



## **Ravenscourt Park Montessori Policy on Safeguarding and Welfare**

Ravenscourt Park Montessori will ensure an environment in which any child in our care is safe from abuse and in which any suspicion of abuse is immediately responded to in the correct manner. We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

In order to do this, we have the following lead personnel, and implement the following strict procedures.

- Our Designated Person (a member of staff) who co-ordinates safeguarding is:  
Denise Tan
- Our Designated Officer (a member of the management team) who oversees this work is:  
Laura Bolton

The Designated Person and Officer above ensure they have links with statutory and voluntary organizations with regard to safeguarding.

### **Identification and exclusion of any known offenders.**

Ravenscourt Park Montessori follows a strict Safer Recruitment process. All applicants for positions within our nursery will be interviewed and asked to supply at least two references that will be followed up, including from their most recent employer. Explanations will be sought if there are any unexplained gaps in an applicant's employment history. Applicants will be asked to complete a Health Assessment and a Suitability Declaration.

All successful applicants will need to provide evidence of an enhanced DBS certificate prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children. They will be informed that our positions are exempt from the provision of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information. Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks are carried out on anyone living or working on the premises.

All appointments will be subject to a three-month probationary period and confirmed only when we are confident that the team member fully upholds our commitment to safeguarding and welfare.

Any students or volunteers will not work unsupervised. All staff and volunteers are informed that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders or reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment with us).

All staff and volunteers are required to notify us if they have had registration refused or cancelled in relation to any childcare provision, or have had orders made in relation to care of their children.

We will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern.

### **Training**

We ensure all staff complete our induction process and are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too.

All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, and understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding concerns are reported to the local authority children's social work team.



All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any safeguarding concerns and know not to just take things at face value.

Adequate and appropriate staffing resources are provided to meet the needs of children.

Training will enable staff to identify signs of possible child abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. Training schedules are in line with Hounslow Safeguarding Children's Board recommendations, which are that Designated Person and Officer will be trained yearly, and all other practitioners every other year.

### **Good practice to prevent abuse**

Ravenscourt Park Montessori will follow all good practice to prevent abuse, including:

- Adults will not be left alone for long periods of time with individual children or within a group.
- If an adult needs to take a child aside – for example when changing a nappy, or during reading practice – the door will be left ajar.
- No child will be left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being within sight and/or hearing of other staff or volunteers. The layout of our site encourages constant supervision.
- Adults who have not been DBS checked will not be allowed to take the children unaccompanied to the toilet.
- Staff at our setting will be alert to unexplained, repeated or prolonged absence of children from the setting.
- Children will be encouraged to develop, through adult support, independence in making choices and expressing their own feelings in acceptable ways. This will help children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.

Practitioners in the setting need to be aware that children with additional needs and/or disabilities can be particularly vulnerable. This may arise from the child's possible difficulty in communicating their concerns. Staff should, therefore, be aware of children's individual needs when considering child protection issues.

Practitioners also need to be aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected children using the provision such as, abuse of disabled children; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation or extremism.

### **Data Protection, and Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras**

Mobile phones belonging to practitioners will be kept in the office at all times and will not be used for the purpose of taking photographs of the children. Any photos will only be taken with prior consent from parents/carer as part of the enrolment process. A dedicated camera to photograph approved children will be provided and will remain in the premises.

All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and the circumstances under which they may share information about you and your child with other agencies.

Parents/visitors to the pre-school are requested not to use their mobile phones on the premises.

Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the ICO.



### **Responding to suspicions of abuse**

We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect. All our teachers have received training on the signs and symptoms of abuse, and recognise the role they play in safeguarding children.

When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or through changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play.

Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with our Nursery Manager and Designated Person or Officer. The information is stored in the child's personal file.

The child's parents will normally be the first point of reference, but if anxieties are not allayed, the matter can also be taken up with Children's Social Care. In exceptional circumstances, where it is suspected that the parent is the likely abuser, Children's Social Care will be the first point of reference. We will co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. In some cases this may mean the police or another agency identified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.

Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), or we observe signs or signals that give us cause for concern, we will listen to the child, offering reassurance that they, as individuals, are valued and respected and have not been at fault.

We make a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure, including the date and time of the observation or the disclosure, the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible, the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time, and the names of any other person present at the time. These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file which is kept securely and confidentially.

All members of staff are familiar with the Child Protection recording and referral forms and follow the procedures for recording and reporting, which are published and on display at the setting. If there are concerns for a child's welfare, the setting will complete a Child & Family Assessment Notification (CFAN) form, which would be sent to Early Help Hounslow.

If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LCSB) escalation process. We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns, including awareness of the LCSB Escalation Policy.

### **Allegations against staff**

We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting, or anyone working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.

All staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults.

A child or young person may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the centre manager or the most senior member of staff available. A parent or other member of the nursery community may also make an allegation against a staff member.



The manager on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation first with the Safeguarding Advice and Allegations Management (SAAM), who will then progress the issue if needed to the Designated Officer for the Local Authority (DO), **before taking any action**. In our local authority, Hounslow, contact should be made first with SAAM (0208 583 5730).

If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the manager themselves, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Chair of the committee/proprietor who will consult with SAAM, without notifying the manager first.

The setting will follow the procedures for managing allegations against staff, as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018.

Dismissal of the member of staff against whom an allegation has been made needs careful consideration, and we will consult with Hounslow to inform this decision. In this event, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be informed.

OFSTED will be fully informed of any allegations, and actions taken in respect of the allegations. This notification will be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made.

The Designated Person will inform the Designated Officer at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, however this should not delay any referrals being made to the children's social worker services, the DO in the local authority, Ofsted or Riddor.

### **Record keeping**

Any worrying changes regarding a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance will be recorded in a separate, confidential Cause for Concern form. The record will include the name and age of the child, timed and dated observations and where possible the exact words spoken by the child. The record will be signed and dated twice, first by the recorder and second also by the Designated Officer or Person. Records will be kept locked, and only accessed by appropriate members of staff such as the child's keyworker and our Nursery Manager.

All suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis. Any existing injuries that a child comes to the setting with are recorded and parents are requested to sign this record, where applicable this information may be notified to the local child protection agencies.

### **Visitors**

In line with our Visitors Policy, procedures are in place to record all visitors to the setting.

Security steps are taken to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.

Steps are taken to ensure children are not photographed or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child, and are asked not to photograph children when visiting our school.

### **Categories of abuse**

There are five categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and honour-based violence (HBV) including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

#### **1. Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

#### **2. Emotional abuse**



Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. It may feature age – or developmentally-inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

### **3. Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### **4. Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **5. Honour-Based Violence**

Honour based violence is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.

#### **Indicators of abuse and what you might see**

It is vital that staff are aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the Designated Person or Officer. I/we are aware that it is my/our responsibility to report concerns. It is not my/your responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused and/or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort
- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently be absent or arrive late
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- become disinterested in play activities
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact



- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

In the case of FGM, signs can include:

- Having difficulty walking, sitting or standing
- Spending extended periods of time in the loo because she has problems urinating
- Often being absent from the provision
- Exhibiting behavioural changes
- Being reluctant to have any support in the bathroom
- Talking about a pain between her legs.

### **Liaison**

Ravenscourt Park Montessori operates in accordance with the strict guidelines of the registering authority. Confidential records kept on children of concern will only be shared with the Social Services Department if we feel that adequate explanations have not been provided.

We will follow HM Government's statutory guidance '*Working Together to Safeguard Children*'. If there are concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.

Here are our key points of contact:

- Hammersmith and Fulham Initial Contact and Advice Team (ICAT) – 020 8753 6610
- OFSTED Complaints, Investigations and Enforcement Team – 0300 123 4666
- OFSTED main contact number - 0300 123 1231

### **Support for families**

Ravenscourt Park Montessori aims to build up trusting and supporting relationships between families and members of staff. Where abuse at home is suspected, we will continue to welcome the child and his/her family whilst investigations are being carried out. Confidential reports on the child will be shared with the family.

Whilst remembering that the safety and care of the child is paramount, we will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

Ravenscourt Park Montessori will ensure a Designated Person for Safeguarding who has completed the appropriate qualifications, and who is responsible for ensuring this Policy is upheld at all times.

**Date: November 2020**

**Our Safeguarding and Welfare Policy will be reviewed annually.**