

Norwich Steiner School

Safeguarding Children Policy

Revised October 2010
(Minor amendments made March 2011)

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Section 1 - Overview

Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004, places a statutory duty on key people and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Revised statutory guidance on this duty was issued in April 2007. Independent Schools have an equivalent duty through Section 157 of the Education Act (2002) and must have regard to the statutory guidance, *Safeguarding Children in Education*, issued in September 2004. Norwich Steiner School accepts and adheres to the principles outlined in that guidance stating that:

- Safeguarding should encompass more than child protection.
- Child protection policies and procedures should be consistent with local and national procedures;
- Staff should receive appropriate levels of child protection training
- Schools should operate safe recruitment of teachers, staff and volunteers.
- Child Protection procedures are reviewed annually.

A copy of this policy is made available to parents of pupils on the school website and a paper copy is kept in the Policy and Guidelines Binders in the school office available on request.

The best practice guidance in the DfES document "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused" (issued in December 2006) has been used to help formulate this policy, along with the Department for Education (DfE) statutory Guidance, issued in March 2010, entitled "Working together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children".

For details of where individual responsibility lies, please see appendix 1

Section 2 - Designated Child protection officers

Susan Brown (for Kindergarten children)
Sandie Tolhurst (for School children)

John Hales (Designated Trustee for Child Protection)
Lucy Parker (Chair of Trustees)

Section 3 - Child Protection Procedure

3.1 Informing the Designated Child Protection Officer

All staff should discuss any concerns or disclosures about potential child abuse with the relevant DCPO. If one DCPO is absent, staff should consult the other DCPO.

3.2 Action by the DCPO

If, after discussion, concerns remain, the DCPO will take one or more of the following actions:

- a. **Speak to or arrange for the pupil to be spoken to** informally by the Class Teacher, or other relevant member of staff, to clarify any incident or disclosure. The role of the interviewing teacher is to be descriptive, not diagnostic or judgemental. (see guidelines below)
- b. **Speak to the parents** (or ask the child's teacher to speak to the parents), to assess

whether any explanation given about the incident or injury is plausible and consistent with situation causing concern;

- c. **Seek informal advice** from the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO)
- d. **Monitor** the situation further
- e. **Make a referral to Children's Social Care** if there is a concern that a child may be suffering from Significant Harm. Whilst ordinarily the school will aim to speak to and gain agreement from parents before making a referral, if there is a concern that doing so may put a child at greater risk, then the school may make a referral without first informing the parents. (Note: 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).

3.3 Record keeping

Records will be kept of all concerns raised, disclosures made, conversations and decisions; all information recorded or gathered will be kept in a confidential DCPO file.

3.4 Action following a referral

If a referral is made to Children's Services by telephone, the DCPO will confirm it in writing within 48 hours and will provide a copy of this referral to the Designated trustee. Children's services should acknowledge this written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if the DCPO has not heard back within 3 working days, they should contact Children's Services again.

Once a referral has been made, further steps taken will depend upon advice given by Children's Services.

Section 4 - Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Staff, Volunteers, or Another Pupil

Norwich Steiner School understands that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff, volunteer or another pupil.

4.1 Reporting an allegation against a member of staff

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, it can be reported initially to the DCPO or directly to the Trustee for Child Protection. The Trustee will work with the DCPO, but will take responsibility for any action necessary.

If the allegation concerns the trustee, then the allegation should be referred by the DCPO to the chair of Trustees, Lucy Parker.

4.2 Assessing an allegation

Discretion will be used in dealing with all allegations. A false allegation, whether it is made for frivolous or malicious reasons, can jeopardise the career of a member of staff/volunteer and cause irreparable damage. Equally, if a genuine complaint is not taken seriously, it can be damaging to the child concerned and to other children who may become future victims. The Trustee will, on all such occasions, discuss the content of the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The matter must remain strictly confidential until the DCPO and Designated Trustee has made an initial assessment and decided what steps are to be taken. If it can be shown that an allegation is demonstrably false, is it not necessary to make a referral. If this is not the case, then a decision will be taken as to whether the suspicion or allegation is an internal disciplinary matter (in which case the school's disciplinary procedures will be followed) or whether there is a potential child protection issue (in which case the school's child protection procedures will be followed).

4.3 Informing people following an allegation

When a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, both the parent of the child and the member of staff against whom the allegations have been made will be contacted as soon as reasonably possible after the disclosure and ideally before making a referral to Children's Services, unless it would, in any way jeopardise the child's safety or is contraindicated by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

Colleagues should be informed that there are allegations against a member of staff and that they should not enter into discussions with that member of staff about the allegations.

The Child Protection trustee will be responsible for maintaining communications with the member of staff against whom there are allegations, whether that person is still at work or whether they are suspended. The Child Protection trustee may choose to delegate liaison to a member of personnel team, at his discretion.

4.4 Suspension

A member of staff/volunteer against whom an allegation has been made may, but will not automatically, be suspended. Suspension will arise on the following grounds:

- A child or children could be at risk by the member of staff/volunteer remaining at work.
- The allegation is so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct is possible.
- It is necessary to allow any investigation to continue unimpeded.

Suspension may be considered at any stage of an investigation, but is a neutral act, not a disciplinary sanction, and will be on full pay.

4.5 Dealing with the aftermath of an allegation against a member of staff

If, after investigation, the allegation is substantiated and the person is dismissed or resigns, the School will notify the Secretary of State within one month of the person ceasing to provide services, whether through dismissal or resignation, as required by law.

If a member of staff or volunteer is dismissed or resigned because they have harmed a child or would have done so had they not left, the School will notify the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

However, If after appropriate investigation it is found that the allegations were false or that the concerns raised were an employment/disciplinary issue and not a child protection issue, and the person who has been suspended returns to work, the School will consider how best to enable this to happen. In some cases this might involve a phased return to work and/or the provision of a mentor.

The school will also need to consider whether the person/persons making false allegations should be referred to children's social care or the police in order to identify the motive behind their actions.

If the school develops concerns about the conduct of a member of staff or another person in a position of responsibility that do not lead to an investigation, and the person leaves, either being dismissed or if they resign, then the school will consider whether or not the Independent Safeguarding Authority should be informed so that the information or concern about that person's conduct, which may have an impact on their suitability to work with children, is held somewhere. If the ISA is informed, this will be done with the knowledge of the person whom the concern was about, but will not be dependent upon their consent. See appendix 5 for more information about the ISA.

Section 5 - Policy on how to deal with direct disclosures of abuse from pupils

All staff should refer concerns to the designated child protection officer (DCPO) as soon as possible. In the meantime, they should:

- Listen to the pupil, keeping calm and offering reassurance
- Observe bruises but not ask a child to remove or adjust their clothing to observe them
- Allow the child to lead the discussion if a disclosure is made, but not press for details by asking questions, eg "what did they do next?"
- Listen — don't investigate or ask leading questions, but use questions such as "is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"
- Accept what the pupil says without challenge — reassure them that they are doing the right thing and that they recognise how hard it is for the child
- Not lay blame or criticise either the child or the perpetrator
- Not promise confidentiality — explain that they have done the right thing and who needs to be told

When abuse by another child is suspected, child protection procedures will be applied to both (alleged) abuser and abused. If appropriate, the school's disciplinary procedures will be invoked.

Section 6 - Procedures for Monitoring, Recording and Reporting

School policy is that brief notes should be kept at the time of the incident or immediately after with the subsequent completion of a critical incident sheet. Records may be used in legal proceedings and must be kept accurate and secure. All records should be copied to the designated person and should include factual information rather than assumption or interpretation. The child's own language should be used to quote rather than a translation.

Records may be used at a later date to support a referral to an external agency.

Section 7 - Children who have a Child Protection Plan in place

Particular attention will be paid to the attendance and development of any child who has been identified as being at risk or who has been placed on any Child Welfare or Protection Plan.

Children Services will be notified immediately if:

- The School or Kindergarten should have to exclude such a child;
- There is any *unexplained* absence of such a child of more than two days' duration, or one following a weekend;
- The child changes school and transfer the appropriate records to the receiving school.

Section 8 - Touch And Physical Contact with Pupils

School staff recognise the value that appropriate touch has for the children in our care and we will provide physical comfort or consolation to a child who expresses a need for such.

We will not touch a child in a way that is sexually inappropriate unless the child has incurred injury that necessitates immediate medical attention and contact in that way. In such circumstances, we will, as adults, make every effort to ensure that another adult as witness is present in order to protect ourselves and the child.

We will not touch a child who in any way expresses that they do not wish to be touched, unless in the extreme case of needing to restrain a child who is in danger to themselves or others.

Section 9 - Guidance on Recognising Abuse

Child abuse is a term used to describe ways in which someone, often in a position of power, harms children. It is not the responsibility of school staff to decide whether child abuse is occurring but we are required to act on any concerns and report them to the appropriate party. The health, safety and protection of a child are paramount.

Abuse might fall into the categories of physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.

More details on guidance about signs of abuse are included in appendices 2 & 3 to this policy.

Section 10 - Partnerships with Parents

The need for parents and children to have privacy is respected by the school. Equally the School acknowledges and respects that families from different backgrounds and cultures may have different approaches to child-rearing.

Where staff have concerns about a child, where possible they will work with and share information with parents. Permission for liaison and information sharing with outside agencies will be sought unless it is believed to place the child at risk. In these cases, the school will seek advice from social care or make a child protection referral.

Section 11 - Confidentiality

Where children have Child Protection Plans and leave one school for another, the DCPO must inform the receiving school and the key worker. If the child leaves the school with no receiving school, details should be passed to Children's Services.

Education staff have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with the investigative agencies. Members of staff should not promise confidentiality but can let the child know that only those who need to know will be informed and always for the child's own sake.

Time should be taken to reassure the child and confirm that information given will be treated sensitively. Reassurance should be given and the adult involved listen sympathetically and non-judgmentally.

Staff should be careful in subsequent discussions and ensure that information is only given to the appropriate person. All staff should be kept aware of issues relating to confidentiality and the status of information they may hold.

Members of staff, other than the designated member and those involved closely, should only have enough details in order to help them to act sensitively and appropriately to a pupil. Sensitive information regarding pastoral issues and for children on the child protection register is kept separately in a folder in the closed section of the office. Discretion should be used when talking about the personal and changing circumstances of children, eg when a child goes into care.

APPENDIX 1a Responsibilities of the Designated child Protection Officers

The role of the school's Designated Child Protection Officers for Safeguarding children is to:

- Ensure that all staff, parents, and carers are aware of who they are
- Ensure that this Policy and its Procedures are followed;
- Decide with other relevant staff whether to take further action about specific concerns regarding Significant Harm;
- Carry out the actions in line with the Procedure if Significant Harm is considered to be occurring; specifically, to contact Children's Services
- Submit reports as required;
- Ensure that effective working relationships with other agencies and services are developed;
- That accurate records relating to individual children are kept in a secure place and marked '**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**' with a note to identify who may access the information;
- Provide guidance to parents, children and staff about obtaining suitable support.

APPENDIX 1b Responsibilities of the trustees

Also in support of the designated teachers, the designated trustee (on behalf of the board of trustees) has the role to ensure:

- That the designated teacher has sufficient time and support to carry out their child protection duties and to offer support to be the direct contact with Social Services if for any reason the member of staff is unable to fulfil the role.
- That the school effectively monitors children who have been identified as being at risk.
- That there is an adequate and appropriate reporting system within the school, which respects confidentiality but that allows for patterns of incidents to be identified.
- That the designated trustee takes charge (with support from the DCPO) in the event of allegations against a member of staff.

APPENDIX 1c RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PERSONNEL TEAM

In support of the designated teacher, the personnel team have the role to ensure:

- That all staff are aware of these procedures;
- That appropriate training and support is provided to all staff.

Definition - There are no absolute criteria on which to rely on when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill treatment may include the degree and extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of harm and neglect. Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm eg. physical injury. More often significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long standing, which interrupt, change, or damage the child's physical and psychological development. Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual harm that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm.

Sources of information about a child being abused may come from:

- Direct disclosure from the child or young person
- Third party reports
- Perpetrator themselves
- Observations by members of staff

Signs and Indicators of Abuse & Significant Harm

The following list is not exhaustive, but may include the following:

- Sudden changes in the child's usual mood or presentation
- Flinching and watchfulness
- Emotional withdrawal and depression
- Excessive masturbation and failing to respond to boundaries on sexual behaviour
- Fear of certain people or situations
- Unexplained injuries or those that are inconsistent with the explanations given
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Patterns of absence that are unexplained and could be in order to hide injuries
- Physical injury to areas of the body, which are not usually considered to be common sites of accidental injury
- 'Failure to thrive' (e.g. looks thin, unwell, below average height and weight)
- Poor personal hygiene
- Reluctant to go home
- Poor social relationships

Extract from DfES guidance (December 2006) "What to do if you're worried a child is being abused"

What is abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – 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. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

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 unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual on-line images, watching sexual activities, 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

APPENDIX 4

USEFUL CONTACTS LIST

Designated Child Protection Officers (DCPOs)

Susan Brown (Kindergarten)	01508 578208 or 07702 875692
Sandie Tolhurst (Lower School)	07549 651016

Designated Trustee for Child Protection
John Hales

01603 677583

Dept. Children, Schools and Families
Independent Education Team

0870 0012345

Norfolk County Council Children's Services Dept.
Local Authority Designated Officer Team (LADO)

01603 223473

Norfolk County Council Children's Services Dept.

0844 8008014

(this number is available 24 hours a day; between 08.00am to 06.00pm the call will be passed to the Access Team, outside those hours the call will go to the Duty Team.)

Norfolk Constabulary (Police)

01953 424242
0845 4564567

Ofsted Early Years

08456 404040

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (see pages 4 & 5 of policy)

The Independent Safeguarding Authority's (ISA) role is to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. We **assess** those individuals working or wishing to work in regulated activity that are referred to us on the grounds that they pose a possible risk of harm to vulnerable groups. There are two principal routes by which referrals are made to the ISA. Firstly, when a person applies for ISA registration, any convictions or cautions which are considered relevant would trigger a referral. The other way a referral would be made is where an employer or an organisation, for example, a regulatory body, has concerns that a person has caused harm or poses a future risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults. In these circumstances the employer or regulatory body must make a referral to the ISA.