

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Value Statement

This policy has been created by the Board of Governors of the school following consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Through it the school seeks to create a safe and caring environment for all pupils and staff. It recognises that pupils may be vulnerable and seeks to protect them from all forms of violence and to keep them safe from harm. It realises that child abuse of its very nature is contrary to the values upheld in its Mission Statement and, if it becomes aware that any pupil is suffering abuse, will take immediate action.

In exercising its responsibilities for child protection, the school will have regard to any regulations/guidelines issued by the Department of Education (DENI) and the Education Authority and will cooperate with the relevant statutory agencies in relation to the protection of individual pupils.

The policy covers all pupils up to and including the age of eighteen. In it:

- 'Designated Teacher' refers in the first instance to the Vice Principal responsible for Pastoral Care and Discipline who is the school's designated teacher for child protection, currently Mrs U Lavery, but also covers, in the event that she is absent or otherwise unavailable, Miss Miskelly and Dr Donnelly who are the school's deputy designated teachers.
- 'parent' includes a guardian and every person who has actual custody of the child;
- 'Principal' includes, where the Principal is absent or otherwise unavailable, the Vice Principal or other person for the time being performing the duties of Principal;
- 'staff' includes teachers, support staff, peripatetic Music staff and sports coaches;
- 'other personnel' includes members of the contract cleaning staff who work in school.

Aims of the Policy

- to monitor children's welfare and physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs;
- to ensure that pupils, staff and parents are aware of the school's child protection policy;
- to ensure that all staff are familiar with the various indicators of child abuse and neglect, the procedures for reporting concerns and their duty of care and responsibilities to report these;

- to create an environment where pupils feel safe to disclose matters relating to child abuse;
- to ensure a sensitive and consistent response to all disclosures of child abuse.

Links to Other School Policies

The policy is linked to the school's Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying, ICT Acceptable Use and Positive Behaviour policies and, like them, seeks to create a safe and caring environment in which effective learning and teaching can take place and all pupils are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. A child may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer, an acquaintance or a stranger who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care for the child, or both. The abuse may take a number of forms including:

- neglect - actual or likely persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive;
- emotional - actual or likely persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and behavioural development of a child;
- Physical - actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child or wilful neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child;
- Female Genital Mutilation - Defined as 'involving procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or non-therapeutic reasons';
- Sexual - actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of a child or young person in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not truly comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent.

N.B. Sexual activity involving a child who is capable of giving informed consent on the matter, while illegal, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse.

- Exploitation - the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Possible Indicators of Child Abuse

Possible indicators of abuse include:

- bruises or marks which may be apparent, for example, when a pupil has changed for physical education;
- inadequate or poorly maintained clothing, poor hygiene, deficient nutrition;
- excessive dependence or attention-seeking;
- a substantial behaviour change, including precociousness, withdrawal or inappropriate sexual behaviour.

Action to Prevent Child Abuse

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care programme promotes the overall development and welfare of all pupils and seeks to ensure that they are protected from harm. It incorporates personal, social and health education and provides pupils with opportunities to develop self-confidence and personal life skills. It contributes to the creation of a supportive atmosphere in which pupils are encouraged to share any concerns they may have with their tutor, class teacher, Year Head, Vice Principal, Principal or any member of staff.

ICT Acceptable Use Policy

The school's ICT Acceptable Use Policy, designed to protect users of the school's computer systems, is explained to all pupils. Web and e-mail filtering mechanisms are installed in the systems to prevent access to or communication of unacceptable material. Pupils are, moreover, warned of the dangers of accessing unsuitable Internet sites outside school.

Classroom Management

Teachers will continue to provide suitable role models by:

- creating a positive, well ordered environment within which each pupil feels valued and respected;
- promoting pupil confidence and self esteem and encouraging pupils to value and respect one another.

Recruitment and Vetting Procedures

The school will continue to have regard to DENI regulations/guidelines in relation to the recruitment and vetting of staff, volunteers and other personnel.

Code of Conduct

The school has adopted an agreed Code of Conduct, which is outlined in this policy statement, for staff, volunteers and other personnel in their contact with pupils.

Training for Board of Governors, Principal, Bursar and Designated Teacher

The school will ensure that appropriate training is provided for members of the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Bursar and the Designated Teacher and two deputies in relation to child protection, including their duties and responsibilities in this area.

Training for Staff, Volunteers and Other Personnel

The school will ensure that the Designated Teacher will provide appropriate training in relation to child protection for staff, volunteers and other personnel. The training will include:

- identifying signs and symptoms of abuse;
- following relevant procedures and the Code of Conduct outlined in this policy;
- being aware of the role played by the Designated Teacher, including discussing with staff, volunteers and other personnel any concerns they may have in relation to Child Protection.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

N.B. Suspected child abuse must be handled with the utmost discretion in the best interests of the child and only those persons who need to be informed should be informed.

Parents

If parents have any concern about their child's safety or if they wish to make a complaint in relation to child protection against any person in school or a member of the Board of Governors they should contact the Principal or the Designated Teacher.

Staff and Volunteers

When a pupil makes a disclosure which may relate to child abuse to a member of staff or volunteer or when a member of staff or volunteer becomes aware of such a matter or has concerns about a child, as a result of one or many observations over a period of time, the member of staff or volunteer should:

- **not** investigate the matter;
- act promptly;
- make detailed notes of the matter;
- refer the matter to the Designated Teacher (unless the Designated Teacher is the suspected abuser, in which case refer the matter to the Principal) and give him/her the notes made.

Other Personnel

If other personnel become aware of a matter which may relate to the abuse of a pupil they should report the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher (unless the Designated Teacher is the suspected abuser, in which case report the matter to the Principal).

Designated Teacher

When the Designated Teacher becomes aware of a matter which may relate to child abuse he/she should:

- seek further clarification, if necessary, from the pupil concerned;
- take any notes made by the person reporting the matter and make his/her own detailed notes;
- report the matter to the Principal and assist him/her in deciding whether or not to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police;
- irrespective of whether or not a referral is made, monitor and evaluate over time.

The Designated Teacher will keep a record of child protection matters, apart from those involving members of staff, volunteers or other personnel, the record of which will be kept by the Principal, and will assist the Principal in making a report to the Board of Governors in

respect of them at least once a year. All child protection records are kept in a separate, secure, confidential filing system for child protection concerns. The records are only accessible to the Designated Teacher, Deputies and Principal.

Principal

When the Principal becomes aware of a matter which may relate to child abuse he/she should:

- in consultation with the Designated Teacher, decide whether or not to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police;

N.B. If there is any doubt about whether or not to refer the matter, advice is available from the Social Services and from the Education Authority Designated Officer.

If a decision is made to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police:

- do so, using the attached pro-forma;
- send copies of the completed pro-forma to the Education Authority Designated Officer and to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors; and
- inform the parents of the child immediately, unless a parent is a suspected abuser, in which case inform only the other parent, if appropriate;
- irrespective of whether or not a referral is made, keep the matter under review.

The Principal will keep a record of child protection issues involving members of staff, volunteers and other personnel. He/she will consult with the Designated Teacher and make a report on all child protection matters to the Board of Governors at least once a year.

If Suspected Child Abuse involves a Member of Staff, Volunteer, Other Personnel or the Principal

If a member of staff, volunteer or other personnel become aware of a matter which may relate to child abuse involving another member of staff, volunteer or other personnel, they must inform the Principal immediately. If the Principal, in consultation with the Designated Teacher, decides that a referral should be made to the Social Services and/or the Police he/she will immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will remove the member of staff, volunteer or other personnel from direct contact with pupils or suspend him/her (in conjunction with the outside contractor, if appropriate) as a precautionary measure pending further investigation.

If a member of staff, volunteer or other personnel become aware of a matter which may relate to child abuse involving the Principal they must inform the Designated Teacher immediately and the Designated Teacher will, in turn, immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of

Governors. If the Chairperson of the Board of Governors decides that a referral should be made to the Social Services and/or the Police he/she will remove the Principal from direct contact with pupils or suspend him/her as a precautionary measure pending further investigation.

Procedures for Dealing with Child Abuse

Advice to Pupils

If you are suffering abuse or are aware of another pupil who is suffering abuse tell someone you can trust:

- parent;
- teacher;
- tutor;
- Year Head;
- Vice Principal;
- Principal;
- any member of staff.

Notes:

- All visitors to the school must report to the school office, receive an identification badge and sign the Visitors' Book. Staff must meet visitors and escort them in the school. Any visitor without a badge is challenged by staff.
- CCTV cameras operate on some corridors and external areas of the school to protect all pupils and staff.

Advice to Staff and Volunteers

If a child discloses a matter to you which may relate to abuse:

- **receive:** stay calm; be there for the child; keep eye contact with the child; let the child talk; do not interrupt the child; at this stage, do not write notes;
- **reassure:** be supportive; reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing in disclosing the abuse; do not make judgements about the child or about any person the child refers to; do not suggest a reason for what has happened to the child;
- **respond:** do not ask leading questions; listen to the child and assure him/her that the matter will be dealt with; tell the child that you want to help and may need to tell someone who is in a position to help; do not give the child any promise of

confidentiality; do not under any circumstances remove the child's clothing or ask the child to remove clothing;

- **record:** immediately after dealing with the child, make a detailed and factual note of any comment made by the child concerning the abuse, quoting the child's words where possible; avoid interpretation on the child's words; be aware that notes taken may be used in subsequent court proceedings;
- **refer:** refer the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher, Deputies or the Principal, as appropriate; give your note to the Designated Teacher or Principal who will keep it securely.

If you see signs which could indicate child abuse:

- as a first step, seek clarification from the child, acting with sensitivity and discretion;
- be careful not to investigate the matter unless you are the Designated Teacher, Deputies or Principal;
- if you continue to have concerns about the child, inform the Designated Teacher or Deputies who will investigate the matter.

Advice to Other Personnel

If you become aware of a matter which may relate to the abuse of a pupil, report the matter immediately to the Designated Teacher or the Principal, as appropriate.

Advice to Designated Teacher (in addition, where appropriate, to the steps outlined above):

- seek further clarification, if necessary, from the pupil;
- take any note given to you by the person reporting the matter, make your own detailed notes and store all notes securely;
- report the matter to the Principal (unless the Principal is a suspected abuser, in which case report the matter to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors) and assist the Principal in deciding whether or not to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police;
- UNOCINI referral form completed and forwarded to Social Services if necessary;
- irrespective of whether or not a referral is made, monitor and evaluate over time.

Advice to Principal (in addition, where appropriate, to the steps outlined above):

- in consultation with the Designated Teacher, after seeking advice if necessary, decide whether or not to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police, using the attached pro-forma;
- if you decide to refer the matter to the Social Services and/or the Police, send copies of the completed pro-forma to the Education Authority, Designated Officer and to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors; (If a member of staff, volunteer or other person is a suspected abuser;
- inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors immediately;
- inform the parents of the child immediately unless a parent is a suspected abuser, in which case inform only the other parent, if appropriate;
- irrespective of whether or not a referral is made, monitor and evaluate over time;
- Cooperate with the preparation of any case conference held by the Social Services Department.

Amended Code of Conduct

- This Code of Conduct is designed to reduce the risk of allegations being made against any member of staff, volunteer or other personnel in respect of their contact with pupils.
- Ensure that your relationship with pupils is appropriate to the age and gender of the pupils, taking care that your conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation on the part of others.
- When conducting a confidential interview, use a room with visual access or with the door ajar or, if this is not possible, inform another member of staff that the interview is taking place.
- Do not spend an undue amount of time with one pupil away from other people.
- Be aware of acceptable boundaries of physical contact with pupils and bear in mind that even perfectly innocent actions can be misconstrued.
- Be alert to the risk of emotional abuse such as persistent sarcasm, verbal bullying or severe/persistent negative comment or actions.

- Be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting, such as a school trip or an extended visit away from home, where relationships tend to be more informal and where you are in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school environment.
- When visiting Social Networking sites do not invite or make friends with pupils.
- Do not name or discuss any pupil when visiting Social Networking sites in particular Facebook or Twitter.
- Following any incident where you feel that your actions have been or may be misconstrued make a written report and give it to the Principal.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

The Board of Governors will keep this policy under review and monitor its implementation.