

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School



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Dear Parents

Our Safeguarding Procedures at St Joseph's

We take our duty to keep all of our children safe very seriously. We comply fully with the standards expected by Dudley Safeguarding Children Board and Dudley Children's Services.

Why have child protection procedures become so rigorous?

Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures have intensified significantly in recent years as a result of a number of serious case reviews. As a result of these reviews all professionals working with children are expected to act with the highest level of caution and due care for the child. Professionals are expected to remember they are 'child focused' and must not let the fear of upsetting the parents prevent them from acting with diligence and care for the child.

You will be only too aware that professionals 'giving the benefit of the doubt' to parents and carers led to the tragic deaths of a number of children like Baby P, Kyra Ishaq, Daniel Pelka and sadly many others. In these cases if social workers, health visitors and teachers and headteachers had followed procedures correctly the children could have been saved before they were killed.

None of us ever wants anything like this to happen to any child, anywhere.

What do the procedures mean for all Parents?

Unfortunately, the atrocities committed by the few have repercussions for the millions of good caring parents in the country. More rigorous procedures are designed to ensure that the minority who mistreat children do not slip through the net but this means that millions of innocent disclosures will have to be investigated as well. In fact, these procedures apply not only to parents and carers but also to school staff, nursery workers and anyone who has contact with children. This letter is for parents but our full policy explains how all allegations are dealt with. You can find it on our website. The good news is that, whilst uncomfortable, upsetting and embarrassing at the time, where a child is not in danger and there is no cause for concern, this is identified extremely quickly and social services / Police involvement is withdrawn appropriately.

This letter and the attached leaflet explain the procedures we have to follow in school in order to keep every single child safe and free from harm.

What if my child says something and the matter is referred to children's services?

We want all of our parents and carers to know that when we make a referral (usually because a child has disclosed

Kind hands, kind words...like Jesus

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We never wish to cause any parent any upset, embarrassment, anxiety or distress and we know that being asked to see a social worker or Police officer can cause all of these things. However, if we do not follow the correct procedure we could be neglecting a child in need and this can have fatal consequences. As a child focused service we must put the child first even if this is upsetting for the parents.

If your child is referred to children's services for any reason be assured that the matter is completely confidential and will not be discussed by anyone other than those directly involved: this is usually the member of staff who hears the disclosure or has the concern and the child protection leader in school (one of either the head, deputy head or one of the two senior teachers).

Please also be assured that if your child is referred to children's services and they have contact with you this is also confidential. If you are asked to come in to school the office staff will not know anything about the matter other than that you are attending a meeting. We will make sure you are treated with dignity and respect at all times and we will make the situation as comfortable as possible. In nearly all cases the social worker and / or Police Officer will see you themselves and our staff will not be part of the meeting.

What if there is no action to be taken? What if there is action to be taken?

After the Social Worker / Police have spoken with you there may or may not be further action to be taken. If there is further action we will support you and treat you with the utmost dignity and respect whilst complying with the instructions of the Social Worker or Police Officer. If there is no further action and the matter is closed we will assure you that the matter remains completely confidential. The relationship between parents and school will continue to be a respectful and supportive one. Nobody at school will make any judgements about you and very few staff will ever have known anything about the referral. As a parent you must not feel in any way inhibited about your relationship with school and you must be assured that the matter has been closed.

The St Joseph's Way

Safeguarding Children is a very serious responsibility and at St Joseph's we are committed to following the procedures correctly all of the time. We realise that this will sometimes involve upsetting parents in order to ensure the child is safe. We hope that this letter and leaflet make it clear why we follow the procedures but also assure you that as a school we are also committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect. We will never make judgements and we will always treat the matter with the strictest confidence involving the absolute minimum number of school staff. Your confidentiality and dignity will be maintained at all times.

Yours sincerely

M Hinton
Principal

Safeguarding Procedures at St Joseph's – Some Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When do you contact Children's Services?

A: We contact Children's Services for *advice* if we have any concern for a child's safety or wellbeing. Dudley Safeguarding Children Board trains all staff on when to seek advice from Children's Services and every staff member in our school is trained regularly.

Q: If there are concerns for my child, will I have to see a Social Worker or Police Officer?

A: Not necessarily. When we contact Children's Services for *advice* they will either instruct us to make a *referral* to them or they will ask us to contact parents *ourselves*. We will do exactly as we are *instructed* by Children's Services and we will not make *any* exceptions to this.

Q: As a school, why can't you tell me exactly what's going on over the phone?

A: We will only be able to tell you what Children's Services have given us *permission* to. *We will always comply with their instructions* – please do not feel that the school is being unhelpful – we can only do as we are instructed by the relevant professional.

Q: What happens when I come to the school? Will everyone know my business?

A: *No, absolutely not.* Only the staff member who has raised the concern and the Child Protection Leader will be involved in the matter. *Nobody else will know anything about the situation.* You will be treated with the usual *dignity, care and respect.*

Q: What will happen if Children's Services need to see me?

A: They will talk to you about the concern that has arisen and decide if any *further action* is necessary. They will explain what is going to happen. In the vast majority of cases the school staff will not be present at this confidential meeting and in all cases the actions to be taken will be led by Children's Services. *The school does not have any role in deciding the course of action.* There may be no need for any further action and the matter may instantly be resolved or there may be further action to follow.

Q: Will the school think badly of me?

A: *The school does not make judgements* and respects everyone's right to confidentiality. We will be informed of the course of action to be taken and will comply with whatever we are told to do. *Whatever happens, whether it be further action or the closure of the case, we will treat you with the respect and dignity that we always do.* Parents *need not* feel inhibited about school in any way and we promise you *we will not make judgements.* We will continue to respect you and care for you. *We ask you to treat us in the same way, whatever actions are taken by Children's Services.*

Q: You know me really well, why can't you use common sense and bend the rules, just for me? My feelings are badly hurt and I'm very cross with the school.

A: In most of the serious case reviews, professionals *didn't* follow procedures fully and *made judgements* themselves. In other words they allowed their *personal feelings*, even *fears of upsetting parents*, overrule their professional decisions. The consequences of these actions have resulted in the *deaths* of or *harm* to children and this is *not acceptable.* We will follow procedure *without* making judgements. At the same time we will treat you *respectfully* and with *dignity* and *privacy.* We will *not judge* in any way and when the matter is resolved we will work with you in the same *respectful* way as before. *We ask you to respect us in the same way too.*

Key Messages: Safeguarding Children at St Joseph's

- 1, It *could* happen to one of the children in our care.
- 2, We have a *duty* to share information if we have any concern about a child's safety or welfare.
- 3, We *cannot* allow personal feelings to interfere with our professional actions.
- 4, We *must* put the child first *without fear* of upsetting the parent / adult.
- 5, We *will not* make judgements and we will always seek advice from the appropriate authority.
- 6, We will treat everyone concerned with *care, dignity* and *respect.*
- 7, We will be mindful of the *sensitive* and *upsetting* nature of a child protection matter.
- 8, We will respect everyone's right to *privacy* and *confidentiality.*

9, We will maintain our *positive* and *caring* relationships with parents at *all times*.

10, We hope parents will *understand why* we need to follow procedures and offer us the same *respect* we afford to them at all times.