



Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy

Supporting victims and developing preventative education throughout the whole school.

What is a whole school approach?

A whole-school approach can be understood as working across the school community - with students, staff, parents and the wider community, integrating a focus on violence against all genders across the school.

Educational settings are an important environment where positive attitudes towards gender equality and healthy respectful relationships can be fostered through a rights-based approach.

Adopting a whole education approach that includes preventative education through all parts of school and college life, involving the community has been identified as significant in being able to teach preventative education.

Research has also shown the significance of this approach in relation to teaching bullying prevention messages and in relation to child sexual abuse prevention.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- To define Sexual and Domestic Violence and how it affects the individual and families
- To provide information of the signs to be aware of that might indicate domestic abuse/sexual violence in the home.
- To raise awareness and understanding of the needs of children living with or who have experienced domestic or sexual violence.
- To secure school attendance and achievement.
- To promote social inclusion and equal opportunities
- To develop a consistent approach and good practice at Alway Primary School with reference to our child protection policy.

This policy is intended to be a straightforward reference point and practical tool particularly for the designated teacher/person responsible for child protection, support staff, teachers and Special Education Needs Co-ordinator who come into contact with children, parents and staff who might be affected by domestic abuse and or sexual violence.

Although this policy focuses on forms of violence and abuse which are disproportionately experienced by women and girls, because they are women. Evidence shows that women experience repeat incidents of domestic abuse, all forms of sexual violence and other forms of violence and abuse such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Whilst it is important that this disproportionate experience is acknowledged and communicated throughout this guide, its purpose is to ensure that professionals can work together to provide an effective response for both domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Domestic abuse and sexual violence happen in all communities, regardless of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity. When dealing with domestic abuse and sexual violence, it is important to recognise differences between all protected characteristics. It follows that different approaches and resources are needed when addressing domestic abuse with different groups.

Principles and practice: The key elements of a whole education approach

The school aims to embed each of the following key elements in our daily practise

- Children and young people learn about violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence, against all genders.
- Staff learn about violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence, against all genders
- Measures are in place to support all people who experience any form of violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Active participation of children and young people, staff and parents/caregivers to prevent violence domestic abuse and sexual violence, against all genders.
- Taking action to prevent violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence in the wider community - 'ASK AND ACT'
- Working in partnership with relevant local experts.
- Embedding a comprehensive prevention programme.

Definition of Domestic Violence

The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

It encompasses any form of controlling or coercive behaviour, including forced marriage, physical assault, psychological and emotional abuse. Schools are in a privileged position to identify those who may be experiencing both sexual and domestic violence/abuse, both at home and within their own relationships. They are key to raising the issue of sexual violence and domestic abuse in a safe and structured environment.

Always Primary school will:

- Be aware of the possible signs that may help to identify the signs of abuse, and/or sexual violence
- Support children, parents, caregivers and staff at our school to seek help and safety
- Model and promote healthy, non-violent relationships through our curriculum
- Safeguard children and young people from the harm caused by sexual and domestic violence/abuse (Children's Act, 2004)

The Impact of sexual and domestic violence on the child

- Children often see school as a safe retreat from problems at home or alternatively feel the need to not attend school through a perceived need for them to be at home to protect abused parents or siblings.
- Domestic violence can have a damaging effect on a child's health, educational attainment, emotional well-being and development. It is widely accepted that there are dramatic and serious effects of children witnessing sexual and domestic violence that often results in behavioural issues, absenteeism, ill health, bullying, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, self-harm, eating disorders and psychosocial impacts.
- Children and young people may not only be affected by Sexual or Domestic Violence between their parents, carers or within their family unit, but as they begin to develop their own intimate relationships they may also perpetrate or become victims of Sexual or Domestic Violence themselves.

Child Protection - Sexual and/or Domestic Violence

The needs of the child can be overlooked in cases of Sexual and Domestic Violence, as the primary target of the abuse is an adult. However, it is not uncommon for a perpetrator to mistreat the child as part of the abuse against the mother/carer or any other family member of the child/children.

There is increasing evidence to show that children living with Sexual and/or Domestic Violence are at risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Prolonged and regular exposure to Sexual and Domestic Violence can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional wellbeing, despite the best efforts of the victim-parent to protect the child.

Children Witnessing Sexual and/or Domestic Violence

Witnessing violence may have a detrimental impact on the child/children concerned. Children are not merely passive bystanders to Sexual and Domestic Violence but will act and make choices in order to cope with and improve their situation. A child may be drawn into colluding with both of the persons involved in order to keep the violence secret as far as possible, thereby serving to deny the harm that is being done and the fear the child is experiencing as well as protecting the violent partner and isolating and confusing the child. The experience of both sexual and domestic violence can have long lasting effects on self-esteem, ability to form satisfying relationships and general mental health.

Signs to look out for in children between the ages of 5-16

School aged children (5-16) may:

- Be engaging in risk-taking behaviours
- Be withdrawn
- Have increased impulsive & aggressive behaviours
- Be exhausted and having sleep difficulties
- Be experiencing sadness, depression and mood swings
- Have a decline in school performance
- Have high non-attendance
- Not be doing their homework
- Have problems with concentration & attention
- Be anxious to leave parent/carer/family member at home
- Be being bullied or bullying
- Have low self-esteem & therefore risk associated with this (self-harm, substance misuse etc)
- Have no hopes or ambitions
- Be isolated; not many friends
- Be throwing themselves into schoolwork as an escape from home life
- Not be allowed to attend clubs or local groups
- Be unable to have school friends visit them at home
- Have limited money for food/schools' items.

Role of Alway Primary School:

Our whole school approach to tackling sexual and domestic abuse will focus on **Training and Education, Positive Ethos and Identity Support.**

The school will:

- Regularly review relevant Child protection and safeguarding policies and practice and adhere to the VAWDASV Ask and Act guidelines.
- Provide whole school training and updates on sexual and domestic abuse.
- Support and train key staff e.g. designated child protection lead to the appropriate recommended level.
- Ensure that child protection procedures are followed.
- Provide information and advice for parents, carers and any affected family members
- Record domestic violence incidents.
- Provide curriculum opportunities with a focus on emotional literacy, developing and maintaining positive relationships, managing conflict, bullying as these will all contribute to work on sexual and domestic violence.

Procedure

In all cases where sexual and/or domestic abuse in the home is suspected, teachers and other members of staff should report the information to the Child Protection Officer following the procedures set out in the school Child Protection policy.

The Role of the Child Protection Officer

After a member of staff reports a case of suspected sexual and/or domestic violence the Child Protection Officer will decide on the appropriate action to be taken. Reference will always be made to the school's child protection policy regarding emergency or non-emergency situations, record keeping, distribution of information to the relevant agency.

Governors

Governors will not be told specific details about cases but regular liaison will take place between the Head and Child Protection Governor about issues arising. The Head will provide child protection statistics once a year to the Governing Body in the annual safeguarding report.

**To be read in conjunction with the following document:
Child Protection Policy**

Useful Information

Websites

www.welshwomensaid.org.uk

<https://gov.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/lgbt/> Website for LGBT Community

<https://www.mankind.org.uk/> Website for Male Domestic Abuse

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