



Child Protection Policy

‘Safe Guarding Children’

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Rationale

Child Protection – Safe Guarding policy and procedures are an integral part of our School Pastoral Care. This policy works hand in hand with our other school policies (these policies are available through the school office or school website):

- Pastoral Care
- Learning and Teaching
- Anti Bullying
- Positive Discipline
- Internet Usage
- Photographic Images
- Safe Handling

Following consultation with the Education Authority Child Protection Officers and staff of St. Clare's Primary School and Nursery Unit we have adapted the DENI Circular 1999/10 and the Pastoral Care In Schools – Child Protection Document.

We agree that we have a primary responsibility for the care, welfare and safety of the pupils in our charge, and we will carry out this duty through our pastoral care policy, which aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe environment, valuing individuals for their unique talents and abilities, in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential.

Our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks through Access N.I. The staff of our school have also adopted a Code of Practice for our behaviour towards pupils. Our staff are trained annually in Child Protection Policy and Procedures to ensure the safety of our pupils.

The school will have clear Risk Assessment Procedures to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and school property including: Fire, Educational Trips and Behaviour.

We are aware of the Children's Order (NI, 1995) that we are duty bound to comply with specific child protection requirements. Consequently, we may contact external agencies and / or make referral to external agencies without consulting with parents.

The purpose of the following procedures on Child Protection is to protect our pupils by ensuring that everyone who works in our school - teachers, non-teaching staff and volunteers - have clear guidance on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected.

Our Child Protection - Safe Guarding Children Policy will be available for all staff, parents and governors. Board of Governors will have a Child Protection update at each meeting.

The overriding concern of all caring adults must be the care, welfare and safety of the child, and the welfare of each child is our paramount consideration. The problem of child abuse will not be ignored by anyone who works in our school, and we know that some forms of child abuse are also a criminal offence.

Nurturing School

As a nurturing school we feel that there may be occasions when it is necessary to comfort a pupil with appropriate physical contact. Indeed as a school we follow the Nurturing Principles;

- Children's learning is understood developmentally
- The classroom offers a safe base
- We recognize the importance of nurture for the development of self-esteem
- Language is a vital means of communication
- All behaviour is communication
- We recognize the importance of transition in children's lives

Child Abuse Definitions

What is child abuse?

We use the following definition:

Physical – is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Sexual – occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children,

Emotional – is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Neglect – is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected also suffer from other types of abuse.

Exploitation – is 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.

A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

Domestic Violence

Our school recognises the impact on children of an abusive family setting. We will respond in line with pastoral and child protection procedures as well as promoting within the curriculum an understanding for children of healthy relationships and personal safety.

Indications of Abuse

- Unexpected changes in behaviour or performance
- Bruises, lacerations, burns
- Inadequate clothing. Poor growth, hunger
- Excessive dependence, attention seeking
- Withdrawal, sexual precocity.

No single indicator would in itself be confirmation of abuse.

It is not the responsibility of school staff to undertake investigations or to make inquiries of parents or guardians.

Social services will investigate cases of suspected abuse and will determine what action, if any, is required.

Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and is not tolerated in our school. All staff are vigilant at all times to the possibility of bullying occurring, and will take immediate steps to stop it happening, to protect and reassure the victim and to discipline the bully. Parents of both victim and bully will be personally contacted when bullying behaviour is identified.

Any complaint by a parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the designated teacher. A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation that has been carried out and the action being taken.

The sanctions taken against a pupil who bullies will depend on the seriousness of the case, but will include the loss of any privileges or position of responsibility he/she holds in the school. His/her behaviour will be carefully monitored until staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

This is a brief summary of our schools full Anti-Bullying Policy. Indeed we work hard to ensure that our school has an ethos and culture where bullying is seen as completely unacceptable.

Risk Assessments

The school will follow E.A. and CCMS guidance to ensure pupils, parents and staff safety. This will include;

- Health and Safety issues in relation to the school building/site.
- Individual pupil – risk from behaviour in themselves, others and property.
- Educational visits.

Code of Conduct

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the children and young people in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Private Meetings with Pupils

- a. Staff should be aware of the dangers that may arise from private interviews with individual pupils. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews must take place. As far as possible, staff should conduct such interviews in a room with visual access, or with the door open.
- b. Where such conditions cannot apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. It may be necessary to use a sign indicating that the room is in use, but it is not advisable to use signs prohibiting entry to the room.
- c. Where possible another pupil or (preferably) another adult should be present or nearby during the interview, and the school should take active measures to facilitate this.

Physical Contact with Pupils

- a. As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with their pupils.
- b. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch pupils only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this.
- c. Staff should never touch a child who has clearly indicated that he/she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm. (DENI Circular 1999/9, on the use of reasonable force, gives guidance on Article 4 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (*Power of member of staff to restrain pupils*)).
- d. Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.
- e. Schools should, in particular circumstances, such as use of certain areas like the photographic darkroom, draw up their own guidelines for these circumstances.

- f. Staff who have to administer first-aid to a pupil should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. *However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.*
- g. Any physical contact that would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.
- h. Following any incident where a member of staff feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to his/her line manager.
- i. Staff should be particularly careful when supervising pupils in a residential setting, or in approved out of school activities, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where staff may be in proximity to pupils in circumstances very different from the normal school/work environment.

Choice and Use of Teaching Materials

- a. Teachers should avoid teaching materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- b. When using teaching materials of a sensitive nature a teacher should be aware of the danger that their application, either by pupils or by the teacher, might after the event be criticised. Schools have already received advice on the value of consulting parents and Governors when proposing to use materials such as the AIDS education for schools and in connection with sex education programmes.
- c. If in doubt about the appropriateness of a particular teaching material, the teacher should consult with the principal before using it.

Relationships and Attitudes

Within the Pastoral Care Policies of the school and the employing authority, staff should ensure that their relationships with pupils are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the pupils, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought, particularly when staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

Conclusion

It would be impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all the circumstances in which staff interrelate with children and young people, or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur.

In all circumstances, employees' professional judgement will be exercised and for the vast majority of employees this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their teaching styles, relationships with children/young people and their manner and approach to individual children/young people, to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of colleagues, of children/young people or of their parents/guardians.

Parents Conduct

Parents are at all times reminded that the school and staff are here to meet the needs of every pupil. This may lead to referrals made to outside agencies when deemed necessary in consultation with parents but may also be done without consultation, in cases of Child Protection. Making reference to other pupils or staff in a negative or insulting manner is totally unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. Parents are asked to Conduct themselves appropriately when in the school grounds or dealing with school staff. Parents should follow all guidance made available from the school.

Procedures for reporting suspected (or disclosed) child abuse

The designated teacher for child protection is Mr Birt, *Vice Principal*. In his absence, Mrs Welsh, will assume responsibility for child protection matters. Mrs Corrigan is the designated teacher in St. Clare's Nursery Unit.

If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, **the member of staff must act promptly.**

He/she should not investigate - this is a matter for the Social Services – but should report these concerns immediately to the designated teacher, discuss the matter with him, and make full notes.

Please refer to Chart below for clear guidelines.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE IN CATHOLIC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Child makes a disclosure to teacher or teacher has concerns about child either as a result of one observation or many observations over a period of time. Teacher does not investigate.
MUST ACT PROMPTLY.

↓
Teacher refers matter to designated teacher, (Mr Birt/Mrs Welsh or Nursery Mrs Corrigan) discusses with designated teacher, makes full notes.

↙ ↘
Designated teacher meets with principal (in case of principal's absence vice-principal) to plan course of action and ensures that a written record is made

If there is any doubt about whether to take further action, advice is available from:
CCMS Senior Management Officer (Schools);
Education Authority Designated Officer
Social Services;

For other sources of advice see Appendix 2.
When seeking advice you do not have to give any names. You are making an enquiry.

↙ ↘
Principal/Designated Teacher makes referral to:

- Social Services and Care Unit.
- Copies of pro-forma to:
- CCMS Senior Management Officer (Schools).
- Education Authority Designated Officer.
- Indicate that it is a Child Protection issue in an Envelope marked 'Confidential'.

↓
Other Action:
Record Advice given;
Monitor
Review

St. Clare's Pastoral Team

The most important aspect within any school is to meet the needs of their pupils. In St. Clare's this role was highlighted and developed through the establishment of a school 'Pastoral Team.' To do this the relevant school staff, outside agencies and support services linked to the school were invited to join the team. The extended school programme in St. Clare's P.S, in partnership with the 'Greater Falls Cluster' provide the resources to allow this to happen.

The aim of the team is to focus on the pupils/families in most need of support and devise the best actions to address their needs. The team meets every 6 weeks to discuss and update new and existing pupils/families of concern. Each case is discussed, reviewed and prioritised at these meetings. Strategies are agreed and planned with referrals made to appropriate services when deemed necessary.

Co-ordinated success is clearly seen through the many pupils, parents and families that have had needs addressed by a variety of support mechanisms or services. St. Clare's P.S is extremely proud of the many ways in which it highlights and supports those in need.

School Access

Ensuring the safety of our pupils is paramount and to this end we have secure access to the school building. Visitors must gain access through the front door security system and then be signed into the building before access is allowed. Parents bring pupils to school and can gain entrance through the school breakfast club (8:15-8:45) or after the morning assembly at 8:55 where class teachers collect the pupils.

Modern Technologies

Mobile Phones

Pupils are asked not to bring mobile phones to school at any time unless in extreme circumstances where permission has been given. Pupils will give the phone to class teachers at the start of the day and get it back at the end of the day. Phone calls, text messaging and photographing should not be done on school grounds.

Internet – Games / Social Networking

The school has a clear Internet Policy in place for school technology. However pupils and parents are reminded about the dangers of using such sites.

We ask that no photos of school staff or pupils in uniform appear on these sites. This is for the protection of our whole school community.

Making reference to other pupils or staff in a negative or insulting manner is totally unacceptable and will be dealt with severely.

How a Parent Can Raise a Concern:

1. I have a concern about my/a child's safety
2. I can talk to the class/form teacher
3. If I am still concerned, I can talk to the designated teacher for child protection, Mr Birt, VP.
4. If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Principal, Mrs. White.
5. If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chairman of the Board of Governors

At any time, I can talk to a social worker, Gateway tel:02890507000 or the Police (local CARE Unit) tel:02890650222

It's Good to Talk!

- If you have something important to talk about you can talk to your teacher, Mr Birt or Mrs Welsh.



- If you are worried about something that is happening to you, or to someone you know.
- If you need help, or if you need to know how to get help the staff are here to listen and to help - they will try to do what they can.
- If you are worried about telling things in confidence tell the staff - they will understand. If they are concerned about your safety, they may need to share this with others, but they will always tell you first.
- If you are still unsure about talking to a member of staff, you can telephone

ChildLine on 0800-1111

NSPCC on 0808-8005000

These calls are free, and they will not show up on your phone bill.
They will help you work out what to do next.

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

- Published on the Department of Education and Skills anti-bullying web pages <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying> Tackling Syberbullying sets out simple sets that schools, parents and pupils can take to prevent cyberbullying and to deal firmly with incidents where they occur.
- www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm
- NSPCC: www.There4me.com (online support and guidance service for children and young people).
- www.help4kids.co.uk NSPCC on-line counselling for children and young people.
- www.kidsmart.org.uk (internet safety guide for parents and young people. Also refers to mobile phone safety guide).
- www.childguard.ie includes tips for safe surfing for kids and a parent's guide to online lingo. It also provides links to the Internet Advisory Board (Rep of Ireland). The site was developed after a survey in Rep of Ireland (2006) which found that one in ten Irish children who arranged to meet someone they met on the internet experienced physical threats and abuse.
- www.childnet.com (established by Nigel Williams to raise awareness of the benefits and risks to children posed by new technologies).
- www.barnardos.org.uk/beyondtheshadows (child sexual exploitation project).
- Contact Youth 028 90457848 www.info@contactyouth.org
One to one province wide therapeutic counselling for young people. Youthline telephone counselling service.
- Children's Law Centre 028 90245704 www.childrenslawcentre.org
Offers advice and guidance about law and policy affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland.
- Kidscape 0207 730 3300 www.kidscape.org.uk
Offers free child protection leaflets with a SAE and a telephone helpline for parents of bullied children.
- Parent's Centre www.parentscentre.gov.uk
Online information and support for parents on how to help with children's learning, including advice on subjects such as bullying, using computers and the internet, behaviour and discipline.
- Save the Children www.savethechildren.org.uk

STATUTORY AGENCIES

PSNI

**Public Protection Units
Tel 02890 650222**

Child Abuse Investigation Units

**N&W Belfast
Tennant Street Police Station
Detective Inspector Patricia Wallace
Tel 08456008000 x28968
Detective Sergeant Angela McKernin / Paula Gilmore
Tel 0845600800 x26797**

SOCIAL SERVICES – EDUCATION AUTHORITY BELFAST REGION AREA

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust:

Gateway Team: 02890507000

**OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM
02890565444 / 02890565707**