



Safeguarding Information for Parents/ Carers

Headteacher/ Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs M Regnier
Assistant Headteacher/ Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Miss L Bateman
Assistant Headteacher/ Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs G Hall
Safeguarding Governor: Mrs C Loison

Introduction

Merry Hill Infant and Nursery School recognises our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of our pupils. We will endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We will be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and will follow our policies and procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection.

We have put together this information about how we meet our safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. We have also included some tips to help you to keep your child safe.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact Mrs Regnier, Miss Bateman or Mrs Hall who would be happy to speak with you. You can also find our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies on the school website.

We help to keep pupils safe by:

- having an up to date Child Protection and Safeguarding policy, in line with the most recent versions of Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2019) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018)
- having other safeguarding policies, such as anti-bullying and e-safety
- checking the suitability of all our staff to work with children
- encouraging pupils to tell us if something is wrong
- adhering to health and safety regulations
- training all our staff to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead and two Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, who have additional training in child protection
- working in partnership with parents and carers
- sharing information with appropriate agencies if we have concerns
- managing and supporting all staff
- holding weekly safeguarding briefings with all members of staff

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Internet and mobile phone safety

Mobile phones and computers are a part of everyday life for many children and young people. Used correctly, they are an exciting source of communication, fun and education but used incorrectly, or in the wrong hands they can be dangerous.

The risks include:

- cyber-bullying, where hurtful texts or emails are sent to children
- children accidentally or deliberately accessing violent or sexually explicit websites, either on a computer or a mobile phone
- strangers talking to children by mobile phone or online and encouraging them to engage in conversations, send photographs or arrange actual meetings

It is probably not practical to simply ban your child from using mobiles and computers as they may well try to find a way of using them, perhaps at a friend's house or in an internet café. They also need to learn how to manage the risks. Younger children will be much easier to supervise and you will decide if and when they should begin to use these technologies.

Here are some tips to help you to manage the risks:

- Try to put the computer in a family room where it will be easier for you to supervise your child's online activity.
- Ensure that your child knows they should never give their full name, address and contact details to people they chat to on the internet.
- Gently explain that some people they talk to on the internet may not be who they say they are and might say or do unpleasant or hurtful things.
- Investigate whether the 'parental controls' available from some internet service providers will be helpful.
- Consider installing software that can filter out inappropriate material.
- Talk to your child about their internet use.
- Ask them which sites they enjoy most, and why.
- Show you are interested, while understanding their need for some privacy.
- Impress on your child that they can talk to you if they are worried about something that has happened during their internet use.
- Make it very clear that your child must never arrange to meet someone they have chatted to online without your permission. Their new 'friend' might well be a local young person of similar age, but they might not.

For further advice and information visit:

Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre: www.ceop.gov.uk

Stop It Now! www.stopitnow.org.uk

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Child abuse and what to look for

No parent wants to think about the possibility of their child becoming a victim of abuse, and most children are never abused. Even so, it is important for parents to be aware of the possibility and to know that help is available if the unthinkable does happen.

Although there is always a lot of media focus on 'stranger danger', the abduction of children is rare and the threat from strangers is quite small. You should still ensure that your child knows the rules about keeping safe when they are out alone.

Most children know their abusers. They may be family members or friends of family, someone who works with the child or someone who lives in the community.

There are four types of abuse: physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

There are many signs, or indicators that a child might be suffering abuse. There may be injuries, but it is more likely that you will notice some change in your child's behaviour.

If you notice anything that concerns you, talk to your child to see if you can find out what is happening. Remember that, if your child is being harmed, she or he may be too frightened to tell you. If your child becomes distressed or you are not happy with the explanations, you could talk to an adult you trust or call a helpline or children's social care services. Our Designated Safeguarding Leads at school (Mrs Regnier, Miss Bateman or Mrs Hall) will also try to help.

Some signs to look for are:

- bruises or other injuries
- a change in behaviour – from quiet to loud, or from happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- pain or discomfort
- fear of a particular person, or a reluctance to be alone with them
- secrecy around a relationship with a particular person
- reluctance to discuss where they go, or who they are with
- sexual talk or knowledge beyond their years being watchful, or always on edge
- losing interest in their appearance, hobbies or family life
- having money and refusing to say where it has come from
- wetting the bed
- becoming clingy

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If your child is being bullied

The new definition of bullying is 'a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable'. Bullying is a behaviour that is deliberate, repeated more than once and is designed to be hurtful. Bullies tend to pick on children who they think are unable to defend themselves. Bullying is not only about hitting or fighting. It also includes name calling, threats, taking belongings, intimidating and making unkind or abusive remarks. Children may try to hide the fact they are being bullied because they are afraid or ashamed but you might notice some signs, for example your child might:

- change their behaviour
- come home with torn clothing
- try to avoid going to school
- complain regularly of headaches or stomach aches
- have unexplained cuts and bruises

We have anti-bullying procedures that help us to identify and deal with any case of bullying in school, but bullying does not only take place in school, it can also happen in the home or in the community.

Bullying can be serious and cause a lot of distress. If your child tells you that they are being bullied in school, ask for their permission for you to tell us. They may not have told us themselves because they are afraid that the bully will find out and the bullying will get worse. Try to help them to understand that the bullying will not stop while it is kept secret. As soon as we know it is happening we will follow our anti-bullying procedures to try to stop it.

It is also distressing to suspect that your child might be bullying other children. Our anti-bullying procedures include trying to support children who bully to change their behaviour, so please talk to us if you think your child needs some help.

What we will do if we have a concern about your child

If we are concerned that your child may be at risk of abuse or neglect we must record any concerns on our Record of Concern form. You can look at the Child Protection policy on the school website.

Our procedures are designed to protect all pupils. They comply with our statutory responsibilities and are designed to support pupils, families and staff. The procedures are based on the principle that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration.

In almost all circumstances, we will talk to you about our concerns and we will also tell you if we feel we must refer our concerns to children's social care. We will ask your consent to make a referral, but in some circumstances we may need to make the referral against your wishes. We will only do this if we genuinely believe that this is the best way to protect your child, and the fact that you did not consent to the referral will be recorded.

If we think that talking to you first might in some way increase the risk to your child, we will report our concerns to children's social care and take advice from them. We will normally tell you that a referral is being made and we will record the reasons why we decided to follow this course of action.

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Child protection is a very sensitive issue and it raises many questions and a range of strong emotions. We will do everything we can to support our pupils and you can be assured that any action we take will be in the best interests of your child.

Sources of support and information

<p><u>Child protection</u></p> <p>Children’s Services: 0300 123 4043 NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000 Childline: 0800 1111 Child Law Advice Line: 08088 020 008</p>	<p><u>Parents’ support</u></p> <p>ParentlinePlus: 0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Bullying</u></p> <p>NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000 Childline: 0800 1111 Kidscape: 08451 205 204 www.kidscape.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Internet safety</u></p> <p>ChildNet International: www.childnet.com Child Exploitation and Online Protection: 0870 000 3344 www.ceop.gov.uk Internet Watch Foundation www.iwf.org.uk Think U Know: 0870 000 3344 www.thinkuknow.com</p>
<p><u>Mental health</u></p> <p>Young Minds: 0808 802 5544 www.youngminds.org.uk Mental Health Foundation: 020 7803 1100 www.mentalhealth.org.uk Mind: 0845 766 0163 www.mind.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Sexual harm</u></p> <p>Stop It Now! 0808 1000 900 www.stopitnow.org.uk</p>

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