



COLD FALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mr E Marshall

Safeguarding Update

Dear Parents,

I am writing to all families on the very important subject of child safeguarding. As this is such an important area of our work, I have decided, with the support of the governing body, to send home this summary about how we protect children at our school, the statutory responsibilities of schools and the steps that we have to make sure to ensure that your children are kept safe. Our intention is to always be clear and transparent.

1. Definitions of Abuse

We have a very serious legal responsibility to protect children from what the law considers 'significant harm' or 'abuse'. The four categories of abuse are defined as follows:

- Neglect: failure to provide basic care to meet the child's physical needs, such as not providing adequate food, clothing or shelter, or failure to protect the child from harm or ensure access to medical care and treatment
- Physical abuse: causing physical harm or injury to a child
- Sexual abuse: involving children in sexual activity, or forcing them to witness sexual activity, which includes involving children in looking at or the production of pornography
- Emotional abuse: failure to provide love and warmth that affects the child's emotional development; psychological ill treatment of a child through bullying, intimidation or threats

2. Responsibilities at Coldfall Primary School



Mr Descrettes



Ms O'Mahoney



Ms Sapirstein

I am what is called the 'Designated Safeguarding Lead' responsible for safeguarding and child protection throughout the school. Ms Sapirstein and Ms O'Mahoney have received the same training and fulfil the role alongside me and in my absence as my deputies. Part of my responsibility is to ensure that all staff are regularly and appropriately trained to follow our school's safeguarding policy and procedures. All staff were given updated safeguarding training at the start of the school year or as part of the induction process if they begin work mid-year. All class-based staff also were given enhanced online safety training.

3. Processes

If a member of staff suspects abuse, or if a child tells them that they are being abused, the member of staff is duty-bound to pass the matter to a member of the safeguarding team. We will either directly refer to social services or discuss the matter with them 'in principle' before deciding whether or not a referral is necessary. At the same time, a member of the

safeguarding team would usually inform the child's parents of the action we are taking, although sometimes social services or the police specifically request that we don't inform parents. I am also directly supervised by an external safeguarding specialist, who provides guidance and challenge for decisions made regarding the safeguarding of children in the school.

Often, children tell us things that, whilst not suggesting that abuse is taking place, suggest that a family may be experiencing difficulties. In these instances, a member of the safeguarding team will phone home to see if everything is alright and to offer access to additional support if needed.

4. Principles

At Coldfall, we seek to create a climate which encourages good communication and open discussion between pupils and staff. We educate children about their rights and provide opportunities for children to request help if they need to do so. We regularly ask the children to name five trusted Coldfall adults (their 'Gimme 5!'), who they could go to if they have a problem. Each classroom also has a worry box. If we are involved in potential child protection conversations with children, we follow a strict protocol: never promising secrecy and never asking 'leading' questions that put words into a child's mouth.

5. Legal Responsibilities

I would like to clarify the legal position with regard to parental punishment of children. UK law states that it is unlawful for a parent or carer to hit their child, except where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment'. This defence is laid down in section 58 of the Children Act 2004, but it is not defined in this legislation. Whether a 'smack' or a 'light hit' amounts to reasonable punishment will depend on the circumstances of each case, taking into consideration factors like the age of the child and the nature of the smack. However, physical punishment will be considered 'unreasonable' if it leaves a mark on the child or if the child is hit with any implement such as a cane, belt or shoe. If a child alleges that an implement has been used to punish them or if there are any visible signs of bruising/cuts, I have no option but to refer the matter to social services for further investigation.

Similarly, if a child alleges that they been shaken or struck on the head or slapped around the face, the school must refer to social services. If such violence is alleged to have been threatened, a member of the safeguarding team will always discuss the matter with social services and take their advice on whether or not a formal child protection referral is required. Other physical punishments, which don't involve actual 'hitting', e.g. washing a child's mouth out with soap, will also be viewed as physical abuse. Even though the law allows 'reasonable punishment,' we strongly believe that there are always better alternatives to physical chastisement.

The most important job of the safeguarding team is to ensure that children have a voice and a means to ask for help when they do not feel safe. A key principle to make clear is that if a child makes a disclosure of abuse, then we will take it at face value; we never suggest that they are lying. In some cases of alleged abuse, social services or the police decide not to proceed because they have reasons to doubt the child's account; this is not a decision that the school, or the safeguarding team has the authority to make. Schools are not allowed to determine 'guilt' or 'innocence'; they must simply follow procedures and refer allegations and disclosures to social services. Failure to do so would mean that the school and the individual had not correctly and adequately followed safeguarding policy.

We do have a very detailed [safeguarding policy](#) available for parents to view on our website.

In addition to the information shared above, I would like to make an offer of support. Class teachers, the school leadership team, as well as Ms Sapirstein and I, are always available to offer suggestions concerning effective strategies for behaviour management at home. We appreciate that family life can be stressful at times, and we are happy to offer support, if asked, or point you in the right direction for more specific help.

Yours sincerely,

Mr S Descrettes

Assistant Head Teacher