



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

St Dominic's is a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College committed to the personal and spiritual growth of all its members based on Christian values, academic excellence and high quality pastoral care

## 1. Introduction

The Police and Social Services have the primary responsibility in the field of child protection. The Children Act 1989 places a duty on Local Authorities to take steps to protect children in appropriate circumstances and gives certain powers to the Police so that they can take action to protect children. The Children Act 1989 defines a child as a person under the age of 18.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, DFES guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018) place particular responsibilities on Colleges in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. St. Dominic's fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children.

It is the College's responsibility to investigate alleged abuse taking place within the College only. Nevertheless, it also has a duty to act if there is a cause for concern linked to alleged abuse taking place outside the College and to notify the appropriate agencies so that they can investigate and take appropriate action.

Child abuse can involve any one or more of the following:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Radicalisation and extremism
- Peer to peer abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM), honour based violence

## 2. Aims

This policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in the College. It is referred to in the College Prospectus and can be viewed on the College website. There are five main elements to the policy:

- Ensuring we practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with students.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping students with the skills needed to keep them safe.
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Supporting students who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- Establishing a safe environment (including Health & Safety and Risk Management) in which students can learn and develop.

## 3. Implementation

We recognise that because of the day to day contact with students, College staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. St. Dominic's will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where students feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
- Ensure students know that there are staff in the College whom they can approach if they are worried.
- Include opportunities in the PSHE and RE curriculum for students to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse. This includes the College's zero policy towards violence (and drugs) and safeguarding students from radicalisation and extremism through the Prevent Strategy.

The College will follow the procedures set out by the Harrow Local Safeguarding Children Board and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education to:

- Ensure we have designated teachers for child protection, the Assistant Principals (Student Services), who have received appropriate training and support for this role.
- Ensure we have a nominated governor responsible for child protection.
- Ensure every member of staff, volunteer and governor knows the name of the designated teachers responsible for child protection and their role.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated teachers responsible for child protection. Staff training should be regular and on-going. All staff and governors have a copy of the College's Child Protection Handbook. All staff are provided with a copy of Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2018).
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the College and staff for child protection. This includes the need for 'early help' intervention when a student is identified as needing support.
- Notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a student who is on the child protection register.
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences.
- Keep written records of concerns about students, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure all records are kept securely, separate from the main student file, and in locked locations.
- Develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed and DBS checks undertaken on all members of staff before they work with young people.
- Respond effectively to the needs of students who are in care.
- Ensure our procedures are reviewed annually and up-dated in accordance with current legislation.
- Ensure that when staff join our College they are informed of the child protection arrangements in place. They will be given a copy of this policy and told who the Designated Teachers are and who acts in their absence.
- Highlight to staff and students that radicalisation and extremism are included within the safeguarding policy, along with FGM, honour based violence and peer to peer abuse. By implementing the Prevent Policy the College aims to safeguard vulnerable students from being drawn into violent extremist or terrorist behaviour. This issue is addressed within the College's RE and PSHE programme which promotes the principles of mutual respect and tolerance. All students undertake this programme.

We recognise that students who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. College may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of students at risk. When at College their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. St. Dominic's will endeavour to support the student through:

- The content of the curriculum.
- The College ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives students a sense of being valued.
- The College's Pastoral Support procedures which are aimed at supporting vulnerable students. The College will ensure that the student knows that some behaviour is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
- Liaison with other agencies that support the student such as social services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology service.
- Ensuring that, where a student on the child protection register leaves, their information is transferred to the new school or college immediately and that the student's social worker is informed.

#### **4. Procedure in suspected cases of abuse**

1. If any member of staff becomes aware of abuse concerning a student they must refer this immediately to the Assistant Principal (Designated Teacher).
2. Any suspicion, allegations or actual abuse of a child by a member of staff, volunteer or student in the College must be reported to the Principal in the first instance as well as the Assistant Principal.
3. Promises of confidentiality should not be given as the matter may develop in such a way that these cannot be honoured.

4. Questions to the student should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged and leading questions should be avoided. The use of leading questions can cause problems for the subsequent investigation and any court proceedings.
5. A full record should be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information including:-
  - The time and place where the alleged abuse happened
  - The name of the person receiving the report of alleged abuse and the name of others present
  - The name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the student who has allegedly been abused
  - The nature of the alleged abuse
  - An accurate description of any injuries observed
  - The account which has been given of the allegation
  - The record should be signed and dated
6. The College will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or other Local Authority body with specific responsibility for Child Protection, in line with guidance provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. A written report of the date and time of the discussion will be kept and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. A copy of the outcome of the process must be forwarded to the LADO. The College will discuss with the LADO what action will be taken and how the parents or guardians of the student will be informed and a note of that conversation should be made. *If necessary the College Insurers will be informed.*

## **5. Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff**

The College has a written recruitment and selection policy statement. The statement is included in all job advertisements, publicity material, recruitment websites, and candidate information packs. The recruitment process is robust in seeking to establish the commitment of candidates to support the College's measures to safeguard children and students, and to deter, reject or identify people who might abuse children or are otherwise unsuited to work with them. The College will implement all appropriate measures under the ISA Vetting and Barring scheme.

## **6. Allegations against staff**

We understand that a student may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Principal. The Principal on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the LA's Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education. If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the Principal, the designated teacher will immediately inform the Chair of Governors who will consult with the LA's Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education. The College will follow the LA procedures for managing allegations against staff. These procedures are set out in Chapter 5 and Appendix 5 of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children', and in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## **7. Whistleblowing**

We recognise that children and students cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

## **8. Complaints or Concerns expressed by Students, Parents, Staff or Volunteers**

We recognise that listening to students is an important and essential part of safeguarding them against abuse and neglect. To this end any expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual student will be listened to and acted upon in order to safeguard his/her welfare.

We will also seek to ensure that the student or adult who makes a complaint is informed not only about the action the College will take but also the length of time that will be required to resolve the complaint. The College will also endeavour to keep the student or adult regularly informed as to the progress of his/her complaint.

Feedback on student safety and wellbeing is regularly sought through surveys and learner feedback.

## **9. Prevention**

We recognise that the College plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our students by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The College will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where students feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are always listened to;
- Ensure students know that there are adults in the College whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty;
- Include in the curriculum (through PSHE and the RE programme) opportunities that equip students with the skills they need to stay safe. This will include information about e-safety and the dangers of pornography, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, sex and relationships education, and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

## **10. Abuse of Trust**

We recognise that as adults working in the College, we are in a relationship of trust with the students in our care and acknowledge that it is a criminal offence to abuse that trust. We acknowledge that the principle of equality embedded in the legislation of the Sexual Offenders Act 2003 applies irrespective of sexual orientation: neither homosexual nor heterosexual relationships are acceptable within a position of trust. We recognise that the legislation is intended to protect young people in education who are over the age of consent but under 18 years of age.

## **11. Bullying**

Our policy on bullying is set out in a separate policy and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. Peer on peer abuse is always investigated and dealt with promptly.

## **12. Female Genital Mutilation and 'Honour-Based' Violence (HBV)**

The College recognises that it is an offence for any person to perform FGM in England and Wales or assist a non-UK person to carry out FGM outside the UK on a UK national. We are aware of our legal obligation to notify the police if we discover FGM or any form of HBV has been carried out on a student under the age of 18.

## **13. Prevent**

We recognise the need to protect students from the risk of radicalisation in line with the Prevent duty. The College has a separate Prevent Policy which deals specifically with this form of abuse.

## **14. E-safety**

We recognise that internet safety is a whole College responsibility (staff, students, parents). Students may expose themselves to danger, whether knowingly or unknowingly, when using the internet and other technologies. Additionally, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal. This may include terrorist or extremist material. We therefore recognise our responsibility to educate our students, teaching them the appropriate behaviours and critical thinking skills to enable them to remain both safe and legal when using the internet and related technology.

The College is aware of its responsibility surrounding 'youth produced sexual imagery' and the sharing of sexual imagery by young people. It follows the procedures laid down in the document 'Sexting in school and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people' produced by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. It is against the law to take, make, permit to be taken, distribute, show or possess indecent images of a child (anyone under 18). Incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should primarily be treated as a safeguarding issue. Any such incidents should always be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In certain circumstances this could then involve a referral to the police or Social Services. The sharing of sexual photos and videos of under 18-year olds with, or by adults, is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police.

## **15 Informing the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency)**

The College will inform the ESFA of any safeguarding or prevent incidents which involve a police investigation into the College or one of its subcontractors (by email to [enquiries.EFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries.EFA@education.gov.uk)). The email will describe the nature of the incident and confirmation that it is under investigation by the police. Similarly, the ESFA need to know if a referral has been made re: Disclosure and Barring Service.

## 16. Contacts

Paul Higginson, Assistant Principal: Designated Teacher for Child Protection  
Julie Cope, Assistant Principal: Designated Teacher for Child Protection  
Maura Coumbe: Governor responsible for Child Protection  
Andrew Parkin: Principal  
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – Harrow Tel: 020 8863 5544  
Harrow Local Safeguarding Children Board [www.harrowlscb.co.uk](http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk) ([lscb@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:lscb@harrow.gov.uk))  
Tel: 020 8424 1147

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Originator: Assistant Principal Student Services  
Updated: November 2018  
Circulation: SharePoint / Prevent and Safeguarding  
Staff Handbook Section A  
Child Protection Handbook  
College Website