



Crown Lane Primary School

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CROWN LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY - SEN

While child protection relates to young people who are at risk of significant harm or have been affected by it, safeguarding refers to the general obligation to keep all our children safe from harm. The gap between safeguarding the 14 million children in the UK and protecting those directly affected by harm or the risk of harm is very broad. The NSPCC's *How Safe Are Our Children* report (2013) indicates that around 800,000 children were victims of maltreatment in 2011.

Until recently, the vetting of people working with children was strict and could involve several checks. Since the beginning of 2013, though, legislation has reduced the number of applications to the DBS. Filtering rules now apply that remove from the DBS certificate certain prescribed cautions after six years, or convictions after 11 years.

Who is most at risk?

A balance has to be struck between ensuring the safety of all children, yet avoiding the moral panic that our young people are haunted by adults who wish to harm them. In some ways, children today are safer than in the past. In the UK, the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse is declining, fewer children are dying from assault or suicide (except in Northern Ireland) and the homicide rate is coming down (NSPCC Data). For the vast majority of children and young people, the risk of harm is minimal and “good enough” parenting and a sound education will see them learn to cope with new situations and develop their own sense of security.

There are, however, identifiable groups of children who are at greater risk of harm. The *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2015) guidance encourages agencies to provide training for staff and early support and intervention for children and families. The groups considered at greater risk include children who:

- are disabled and have specific additional needs
- have SEN
- are young carers
- show signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- live in challenging circumstances, for example, with adults with issues around mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence.

It is hard to get a clear picture of how the inter-relationships between these factors increase risk further, but the greater the number of stressors, the higher the risk of harm. Sometimes, the ways in which we aim to support children can actually heighten the risk even further, for example, moving young people into the care system and into residential care.

What can schools do?

Effective Support can help identify abuse. Understanding the risk factors behind child abuse enables schools to target those children and families at greatest risk and ensure that monitoring processes are particularly robust for those pupils.

An effective partnership between the SENCO, designated safeguarding officers and pastoral lead teachers should identify children and siblings with the highest risks on intake to the school and over subsequent terms. By linking the information on the school's SEN register, those with poor attendance, children who are looked-after, children with multiple exclusions and those who score highly on other risk factors, resources can be effectively focused.

For a number of reasons, families struggling with these risk factors can appear distrustful of support and can be difficult to engage. They may also respond poorly to school. Early identification offers a period of time to build safe, positive relationships which can prepare the way for coping during more difficult times, when links with staff can become strained.

Children with disabilities

Some children in our school have disabilities. We are committed to meeting the needs of these children, as we are to meeting the needs of all groups of children within our school. The school fully meets the requirements of the amended Disability Discrimination Act that came into effect in September 2002. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure that these children are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled children.

The school is committed to providing an environment that allows disabled children full access to all areas of learning. All our classroom entrances are wide enough for wheelchair access, and the designated points of entry for our school also allow wheelchair access. We have specialist desks and chairs for pupils with limited motor-coordination skills. Our Access Plan identifies how we intend to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of all that our school has to offer.

Teachers modify teaching and learning expectations as appropriate for children with disabilities. For example, they may give additional time to complete certain activities, or they may modify teaching materials. In their planning, teachers ensure that they give children with disabilities the opportunity to develop skills in practical aspects of the curriculum.

Teachers ensure that the work undertaken by disabled children:

- takes account of their pace of learning and the equipment they use;
- Crown Lane Primary School takes account of the effort and concentration needed in oral work, or when using, for example, vision aids;
- is adapted or offers alternative activities in those subjects in which children are unable to manipulate tools or equipment, or use certain types of materials;
- allows opportunities for them to take part in educational visits and other activities linked to their studies;
- includes approaches that allow hearing-impaired children to learn about sound in science and music, and visually impaired children both to learn about light in science, and also to use visual resources and images both in art and design and in design and technology;
- uses assessment techniques that reflect their individual needs and abilities.

Disapplication and modification



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The school can, where necessary, modify or disapply the National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements. Our school policy is to do this only in exceptional circumstances. The school makes every effort to meet the learning needs of all its children, without recourse to disapplication or modification. We achieve this through greater differentiation of the child's work, or through the provision of additional learning resources. When necessary, we also support learning through appropriate external specialists. In such cases, teachers work closely with these specialists to support the child.

In exceptional circumstances, we may decide that modification or disapplication is the correct procedure to follow. We would only do this after detailed consultation with parents and the LA. The school's governor with responsibility for special educational needs would also be closely involved in this process. We would ensure that every effort had been made to provide the necessary support from within the school's resources before considering such action.

Should we go ahead with modification or disapplication, we would do so through:

- section 364 of the Education Act 1996. This allows modification or disapplication of the National Curriculum, or elements of it, through a statement of special educational needs;
- section 365 of the Education Act 1996. This allows the temporary modification or disapplication of the National Curriculum, or elements of it.

Protecting children with SEN

Two clear groups of pupils emerge with the highest risk factors: children with physical disabilities – particularly those who are non-verbal – and young people with social or emotional difficulties, especially those with complex challenging behaviour.

Safeguarding Disabled Children (2009) shared data from a large-scale American study which found, in 2000, that children with disabilities were around three to four times more likely to be victims of abuse than other groups of children. The research found that nine per cent of non-disabled children were victims, compared to 31 per cent of those with disabilities. Small scale studies suggest that a similar pattern would be found in the UK.

Children with disabilities and SEN have an increased vulnerability to abusive situations because they may need intimate care and may have cognitive impairments that prevent an understanding of appropriate adult behaviour. A lack of effective communication skills to share concerns and a reliance on adults can also be important factors. The challenge for schools and care providers is to ensure that the need for privacy and dignity is balanced by protection from harm.

In many cases, even children with mild communication difficulties are not taught a sign or symbol vocabulary to allow them to make complaints or describe how injuries occurred. Independent advocacy

arrangements are often paltry. Leadership teams in special schools are often acutely aware of these issues, but the less ideal environments elsewhere can sometimes allow good practice to slip, for example, because of an over-reliance on a limited number of carers. An annual audit amongst the staff, perhaps anonymously, may raise issues of concern about safeguarding and create a plan for improvement.

Children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) are particularly at risk of harm from both internal and external stressors. Internal drivers that may lead to harm include a greater likelihood of risk-taking behaviours, poorer impulse control and angry or violent outbursts. External factors could arise, for example, from the characteristics of the family and the environment that the child experiences. Managing young people with (BESD) can be very challenging for staff, who need to ensure that they deal with aggressive or violent incidents in a way that is in-line with high-quality safeguarding practice, and not overly dependent upon physical restraint or inappropriate verbal attacks. Remaining highly professional during these incidents depends on excellent training, shared approaches and a shared ethos.

For both groups of children, entry into residential care is a possibility. Many care settings are good or outstanding, and it is to be hoped that recent care scandals may be a thing of the past. However, it is important to continue to be vigilant. High standards of quality control, mentoring and supervision are important in maintaining safety. Without such safeguards, over-use of restraint, restriction of liberty and abusive punishment regimes are possible. In such settings, dangers might not only come from staff but also from other young people, and risk assessing the mix of residents is crucial.

Safeguarding children and young people with SEN requires understanding, foresight and reflection. Keeping children safe from harm in schools relies on all staff being able to recognise the raised risk factors, identify young people with the greatest levels of risk and create focussed action plans that sufficiently respond to their needs. Keeping open dialogue between staff and raising the importance of safeguarding across the school is essential.

SOURCES

Andrew Hall - <http://www.safeguardingschools.co.uk/andrew-hall/>

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