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# Abuse – A Guide for Parents

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**Abuse is a form of maltreatment (in this context, of a child). Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (for instance, online). They may be abused by an adult or adults, another child or children.**

**This short guide defines the different forms of abuse to assist you in safeguarding your child.**

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It is also possible for physical harm to take the form of fabricated symptoms, where a parent or carer deliberately induces illness or suffering in a child.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** can be defined as the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, causing severe and adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may include 'silencing' a child or not giving them opportunities to express views and opinions, or ridiculing what they say or how they express it. Developmentally inappropriate expectations may be placed on the child by interacting at a level beyond their intellectual capability. They may be 'overprotected' thus limiting their exploration and learning and potentially reducing their participation in normal social interaction. Children may see, or be exposed to, the ill-treatment of others. They may be bullied (including cyber bullying) or constantly feel frightened, at risk or in danger.

**SEXUAL ABUSE** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. It will not necessarily involve a high level of violence. The child or young person may or may not be aware of what is taking place. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities such as the viewing or production of sexual images, watching sexual activity taking place, or encouragement to behave in a sexually-inappropriate manner. The grooming of a child in preparation for sexual abuse (including online) also fits here. Sexual abuse can be initiated by men, women and other children.

**NEGLECT** can be defined as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is, in turn, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's development or health. Neglect may begin during pregnancy as a result of substance abuse. After birth, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (by oneself or chosen care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care/treatment

It may also include the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's emotional needs.

**BULLYING\*** could include name-calling, teasing, making threats, damage to property, theft, the spreading of rumours, cyber bullying, physical assault or getting people into trouble.

*\*There is no legal definition of bullying. However, it's usually defined as behaviour that is repeated, intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally, and is often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.*

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** is when one adult in a family or relationship threatens, bullies or hurts another member of the family physically, psychologically, emotionally, sexually or financially.

The school has various systems and procedures in place to support children should they face abuse or neglect. If you have a query or concern, please speak with the designated safeguarding lead(s) at the school.