



# Oxenhope Church of England Primary School

## **Families Facing Adversity**

### **Policy**



**If you are concerned about the safety of a child, act!**

Our Named Persons for Child Protection are Alice Jones, Gillian Dyson, Caroline Auty, Joanne Brown, Laura Smales and Oliver Thurlby

Useful phone numbers:

School – 01535 642271

Social Services Initial Contact Point 01274 437500

NSPCC – 0808 800 5000

West Yorkshire Police – 101 or 999

This policy must be read alongside the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

It is advised that this policy is read alongside the school's early help offer

Created By:	Last reviewed:	Next Review Date:
A Jones	May 2024	May 2026

## School Vision

We provide the rich soil allowing children and adults to flourish and develop deep roots. We nurture **growth**, enabling children and adults to thrive as our Christian values blossom in their lives. We cultivate a sense of pride in our rural **community** where children and adults are **loved** and valued.

*May our children flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. Psalm 144 v 12.*

Throughout our curriculum and school life, along with our school vision, these three golden strands permeate through everything we do.

## Community

Jesus often spoke of unity in our communities and encouraging one another on our journey. He spoke of bearing each other's burdens in love and helping those in need.

'Live in harmony with one another.' Romans 12 v 16



## Love

It says in the Bible that God is Love and encompasses all that is loving and good. Jesus showed the ultimate unconditional love when he laid down his life for us on the cross. Therefore, this love should lead to a desire to love other people.

'Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us.' Ephesians 5 v 2



## Growth

Just like a plant, we must endure the difficult times along with the good; but God has sent us his Holy Spirit to help and strengthen us so we can bear fruit and grow in the likeness of Christ.

'Grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2 Peter 3 v 18



## **The role of schools, academies, and colleges in England in responding to concerns relating to families with multiple needs (domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, mental health)**

Children who live in families with multiple needs are at an increased risk of negative outcomes.

Difficulties within families may be commonly known by the school or by the local community, but it can be difficult to know when problems within families have reached the threshold for acting. Schools have daily contact with children and young people and are in a good position to be able to identify when these problems are impacting upon a child's safety and welfare.

### **A brief outline of the subject**

The term 'families with multiple needs' covers a wide range of experiences and circumstances each of which may be experienced by families from time to time and pose difficulties for them, but may not represent long-term damaging effects for their children.

For children, the most high-risk of these problems are:

- living with domestic violence
- parent or carer drug or alcohol misuse
- parent or carer mental health problems.

Living with domestic violence is included in the definition of "significant harm" and so any concerns about domestic violence must follow child protection procedures. Parent or carers with substance misuse problems or mental health problems may struggle at times to provide their children with the care and protection they need. Concerns about these issues should also follow child protection procedures, to ensure that the family gets the support they need to keep the children safe from harm.

### **School ethos, policy and training**

At Oxenhope C of E Primary we have an ethos that encourages all staff to feel confident in expressing concerns about a child who they believe may be living in circumstances where these parental risk factors apply, no matter how difficult this may be, or where there may be perceived to be a strong relationship between the school and the family. The well-being of the child must come first.

It is made clear to staff that concerns of this nature are regarded as potential child abuse and the school child protection procedures should be followed. Information should be included (or signposted) in school child protection policies, procedures and relevant training.

School also displays posters for Child Line and other sources of support for children who are worried about what is happening at home.

## **Recognition of possible signs and indicators**

- Poor attendance at school
- Not reaching developmental milestones
- Poor educational attainment
- Poor attachment to parents or carers due to emotional unavailability
- Behavioural problems such as anxiety, stress and anger

Other indications that a family is experiencing a multiplicity of problems is when they are known to be regular users of a wide range of services such as welfare and benefit services, social housing, health, social care, youth offending or probation as well as community services for identified problem areas. Response and action to be taken.

If you are concerned that a child may be experiencing problems at home, then report your concerns to your designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible, in line with our child protection policy and procedures. It is important to record your concerns especially if they occur incrementally over time. Sometimes the evidence builds up with each incident appearing mild but the frequency and impact on the child being highly significant.

## **Working with parents and carers**

The principle of working with parents and carers must of course be upheld, but suspicions relating to a perception of their multiple needs and the impact on their child/ren must be handled very carefully. Neither schools nor members of staff should carry out their own enquiries and any decision about informing parents or carers should be made by Children's Social Care. There should be a presumption of openness, joint decision making, and a willingness to listen to families and capitalise on their strengths and resilience, but the guiding principle should always be what is in the best interests of the child.

Where it is suspected that the level of parental impact on a child, of their behaviour or circumstances, is at an unacceptable level, all decisions about what and when (and by whom), to tell parents, carers and children should be taken by senior staff within the multiagency team. While professionals should seek, in general, to discuss any concerns with the family and, where possible, seek their agreement to action, this should only be done where such discussion and agreement-seeking will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm.