

Children's Services by dialling:

Hammersmith & Fulham

020 8753 6600

They can also dial the

NSPCC Helpline (Freefone) on

0808 800 5000

Attendance (statutory)

Child employment and entertainment

Elective home education and children missing education

Child Protection in Hammersmith & Fulham Schools

The purpose of this leaflet is to inform parents and carers about the procedures used in Hammersmith & Fulham schools and nurseries to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect.

The leaflet aims to answer the most common questions that parents or carers ask about child protection.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a relative, carer or professional harms or neglects a child or young person or fails to protect a child from being harmed by another person. Besides physical injuries, the abuse can be emotional or sexual.

What has this got to do with education?

The Children Act 1989 requires local councils to investigate the circumstances of all children thought to be suffering significant harm. Children's services (social care) make these investigations, but other council departments, including schools, must assist in protecting children from abuse. The government expects all schools to have child protection procedures. Each school has to name a senior teacher to be responsible for seeing the procedures are followed in the school.

What do the child protection procedures in Hammersmith & Fulham say?

The guidelines of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) make it clear that all schools and nurseries must report all cases of actual or suspected child abuse. This includes any unexplained marks or injuries, any unusual behaviour, and any worrying observations or remarks made about or by a child.

Shouldn't school staff talk to parents or carers first?

Yes, in most cases. However, there may be occasions when it is not possible or not considered to be in the child's best interests. Does this mean that the child will be removed from home?

No. It is very rare for this to happen: the Children Act 1989 says that everything possible should be done to assist parents or carers to look after their children at home. Children will only be removed from home if

there is no other way of ensuring their safety.

If there is serious concern about possible abuse or neglect, a meeting will be called. This will be known as a child protection case conference. The family will be invited.

What happens if a referral is made and the child is not being abused?

This can be very upsetting for the parents or carers and children, but please remember that a child protection referral is not an accusation. It is the sharing of concern. Many children have been saved from being seriously hurt (or worse) and families helped at times of great stress because of prompt action by school staff. Very often referrals will come to nothing. Staff must act in the best interests of the child, even if that means that innocent parents or carers are sometimes upset. Schools cannot take risks with the welfare or safety of children.

What can parents or carers do to prevent a false alarm?

Children benefit from their education when staff and parents or carers work in partnership. This means that there must be good communication between home and school. Parents or carers should tell class teachers or headteachers if a child

- has been hurt accidentally,
- has a medical condition that may lead others to suspect abuse,
- is specially upset about something that has happened at home.

What can parents or carers do if they feel they may have gone too far in punishing their children or fear they may harm them?

Help is available, and telling someone there may be a problem is the first step to solving it.

Parents or carers can contact a social worker from their local area

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