

Child Protection Policy

Context

- ◆ The protection of children is the proper concern of everyone in a position to help. Primary responsibility for the care and protection of children rests with their parents, but a range of services is available to help them in this task. Many referrals to agencies are made by parents seeking help for themselves. Relatives, friends and neighbours may also directly, or encourage families to, seek help or alert statutory authorities to children about whom they are concerned. All agencies with staff who are in direct contact with children and families must be involved.
- ◆ The safety and protection of MAGO school children is of paramount importance to all those involved in Education.
- ◆ Children can develop a special and close relationship with school staff, and view them as significant and trustworthy adults.
- ◆ It is not surprising therefore that children, if they have been abused, may confide or disclose to a teacher or other member of staff.
- ◆ School staff are also in a unique position to notice any change in demeanour or circumstances, or notice injuries, marks or bruises when children are doing P.E., games or swimming which might indicate a child has been abused.

At MAGO we agree that the safety and protection of all pupils is of paramount importance and all staff will adhere to this policy and the child protection procedures established. We will work appropriately with each child, their family and other agencies to protect in all cases, the child.

Key points

i. The designated teachers

- The designated teacher(s) for child protection is:

Principal

Or in his/her absence, the assistant Principal

ii. The staff

- All staff, including substitute teachers, visiting professionals working with pupils in the school, and those supporting school visits, are informed of the name of the designated teacher and the school's procedures for protecting children, for example, how to report their concerns, suspicions and how to receive, record and report disclosures through a copy of this policy
- All staff need to be alert to signs of abuse. They should report any concerns or suspicions if not immediately, as soon as possible, that day to the designated teacher. If in doubt they should talk with the designated teacher.

iii. Response in school

Reporting to the designated teacher

- Any concern must be discussed with the Principal and the designated teacher, as soon as possible, at least by the end of the morning or afternoon session of that day.

Immediate response to the child

- It is vital that our actions do not abuse the child further or prejudice further enquiries, for example:
 - ♦ listen to the pupil, if you are shocked by what is being said, try not to show it
 - ♦ it is OK to observe bruises but not to ask a child to remove their clothing to observe them.
 - ♦ if a disclosure is made the pace should be dictated by the pupil without being pressed for detail by the teacher asking leading questions such as "what did s/he do next?" or "where did s/he touch you?" **It is our role to listen not to investigate.** Use open questions such as "is there anything else you want to tell me?" or "yes?" or "and?"
 - ♦ accept what the pupil says. Be careful not to burden them with guilt by asking "why didn't you tell me before?"
 - ♦ do acknowledge how hard it was for them to tell you this
 - ♦ don't criticize the perpetrator, the pupil may love them
 - ♦ **don't promise confidentiality**, reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing, explain whom you will have to tell (the designated teacher) and why; and, depending on their age, what the next stage will be. It is important that you don't make promises that you cannot keep such as "I'll stay with you all the time" or "it will be all right now."

Recording information

- Make some brief notes at the time or immediately afterwards; record the date, time, place and context of disclosure or concern, recording facts and not assumption and interpretation.
- If it is observation of bruising or an injury try to record detail, e.g. "right arm above elbow", and draw and annotate on the body pictures on the referral form,
- Note the non-verbal behaviour and the key words in the language used by the pupil (try not to translate into "proper terms").
- it is important to keep these original notes and pass them on to the designated teacher who may ask you to complete a referral form

Support

- Of the child: All members of staff need to know that the child has had a problem and to monitor and report all instances of changed or erratic behavior.
- Of the staff involved: The member of staff to whom the disclosure was made can choose to continue or pass the case to the 'named person'. It is desirable that the 'named person' takes on responsibility for case conferences.
- Of the staff not directly involved: Need to know there is a problem but details are not essential. They should monitor the child's behavior if they come into contact with the child, but not treat the child differently.

Confidentiality

- if abuse is suspected, information should be given directly to the designated teacher for child protection or, in their absence, to the assistant principal
- the personal information about all pupils' families is regarded by those who work in this school as confidential. All staff working need to be aware of the confidential nature of personal information and will aim to maintain this confidentiality.

Staff have the professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly investigating agencies. If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff tells the child sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies for the child's own sake. Within that context, the child should, however, be reassured that the matter will be disclosed only to the people who need to know about it. Staff who receive the information about children and their families in the course of their work should have that information only within appropriate professional contexts. Child protection records should be kept securely locked.

(iv) Parents

- Parents play an important role in protecting their children from abuse. The school is required to consider the safety of the pupil and should a concern arise professional advice will be sought prior to contacting parents. Parents will be contacted, and the school will continue to work with the parents to support the needs of their child.

(v) Record keeping

- The present policy for record keeping is a note on the child's record of any instance of disclosure. Details of case conferences are kept with this record.
- Disclosure records are kept in the office.
- The records are reviewed annually by the Principal.
- The Principal and classteacher have access to the confidential files.

(vi) When a pupil transfers to another school

- If a pupil is on the child protection register, the pupil's key worker at Children Services will be contacted by the designated teacher.
- When a child changes school within the area, child protection records will be passed on to the designated teacher of the next school or to Children Services (DCF) within the area if the pupil is transferring to another State. Case conference notes are not transferred but date, time, name of chair, and outcome such as "no action", "placed on/removed from child protection register" are recorded on the child's file.

vii. Training

- the school will offer staff training and discuss the Policy in meetings.

viii. Curriculum

- taught through Islamic Studies programs.