

Eveswell Primary School

Ysgol Gynradd Eveswell



Policy Whole School

Approach to Domestic Abuse, Violence against Women and Sexual Violence

Date written: September 2017

By: C Barnett DSP

Date first agreed by Governors: September 2017

Review date: September 2024

EVESWELL AND SOMERTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Approach to Domestic Abuse, Violence against Women and Sexual Violence

" There is no acceptable form of violence in families. When it does occur children are always victims. Their lives are damaged by the experience of the violence in their family. Schools are uniquely placed to see some of the symptoms and effects of violence and to mobilise support for children. "

What is a whole school approach?

A whole-school approach can be understood as working across the school community - with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community, integrating a focus on domestic abuse, violence against women and girls 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 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 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 in the home.
- To raise awareness and understanding of the needs of children living with or who have experienced domestic violence.
- To secure school attendance and achievement
- To promote social inclusion and equal opportunities
- To develop a consistent approach and good practice at Eveswell 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 Additional Educational Needs Co-ordinator who come into contact with children, parents and staff who might be affected by domestic abuse.

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 practice

- **Children and young people learn about violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence**
- **Staff learn about violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence**
- **Measures are in place to support people who experience forms of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence**
- **Active participation of children and young people, staff and parents/care-givers to prevent violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.**
- **Taking action to prevent violence against women, 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 domestic violence/abuse, both at home and within their own relationships. They are key to raising the issue of domestic abuse in a safe and structured environment.

Eveswell Primary school will:

- Be aware of the possible signs that may help to identify the signs of abuse
- 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 domestic violence/abuse (Children's Act, 2004)

The Impact of 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 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 domestic violence between their parents, but as they begin to develop their own intimate relationships they may also perpetrate or become victims of domestic violence themselves.

Child Protection and Domestic Violence

The needs of the child can be overlooked in cases of 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. There is increasing evidence to show that children living with domestic violence are at risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Prolonged and regular exposure to 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 Domestic Violence

Witnessing violence may have a detrimental impact on the child concerned. Children are not merely passive bystanders to 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 adults 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 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 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 school work 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.

What Eveswell Primary school will do:

Our whole school approach to tackling 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 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.
- 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 domestic violence.

Procedure

In all cases where 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 domestic violence in the home 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 headteacher and child protection governor about issues arising. The headteacher will provide child protection statistics termly to the governing body in the governors' report.

To be read in conjunction with the following document:

Child Protection Policy

September 2023