

## Early Help at Coalway Community Infant School

### What does 'Early Help' mean?

Definition: from *'Working together to safeguard children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'* (March 2015):

"Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care."

Early Help is about children, young people and families getting the right help at the right time, as soon as a difficulty arises.

Early Help is vital in ensuring that our children are safeguarded and that their needs are met. At Coalway we identify the kind of support that a child or family may need and provide help at the earliest stage, doing a range of things to act as early as possible, before it gets to a stage when a child may be at risk of harm.

### How is Early Help provided?

At Coalway we aim to be proactive, rather than reactive, in our provision of Early Help. Ensuring that we meet the needs of all of our pupils is a primary aim of ours, and as such we regularly identify, respond to, and review the different types and levels of need of individual children and families and adapt types/levels of support according to their changing needs. Providing a continuum of help and support is embedded in our inclusive ethos/philosophy/approaches.

Close partnership working is fundamental to our 'Early Help Offer' and very much at the heart of the Coalway Schools' ethos. The Schools place great emphasis on establishing positive, open relationships with both pupils and parents. This ensures that any concerns from pupils, home or school can be openly discussed, problems identified and quickly alleviated. All staff endeavour to promote and establish this philosophy for the benefit of all of our children.

At Coalway Infants we provide high levels of adult support and wrap-around care. As a result of our high supervision ratios and close day to day contact with the children our staff are well placed to observe and interact with the children, and discuss any concerns that the children may have at the earliest possible point. Our pupils' well-being is of paramount importance. All staff work hard to establish and maintain an environment where the children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and where staff listen. We ensure that the views of our children are constantly sought, that their voice is heard and that children know that there are adults whom they can approach if they have any concerns. Our curriculum is also planned to include particular opportunities for children to express their views/concerns and develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse. We teach a graduated, progressive PSHE curriculum which develops and promotes our pupils' emotional intelligence and well-being, as well as developing other skills such as perseverance, conflict resolution and resilience. Specific values are discussed through themed assemblies and curriculum work to promote positive attitudes/practices regarding, for example, friendship, respect, determination, self-belief, tolerance and courage. The idea that everyone is special and deserves to be treated well is positively promoted. We are proactive in discussing bullying, highlighted during our annual Anti-Bullying week in November. Children understand that it is right to ask for help if they are in trouble or worried about bullying, abuse or any other concern.

Everyone at Coalway Community Infant School has a role to play in safeguarding children and is in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. The Head Teacher, Governing Board and all other members of the staff have important responsibilities to recognise pupils who require Early Help and know the procedure for reporting any concerns. We ensure that children at risk are identified at the earliest possible stage and that we work with them, their families and outside agencies, in a coordinated manner, to prevent the risk reaching a crisis point. Children have different levels of need at

different times across a range of situations and it is important to take all needs into consideration when determining the support required and which professionals need to be involved. The aim of Early Help is to clearly identify when and how children can be supported and safeguarded to ensure their needs are met, at whatever level. At Coalway Infants we work closely with social care, the police, health services and other services from the private, voluntary and statutory sectors to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. All relevant staff are informed of any support required for pupils and work together to achieve the best outcomes. Whilst also respecting confidentiality, at Coalway there is very much a culture of vigilance and sharing of information at all stages. Staff talk regularly to each other to ensure that we have a full picture of any difficulties a family might be facing.

All staff are trained in recognising the signs of Child Abuse and Extremism and are committed to and know the benefit of Early Help as a way of supporting families and young people before their needs become acute and Social Care or other specialist intervention may be necessary. The school has a range of robust safeguarding procedures in place which puts the safety and protection of children at the heart of any decisions. The school's safeguarding team is made up of the following school personnel:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Mrs F Hamilton
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): Ms L Mudway & Mrs S Clowes-Burke
- Child Protection Governor: Mrs C Bushell

The DSL and DDSLs complete inter-agency safeguarding training on a two yearly programme. All other school staff complete safeguarding training on a three yearly basis and are updated regularly regarding any changes in legislation.

As part of our site 'Early Help Offer', the two Coalway schools have appointed Family Support Workers. These members of staff work with both children and families to overcome barriers to learning and improve their outcomes, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Support is given in a range of areas including Parenting Skills, Behaviour Management, Attendance, Academic Support, Home Routines, as well as on specific issues such as bereavement, loss, anger management, money management (including benefit advice) and housing. Pupil counselling/support is offered to any child in need of individual support, either identified by the child, parent or school (with parental consent). Specific provision is offered for families where Domestic Abuse, Substance Misuse and Mental Health support is needed or where children have been recognised as being at risk of abuse as part of the Child Protection process. Support is given according to the targets within the child's plan (Child in Need or Child Protection Plan).

We place great emphasis on identifying the specific educational needs of pupils as early as possible and devising appropriate learning programs for them. On-going assessment and liaison with parents is a key factor in this process. The School has a range of intervention programmes to meet individual pupils' needs which may be delivered by Teachers, Teaching Assistants or the Family Support Worker. All staff are suitably trained to ensure that any support given is appropriate, focused and helpful. Expertise is broad and professional development is on-going and up-dated regularly. Staff work in line with agreed school policies to ensure consistency of care and approach. Detailed information regarding our range of staff-led interventions is available in our SEND Offer which is available on the school's website. Parents will also find out a range of information about specific aspects of provision for our pupils within this offer.

Coalway Infant School enjoys excellent relationships with a range of outside agencies to further extend our 'Early Help Offer' and meet needs appropriately. Signposting, liaison with and referrals to these agencies are a regular part of our practice and reflect our ethos to work holistically rather than just as 'education'. Agencies that may become involved with a child or young person who require early help are detailed in the Appendix, with intervention levels altering according to a graduated pathway of support for pupils.

Staff are vigilant to share knowledge and information between schools regarding pupils, families and relevant current local issues, particularly between our 'feeder' schools on site. At transition points and at other times throughout any given academic year, concerns and relevant information is passed between settings, with the DSLs meeting/liasing regularly. Written logs and chronologies are kept where there may be a concern so that

any patterns can be identified and tackled before things escalate. Confidential pupil files/records such as these are transferred between schools at the end of Key Stages.

N.B. The school will always involve the family in all Early Help strategies and most will only be put in place with their permission. The school will aim to work with families in a supportive, non-judgemental way so that trust is built up and the best possible outcomes achieved. There are occasions, however, when the school's safeguarding team or member of school staff may believe that a child may be at immediate risk of significant harm and that by informing the parents/carers of the concern may put the child at further risk. In these cases the school will implement Section 47 procedures. This will involve an immediate referral to social care without the parents/carers knowledge.

#### **Review**

This 'Early Help Offer' will be reviewed annually in accordance with our Child Protection Policy. Reference should also be made to the Schools' Behaviour, Anti-bullying, Attendance, Child Protection and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policies and the Schools' SEND Local Offer.

Date: November 2021

Review Date: November 2022

*Further information: For further information on Gloucestershire County Council's offer of Early Help please contact: [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/early-help-for-families](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/early-help-for-families)*

## Early Help: Appendix 1

### Agencies that may become involved with a child who requires Early Help

N.B. the following list is not exhaustive

#### Where a child or family may need some extra support, the following may be contacted:

- Family Support Worker
- School SENCO
- Local Authority SEN Team
- SEN Support Services
- School Safeguarding Team
- Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)
- Police
- GP
- Health Visitor
- Midwife
- School Nurse
- Street Warden
- District/County Council
- Change4Life
- Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning (GHLL)
- School Clubs
- Forest Pulse
- Food Bank
- Churches and Religious Leaders
- Gloucestershire Families First team, Community Social Workers
- Community Social Worker
- Early Help Hubs
- Housing Association - 2Rivers
- Green Square
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Job Centre
- Education Entitlement and Inclusion Team (EEI) / Education Performance and Inclusion teams
- Communication with previous settings, Children's Centre's and Nursery's
- Voluntary Agencies
- Family Information Service
- CCP (Caring for Communities and People)

#### Specialist Support may also be sought from:

- School Safeguarding Team
- Social Care (Initial/Core Assessment/Team around Child/Child in Need meetings)
- Parenting Courses
- Paediatrician
- Counselling - Teens in Crisis
- TOUCAN - Play Therapy
- 1:1 Art Therapy

- Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)
- Adult Mental Health Service
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Advisory Teaching Service
- Educational Psychologist
- Behaviour Support Teams
- Winston's Wish
- The Samaritans
- Cruse Bereavement Care
- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)
- Gloucestershire Families First
- Gloucestershire Drugs and Alcohol Support (GDAS)
- NSPCC
- Childline
- Child Online Protections and Exploitation Centre (CEOP)
- Channel Programme

Where a child or their family need a high level of support to prevent harm the following may become involved:

- Social Care - Child Protection (CP)
- School Safeguarding Team
- Social Worker
- Police - Police Protection Order (PPO)
- Courts - Care Proceedings
- Counselling
- Channel Programme