

# Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School



## Policy and Procedures on Child Protection

## **Introduction**

We in Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School fully recognise the contribution we can make to protect children and support pupils in our school. The aim of the policy is to safeguard and promote our pupils' welfare, safety and health by fostering an honest, open, caring and supportive climate.

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.

One way in which we seek to protect our pupils is by helping them to learn about the risks of possible abuse, helping them to recognise unwelcome behaviour in others and acquire the confidence and skills they need to keep themselves safe.

There are four main elements to our Child Protection Policy:

- Prevention (e.g. positive school atmosphere, teaching and pastoral support to pupils);
- Protection (by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately and sensitively to Child Protection concerns);
- Support (to pupils and school staff and to children who may have been abused);
- Working with parents (to ensure appropriate communications and actions are undertaken).

This policy applies to all staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to the school. We recognise that child protection is the responsibility of all staff within our school. We will ensure that all parents and other working partners are aware of our child protection policy by mentioning it in our school prospectus, displaying appropriate information in our visitors' book and by raising awareness at initial meetings with parents of new pupils as well as at the beginning of each school year.

## **School Commitment**

The school adopts an open and accepting attitude towards children as part of its responsibility for pastoral care. Our staff hopes that children and parents will feel free to talk about any concerns and will see school as a safe place when there are difficulties. Children's worries and fears will be taken seriously and children are encouraged to seek help from members of staff. Their concerns will be responded to appropriately.

Our school will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to;
- Ensure that children know that there are adults in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty;
- Include in the curriculum activities and opportunities to equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse.
- Ensure every effort is made to establish effective working relationships with parents.
- Operate safe recruitment procedures and make sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on new staff and volunteers who will work with children. All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks.  
Only substitute teachers who are on the Northern Ireland Substitute Register are employed.

The staff of our school has also adopted a Code of Conduct for our behaviour towards pupils. (See Appendix 1)

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.

**The child's welfare must always be paramount and this overrides all other considerations.**

## **What is Child Abuse?**

“Child Abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are many different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.”

### **There are four categories of Child Abuse.**

#### **1. Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to cause significant harm. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive emotionally or educationally.

It may involve a parent or carer:

- Failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing;
- Failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger;
- Failing to ensure access to medical care or treatment;
- Failing to provide stimulation or supervision.

## **2. Physical**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

This may include:

- Hitting;
- Shaking;
- Throwing;
- Poisoning;
- Burning or scalding;
- Drowning;
- Suffocation;
- Confinement to a room or bed;
- Inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

### **3. Sexual**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.

This may include:

- Non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material;
- Watching sexual activities;
- Encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### **4. Emotional**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

It may involve:

- Conveying to a child that she is worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as she meets the needs of another person;
- Causing a child to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of a child.

Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional harm.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is a highly distressing and damaging form of abuse and it is not tolerated in our school. All members of 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 immediately 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 for child protection, and team action will be taken to protect the victim. This will usually include ensuring that another child or small group of children befriends and supports the child being bullied during the school day.

A register will be kept of official complaints of bullying.

A parent making a complaint about bullying will have a personal response from the designated teacher or principal within one week of making the complaint, indicating the investigation, which 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 she holds in the school. Her behaviour will be carefully monitored until the staff are satisfied that the problem has stopped.

If a pupil's bullying persists the second stage will be to instigate the Child Protection procedure described below.

**Procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed child abuse by  
someone other than a member of the school's staff**

( see figure 1 )

The designated teacher for child protection is Mr P. McQuillan. In his absence Mrs. D. Bradley will assume responsibility for child protection matters.

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, **that member of staff must act promptly.**

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

The designated teacher will discuss the matter with the Principal as a matter of urgency to plan a course of action and ensure that a written record is made.

The Principal, in consultation with the designated teacher, will decide whether, in the best interests of the child, the matter needs to be referred to Social Services.

**If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the school is obliged to make a referral.**

Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parents will be informed immediately.

The Principal may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Board's Designated Officer and the CCMS's Designated Officer or the Senior Social Worker before a referral is made. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and appropriate advice.

**The safety of the child is our first priority.**

If it appears that urgent medical attention is required arrange for the child to be taken to hospital (normally this means calling an ambulance) accompanied by a member of staff who must inform medical staff that

non-accidental injury is suspected. Parents must be informed that the child has been taken to hospital.

**Exceptional circumstances:** If it is feared that the child might be at immediate risk on leaving school, take advice from Social Services (for instance about difficulties if the school day has ended, or on whether to contact the police). Remain with the child until the Social Worker takes responsibility. If in these circumstances a parent arrives to collect the child, the member of staff has no right to withhold the child. If there are clear signs of physical risk or threat, Social Services should be updated and the Police should be contacted immediately.

Where there are concerns about possible child abuse, the Principal will inform:

- The Social Services
- SEELB Designated Officers
- CCMS Designated Officer

**This will be done in an envelope marked “CONFIDENTIAL – CHILD PROTECTION”**

If any member of staff feels unsure about what to do if he/she has concerns about a child, or unsure about being able to recognise the signs or symptoms of possible abuse, he/she should speak to the designated teacher.

**It should be noted that information given to members of staff about possible child abuse can not be held “*in confidence*”. In the interests of the child, staff may need to share this information with other professionals. However, only those who need to know will be told.**

### **Individual Staff/Volunteers/Other Adults – main procedural steps**

When a child makes a disclosure, or when concerns are received from other sources, **do not investigate, ask leading questions, examine children, or promise confidentiality.** Children making disclosures should be reassured and if possible at this stage should be informed what action will be taken next.

As soon as possible write a dated and timed note of what has been disclosed or noticed, said or done.

Report to the Designated Senior person for Child Protection in the school, even if the concern involves the conduct of a member of staff or volunteer, a visitor, a governor, a trainee or another young person or child. Pass on the written record.

### **Records and Monitoring**

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. All staff realise the need to record and report concerns about a child or children within our school.

Written, dated records must be made to what has been alleged, noticed or reported, and kept securely and confidentially.

The Designated Senior Person for Child Protection is responsible for such records.

Records relating to actual or alleged abuse or neglect are stored apart from normal pupil or staff records. Normal records have markers to show that there is sensitive material stored elsewhere. This is to protect individuals from accidental access to sensitive material by those who do not need to know.

Child protection records are stored securely, with access confined to specific staff, i.e. the Designated Senior Person for Child Protection, the Principal and the Vice Principal. Records are kept for all time.

Child protection records are reviewed regularly to check whether any action or updating is needed. This includes monitoring patterns of complaints or concerns about any individuals and ensuring these are acted upon.

Transfer: When children transfer school their records are transferred. If there is child protection material, this is transferred separately and direct to the relevant member of staff in the receiving school, with any necessary discussion or explanation. A record is kept of the date of such transfer of sensitive files and of the person to whom they are transferred.



**Procedures where a complaint has been made about possible abuse  
by a member of the school's staff**

( *see figure 2* )

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the designated teacher, if he is not available) must be informed immediately.

The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the designated teacher). Where the matter is referred to Social Services, the member of staff will be removed from duties involving direct contact with pupils, and maybe suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by Social Services.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed immediately.

If a complaint is made against the Principal, the designated teacher must be informed immediately. She will inform the Chairman of the Board of Governors and together they will ensure that the necessary action is taken.

## **Code of Conduct** (Appendix 1)

Respect for the individual and a concern for personal dignity are fundamental principles within the ethos and values of the Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School. The school endeavours to create and maintain an environment in which relationships are based on tolerance and respect. However, it is desirable at times to specify certain guidelines on behaviour.

This Code of Conduct related to contact with children.

### **Guidelines for Staff**

#### **1. Interviews with Pupils**

- a) Staff should be aware of the dangers which 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. Never block windows in your classroom door.
- b) Where such conditions can not apply, staff are advised to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. Where possible, another pupil, or preferable, another adult should be present or nearby during the interview.

#### **2. 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 only touch pupils 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 she is, or would be, uncomfortable with such contact, unless it is necessary to protect the child, others or property from harm.
- d) Physical punishment is illegal, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint.

- e) Permission for a child's classroom teacher, classroom assistant and school secretary to assist a child with intimate care arrangements, such as changing soiled clothes, will be sought. On these occasions staff is advised to be sensitive to the child's needs and right to privacy when providing care. It is advisable that staff have another adult present/close, that they do not do anything for the child that they could do for themselves and that any such incidents are recorded and parents informed.
- f) When accompanying children to changing facilities, either in school or at other venues, staff will be sensitive to the children's right to privacy whilst ensuring that the children's welfare and safety is maintained. A teacher will knock and give warning before entering a changing room and, only enter the changing room of children of the same sex. However, the safety of the children is always of paramount concern.
- g) 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.
- h) Any physical contact which would be likely to be misinterpreted by the pupil, parent or other casual observer should be avoided.

### **3. Relationships and Attitudes**

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 adolescents girls.

### **4. Mobile Phones**

For the protection of staff and pupils alike, mobile phones should not be turned on during class time. Pupils should not bring mobile phones to school. If they do, they must be handed into the office and will be returned at the end of the school day. If it is necessary to contact home they may use the office telephone.

## **Follow up**

- Following an 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 the Principal or Vice Principal.
- A complaint relating to inappropriate conduct on the part of a member of staff will be dealt with under the school procedures. A concern for fairness and for the welfare, dignity and protection of staff and pupils will be paramount.
- In accordance with the Child Protection Policy, all members of staff whose work gives them substantial access to children are subject to criminal record checks.

### DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this leaflet is for guidance only and should not be regarded as a complete and authoritative interpretation of the law.

### **Staff with specific Child Protection responsibilities and other contacts**

- Chairman of the Board of Governors – Mr C Bowd
- Principal – Mr H Kelly
- Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mr P McQuillan
- Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mrs D Bradley
- Nominated Governor for Child Protection – Mrs N Doran

Where there are concerns about possible abuse the Principal will inform –

- **Designated Officers (SEELB)**

Ms Alison Casey – Tel: 028 90566498

Mr Colum Boal - Tel: 028 90566434

- **Designated Officer (CCMS)**

Ms Susan Sullivan – Tel: 028 90426972

- **Duty Social Worker -** Tel: 028 44613511

- **PSNI -** Tel: 028 44611109

*This policy and procedure on Child Protection is reviewed annually and was last updated in September 2014.*