

Safeguarding At Portesbery School (Bruising)



Portesbery School
A happy school where every one matters
and every voice is heard

We take looking after your children very seriously at Portesbery School. You send them to us with the full trust that we will care for them as you would and it is our privilege to do so. Keeping your child safe (safeguarding) is THE most important thing we do and recognise the responsibility that carries.



Safeguarding- what is it?

All schools use a statutory document called Keeping Children Safe in Education and this is our rule book. Our staff are trained annually based on this important document and the document itself is updated yearly.

Safeguarding means the safety and wellbeing of all our students at school and at home. It covers a huge umbrella of responsibility such as ensuring suitable checks are carried out on all members of staff prior to undertaking their job, induction training and refreshers whilst carrying out their role, health and safety of pupils on and off site as well as ensuring that we follow Surrey processes when reporting a safeguarding concern.

The full Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy can be found on the school website.

Home and School

Safeguarding works best when we all work together- home and school- and we will always endeavor to do this. The only exception would be, if we felt communicating with a parent/carer was to put a child at risk. We believe that having an open and transparent relationship between home and school is the best way to fully protect children.

Safeguarding Leads

Within Portesbery School, we have a large team of trained Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and we have a Governor who is responsible for holding us to account, Emma Newman.

DSL's: Clare Walker, Nathan Aspinall, Cathryn Hopkinson, Sam Leach, Lisa Fagan, Lauren Campbell, Lynne Ward, Adele Devine and Jo Seldon.

Bruising- the process, what happens when we notice a bruise on a child

Surrey Safeguarding Partnership Board Definition of a bruise,

Bruising: extravasations (leakage) of blood in the soft tissues, producing a temporary, non- blanching discolouration of skin however faint or small with or without other skin abrasions or marks. Colouring may vary from yellow through green to brown or purple or red. This includes petechiae, which are red or purple non-blanching spots, less than two millimetres in diameter and often in clusters.

<https://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/hkyghz/procedures-for-specific-circumstances/a-multi-agency-protocol-for-the-management-of-actual-or-suspected-bruising-in-infants-who-are-not-independently-mobile>

Whilst the process we are going to look at now applies also to a verbal disclosure, the purpose of this information is to look at what we do when a mark or a bruise is identified on a child as this is often the most common one that can conflict with Surrey Policy. Many of the children are not able to explain how they have acquired a bruise so it relies on good relationships between staff and parents to determine the cause and we understand as well, not every mark on a child can be legitimately be accounted for.

But, if we flip that statement round, we also know how a vulnerable child might not be able to say that they are being hurt and they need people they trust keeping an open mind and being an advocate. Bruising is the most common feature of abuse so we have to follow policy and keep in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, which is very clear that we must always maintain a 'it could happen here' approach.

What happens?

When bruising is noticed, the staff member ask the team if they know what has happened and then will come and speak to a DSL. The course of action is different depending on the location of that bruise and if the child is considered 'mobile' or 'not independently mobile', as per Surrey's definition.

"Not Independently Mobile (NIM): is an infant who is not yet crawling, bottom shuffling, or cruising. It includes all infants less than 6 months."

<https://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/hkyghz/procedures-for-specific-circumstances/a-multi-agency-protocol-for-the-management-of-actual-or-suspected-bruising-in-infants-who-are-not-independently-mobile>

A discussion takes place and if it meets the criteria, a body map will be issued. This records the date, time, size, location of the bruise/mark, any explanation included in home school diary.

Once the body map is returned to the DSL, we then decide if it is in the child's best interests to phone the parent to ask for information about the bruise to seek clarity. If it was felt it put a child at greater risk of harm, we would not make this phone call home as per our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

At least 2 DSL's then agree whether to contact C-SPA (Children's Single Point of Access) for a mobile child.

For a 'not independently mobile' child, we **HAVE** to contact C-SPA unless the family already have an allocated social worker, in which we case we send the body map to them.

When a call is made to the C-SPA we talk to a duty social worker who has no knowledge at all of the child. They then decide what the next steps are going to be, this is completely out of our control. I have attached a leaflet to shows what happens next and the link is <https://www.surreyscp.org.uk/documents/sscp-bruising-in-infants-who-are-not-independently-mobile/>

Record Keeping

These body maps are kept on a system we have in school called C-POMS so we have reference and a chronology.

It is important to state that a bruise can also be an indicator of an underlying medical condition.

It is important to keep records so we have accurate dates, times so we can establish patterns for further information-either medically or from a safeguarding point of view.

Support

Our job is not to judge. We simply deal in facts and it is only ever fact that is passed over to C-SPA should it be necessary. We do not investigate. We see a mark, we record the mark, we seek an explanation and we hand over the facts.

The DSL's at Portesbery will always work alongside both a family and a social worker offering support and it is important to remember that everyone is trying their best to do the same thing- look after the child. Extra support is needed by so many of our families due to the additional challenges faced and it can be a good thing as it can lead to help from the Children with Disabilities Team.

A particular grey area for us at Portesbery School is around the issues of bruising and marks on children who are considered by Surrey to be 'not independently mobile'. Unfortunately, we feel the definition of 'not independently mobile' (NIM) is unfit for our pupils. We know that even if a child is in a wheelchair with complex needs, they can still be mobile- for instance their arms, legs and heads can still move and it is quite common for them to mark.

We will work with you on creating a risk assessment (NIM), helping us define what movements are 'typical' for your child. Then if your child comes in with a mark that is in line with a 'typical' movement, we can talk this through with the C-SPA and submit with the paperwork. We still have to follow the process but hopefully there will be transparency and a greater level of understanding when they are establishing the next steps.

If we feel this step applies to your child, we will be in touch in due course.

What if we already have a Children With Disability Team social worker?

If your child already has a named social worker, we send them the body maps and they do not get phoned in to C-SPA. This is a much clearer process as the social worker knows the child and family. They will be in touch about next steps.

How can I help?

If you notice a bruise/mark on your child- particularly if your child is 'not independently mobile', please tell us via the home/school diary/Class Dojo, an email or a phone call as soon as possible. It makes the process much quicker if you inform us and you will know to expect a call, rather than it coming as a surprise.

To finish...

Many of the Surrey Special Schools have highlighted 'bruising and marks' and the definition of 'not independently mobile' as an issue. We are working with Surrey, hoping for a better definition and clearer guidance. But until then, we hope you will support and work with us. If we have to phone C-SPA, it is only ever, because we have the best interests of your child at the centre of any decision and that we are legally obliged to follow Surrey procedure.

I have attached the process we use in school for your understanding.

What should I do if my child comes home from school with a bruise?

Bruising doesn't only happen at home. You may notice a bruise on your child when they return home from school that has not been communicated to you. In the same way, please ask us about it as we would you. If we are unable to provide an explanation, we will body map it the next day and refer to C-SPA in the same way as has been explained above.

We hope this clarifies what we do and why. If you have any questions/suggestions please email any of the DSL team dsl@portesbery.surrey.sch.uk