

Wimbledon College
Child Protection Policy

Summer 2004

1. Preamble

- 1.1 Wimbledon College is committed in its Mission Statement to the care of the individual. This means that the physical and moral well being of each pupil is our first concern. In this policy document, Wimbledon College sets out its principles and procedures for putting into practice its commitment to the well-being of its pupils in the matter of child protection. In line with the Children Act of 1989 we understand that the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.
- 1.2 A copy of the full text of this document is given to each teacher and each Governor.
- 1.3 Parents are notified that Wimbledon College has a Child Protection Policy in the Family Handbook. The Family Handbook gives broad guidelines for parents who have concerns about bullying or abuse. Parents are informed that the full text of the Child Protection Policy is available on request from the Headmaster's Secretary.
- 1.4 Pupils are, according to their age and understanding, made aware of the school's policies on bullying and child protection and are told where they can seek help.

2. General Introduction

- 2.1 All the staff have a total commitment to child protection and endeavour to develop a climate of trust within our school environment in order that children feel able to talk about, and share, their thoughts and feelings. We aim to ensure that each child can always find the support, guidance and help that he needs. At the same time, the school has a duty of care towards individual members of staff and a duty to provide clear guidance about relationships with children which, when followed, avoid unnecessary and unfortunate misunderstandings.
- 2.2 All schools have a designated teacher for child protection, who liaises with the social services departments and with teachers in school. At Wimbledon College, **Mr Mark Ventom [from September 2009]** is the designated person for child protection. However, for this procedure to work, it relies on the skills and expertise of every teacher and adult within the school to recognise or report anything which may give cause for concern. It is also important that all relevant agencies involved in child protection cooperate together for the benefit of the child.
- 2.3 All teachers, through their care of the children, try to ensure that the children are kept safe. Suspected cases are reported, procedures adhered to and subsequent actions are left to the appropriate agencies. We also care for

children who have been abused and strive to show a sympathetic awareness and understanding of their problems. We may not be able to prevent child abuse but, by following child protection procedures, we are trying our best to protect all our children.

- 2.4 Wimbledon College has a policy of partnership between home and school, but with child abuse, or suspicion of child abuse, our primary responsibility is to the child. This may mean that parents are not informed or consulted by the school in the first instance.

3. Duties of the Child Protection Officer

The duties of the Child Protection Officer include:

- 3.1 ensuring that Wimbledon College maintains a clear policy for child protection and reviewing the Child Protection Policy on a regular basis.
- 3.2 being fully conversant with the local authority and school Child Protection Policy and procedures and how they work in practice.
- 3.3 being available to all staff in the school community for consultation on child protection issues, providing guidance and support
- 3.4 ensuring that Wimbledon College has a system for recording child protection concerns at all stages (The Child Protection Register) up to the point of referral to the social services.
- 3.5 ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the school and that procedures are followed in actual or suspected cases of abuse.
- 3.6 undertaking appropriate training and monitoring any staff development and training needs with regard to child protection issues and providing training as appropriate (It is expected that staff will receive training on child protection matters every two years and that this will involve training in the identification of possible abuse, the response required and the school's current Child Protection Policy and procedures).
- 3.7 ensuring that the curriculum offers opportunities for raising pupil awareness of child protection issues and developing strategies for ensuring their own protection.

4. Definitions of Abuse

- 4.1 An abused child is a boy or girl under the age of 17 who has suffered from physical injury, physical neglect, emotional or sexual abuse, which the person who has had custody, charge or care of the child either caused or knowingly failed to prevent. Abuse can arise under the following headings:
- 4.2 **Physical abuse.** Physical injury to a child where there is definite knowledge, or a reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- 4.3 **Sexual abuse.** The involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children in sexual activities that they do not truly comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent.
- 4.4 **Emotional abuse.** The seriously adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. It is accepted that all abuse involves emotional abuse

but this category supersedes only when it is the main, or the sole, form of abuse.

- 4.5 Neglect.** The persistent or severe neglect of a child, which results in serious impairment of that child's health or behaviour, including non-organic failure to thrive.

5. A rough guide to injuries

- 5.1 Accidental injuries are usually at the end of limbs and on the 'outside'. Children are usually quite proud of their accidental injuries and will happily tell you about them.
- 5.2 Abuse injuries are usually to the middle of the limbs, where the child has been seized by the arm, punched, assaulted on the body and so on, or on the less easily accessible parts of the body. Children tend to be shy, vague and unhappy when telling you about injuries caused by abuse.

6. Steps to be followed by a member of staff if he/she is approached by a child who may have been abused.

- 6.1 It is recognised that dealing with children who have been abused is difficult, but any member of staff may be approached by a child and it is then a duty we cannot avoid. All staff have a duty of care with regard to their pupils and have a professional obligation to act upon concerns, however they may arise.
- 6.2 It is important that individual members of staff do not make private decisions for dealing with cases of suspected or known abuse and, for this reason, it is required that staff follow the policy and procedure as set out in this document. In such cases, these guidelines are to be followed:
- 6.2.1 The child is always to be believed. Accept what you are told. It is not your responsibility to investigate its truth or otherwise or decide if the information is correct.
- 6.2.2 Reassure the child
- 6.2.3 Do not promise confidentiality. Given that the safety of the child is paramount, a member of staff cannot give a cast-iron assurance that the information presented does not need to be shared with the Child Protection Officer. If asked, explain that if you are going to be told something very important that needs to be sorted out, you will need to tell the people who can sort it out, but that you will only tell people who absolutely have to know.
- 6.2.4 Listen with care, allowing time for silence and thought, and take all the time the child requires. If you can, write brief notes of what they are telling you while they are speaking and keep your original notes, however rough. If you don't have the means to write at the time, make notes of what was said as soon as possible afterwards.

- 6.2.5 It is imperative that you do not interview the child. Questions must be open ended. For example, just ask ' what do you want to tell me' or 'is there anything else you want to say?'
- 6.2.6 Offer the chance of another talk later on.
- 6.2.7 Explain what you intend to do next. Immediately tell the Child Protection Officer. In the case of Wimbledon College, this will be the Headmaster. In cases where the allegation is made against the Headmaster, the matter should be referred directly to the Chairman of Governors. Do not tell other adults or pupils what you have been told. Never attempt to carry out an investigation of suspected or alleged abuse by interviewing people. Social services and police staff are the people trained to do this. You could cause more damage and spoil possible criminal proceedings. Never think abuse is impossible in your school or that an accusation against someone you know and trust is bound to be wrong.
- 6.2.8 Make careful notes afterwards. Include date, time and place and sign the notes. Describe any observable behaviour (shaking, crying, constantly moving round the room) but do not interpret these features. Record the actual words spoken by the child wherever possible. Give these notes, when completed, to the Child Protection Officer. Do not keep a copy of these notes.
- 6.3 Once the Child Protection Officer has been informed, he will collate all the relevant information and will make a determination as to the clarity of evidence held by the school and the urgency of the case. A decision will then be taken about whether to pass the matter to social services.
- 6.4 If there is good reason to suspect a child has been abused or requires protection, the duty officer at social services will be informed at once. Proof is not required at this stage. From this point, no interviews will be conducted by the school.
- 6.5 If there is insufficient grounds or evidence to suggest referral to an outside agency, a report of the matter will be kept on file (in the Child Protection Register), together with details of what further action was, or is, to be taken, together with the arrangements put in place for review. Such information is kept in a secure location, with keys held by the Headmaster and Chairman of Governors.

7. If an allegation is made against a member of the teaching staff

- 7.1 Allegations against members of staff must be treated with the same professional regard as those made against others. It is recognised that abuse does take place in the context of schools, although fortunately the incidences are rare. It may be that allegations are falsely made. What is important is that staff feel that they will be fairly treated, according to clearly set out procedures. We understand that there are a number of sensitive issues to be addressed, namely the welfare and rights of the child, the rights of the member of staff involved and the reaction of the parents.

- 7.2 The member of staff will be notified of the allegation and will immediately be placed on administrative leave, without prejudice, to allow the matter to be investigated. The Chairman of Governors will be informed. The member of staff, who is advised to be accompanied by a friend or professional representative, will be invited to a meeting with the Headmaster in order that he/she may be briefed more fully about the allegation and his/her rights in the matter. All that is possible will be done to maintain confidentiality.
- 7.3 The procedure then to be followed is contained in the Staff Discipline Policy.

8. Directions to Staff when they need to be Alone with Children

- 8.1 The work of teachers clearly means that, at times, they will be alone with individual children. It is only wise to be aware of how easy it is for our words or actions in such situations to be misunderstood. To ensure decorum in staff-pupil relations and to minimise the chances of improper allegations being made, the following guidelines are provided.
- 8.2 If you are interviewing a child on his own ensure that the door has a glass panel, or have the door open, or have another adult present or conduct the interview in a room frequented by others or, if none of the above are possible, at least tell another adult that the interview is taking place and on no account be in a locked room with a child.
- 8.3 If you do need to give an individual pupil a verbal reprimand, do so in a classroom or in a room with the door open or have another adult present.
- 8.4 If you need to physically restrain a child, make it clear to the child that you are only doing so as a last resort. Use only the minimum force necessary and any action must only be to restrain and no more. Write a report on the incident for the Headmaster.
- 8.5 All forms of physical chastisement are strictly forbidden, as is any physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of restraint.
- 8.6 Be clear that gratuitous physical contact with a child, even placing a hand on his/her shoulder, can be threatening to some pupils and, if repeated, is likely to be misconstrued by the child, observers and parents. Such contact is to be avoided.
- 8.7 Physical contact may be appropriate to comfort a distressed child. If this is the case, make it clear to the child, and to any others present, that your action is in response to the child's needs and no more and would be understood as appropriate by an observer.
- 8.8 In the event of medical treatment being necessary, the door must be open unless an adult chaperon is present. In an emergency requiring immediate action, if a pupil is required to remove clothing from, or provide access to, any part of the body normally considered private, then an adult chaperon must be present. If an adult needs to be in a room with a sick child, the door of the room needs to be kept open.
- 8.9 Staff must not make unnecessary comments that may be construed as having sexual connotations. It is not permitted to encourage talk or debate in class about such topics unless required by the nature of the lesson.

- 8.10 If a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued, he/she should discuss the matter urgently with the Headmaster. If it is agreed to write up the incident, have the report checked by a union or professional association. It is particularly important to discuss these matters when a member of staff has been required to restrain a pupil physically.
- 8.11 Meetings with pupils away from the premises of the school for social purposes can be misconstrued and should take place only with the Headmaster's permission, and may never take place at the staff member's home. Coaching individual pupils or groups of pupils off the school's premises may only take place with the Headmaster's permission.
- 8.12.1 Staff are also advised that, on school trips, young boys may need to be supervised in the showers. This must be done from a distance and by two teachers at once, lest a misunderstanding occur. If you need to enter bedrooms, always knock first. Rooms may need checking at night, but this may be done only by two teachers at once.
- 8.12.2 Care must be taken in the supervision of boys in the changing rooms after games. A member of staff should turn the showers on and inform the boys that the showers are ready. No member of staff should remain in the shower area or in the changing rooms themselves, but wait at the entrance to the changing area. Boys may come to them for assistance. Showers should be turned off when all boys have left the showering area.