

Child Protection in school: Guidance for parents and carers

This information aims to help parents to understand the process of protecting children and the procedures which we, as a school, have to follow.

At George Stephenson High School we see children's welfare as of paramount importance. We are committed to working with parents to ensure that our pupils have a happy, safe and good learning environment both at school and at home.

As a school we are committed to and have a legal duty to safeguard your child's welfare. We follow the model policies and protocols outlined by North Tyneside Local Safeguarding Children's Board in order to ensure the welfare of our children. All members of staff in school are trained in safeguarding children and are committed to ensuring the safety of all our pupils.

If the school is worried about a pupil's welfare and that a child is at risk of harm, we **must legally** look into the matter and follow:

- The law
- Guidance from the Department of Education
- Local multi-agency child protection procedures

What sort of harm?

Harm in these circumstances means child abuse or child maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or not acting to prevent harm. Harm is defined by the NSPCC as:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Enquiries also have to be made if a child is living with someone who has previously been involved in the abuse of another child.

What will school do?

If a member of staff is concerned that a child is at risk of suffering harm, they will report it to the senior members of staff responsible for child protection matters. The designated safeguarding lead person at George Stephenson High School is Kathryn Williams. In her absence Louise Dunn is the deputy designated safeguarding lead person.

The senior member of staff will then investigate the matter and decide whether it is necessary to contact social services. If the senior member of staff does have concerns about the child's welfare, they must, by law, refer this on to a social worker.

When the child is referred, school must share all relevant information about the pupil. The Data Protection Act allows school to share personal information with other agencies where there are child protection concerns about a child.

School may let the child's parent(s) know when the child is referred, but will not contact parents if we think this could put the child at risk. School will seek advice first.

What happens next?

A social worker, sometimes together with a police officer, will talk to everyone in the family. The social worker will talk to all children who are old enough to find out how they feel and what worries them.

Children and young people have a right to be protected from harm. Families have the right to expect schools to provide a safe and secure environment.

If there are a lot of concerns about a child, a meeting called a 'child protection conference' will be arranged. People who know the child and their family, for example a teacher, a doctor or a health visitor, will be invited to this meeting, together with parents, partners and in some cases older children.

The conference will talk about what has happened and what can be done to help. If necessary a 'child protection plan' will be agreed of all the things people should do to help the child and the family.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a doctor to see the child. This will normally be a doctor who has a lot of experience working with children. If there are other children in the family, they may also need to be seen to make sure that they are ok. Parents will be asked permission before the child is seen by a doctor. Social services will contact the parents/carer to let them know what is happening as soon as possible.

Will my child be taken away from me?

This is often a very real concern for families. In a lot of cases, it is assessed that it is in the best interests of the child to remain at home with their families. This is often where problems are sorted out most effectively. However, the law says that children's social care must make sure that children are safe. If it is not safe for a child to continue to live at home, the social worker will see if the child can stay with another member of the family. If that is not possible, the social worker will arrange for the child to stay with a foster carer or in a children's residential home unit it is safe for the child to go back home.

What happens after the investigation?

One of several things may happen after the investigation:

- No further action is taken
- Advice and support is offered (this may be provided by other professionals or agencies)
- A meeting is arranged to decide what will happen next.

Further information

Further information can be found from the sources detailed below:

- School policies, including the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. These can be found on our website and on request from the school office.
- NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk)
- North Tyneside Safeguarding Board www.northtyneside.gov.uk/lscb