be followed, including the way in which information will be shared across professional boundaries and within agencies, and be recorded;
- which agency, team or professional has lead responsibility, and the precise roles of everyone else who is involved, including the way in which the children and other family members will be involved;
- any timescales set down in Regulations or Guidance which govern the completion of assessments, making of plans and timing of reviews.

What is a child in need?

Children who are defined as being 'in need', under the Children Act 1989, are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services (s17(10) of the Children Act 1989). The critical factors to be taken into account in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 1989 are what will happen to a child's health or development without services, and the likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development.

What is significant harm?

Some children are in need because they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. The local authority is under a duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm (s47 of the Children Act 1989). To make enquiries involves assessing what is happening to a child. Where s47 enquiries are being made, the assessment (known as the 'core assessment') should concentrate on the harm that has occurred or is likely to occur to the child as a result of child maltreatment, in order to inform future plans and the nature of services required. Decisions about significant harm are complex and should be informed by a careful assessment of the child's circumstances, and discussion between the statutory agencies and with the child and family.

What is abuse and neglect?

A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child, including by fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing ill health to a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment 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 unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person, age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, causing children frequently to feel frightened, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts.

They may include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

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, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Four key processes underpin work with children in need and their families, each of which needs to be carried out effectively in order to achieve improvements in the lives of children in need. They are assessment, planning, intervention and reviewing (Department of Health, 2002a). At any stage, a referral may be necessary from one agency to another, or received from a member of the public.

Child welfare concerns may arise in many different contexts, including where a child or family is already known to social services.

There may be a number of explanations for the perceived impairment to a child's health or development and each requires careful consideration and review.

In general

All those who come into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including practitioners who do not have a specific role in relation to child protection, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Staff are likely to be involved in three main ways:

- you may have concerns about a child, and refer those concerns to social services or the police (via our designated teacher, Helen West);
- you may be approached by social services and asked to provide information about a child or family or to be involved in an assessment. This may happen regardless of whom made the referral to social services;
- you may be asked to provide help or a specific service to the child or a member of their family as part of an agreed plan and contribute to the reviewing of the child's progress.

All practitioners working with children and families should....

- Be familiar with and follow your organisation's procedures and protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children in your area, and know who to contact in your organisation to express concerns about a child's welfare.
- Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking a child leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse.
- If you are responsible for making referrals, know whom to contact in police, health, education and social services to express concerns about a child's welfare.
- Refer any concerns about child abuse or neglect to social services or the police.
- When referring a child to social services you should consider and include any information you have on the child's developmental needs and their parents'/carers' ability to respond to these needs within the context of their wider family and environment. Similarly, when contributing to an assessment or providing services you should consider what contribution you are able to make in respect of each of these three domains. Specialist assessments, in particular, are likely to provide information in a specific dimension, such as health, education or family functioning.
- See the child as part of considering what action to take in relation to concerns about the child's welfare.
- Communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference. This is especially important for disabled children and for children whose preferred language is not English. The nature of this communication will also depend on the substance and seriousness of the concerns and you may require advice from social services or the police to ensure that neither the safety of the child nor any subsequent investigation is jeopardised. Where concerns arise as a result of information given by a child it is important to reassure the child but not to promise confidentiality.
- Record full information about the child at first point of contact, including name(s), address(es), gender, date of birth, name(s) of person(s) with parental responsibility (for consent purposes) and primary carer(s), if different, and keep this information up to date. In schools, this information will be part of the student's record.
- Record all concerns, discussions about the child, decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions. The child's records should include an up-to-date chronology, and details of the lead worker in the relevant agency – for example, a social worker, GP, health visitor or teacher.

- Talk to your manager and other professionals: always share your concerns, and discuss any differences of opinion. Follow up your concerns. Always follow up oral communications to other professionals in writing and ensure your message is clear.

All practitioners should.....

- Discuss concerns with the designated teacher. If you still have concerns, you or the designated teacher could also, without necessarily identifying the child in question, discuss your concerns with the Principal or senior colleagues in other agencies – this may be an important way of you developing an understanding of the reasons for your concerns about the child's welfare.
- If, after this discussion, you still have concerns, and consider the child and their parents would benefit from further services, consider which agency, including another part of your own, you should make a referral to. If you consider the child is or may be a child in need, you should refer the child and family to social services. This may include a child whom you believe is, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm. Concerns about significant harm may also arise with children who are already known to social services. Information about these children should be given to the allocated social worker within social services. In addition to social services, the police and the NSPCC have powers to intervene in these circumstances.
- In general, seek to discuss your concerns with the child, as appropriate to their age and understanding, and with their parents and seek their agreement to making a referral to social services unless you consider such a discussion would place the child at risk of significant harm.
- When you make your referral, agree with the recipient of the referral what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.
- If you make your referral by telephone, confirm it in writing within 48 hours. Social Services should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard back within 3 working days, contact social services again.

Appendix

The role of the designated teacher for Child Protection and Looked After Children

1. To be fully conversant with all local and national policies, guidelines and procedures.
2. To be available to all staff in the Academy for consultation on issues relating to vulnerability and child protection concerns.
3. To ensure that appropriate action is taken in the Academy and procedures are followed in all cases of actual or suspected child abuse or following a disclosure or allegation made by a student or adult.
4. To compile a Child Protection Register (CPR) and Looked After Children register (LACR) and keep this updated on a continuous basis.
5. To monitor a student's progress after a student has been recently de-registered or is no longer on the Child Protection Register or Looked After Children Register.
6. To ensure that an indication of 'further record keeping' is marked on students main files.

7. To take part in all Child Protection conferences or Personal Education Plan reviews or at least ensure that another key member of staff attends. Where this is not possible, to provide a report to the conference from the Academy.
8. To inform the relevant Social Services Department of irregular or unexplained student absence.
9. To inform a new school of the child's Child Protection or Looked After status following transition or transfer to another school.
10. To monitor staff development and training needs and to organise training as appropriate. To ensure that all staff receive training to which will allow them to remain updated on developments.
11. To ensure that the curriculum offers opportunities for raising students awareness and developing strategies for ensuring their own protection.
12. To work closely with parents and carers to ensure that the most effective form of support is in place and to ensure that concerns are acted on immediately.