

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

This policy has been developed and updated in accordance with principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, the Education Act 2002, the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and in line with the following government publications¹, and Surrey Safeguarding Children Board SSCB procedures

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused — DfES, 2006

Working Together to Safeguard Children — HM Government, March 2010

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education — DfES, Jan 2010

Surrey Safeguarding Children Board Online Child Protection Procedures — SSCB²

Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and other Staff DofE July 2011

The College acknowledges its responsibility under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and to work together with other agencies to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm.

The College recognises that all adults, including governors, teachers and support staff, whether full-time, part-time or temporary, employed or volunteer, have a full and active part to play in protecting our pupils from harm, and that children's welfare is always of paramount concern.

The College should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment that promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual child.

The aims of this policy are:

- to support each child's development in ways that will foster security, confidence and independence;
- to provide an environment in which children and young people feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident — and know how — to approach adults if they are in difficulties, believing they will be listened to effectively;
- to raise the awareness of all teaching and non-teaching staff of the need to safeguard children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse;
- to provide a systematic means of monitoring and supporting children known or thought to be at risk of harm, and ensure that the College contributes to assessments of need and support packages for those children;
- to emphasise the need for good levels of communication between all members of staff;
- to maintain a structured procedure within the College that will be followed by all members of the College community in cases of suspected abuse;
- to develop and promote effective working relationships with other agencies, especially the police and children's social care;

¹ Copies of these publications may be found in a red box file kept in the Common Room.

² *SSCB Child Protection Procedures*: available online at <http://sscb.proceduresonline.com/index.html>

- to ensure that all adults working or living in the College who have substantial access to children have been checked as to their suitability, and given basic induction regarding child protection and what constitutes safe practice with children .

Guiding principles

The College's procedures for safeguarding children are in line with those of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB)³.

The College will ensure that:

- all members of the Board of Governors understand and fulfil their responsibilities;
- it has a designated Governor who monitors the College's child protection procedures;
- it has a designated senior member of staff — the College's Child Protection Liaison Officer (CPLO) — who has undertaken the Safeguarding Children Foundation Training course in inter-agency working provided by the SSCB, and who undertakes other training as necessary, including refresher training at two-yearly intervals;
- it has at least one other senior member of staff who will act in the designated member of staff's absence, who will also have undertaken the Safeguarding Children Foundation Training, updated at two-yearly intervals;
- all members of staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed at the College when a suspicion or allegation of abuse or neglect of a child is first encountered;⁴
- the Headmaster and all members of staff undertake training in child protection, approved and supplied by the SSCB but delivered in school by the CPLO, to develop their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse and to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil their responsibilities for safeguarding children;
- such knowledge and skills are to be kept up to date by means of refresher training delivered at a minimum of three-yearly intervals;
- all new permanent members of the teaching staff are given a copy of the College's child protection policy and the booklet *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*, with the CPLO's name and that of his deputies shown clearly, as part of their induction into the school;
- other new members of staff, including temporary members of the teaching staff and volunteers who work with pupils, are given an abridged version of the College's child protection policy and selected extracts from the booklet *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused* as part of their induction into the school;
- all members of staff, volunteers, and governors know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse, or to information received from any source indicating that a child may be at risk of harm ;
- all parents and guardians of pupils at the College are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members with regard to child protection procedures through publication of the College's *Child Protection Policy*, which is available on request (and via the College website) to parents and guardians of current pupils, and parents of prospective pupils, and to which reference is made in the booklet *Information for New Pupils and Parents*;
- its lettings policy will seek to ensure the suitability of adults working with children on school sites at any time;
- community users and others who organise activities for children are aware of the College's child protection guidelines and procedures;

³ Multi agency Child Protection arrangements in Surrey are co-ordinated by the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB).

⁴ Set out on pages 5, 6 and 7 of this document.

- its selection and recruitment of staff include checks for their suitability for work with children with the Criminal Records Bureau, with checks carried out on staff every three years;
- any member of staff found not suitable to work with children, following referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO, will be reported to any relevant professional body and Independent Safeguarding Authority for consideration for permanent disqualification from working with children;⁵
- organizers of offsite visits and tours confirm as part of their planning and preparation that all staff working at establishments being visited who could have unsupervised contact with children have had the necessary checks carried out;⁶
- senior pupils (College Prefects) are given training at the beginning of each academic year on appropriate action to take should they receive any allegation of abuse, and what constitutes appropriate practice with young people in their role.

This policy and the procedures set out within will be regularly reviewed and up-dated. Any deficiencies or weaknesses in the College's child protection arrangements will be remedied without delay.

The Board of Governors, taking into account an annual report on all child protection matters prepared for them by the CPLO, will undertake an annual review of the College's policies and procedures concerning the safeguarding of its pupils to ensure that all responsibilities related to this aspect of the school's governance have been discharged.

Mr Paul Williams, Deputy Head, is the designated member of staff having responsibility for child protection (the Child Protection Liaison Officer). Dr Eric Huxter, Director of Extra Curricular Activities, and Mrs Rosemary Doyle, Head of Learning Support, will act in his absence. Dr Alastair Wells is the designated Governor.

The role of the Child Protection Liaison Officer

The College's CPLO is responsible for

- acting as a focal point for staff and others to discuss concerns about possible abuse to children;
- co-ordinating referrals of a child for whom there are concerns to the Contact Centre Children's Team;⁷
- ensuring that a referral is made within 24 hours of any allegation being made;
- faxing a written record of the referral if requested;⁸
- keeping written records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral;
- ensuring that all such records are kept confidentially and securely and are separate from pupil records;
- ensuring that an indication of further record-keeping is marked on the pupil records;
- liaising with other agencies and professionals;

⁵ The Independent Safeguarding Authority administers two registers of those assessed as unsuitable to work with children, and with vulnerable adults

⁶ *ECOAMS* Section III (A) (6).

⁷ Surrey Contact Centre Children's Team, 0300 200 1006 . Out of office hours, urgent referrals can be made to the Emergency Duty Team, 01483 517898. Where a young person's home is outside Surrey, the Contact Centre Children's Team will assist with the relevant contact details for the home area.

⁸ Using the *SCC Multi-agency Referral Form* available online at www.surreycc.gov.uk.

- ensuring that either he or the Housemaster or Housemistress attends strategy meetings, case conferences, core groups, or other multi-agency planning meetings, contributes to assessments, and provides reports as requested;
- ensuring that any pupil currently subject to a child protection plan who is absent without explanation for two days is referred to their key worker's Social Care Team;
- developing and directing child protection training following SSCB guidelines for all school staff and, as appropriate, for prefects;
- reviewing and updating the College's child protection policy in line with changes in legislation and recommended 'best practice' procedures;
- providing, in consultation with the Headmaster, an annual report for the Educational and Pastoral Committee of the Board of Governors, detailing any changes to the policy and procedures, training undertaken by the CPLO, and by all staff and governors, the number and type of incidents and cases, and the number (but not names) of children with child protection plans

It is accepted that once a referral relating to actual, alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of a child, or to any other concern, has been accepted, decisions about further action will be made by the police or social services (Social Care Team) and not by the College without consultation with those agencies.

Recognising abuse or neglect

All members of staff should be alert to the possibility of signs of abuse or neglect of any of our pupils — by parents, siblings, other relatives, guardians, other carers, friends, acquaintances, strangers and of course members of the College community including staff and fellow pupils.

Abuse or neglect of a child can arise through inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm and can take many forms. The following categories, used nationally, are taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government March 2010

Emotional abuse is the persistent ill-treatment or rejection of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capacity, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger; or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing 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. The activities may involve physical contact including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually

inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the Internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children..

Neglect: is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Abuse can occur in a variety of circumstances and across all socio-economic groups. Children may be particularly vulnerable where there is a history of family violence, bullying, drug or alcohol abuse, mental health problems, learning difficulties or unemployment. Identification of abuse is rarely straightforward because indications often comprise a complex mixture of medical symptoms, behavioural characteristics and background factors.

The following characteristics in the pupil can be indications of potential abuse:

- unexplained or unusual injuries (e.g. in inaccessible sites like the neck, behind ears, on the soles of feet);
- cuts, bite marks, scalds or bruising;
- apparent age of injuries not being consistent with account given;
- evidence of injuries being repeated;
- evidence of poor overall care and a failure to thrive (e.g. pupil appears dirty and unkempt);
- swallowing harmful substances or consuming inappropriate food or drink;
- evidence of self-harm or self-mutilation;
- unexplained deterioration in performance at school;
- evidence of sexual activity that is inappropriate for the pupil's age;
- behavioural or sudden changes in behaviour (e.g. aggression, hyperactivity, nervousness, social withdrawal).

It must be emphasised that the presence of one or more of these characteristics can only indicate (and not confirm with any certainty) that abuse may have taken place. Behavioural problems, for instance, are often associated with other conditions.

The conduct of parents can also be indicative. Inconsistent explanations of their child's injuries, a lack of concern for or general detachment from their child's problems, a refusal or reluctance to allow treatment or discuss problems, and displays of aggressive behaviour towards their child should all alert staff to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

The College recognises that children can be vulnerable to abuse by their peers that falls outside the category of mistreatment that would be dealt with as an incidence of bullying. Such abuse will be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Staff should be alert to the difference between consenting (appropriate) and abusive (exploitative) peer relationships. They should not readily dismiss abusive sexual behaviour between young

people as 'normal' and should not develop high thresholds before reporting such behaviour to the children's housemasters/mistresses or the CPLO.

Action to be taken when abuse is suspected

A teacher or other member of staff — acting on personal observation or knowledge or in response to an allegation — who has good reason to suspect that a pupil has been abused or neglected in any of the ways described above, or who harbours any other major concern for a pupil's well-being, has a duty to report the suspicion, allegation or concern to a senior member of staff without delay and without attempting to carry out any investigation.

The senior member of staff to whom the report is made would normally be the Deputy Head acting in his capacity as CPLO. It is accepted, however, that the instinct of a teacher or other member of staff at the College may be to discuss his or her concerns first with the pupil's housemaster/mistress. Such a course of action would not be appropriate if any delay in referring the matter to an outside agency, including the police, might put the pupil's welfare or safety at risk or jeopardise a full and proper investigation (where, for example, there might be bruising or other signs of injury that will quickly begin to fade, and examination and diagnosis by a properly qualified expert would therefore need to be arranged urgently by the investigating agencies).

A suspicion of abuse or neglect often takes the form of a concern that cannot be based on hard factual evidence. Such a concern, when discussed with the pupil's housemaster/mistress or other senior colleague, may not necessarily prompt a referral, but may along with concerns raised by others help to create a bigger picture that suggests that the child is indeed at risk.

A teacher or member of staff approached by a pupil who "wants to tell them something" will wish to respond promptly and sympathetically but must proceed with caution.

- In the first instance, a teacher or any other member of staff directly involved has a duty to listen to the pupil.
- **Absolute confidentiality**, whether specifically requested by the pupil or not, **should never be promised** since it cannot be guaranteed. If necessary, it must be made clear at an early stage in the conversation that any duty of confidence would not prevail over the duty to act on information provided by the pupil if such information suggests, for example, that the welfare or safety of the pupil or any other person is at risk. If at all possible, the pupil's express consent for further consultation should be obtained, but in any event the reassurance can and should be given to the pupil that information will only be passed on to those **who absolutely have to know**.
- If the pupil decides not to proceed with the conversation he or she should be encouraged to talk to someone else. Advice is offered in *Guidance for Pupils*.
- If the conversation initiated by the pupil involves any disclosure or allegation of a serious nature, notes should be made as fully and as quickly as possible, including actual words used where appropriate, and a consultation with the CPLO secured without delay.
- The role of the adult or adults present is to listen, to reassure and, if necessary, to take a written statement as a record of the conversation. They should not probe, ask leading questions, put words into a pupil's mouth nor become involved in any form of medical examination. Misguided intervention can jeopardise a police investigation and impede later criminal proceedings.
- When the conversation has ended, any further comments or observations should be recorded straight away. The value at any subsequent enquiry or in legal proceedings of notes made contemporaneously cannot be over-emphasised.

The Deputy Head acting in his capacity as CPLO will ensure that statements and any other relevant records that may be required as evidence are maintained and kept securely. These may be required by the social services or the police. (Information relating to actual, alleged or suspected child abuse is exempted from the provisions regarding the disclosure of pupil records.)

The CPLO, having received a report from a member of staff about actual, alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of a pupil or other major concern for the pupil's welfare, may in certain circumstances proceed in a way that does not have the full support of the reporting member of staff; (where, for example, the CPLO is privy to sensitive and confidential information relating to the pupil.) In such cases the reporting member of staff should discuss his or her concerns with the Headmaster and is in any event at liberty to contact directly the local social care Contact Centre Children's team if they still have concern, but feel the CPLO is not going to refer, on 0300 200 1006..

In all but inconsequential cases — such as those involving an allegation that is demonstrably false or unfounded — the Headmaster will be informed.

Any allegation of abuse involving a member of staff should be reported without delay to the Headmaster, who may consult with the CPLO. They will decide who else is to be informed. If the Headmaster receives an allegation indicating that a member of staff or any other adult working with children has possibly committed a criminal offence against (or related to) a pupil, or behaved towards a pupil or pupils in a way that indicates that the member of staff or other adult is unsuitable for work with children he will ensure that the allegation is reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 01372 833321⁹, from whom advice on proceeding further with any internal investigation and reporting the allegation to the police and/or social care will be sought and acted upon.

The CPLO is able to seek advice on *whether* to make a referral to social care by calling 0300 200 1006 and asking to consult the Duty Manager at the Surrey Contact Centre Children's Team¹⁰.

Key points

All teachers and other members of staff must

- be alert to the possibility of abuse or neglect;
- be able to recognize and act upon indications that a pupil's welfare may be at risk;
- know who to contact to discuss or express concerns about a child's welfare;
- be prepared to listen sympathetically to a pupil who wants to discuss a sensitive issue;
- not promise absolute confidentiality;
- not ask leading questions or put words into a pupil's mouth;
- not attempt to investigate suspicions of abuse or neglect or carry out any form of medical examination;
- keep a written record of discussions and concerns, whether or not further action is taken;
- report concerns about or knowledge of actual, alleged or suspected abuse or neglect to the CPLO;
- report allegations involving a member of staff to the Headmaster;
- only pass on information to others on a 'need to know' basis.

⁹ The LADO can be contacted through the Safeguarding Children Unit duty desk on 01372 833321.

¹⁰ The Duty Manager can be contacted on 0208 541 7401 or 0208 541 7402.

Supporting children

The College recognises that a child who is abused or witnesses violence may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame him/herself, and may find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth. The behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or being withdrawn.

We recognise that the College may provide the only stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm.

The College will support all pupils by:

- encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness — through the curriculum as well as through relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves, whilst not condoning aggression or bullying;
- promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within the College;
- liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children;
- notifying Social Care as soon as there is a significant concern;
- providing continuing support to a pupil about whom there have been concerns who leaves the school by ensuring that appropriate information is forwarded under confidential cover to the pupil's new school and ensuring the school medical records are forwarded as a matter of priority.

Confidentiality

The College recognises that all matters relating to child protection are confidential.

Anyone concerned with a suspected case of abuse should treat all personal information as confidential, taking particular care when dealing with sensitive information relating to the child and the child's family.¹¹ It may sometimes be necessary for one member of staff to disclose personal information about a pupil to another member of staff, but this will only be done on a 'need to know' basis.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with colleagues and other agencies in order to safeguard children. Legal and professional obligations will not generally prevent the sharing of confidential information if:

- the pupil and/or the parent consent to the disclosure;
- the public interest in safeguarding the child's welfare overrides the need to keep the information confidential;
- disclosure is required by law or under an order of court.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets that might compromise the child's safety or well-being. In deciding whether there is a need to share information, **the pupil's best interests must be paramount.**

The College will always undertake to share the intention to refer a child to Social Care with the child's parents or guardians unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. When there is doubt on this point, the Duty Manager at the Contact Centre Children's Team will be consulted.

Support for staff

¹¹ Guidance on the sharing of information can be found in the booklet *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*. (Appendix 1 on page 17)

The College recognises that staff who have become involved with a child who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting.

The College will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the CPLO and seek further support as appropriate.

Allegations against staff

All College staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position regarding their work with pupils in both formal and informal settings. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults where possible, or to notify a senior member of staff if a one to one session is planned. Communication with pupils and parents, by whatever means including those that make use of modern technology, should take place within professional boundaries. Pupils should never for example be accepted as “friends” on social networking sites, and where pupils are already known to a member of staff in a family or outside friendship connection, this should be made clear to the person’s senior manager. Subject matter of a personal nature should be avoided. Staff should be circumspect in their communications with pupils to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or behaviour that could be misconstrued. All staff should be familiar with the College’s prudence guidelines published in the Common Room Handbook.¹² Volunteers who work with pupils (for example, parents accompanying an off-site visit or tour) are expected to maintain standards of conduct comparable to those prescribed for employed members of staff.

It is understood that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer. If such an allegation is made, whoever receives the allegation, whether directly from the pupil or via a third party, will immediately inform either the Deputy Head or the Headmaster who will without delay consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO on 01372 833321. Together they will decide what action to take. If the allegation concerns the Headmaster the person receiving the allegation will inform the CPLO, who will in turn inform the Chairman of Governors and support them in contacting the LADO. Neither must notify the Headmaster of the referral at that stage.

Parents or guardians of a child or children involved will be told about the allegation as soon as possible. They will be kept informed about the progress of the case and told the outcome where there is not a criminal prosecution. Under no circumstances will a child be sent home, pending any investigation, unless this advice is given exceptionally, as a result of a Strategy Meeting.¹³

The College will also keep the member of staff or other adult who is the subject of the allegation informed of the progress of the case and consider what other support is appropriate for the individual. If a member of a union or professional association, the member of staff will be advised to contact that organization at the outset. The power to suspend a member of staff is vested in the Headmaster and the Board of Governors. Suspension should not be automatic in such cases.

Further guidance is available in “Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and other Staff” DofE July 2011 and in the SSCB procedures

¹² Further advice is available in *Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings* — DCSF, March 2009: available online at www.surreycc.gov.uk > Learning > Teachers and education staff > Safeguarding children > Safe working practice for protecting children and staff in education settings.

¹³ The term Strategy Meeting covers any urgent formal strategy discussion which may take place by telephone between the Headmaster, the CPLO, police, social care, and education managers, requiring action prior to a first meeting.

Whistle-blowing

The College recognises that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. Childline posters are available throughout the school for pupils to access the helpline where they wish to do so, and confidential telephone access is available to them.

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues. If necessary they should speak in the first instance to the CPLO or to the Headmaster, to whom they must report any concern or allegation about school practices or the behaviour of colleagues that are likely to put pupils at risk of abuse or other serious harm. The College's whistle-blowing procedure is set out in full in a separate document.¹⁴

Physical intervention

The College's policy on physical intervention by staff is set out separately.¹⁵ It acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort when a child is endangering him- or herself or others, and that at all times it must entail the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person.

Such events should be recorded and signed by a witness, and reported as soon as possible to the child's parent. It must be understood that physical intervention of a nature that causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under child protection or disciplinary procedures.

Bullying

The College's policy on bullying is set out in a separate document.¹⁶ It must be understood that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. This includes homophobic and gender-related bullying.

The College recognises the rapid escalation of what has come to be known as 'cyberbullying': the use of electronic communications technologies (such as e-mail, mobile phone and text messaging, digital photography, instant messaging, personal websites, chat rooms, blogs and social networking sites) to harass, intimidate, insult, abuse, embarrass or otherwise harm or cause distress to others. As with all other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is regarded by the College as totally unacceptable.

Complaints

The College has in place formal complaints procedures for both pupils and parents. Complaints and concerns relating to any child protection issue should be addressed in the first instance to the CPLO, who will attempt to resolve the matter in a way that satisfies the complainant while balancing the rights and duties of pupils. Pupils will not be penalized for making a complaint in good faith.

Racist incidents

The College acknowledges that repeated racist incidents or an isolated serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

¹⁴ Policy document: *Whistle-blowing*.

¹⁵ Policy document: *Use of Restraint*.

¹⁶ *Anti-Bullying Policy*, which forms part of the Common Room Handbook.

Missing pupils

Where a pupil is inexplicably absent from morning or afternoon registration the housemaster/mistress will make appropriate enquiries and if thought necessary undertake a search. If a pupil remains absent for more than six hours, the housemaster/mistress must inform parents or guardians at the earliest opportunity. Unexplained absence for more than twelve hours must be reported to the Headmaster and possibly also the Police.

Prevention of harm and abuse

We recognise that the College has a significant part to play in the prevention of harm to our pupils by teaching them to be aware of potentially harmful lifestyles and of other threats to their general well-being, and by providing good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The College community will therefore:

- establish and maintain an ethos where pupils feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to;
- ensure that all pupils know there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty;
- include in the curriculum, by means of PHSE lessons, and present in the less formal setting of the weekly tutor period opportunities that equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to know to whom they can turn for help.

Health & safety

The College's health & safety policy¹⁷, together with other published procedures and policies,¹⁸ reflect the consideration given to the protection of pupils and concern for their welfare, both physically within the school environment, and, for example, in relation to internet use, and when away from the College undertaking school trips and visits.

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¹⁷ *Health and Safety*, which is retained in the Bursar's office.

¹⁸ *Policies relating to the use of IT at Epsom College*, which forms part of the Common Room Handbook, and *ECOAMS*, which is available in Staff Utility.