



Midhurst Rother College

The best in everyone™

A member of United Learning Trust

Safeguarding Advice for Parents and Carers'

Introduction

At Midhurst Rother College we recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of all students. Through our motto *free to achieve, belong and contribute* we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where students are respected and valued.

This booklet provides parents and carers' information about how Midhurst Rother College meets our safeguarding and child protection responsibilities and how you can contact us if you have queries or need further advice.

Useful Contacts

Midhurst Rother College Designated Person for Child Protection is Mrs Chris Denne, Vice Principal
Midhurst Rother College Designated Governor is Lt Col Tex Pemberton

If you are concerned about the safety or welfare of your child or a child you know, you should act without delay. You can report your concern

- Children's Social Care: 01243 752999 (Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) or out of hours emergency team: 01903 694422*
- Sussex Police: 999 for emergencies or 0845 60 70 999 for switchboard
- NSPCC child protection helpline: 0808 800 5000

**The WSCC out of hours team covers the whole of West Sussex. For children and young people, it deals with:*

- *urgent assessments under the Mental Health Act, in conjunction with appropriate doctors*
- *immediate threats to a child or young person's safety or welfare*

Many people worry that their suspicions might be wrong, or that they will be interfering unnecessarily. If you wish, you can telephone for advice without identifying the child. If the conversation confirms that you are right to be concerned you can then give the child's details. You will be asked for your name and address too, but the agencies will take anonymous calls, so if you really do not want to say who you are, you do not have to. Remember, it is always better to be safe than sorry.

Midhurst Rother College keep students safe by:

- having an up to date child protection policy
- having other safeguarding policies, such as anti-bullying
- checking the suitability of all our staff to work with children
- encouraging students to tell us if something is wrong
- adhering to health and safety regulations
- training all our staff to recognise and respond to child welfare concerns
- appointing a designated person who has additional training in child protection and safeguarding
- working in partnership with parents and carers

- using outside agencies such as the Police, College Nurse and Drugs Awareness Team to deliver lessons to students on healthy lifestyles and being safe
- sharing information with appropriate agencies if we have concerns
- managing and supporting our staff team
- having a complaints procedure

There may be an occasion when you need to tell us that something has gone wrong. If you have a serious concern about the safety or welfare of your child or another student it may be dealt with under our safeguarding and child protection procedures. All other complaints, including those that may point to poor practice by a member of staff, will be dealt with firstly through the complaints procedure. You should take any serious concerns about the behaviour of a staff member directly to the Principal, Dr J A Vitagliano.

Examples of serious concerns include those involving violence, anything of a sexual nature, persistent bullying or humiliation. Otherwise, the complaints procedure has the following stages.

Informal Resolution

It is recognised that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with MRC. Almost invariably, the sooner such concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found. This would normally be your child's *Form Tutor*. A concern or complaint may be raised with any member of staff. That person will try and resolve the matter or will refer you to the appropriate person. The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If the matter cannot be resolved within 3 school days or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to proceed to make a formal complaint to the Complaints Co-ordinator *Mrs C Denne (Vice Principal)*. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the Complaints Co-ordinator would normally refer you to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

If you need to make a formal complaint it should be in writing and sent to the Complaints Co-ordinator *Mrs C Denne*. If you have difficulty in putting your complaint in writing, you are asked to make an appointment with the Complaints Co-ordinator who will help you do that. The Complaints Co-ordinator will decide the best person to hear the complaint. It would be helpful if you could indicate if there is someone with whom you might have difficulty discussing the complaint so that your views can be respected. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Complaints Co-ordinator may consider referring you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will normally be undertaken by the Complaints Co-ordinator. If the matter cannot be resolved within 5 school days following receipt of the written complaint or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure. The Complaints Co-ordinator will make a written record of the

complaint, the date on which it was received, the date on which the matter was dealt with and the outcome of the procedure. You will receive a copy of this written record within a reasonable time following this process.

Stage Two: Complaint Heard by the Principal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage one, if you feel that your complaint is sufficiently serious, or if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, you may take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure. You should put your complaint in writing to the Principal. Again, if you have difficulty in doing that, you are asked to seek assistance from the Complaints Co-ordinator. The Principal will delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Principal will decide whether it would be helpful to meet with you to discuss your complaint. The decision in respect of this complaint will normally be made within 5 school days of the Principal receiving the complaint. If the Principal feels that it is necessary, within reason, to ask for additional time, you will be informed.

Internet and mobile phone safety

Mobile phones and computers are a part of everyday life for many children and young people. Used correctly, they are an exciting source of communication, fun and education but used incorrectly, or in the wrong hands, they can be threatening and dangerous.

The risks include:

- cyber-bullying, where hurtful texts or emails are sent to children
- children accidentally or deliberately accessing violent or sexually explicit websites, either on a computer or a mobile phone
- paedophiles talking to children by mobile phone or online and enticing them to engage in sexual conversations, photographs, video or actual meetings.

It may not be practical to ban your child from using mobiles and computers as they may well try to find a way of using them, perhaps at a friend's house or in an internet café. They also need to learn how to manage the risks.

Here are some suggestions to help you to manage the risks:

Help your children to understand that they should never give out personal details to online friends they do not know offline.

- Explain to your children what information about them is personal: i.e. email address, mobile number, College name, sports club, arrangements for meeting up with friends and any pictures or videos of themselves, their family or friends. Small pieces of information can easily be pieced together to form a comprehensive insight in to their lives and daily activities.

- Make your children aware that they need to think carefully about the information and pictures they post on their profiles. Inform them that once published online, anyone can change or share these images of them.
- It can be easy to forget that the internet is not a private space and, as a result, young people sometimes engage in risky behaviour online. Advise your children not to post any pictures, videos or information on their profiles, or in chat rooms, that they would not want a parent or carer to see.
- If your child receives spam or junk email and texts, remind them never to believe their contents, reply to them or use them.
- It is not a good idea for your child to open files that are from people they don't know. They won't know what they contain—it could be a virus, or worse - an inappropriate image or film.
- Help your child to understand that some people lie online and therefore it is better to keep online 'mates' *online*. They should never meet up with any strangers without an adult they trust.
- Always keep communication open for a child to know that it is never too late to tell someone if something makes them feel uncomfortable.

Child abuse and what to look for

No parent wants to think about the possibility of their child becoming a victim of abuse, and most children are never abused. Even so, it is important for parents and carers to be aware of the possibility and to know that help is available if the unthinkable does happen. Although there is always a lot of media focus on 'stranger danger', the abduction of children is rare and the threat from strangers is quite small. You should still ensure that your child knows the rules about keeping safe when they are out alone. Most children know their abusers. They may be family members or friends of the family, someone who works with the child or someone who lives in the community. There are four types of abuse: emotional, physical, sexual abuse, and neglect.

Type of harm to children	Meaning	Examples
Emotional	Action or inaction by others that causes mental anguish	Emotional harm is the emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.
Physical	Any intentional physical contact that results in discomfort, pain or injury	Physical harm may involve assaults including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
Sexual	Any form of sexual activity with a child under the age of consent	Sexual harm involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Neglect	Failure to identify and/or meet care needs	Neglect is the 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.
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There are many signs, or indicators that a child might be suffering abuse. There may be injuries, but it is more likely that you will notice some change in your child's behaviour. If you notice anything that concerns you, talk to your child to see if you can find out what is happening. Remember that, if your child is being harmed, she or he may be too frightened to tell you. If your child becomes distressed or you are not happy with the explanations, you could talk to an adult you trust or call a helpline or children's social care services. Our designated person at Midhurst Rother College will also try to help.

Some signs to look for are:

- bruises or other injuries
- a change in behaviour – from quiet to loud, or from happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- pain or discomfort
- fear of a particular person, or a reluctance to be alone with them
- secrecy around a relationship with a particular person
- reluctance to discuss where they go, or who they are with
- sexual talk or knowledge beyond their years
- being watchful, or always on edge
- losing interest in their appearance, hobbies or family life
- alcohol or drug taking
- having money and refusing to say where it has come from
- wetting the bed
- becoming clingy

What we will do if we have a concern about a student

If we are concerned that a student may be at risk of abuse or neglect we must follow the procedures in our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy. You can look at the policy on the College website (www.mrc-academy.org) or receive a copy to take home. Please just ask one of the College Reception Office staff.

The procedures have been written to protect all students. They comply with our statutory responsibilities and are designed to support students, families and staff. The procedures are based on the principle that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration. In almost all circumstances, we will talk to you about our concerns and we will also tell you if we feel we must refer our concerns to children's social care. We will ask your consent to make a referral, but in some circumstances we may need to make the referral against your wishes. We will only do this if we genuinely believe that this is the best way to protect your child, and the fact that you did not consent to the referral will be recorded.

If we think that talking to you first might in some way increase the risk to your child, we will report our concerns to children's social care and take advice from them. We will normally tell you that a referral is being made and we will record the reasons why we decided to follow this course of action.

All child protection records are kept separate from your child's general College file. Records are stored in a locked cabinet or drawer, and if stored on computer they are password-protected. The only staff who have access to the records are those who need to know about the concerns in order to protect and support your child. You can ask to see what information is held on your child, and we will normally agree to this, but if we are unsure we will seek advice from the local authority designated officer or children's social care first. Child protection is a very sensitive issue and it raises many questions and a range of strong emotions. We will do everything we can to support our students and you can be assured that any action we take will be in the best interests of your child.

March 2010