

Guidance on Child Protection and Safeguarding Essentials for Volunteers in Schools

Introduction

This guidance is part of Schoolreaders commitment to help keep children safe.

This information will help you know what to do, how to respond and who to report to if you have concerns about a child while you are volunteering in your Host School.

Key Terminology

Safeguarding is protecting children from maltreatment; preventing harm to children's health or development; ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the action that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.

Safeguarding training and guidance

Your school has committed to providing you with their relevant safeguarding policies, procedures and expected conduct information.

Schoolreaders also provides you with mandatory supplementary safeguarding guidance. In addition, you are required to read the Schoolreaders safeguarding policy.

Recognising and responding to abuse

You should familiarise yourself with the following information about the types of abuse and how to handle a concern. Abusers can be adults or children. Keep this information in a safe place to refer to if needed.

The four essential elements to remember in safeguarding children at risk known as – the four Rs:

1. Recognise concerns that a child is being harmed or might be at risk of harm.
2. Respond appropriately to a child who is telling you what is happening to him or her.
3. Report the concerns to the headteacher or the school designated safeguarding lead.
4. Record the fact that you have reported the incident by informing the Schoolreaders designated safeguarding lead.

1. Recognising child abuse

There are four types of child abuse and children can be subjected to more than one type.

- **Physical abuse** can include hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, female genital mutilation, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.
- **Emotional abuse** can involve saying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may involve seeing or hearing the abuse of another, including domestic abuse, and may mean the child is frequently frightened. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **Neglect** can include dirty skin, body odour, untreated lice, frequently left alone, infected cuts, untreated illnesses or frequently hungry.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or persuading a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. These activities may include physical or non-physical involvement. They may also include involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse, including via the internet. Sexual abuse is not only committed by men, women can also sexually abuse children, as can other children.

Signs of possible physical abuse:

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them.
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or rough games.
- Bruises, bites, burns and fractures, for example, which do not have an accidental explanation.
- The child gives inconsistent accounts for the cause of injuries.

Signs of possible emotional abuse:

- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety, changes or regression in mood or behavior, particularly where a child is withdrawn or becomes clingy.
- Sudden underachievement or lack of concentration.
- Highly aggressive or cruel to others.
- Running away, stealing or lying.

Signs of possible neglect:

- Dirty skin, body smells, unwashed, uncombed hair and untreated lice.
- Frequently left unsupervised or alone.
- Untreated illnesses, infected cuts or physical complaints which the carer does not respond to.
- Frequently hungry.

Signs of possible sexual abuse:

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse.
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing.

2. Responding to concerns expressed by a child

If a child discloses a worry or experience of abuse it is important that you:

DO

- Stay calm and listen carefully without displaying shock or disbelief
- Allow them to tell their story at their own pace.
- Reassure and emphasise that they have done the right thing in telling you but do not offer physical support e.g. cuddle them.
- Tell them what you will do next - follow the schools process and report to the DSL.

DON'T

- Promise confidentiality, you have a duty to refer
- Ask leading or probing questions.
- Give your opinion or pass any judgemental comment on what you have been told
- Investigate.
- Repeatedly question or ask the child to repeat the disclosure.

3 and 4. Reporting and Recording

- You should make a written record of exactly what has been said as soon after the conversation as you can.
- Follow the school policy and report the concern/disclosure to the school DSL the same day. If for any reason you do not report on the day of the disclosure, do so as soon as you can after that, do not delay until you are next in school.

Sometimes you will not be sure whether to report or not, and it can be a hard judgement to make. Each school will have their own reporting procedure for you to follow. However, you should always consult the designated safeguarding lead (or Headteacher if DSL not available) if you are not sure and give them the notes you have made.

It is not for you to decide if further action is required, but you are responsible for passing on what you know or what has been shared with you to the school in a timely fashion. Do not share this information with anyone else.

You may be asked by the school to record the following information if known:

- Name and any relevant information about the child e.g. age, gender.
- Nature of concern – what the child said, what someone told you, physical signs and behavioural indicators
- Your name and your position (if relevant) or the name and role of the person who told you
- When and where this happened
- What the child said or what you observed about the child if they were telling you directly
- Any known previous history
- Any details about the alleged abuser
- Who you have told, any advice received or action taken.

If you do not have all this information, it does not matter, just report as much as you can but don't let this stop you taking action.

You should also inform the designated safeguarding lead at Schoolreaders that you have made a report.

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Annabel Cox

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Caroline Dowson

Telephone Number – 01234 924111

What to do if you have concerns outside your volunteering for Schoolreaders

Schoolreaders expects all volunteers to act appropriately on any safeguarding/child protection concerns that they encounter.

When you have concerns trust your judgement and take action. And remember advice may always be sought from the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000.