



Domestic Abuse Policy

Our school helps us to walk with Jesus to be the best that we can be. Through God's love and guidance, we create an ethos of shared endeavour, friendship, and cooperation to help us flourish academically, emotionally, and spiritually.

“I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13

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1. Statement of Intent

At Baxenden St John's CE Primary School, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. We recognise that domestic abuse can have a significant impact on children's physical safety, emotional wellbeing, learning and development. This policy has been informed by safeguarding principles and professional guidance regarding coercive and controlling behaviour, confidentiality, safety planning and domestic abuse risk management.

We acknowledge that domestic abuse is a safeguarding issue and that children who witness, hear, experience or are affected by domestic abuse are victims in their own right.

Our school will work closely with children, families and partner agencies to:

- Identify concerns early.
- Protect children from harm.
- Support victims of domestic abuse.
- Ensure that information is shared appropriately and safely.
- Promote a culture where children and adults feel safe to seek help.

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Relationships, Health and Sex Education Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Information Sharing Procedures

2. Definition of Domestic Abuse

In England and Wales, the legal definition of domestic abuse is set out in the **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**. Domestic abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected. The Act states that abusive behaviour includes:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse (for example, controlling someone's access to money or resources)
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

Importantly, the law recognises that:

- Domestic abuse does **not** have to involve physical violence.
- A single incident or a pattern of behaviour can constitute domestic abuse. However, domestic abuse is rarely a single incident and often involves an ongoing pattern of behaviour designed to establish power and control over another person.
- Abuse can continue after a relationship has ended.
- Behaviour directed at a child can form part of domestic abuse towards another person.
- Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse are recognised as victims in their own right.

3. Impact on Children

The school recognises that domestic abuse can have a profound impact on children, even if they do not directly witness incidents.

Children may:

- Experience fear, anxiety and distress.
- Have difficulties concentrating and learning.
- Display withdrawn, aggressive or disruptive behaviours.
- Experience trauma-related responses.
- Feel responsible for protecting a parent.
- Develop low self-esteem.
- Be used by perpetrators as a means of maintaining control over the non-abusing parent.

Research and professional experience show that abuse frequently continues after a relationship has ended and may escalate when a victim attempts to leave. Children can also become involved in ongoing manipulation through court proceedings, contact arrangements or emotional pressure from the perpetrator.

4. Principles

Baxenden St John's CE Primary School will:

Ensure Safety

- Prioritise the immediate safety of children and adults at risk.
- Take all disclosures seriously.
- Follow safeguarding procedures without delay.

Be Professionally Curious

- Ask appropriate questions when concerns arise.
- Remain alert to signs of coercive and controlling behaviour.
- Recognise that victims may minimise risks due to fear or coercion.

Maintain Confidentiality

- Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding legislation.
- However, where there is concern that a child is suffering or at risk of significant harm, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and information will be shared appropriately with safeguarding agencies.

Work in Partnership

The school will work collaboratively with the following agencies where appropriate and with consent unless doing so would place a child at risk:

- Children's Social Care
- Police
- Health professionals
- Domestic abuse services
- Lancashire safeguarding partners
- Victim Support and specialist support agencies

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board

The Governing Board will:

- Ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are in place.
- Monitor implementation of this policy.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will:

- Promote a culture of vigilance.
- Ensure policy implementation & appropriate training of staff.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL will:

- Lead the school's response to domestic abuse concerns.
- Maintain accurate safeguarding records.
- Liaise with external agencies.
- Undertake risk assessments where required.
- Monitor support plans for affected children.
- Ensure appropriate information sharing.

All Staff

All staff should understand that domestic abuse is a significant risk factor in child protection cases. All staff must:

- Recognise signs of domestic abuse.
- Record concerns promptly.
- Report concerns immediately to the DSL.
- Follow safeguarding procedures.
- Attend safeguarding training.

6. Responding to Disclosures

Any disclosure of domestic abuse must be reported immediately to the DSL. Staff should:

- ✓ Listen carefully.
- ✓ Remain calm.
- ✓ Take what is being said seriously.
- ✓ Reassure the individual that they have done the right thing by speaking up.
- ✓ Record the information accurately.

The welfare of the child is always the primary consideration. Staff must not:

- ✗ Promise confidentiality.
- ✗ Investigate the disclosure.
- ✗ Ask leading questions.
- ✗ Contact the alleged perpetrator.
- ✗ Attempt mediation between adults.

7. Safety Planning

Where domestic abuse is identified, the school will work with victims and relevant agencies to develop appropriate safety plans.

This may include:

- Identifying a trusted member of staff.
- Using a consistent point of contact within school.
- Recording agreed communication arrangements.
- Reviewing collection arrangements.
- Monitoring attendance and wellbeing.
- Risk assessing information sharing.
- Ensuring safe transfer of information during transition periods.

The school acknowledges that seemingly minor information disclosed to a perpetrator may significantly increase risk for a victim. Therefore, staff must always consider the safeguarding implications of sharing information and consult the victim and DSL wherever appropriate.

8. Information Sharing

Information sharing will follow statutory safeguarding guidance. The school will:

- Share information on a need-to-know basis.
- Distinguish fact from opinion.
- Keep secure records.
- Record decisions and rationale.
- Seek advice when unsure.

The safety of the child takes precedence over parental consent where there is a safeguarding concern.

9. Working with Alleged Perpetrators

Staff should understand that perpetrators may present differently in public than in private relationships. Following a disclosure:

- Staff must not confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Staff must not reveal that a disclosure has been made.
- All communication should be directed through safeguarding procedures and external agencies when appropriate.

10. Record Keeping

The school will:

- Maintain secure safeguarding records.
- Restrict access to relevant safeguarding staff.
- Keep information separate from general pupil files where appropriate.
- Ensure records are transferred securely when pupils move schools.
- Refuge addresses or protected locations will never be routinely recorded or disclosed.

11. Training

The school will ensure that:

- All staff receive regular safeguarding training.
- Staff understand the dynamics of domestic abuse.
- Staff are aware that abuse can continue after separation.
- DSLs receive advanced safeguarding training.
- Staff know how to access local domestic abuse services.

12. Support Services

Support may include referrals to:

- Lancashire Domestic Abuse Services
- Children's Social Care
- Lancashire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Victim Support
- NSPCC
- Childline
- Women's Aid
- Refuge

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes.
- National guidance changes.
- Local safeguarding procedures change.
- A serious incident indicates that amendments are required.